



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)

**GACEC Advisory Committee for the Education
of Individuals with Hearing Loss Meeting
Delaware School for the Deaf**

620 East Chestnut Hill Road, Newark, DE 19713

March 9, 2011

3:15 p.m.-Tour of the new Delaware School for the Deaf

4:15 p.m.-Regularly scheduled meeting,

Room B-6, existing Delaware School for the Deaf

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wendy Strauss, Executive Administrator, GACEC; Nick Fina, Choices; Jill McKinney, Child Development Watch (CDW); Cindy Farrell, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing with Cape Henlopen School District; Tina Fredrickson, Coordinator, Statewide Programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Della Thomas, Director, Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind; Freeman Williams, Assistant Superintendent of Christina School District; Mia Papas, Coordinator for Guide by Your Side (GBYS), parent of a child who is deaf, and member of Choices; Kyle Hodges, Director, State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD); Mark Campano, Coordinator, Statewide Programs for the Deaf-Blind; Debra Trapani, Elementary School Leader, DSD; Brian Touchette, Department of Education (DOE)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Julie Johnson, Chairperson and member of GACEC; Loretta Sarro, Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Equality and Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Thierry Morlet, A.I. DuPont

OTHERS PRESENT: Dr. Lou Bartoshesky, Christiana Care, A.I. DuPont, and Delaware Public Health (DPH); Representative S. Quinton Johnson (attended tour only); Fran Fletcher, Facilitator from University of Delaware (UD); Josh Weinstein, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Coordinator for Milestones in Pennsylvania (*proxy for Loretta Sarro*); Rob Hemenway, Karasch and Associates CART Services Provider; Pamela Whitney, ASL Interpreter; Donna Ellis, ASL Interpreter; Kristin Mullen, GACEC Staff and Committee Recording Secretary

With Chairperson Julie Johnson being absent, Wendy Strauss called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

Before proceeding to the scheduled approval of the minutes and agenda, Wendy stated that she had an announcement to make. Wendy informed the committee that Chairperson Julie Johnson had requested a leave of absence from the GACEC. Since the chairperson of the committee must be a member of the GACEC, Julie also requested a leave of absence from the committee. Julie will be stepping down as the Chairperson of the GACEC Advisory Committee for the Education of Individuals with Hearing Loss.

Since the committee charter states that the committee chair must be a GACEC member (not staff), Wendy asked the committee how they would like to proceed. Wendy said that she would assume the role of chair for this meeting, but asked the committee if they would like for her to continue as Chairperson. Jill McKinney made a motion to elect Wendy Strauss as Chairperson of the GACEC Advisory Committee for the Education of Individuals with Hearing Loss. Nick Fina seconded the motion, and all members were in agreement. The motion was passed.

Approval of Minutes from 2/9/11 Meeting

- Brian Touchette and Nick Fina abstained from voting, as they were not present at the 2/9/11 meeting.
- Kyle Hodges requested a correction of his name. On page 6, Kyle was mistakenly referred to as “Kyle Hartman.” The recording secretary noted this change.
- Mia Papas asked if she could still send questions and comments regarding the 2/9/11 minutes to the GACEC, even though she was not present for the meeting. Wendy said the Mia should feel free to do so.
- The minutes, with the adjustment to Kyle’s name on page 6, were approved.

Approval of Agenda for 3/9/11 Meeting

- Agenda was approved as written.

Review of GACEC Letter to Delaware Health and Social Services (DHSS)/Delaware Public Health (DPH) Regarding the Newborn Hearing Screening Coordinator Position

- Wendy stated that the GACEC wrote a letter to DHSS Secretary Rita Landgraff, with a cc to Lt. Governor Matt Denn, regarding the need to fill the position of Newborn Hearing Screening Coordinator, and urging DHSS/DPH to un-freeze the position. A copy of the letter was contained in the member’s information packets.
- Mia stated that she saw a posting on the State of Delaware website, which was up from 3/3/11 to 3/9/11. This posting was not for the Newborn Hearing Screening Coordinator, but for the assistant. The assistant position is an hourly position.
- While the committee agreed that the posting for an assistant was a step in the right direction that the committee still needed to follow up on /encourage DHSS/DPH to fill the Newborn Hearing Screening Coordinator position.

