

# **SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ANNUAL BOARD REPORT**

**December 11, 2007**

This report is designed to provide you, the Board of Trustees, with information regarding Denton ISD's special education department including personnel, curricular and innovative programs, staff development, and a summary of program successes.

## **Departmental Overview:**

The special education department provides services and supports for 2,357 students as reported for the October 27 snapshot. These students range in age from three (3) years through 21 years. Students with disabilities account for 0.12% of the total enrollment in Denton ISD. (See Attachment A)

Students with disabilities are receiving services and supports as follows:

- Instruction
- Adapted Assistive Technology
- Adapted Physical Education
- Vision (Braille, large print, orientation and mobility)
- Speech
- Psychological
- Counseling
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Music Therapy
- Audiological (maintenance of equipment)
- Interpreters for the deaf
- Autism services
- Diagnostic services (testing)
- Transportation

<http://www.sped23.homestead.com/> Please visit our web site!

## I. Personnel

As noted above in relation to the types of services available for students with disabilities, individuals from a variety of professional disciplines are needed to assure the district complies with the delivery of services by highly qualified appropriately licensed or certified professionals. In addition to classroom teachers who are hired at the campus, level the department continues to seek out and hire the best-qualified individuals as indicated below:

Educational Diagnosticians	24 (2 district wide as bilingual evaluators)
Speech Pathologists	34 (also serve as case managers and instructional) (among the speech pathologists are six district wide bilingual therapists)
Licensed Specialists in School Psychology	22 (1 district wide as bilingual evaluator)
Adapted Physical Educators	4 full time and 14 college interns
Autism Support Team	2
Team for Visually Impaired	4 (2 teachers, 1 O&M, 1 Brailist)
Homebound Teacher	1
Clerical Support	4
Occupational Therapists	4
Physical Therapists	2
Music Therapists	2

## II. Curriculum/Innovative Programs

Students receiving supports through special education are expected to have access to and instruction from the general curriculum as appropriate. Instruction is delivered at the enrolled grade level with the exception of a rare few for whom their instruction is based on pre-requisite skills.

The department offers content specific support at the elementary level in the areas of math and reading. Special education teachers have identified supplemental resources and are utilizing them as needed based on students' individualized instructional needs.

As a department, we are addressing State Performance Plan activities, implementing RF monitoring corrective action activities, collaborating with Curriculum and Bilingual/ESL as well addressing the enhancement of transition activities for secondary students through partnerships with community businesses.

Many of the disciplines represented in special education are addressing activities as outlined below:

## **Psychological Services**

This discipline includes Licensed Specialists in School Psychology led by Dr. Rebecca Julius. LSSPs conduct evaluation for newly referred and current students with disabilities. They are the only group allowed to evaluate for and recommend identification for emotional disturbance.

- Six of the current 22 LSSPs are doctoral level LSSP/Psychologists
- Six additional LSSPs are within 2-3 years of completing doctorate degrees
- By 2009 50% of LSSPs in district will be doctoral
- Four new programs-

LSSP Formal Practicum Program (in year two) provides training for 4-5  
UNT/TWU students each semester

LSSP Internship Program (in year three) currently providing a year long  
formal internship for three (3) Masters level interns.

Professional Psychology Doctoral Internship Program (in year one)  
currently providing a year long formal internship for three Doctoral level  
psychology interns. This district will apply for Association of Psychology  
and Post doctoral Internship Centers (APPIC) accreditation in  
2008-2009.

Denton ISD Family Clinic (in year one) because of crowded conditions at special  
education services, this program is currently operating within Calhoun  
Middle School. The clinic provides family counseling services once per  
week for low SES families with the goal of strengthening student  
academic performance through family intervention. The Clinic offers the  
opportunity for Spanish speaking parents to receive education related  
counseling in their native language.

