

Executive Summary

Prepared for Board of Trustees Meeting December 12, 2006

Special Education Department Report

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the involvement of the special education department staff in the educational experiences of students with disabilities. The department provides instructional and related services for 2,344 students, representing 12% of the district's enrollment.

Our students receive support from a myriad of professionals (attachment A) such as 26 speech pathologists, 21 educational diagnosticians, and 20 Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSP). These individuals are highly qualified and all possess a Masters degree or higher. Many of these support personnel are also pursuing degrees at the doctoral level.

In addition to the above named disciplines, our students also receive support from itinerant professionals as follows:

- 13 adapted physical educators (APE)
- 2 professionals who work with students with visual impairments
- 4 occupational therapists
- 2 physical therapists
- 2 music therapists and 2 interns
- 1 autism specialist

Objectives

- To discuss involvement of the APE team
- To highlight the Regional Day School Program for the Deaf
- To emphasize transition services for students with disabilities
- To celebrate the accomplishments of our speech and language pathologists
- To address involvement of the elementary level diagnostic teams

For Your Information

The Adapted Physical Education team receives direct leadership from Dr. Linda Hilgenbrinck, consists of 13 professionals, including 3 international teachers from Canada, Puerto Rico and South Korea. Six members of this team are nationally certified as adapted physical educators, one (1) has a national license as certified athletic trainer, she works part time at Guyer High School as an athletic trainer and part time as an APE teacher on other campuses in the district.

This team of teachers is itinerant and provide APE services on a direct, consult or monitor basis for 155 students through out the district.

The district enjoys a collaborative partnership with the APE department at Texas Woman's University (TWU) and through this partnership we have students on four (4) campuses in the

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district who participate in a swim program at TWU on Fridays. The Denton ISD APE teaching staff work with and provide leadership for students enrolled in the TWU APE program, seeking certification as APE teachers.

One of the goals of the APE team is to increase physical education/activity opportunities for students with disabilities within the community. To support these goals, teachers have applied for grants through the Denton Public School Foundation. Two applications have been submitted for funding considerations: *Learn to Fish-Fish for Life*, and *1st Annual Pay-it-Forward Golf Tournament*.

Our APE teachers have been involved in the provision of professional development for elementary physical educators presenting in October 2006, *Best practices: Fostering a collaborative relationship between physical educators and adapted physical educators* by Hilgnebrinck, Thibault, Orosco, Columna, Jackson, and Zippay. This training was the second of such collaborative activities in as many years, between general educators and special educators.

The **Regional Day School Program for the Deaf (RDSPD)** serves 62 students from three (3) counties and 25 school districts. In addition to the 62 students who receive services in Denton schools, the RDSPD represents 94 students in the admission, review, and dismissal process as required by state and federal law. Of the 94 students 40% of the group are Denton ISD students. Among the students who are involved in the regional day school, some are involved in extracurricular activities such as cheerleading, girls basketball, and theatre arts, where one of our auditory impaired (AI) students had a starring role in 'Fiddler on the Roof' this fall. One of our students is attending Rice University on scholarship due to his involvement in career and technology education classes, having won the National Robotics Contest last spring. During the 2006 state assessment season, 8 students with hearing impairments took TAKS and 14 took SDAA II. Of the 22 students eligible for state assessment 82% of the group passed all subtests and/or met expected achievement levels set by their respective ARD committees. Ms. DiAnne Allison provides supervision for this multifaceted program.

Transition for students with disabilities is an area where the district is coming full circle in regards to meeting the needs of students and their families. Transition occurs often in even the most secluded of settings. Our students involved in community programs as infants and toddlers engage in transition as they turn three (3) as participants in the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD), again when these PPCD students are ready for Kindergarten. This process continues through middle school, high school and later as students exit public school to embark upon adult activities. The district's transition specialist, Earline Jackson, provides presentations on transition for students at the elementary, middle school and high school levels. She has created pamphlets for both transition and the Vocational Adjustment Class (VAC). (attachment B)

For our students with more significant cognitive disabilities, enrolled in secondary programs, the District has developed partnerships with local business as a means of providing an extended

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classroom in regards to vocational training. This community training sites have increased from 11 during the last school year to 18 for the current 2006/2007 school year. Because of the increase in training sites, student involvement increased with 35 students in training situations and 20 students in settings earning competitive pay.

Students are supported in these off-campus settings through the use of a vocational coach. The vocational coaches receive training on an annual basis as a means of learning about students, characteristics of specific disabilities, expectations of students and coach in the training setting, and documentation of student performance.

The support staff (educational diagnosticians, speech pathologists, LSSPs, special education supervisors and others) received professional development on transition services, and activities earlier this year.

The number of students requiring support from **Speech and Language Pathologists** has increased from 300 in 2000/2001 to 895 in 2006/2007 representing 38% of the total special education population. The 895 students are those with speech impairment as a primary or secondary disability which impacts the student's overall response to instruction.

Our speech team, under the supervision of Ms. Mary Smith has developed a template designed to provide a level of consistency to the identification of students with speech and language difficulties in the area of articulation.

This template was developed during the summer and fall of 2006 with training and implementation underway. This articulation template follows standards outlined in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as amended in 2004.

Effective Spring 2007, Denton will open its first preschool phonology groups. Phonology groups are designed to apply intense speech strategies for 3-5 year olds in small groups targeting speech sound patterns in a sequential cycle approach. This model includes a parent involvement component, as well as phonological awareness using literacy-based themes.

Pecan Creek Elementary and Wilson Elementary will be host campuses for this new and innovative approach to early intervention.

Dr. Jill Slade, provides high quality leadership for our elementary level **Educational Diagnosticians**. She has instituted a Diagnosticians' Academy as a means of orienting those new to the district and the field to the specifics of diagnostics and Denton ISD. Under her leadership, a team of evaluation professionals have received training in an evaluation model known as Play-based Assessment. This team was trained over the summer of 2006, and will begin training other evaluation teams February 2007.

Dr. Slade and elementary diagnosticians are supporting Hawk, Newton Rayzor and Ginnings with training and follow-up in establishing inclusion models. Most recently, Dr. Slade has developed a social skills model for students on the autism spectrum as a means of preparing them better of some of the social situations presented in schools and eventually within the

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community. Other activities have included training for campuses on the Response to Intervention (RTI) model when considering students for referrals to special education. Overall, our elementary diagnosticians are busy providing leadership in a variety of ways for campuses, students and families.

Conclusion

In closing, please note that information provided is a small representation of the special education department's involvement in the educational process of students with disabilities. This team of highly trained professionals goes above and beyond the expectations of responsibility on a daily basis to assure that students with disabilities in Denton ISD receive the best this district has to offer.

The service umbrella of special education includes, but is not limited to the following:

Instructional services

- Speech
- Adapted Physical Education
- Visually Impaired
- Deaf Education

Related services

- Music therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Orientation and Mobility
- Interpreting services
- Adapted Assistive Technology
- In-home training
- Parent training
- Psychological services
- Counseling services
- Transportation

Surrogate Parents

Child Find

Evaluation

Bi-Lingual Evaluation

Transition

The special education department is making every effort to assure that the rights of students with disabilities are protected, that services promised are delivered in a timely and effective manner. Our continuum is designed to meet the individual needs of students in their least restrictive environment (LRE). It continues to be a pleasure to serve the district and its students with disabilities.