- Wendy said she would notify the committee of any response from Secretary Landgraft regarding the letter.

Approval of the Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) Sub-Committee

Recommendations for the LSL Pilot Program/Classroom

- Wendy asked if everyone had a chance to review the LSL Sub-Committee's recommendations, a copy of which was provided to each member at the 2/9/11 meeting. Wendy asked if there were any changes to the recommendations, or if they could be approved as-is.
- Mia requested that DPH be included in the list of agencies to contact regarding research and reporting for the LSL Pilot Program. The committee agreed that this would be a positive addition, and the recording secretary will add DPH to the final list of recommended consultants.
- Nick asked if there could be a follow-up mechanism to ensure that the LSL Sub-Committee's recommendations were being followed up on.
- Brian and Kyle asked if there could be a standing LSL Sub-Committee Report item on each month's agenda, for Tina Fredrickson to give a "progress report." Tina said she would be fine with doing so.
- The committee agreed to accept the LSL Sub-Committee's recommendations, with the changes mentioned above.

Presentation of Promotional Materials for the New LSL Pilot Program/Classroom

- Tina reported that the promotional materials are not yet ready for review, and stated that she will present them when they are ready.

Presentation of Document Regarding Christina School District's Hiring Process

- Nick prepared a written list of questions for Freeman Williams. The GACEC sent Nick's questions to Freeman, who then answered them and sent them back to the GACEC. Committee members received a copy of this document via email and also in their information packets.
- Any committee member wishing to obtain another copy of this document, or who would like to view the transcript of this meeting may contact the GACEC office.
- Nick stated that he believes that since hiring a LSL classroom teacher does not represent a "typical hiring situation," Christina School District should include an established Listening and Spoken Language Specialist (LSLS) professional on their recruiting and hiring team. Freeman responded that this would be considered.
- Della Thomas stated that there may be someone already in place at Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind who could fill the position. She re-stated that LSLS certification was not an absolute necessity for a candidate to be considered for the classroom teacher position.
- Debra Trapani stated that there are four speech and language teachers currently in place at Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind who have the necessary skills to lead the team.
- Della gave a brief list of who would possibly be involved in the recruiting and hiring process. This included: a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), a preschool

teacher, a parent of a child who would be affected, the school site-based administrator, a Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind staff member, and an Audiologist. Della clarified that this is a brief, off-the-cuff list, and is not to be construed as complete.

- Following much discussion regarding the applicant screening process, transparency, trust issues, and remaining an advisory committee rather than a monitoring committee, Freeman stated that if the Christina School District Recruiting and Hiring Team needed assistance in identifying proper candidates for the LSL classroom teacher position, they would reach out to the committee.

Discussing the working relationship of A.I. DuPont and Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind, and ways to enhance their collaboration:

- Wendy asked the committee if they would be willing to postpone this discussion until the April meeting, due to the fact that Thierry Morlet of A.I. DuPont was not able to attend this meeting. The committee was in agreement with this proposal.
- Debra stated that she had a typed document containing her recommendations, which she would e-mail to Kristin Mullen of the GACEC.
- Copies of Debra's recommendations will be provided to the committee via e-mail. Printed copies will also be in the committee member's information packets for the April meeting.

Presentation of information regarding the 2011 National Summit on Deaf Education

- Since there is no "in-person" summit this year, Della has purchased a site license in order to have remote access to the conference via webcast/telecast at Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind.
- Della asked that the committee recording secretary send out the link regarding the conference to the committee members. Kristin said that she would do so.
- The summit will be held in April. The webcast will be available at Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind.
- Della stated, "Whoever can be there, be there." She asked Brian Touchette if DOE could provide representation. Della also encouraged participation for stakeholder groups.

Presentation of Draft Goals 5 and 6

- A copy of Draft Goals 5 and 6 was provided via email to each committee member, as well as in print format in each of their information packets.
- Please refer to this document for a complete description of Draft Goals 5 and 6, which include current conditions, recommended action steps, recommended resources, and parties to involve.
- If you would like another copy of Draft Goals 5 and 6, or if you wish to obtain a full transcript of the meeting, please contact the GACEC office.