## **Adapted Physical Education**

- A Sports Day~the Community Way a project designed to increase physical  
education activity opportunities for students with disabilities within the district  
and community (2007 Denton Foundation grant submission)
- Davis (DAEP) Personal Health and Fitness Program, the result of a meeting with  
campus administrator, Jeff Tinch, program began in fall 2007. Two (2) APE  
graduates students with backgrounds in exercise physiology, a personal health and  
fitness professional, implemented the program for the students. On in-take days  
at the campus the Coordinator for the APE program, Dr. Linda Hilgenbrinck, and  
the APE teacher assigned to the campus obtain personal health measurements and  
conduct a health assessment with each student. Lessons are developed and

- implemented as well as materials including a manual that remains on the campus.
- Texas Woman's University Exercise/Fitness Adapted Lab the APE team facilitated the distribution of flyers to campuses with information for parents about this nine-week program for students with disabilities offered after school hours. Dr. Ron Davis is the TWU professor in charge of this lab. Ten Denton ISD students are involved in this fitness program.
  - Denton Detention Center APE interns provide a traditional physical education curriculum to the youth. This moves the physical activity of the students from the 'boot camp' style approach to a physical education program that mirrors the public school curriculum. This instruction occurs on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday beginning in late afternoon. Many of the youth have completed fitness testing and the Presidential Fitness Test has been administered to male youth in the POST program.
  - Adapted Athletic Association of Sport Program (AAASP) still in the planning stages an initial meeting was held at TWU with district (special education and athletics) and university personnel identifying ways to implement this national program in Denton with Denton ISD serving as a model program for the state. Planning began in fall 2007. <http://www.adaptedsports.org/>  
For more detailed information on AAASP, please refer the association's link provided above.

### **Program for the Visually Impaired**

Serving 35 students with instructional support throughout the district and 17 students with orientation and mobility support, this team addresses the educational needs of students whose ages range from birth through 21. Each student receives services at his/her home campus or in the home depending on the student's age. Students utilize a variety of assistive technology devices, large print and Braille.

The VI team is preparing for its second Annual Pay it Forward Golf Tournament. This fund raising event is designed to generate funds to implement Camp Abilities, a New York-based developmental sports summer camp for youth with visual impairments and deaf-blindness in Denton. For more information on Camp Abilities please reference the link provided. <http://www.campabilities.org/>

### **Music Therapy/Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy**

- Music therapy services are provided by two (2) board certified music therapists and one intern. Services are provided district-wide on 28 campuses. The music therapists, Sherri Ross and Eric Gumm have developed and implemented a drum circle structure and curriculum for public schools. This strategy is used in our

elementary level social adjustment classrooms (SAC). Their research indicates that involvement in drum circle activities could aid students in the process of generalizing specific social/communication/community skills. Districts from across the state are seeking information from our team about duplicating this model, in their districts, for students with emotional and/or behavioral challenges. Recently, Eric and Sherri presented their research and implementation on the drum circles at their American Music Therapy Association's (AMTA) National Conference in Kentucky. They were joined in the presentation by a music therapist from Lewisville and a music therapist from Maryland.

This year Brave Combo hosted an event (at no cost) in support of our annual Book Fair held at Barnes and Noble. This event took place during the first weekend in November.

- Four (4) registered occupational therapists (OT) provide services for 156 students on 28 campuses. In addition to service delivery, the OTs have formulated a position paper on the relationship between sensory processing activities and student performance (academically or behaviorally), developing a brochure as a tool for parents, providing teachers with tips on handwriting, and other educationally relevant strategies. The OTs and PTs provided a summer clinic for identified students and parents on positioning, seating and mobility.
- Serving 68 students across the district, Denton ISD has two (2) licensed physical therapists (PT). Both PTs have provided professional development, for teachers whose students receive PT services, during the district-wide staff development days. Both serve on the districts adapted assistive technology team.

### **Transition Services**

Earline Jackson, the district's transition specialist, coordinates activities for all students with disabilities enrolled in grades 5-12. It is the responsibility of the transition specialist to assure that students and parents receive information that will assist in making educational decisions such as a coordinated set of courses that will support a vocation or involvement in higher education. Self-determination is a very large part of transitional support. Denton ISD has recently completed a three (3) year study with the University of Kansas in relation to self-determination. (See attachment B)

As students progress through grade levels, agencies that provide supports for individuals with disabilities are invited (with parent/adult student permission) to participate in the student's Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee meeting. This allows all stakeholders to identify a path for the student and what services and supports will be required to yield a positive result for the student.