Synopsis of Goal 5, "Placement, Programs, and Services"- Overview, Recommended Action Steps and Committee Member Responses:

The continuum of placement options must be made available to all students who are deaf and hard of hearing, with the recognition that natural and Least Restrictive Environments (LRE) are intricately tied to communication and language.

- 1) Each student should have a meaningful and functional communication system.
- 2) Implement statewide use of the Communication Plan.
- 3) Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) definition should be written as it pertains to deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) Students.
- 4) Explore the provision of 18 months to 2.9 year playgroup for students utilizing LSL skills.
- 5) Have representation at DOE-LRE committees.
- 6) Assign Statewide Educational Audiologist to assist district nurses with screening standards and follow up on failed screenings.
- 7) Develop criteria for mainstreaming students who are enrolled at DSD.

Committee Member Questions/Comments Regarding Goal 5:

- Regarding statement number 7 -“develop criteria for mainstreaming students who are enrolled at [Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind] DSD”-Kyle asked if there was a written plan for how to mainstream DHH students. Della stated that there are no published, pre-determined criteria at this time. Della said that once the criteria are published, she would share this information with the committee.
- Regarding statement number 7 -“develop criteria for mainstreaming students who are enrolled at DSD”-Mia asked Della if “mainstreaming” refers to mainstreaming from [Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind] DSD. Della answered that originally, it’s from the center based program going into mainstream programs.
- Regarding statement number 7-“develop criteria for mainstreaming students who are enrolled at [Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind] DSD”-Brian advised that the term “mainstreaming” is falling out of favor, and that “access to general education curriculum” is becoming a more commonly used term.
- Regarding statement number 7 -“develop criteria for mainstreaming students who are enrolled at DSD”-Debra stated that [Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind] DSD already follows the general education curriculum, and asked Brian for clarification on the term “access to general education curriculum.” Brian stated that he was referring to more generalized special education and that he realizes that DSD students have access to the general education curriculum.
- Regarding statement number 7--“develop criteria for mainstreaming students who are enrolled at [Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind] DSD”- Jill had questions regarding what would happen if the parents of a child disagreed with the child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Background information was given, and Della said that if the IEP team (which includes the child’s parents) continues to disagree on the best course of action, the parents can then escalate by going to mediation or a due process hearing.

- Regarding statement number 3, regarding Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)- “definition should be written as it pertains to DHH students”-Debra said that for DHH students, mainstreaming/LRE doesn’t necessarily mean sending students to general public school as opposed to DSD. Della agreed, and said this is what she intended to communicate with this statement.

Synopsis of Goal 6, “Technology”- Overview, Recommended Action Steps and Committee Member Responses:

Accommodations, assistive and adaptive technologies, and emerging technologies must be maximized to improve learning for students who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH).

- 1) Write a high needs grant through DOE to conduct an assistive technology needs assessment as it relates to students with hearing loss.
- 2) Create a series of professional development opportunities related to technology in the areas of (but not limited to): smart boards, augmentative communication, cochlear implants, hearing aids, iPads, and computer software as they relate to students with hearing loss.
- 3) Explore the benefits of becoming a VRI (Video Remote Interpreting) provider.
- 4) Create an audiology lending library.
- 5) Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind should explore the hiring of an Assistive Technology Specialist to work with students with hearing loss statewide.

Committee Member Questions/Comments Regarding Draft Goal 6:

- Regarding statement number 3, “Explore the benefits of becoming a VRI (Video Remote Interpreting) provider”- Mark Campano said that he felt that the ability to use distance learning (i.e. observing or meeting with classroom teachers and related services personnel via video) to provide services for the deaf-blind would be a huge help. Mark pointed out that other states are already utilizing this technology. Della stated that there is a distance learning lab in the new [Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind] DSD school building.
- Regarding statements number 4 and 5, “Create an audiology lending library” and Statewide Programs [for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind] should explore the hiring of an Assistive Technology Specialist to work with students with hearing loss statewide.” -Brian asked Della if Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind planned to work with the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI). Brian said that this would allow Statewide Programs to utilize an existing resource for this initiative.

-Mark reminded Brian that DATI is a lending program that operates on a two week rotation, which would not be helpful in the long term

-Tina suggested that the lending library should operate on a three year rotation. She also noted that while Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind would like to write a \$50,000.00 grant to procure assistive hearing technology, that amount of money would still not give Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind very much listening technology to loan.

-Tina also pointed out that listening technology quickly becomes obsolete

-Brian said that he feels that a meeting with Martha Toomey regarding this topic is critical.

-Della stated that she feels a sub-committee to address the need for lendable, up-to-date, easily available listening technology is needed. Mark, Nick, and Jill agreed with Della's suggestion

-Wendy said that she feels all of these concerns can be discussed further at future committee meetings, and that she is not sure that a sub-committee is needed at this time, but that could possibly be discussed in the future.

- Regarding statement number 4, "Create an audiology lending library"-Nick said that the Hearing Loss Association of Delaware received a grant from the Crystal Foundation to purchase several dozen hearing assistive technology devices, most of which reside in DATI.

Sharing of information received from Judy Sexton regarding consultation

- Tina Fredrickson contacted Judy Sexton of the Clarke School in Bryn Mawr, PA via email to ask if she would be willing to provide feedback on the LSL sub-committee's recommendations.
- Judy responded, saying that it would be a "significant undertaking" on her part, and it would have to involve more than colleagues sharing ideas.
- Tina stated that while Judy did not specifically state that there would be a fee involved, she implied that there would be.
- Nick told the committee that from past conversations with Judy, he believes that her rate is \$125/hr. Nick asked if the committee thought that \$500.00 was possibly affordable. Nick mentioned that the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) often writes grants for these types of things.
- Kyle said that, while he initially did not see the harm in asking Judy to consult, he does not believe that \$125/hr. is affordable. Kyle also said that pursuing a grant from the DDC would likely take more time than is available before the opening of the LSL Pilot Program.
- Nick asked if there were any other sources of funds, such as DOE. Brian said that, at best, a DOE grant would take six weeks or more.
- Wendy said that, moving forward, if Della or Tina ran into a roadblock with the LSL Pilot Program, then that may be the time to consider bringing in a consultant.
- Following this discussion, it was determined not to ask Judy to consult at this time.

Closing Comments and Information Items

- Della shared that a **Ribbon Cutting and Open House for the new Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind/DSD building** will be held on **May 24, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.** There will be a Signing Treasure performance in the new auditorium, and the building will be open for tours. ASL and Spanish interpreters will be provided. The community is welcome to attend. Della asked that the committee members share this information freely.
- Wendy told the committee about **Disability Day**, which will be held on **April 6, 2011 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.** at Legislative Hall in Dover. Disability Day provides an opportunity for the public to share their concerns about disability issues with their legislators. **Wendy recommended that persons wishing to speak with a specific legislator contact their legislator in advance, and make**

- an appointment.** Kristin said that she would email the flyer with more specific information to the committee members. Della asked if interpreters would be available, and Kyle said that he could make arrangements.
- Nick informed the committee that Choices and the Delaware Academy of Medicine will be co-sponsoring **a day-long symposium on listening and spoken language on May 14, 2011. The event will be held at Christiana Hospital, in the Continuing Education (East) Wing of the hospital.** CEU and CMU credits will be available. Nick said that family members, professionals, parents, and anyone wishing to attend is welcome. There is not a flyer available yet, but Nick said that he is hoping to promote the symposium via direct e-mail, and also by making the information available on the Choices website. **The Delaware Academy of Medicine will have a registration website for those who would like to register online.**
 - Wendy thanked the committee members for their time and attention.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

The next meeting of the GACEC Advisory Committee for the Education of Individuals with Hearing Loss will be held on **Wednesday, April 13, 2011, from 4:15 to 6:15 p.m.** at the **Margaret M. O'Neill Building**, 410 Federal Street, Dover, Delaware.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristin Mullen, GACEC