Currently, the department is conducting an independent evaluation of transition services. A series of focus groups, folder reviews, and student discussion groups are planned. This activity is underway as of October and is expected to be completed in March.

Components of transition for some secondary students may include involvement in combination school/work programs, this is known as a vocational adjustment cooperative, or in a community-based instructional program where students are exposed to a series of training activities in a variety of business locations within the city of Denton. The district has 22 students in the work for pay component and 34 students in the community-based component. Students currently involved are enrolled in grades nine through 12.

### **Elementary services**

Elementary special education supervisors, Paige Boroughs and Jill Slade provide instructional support for elementary teachers across the district. In addition, they offer technical assistance for ARD committees, parent concerns, etc. An intradepartmental task force was created in Spring 2007 to examine how to improve the quality of reading instruction provided by teachers of students with disabilities. Members of the task force included individuals from the dyslexia program, reading resource teachers, inclusion teachers, campus administrators, and special education supervisory staff. The task force met several times, yielding the identification of training needs, and resources for implementing high level reading instruction using research-based materials. Additionally, the task force made recommendations to the department as follows:

- Identify a core of staff development trainings for resource teachers
- Suggested that the department offers training for general education teachers in differentiated instruction
- Assist the teachers with the development of a form to be used as a progressive update of students' gains in reading.

Recommendations of the task force are currently being implemented in elementary classrooms throughout the district thus adding uniformity to both the instructional and documentation process regarding the teaching of reading for students in special education.

Another activity to strengthen the skill set of our special education resource reading teachers is the identification of a cadre of nine (9) teachers who are engaging in on-going training

[http://www.behavior.org/education/index.cfm?page=http%3A//www.behavior.org/education/education\\_precision\\_teaching\\_home.cfm](http://www.behavior.org/education/index.cfm?page=http%3A//www.behavior.org/education/education_precision_teaching_home.cfm) in the direct instruction approach of precision teaching. A certified consultant works with the cadre after school for whole

group training and then conducts individual observations with modeling in the classroom. This approach to training allows teachers to implement strategies with fidelity.

Our cadre will then begin training their counterparts.

Dr Slade also coordinates our services for students with Autism. The Autism team is in year two (2) of a middle school level social skills group for students with Asperger Syndrome. The pilot for this program involved students from Calhoun and McMath. This after school program, funded through a grant from the Denton Education Foundation, is now involving students from all five (5) middle schools. A social skills curriculum <http://www.socialskillstrainingproject.com/>

developed by Jed Baker provides the framework for the instructional component for this program. Calhoun Middle School serves as the host campus, with students engaging in two (2) culminating community-based social outings. Staff involved in the social skills training include students from the TWU school of psychology, district LSSPs, staff members of the Autism team. Additional programs are emerging at two elementary campuses, and one of the original students in the pilot program is now in high school, also engaged in a similar activity in the high school setting.

Dr. Slade provides leadership for the elementary diagnosticians, and has instituted a new diagnosticians' academy which allows individuals new to the role of educational diagnostician opportunities to ask questions, staff cases, study guidelines and other supportive activities, meeting once monthly.

In addition, Dr. Slade has formulated sub-committees of educational diagnosticians for staffing the results of evaluations for students being considered for eligibility as learning disabled. The purpose of the sub-committees is two-fold, 1) to provide better information for ARD committees regarding recommendations, and 2) to assure that recommendations align with the new criteria referenced in Federal law regarding eligibility as learning disabled. This has been especially important, since Commissioner's Rules on the state's criteria for determining a student eligible as learning disabled.

### **Joe Dale Sparks Campus**

Teachers continue to monitor the status of students identified as residential facility students. The campus experiences the entry and exit of 1,200 students in the course of an academic year. An average of 40% of the students who pass through are students with disabilities.

Paige Boroughs divides her time between special education supervisor for elementary programs and administrator for the Sparks campus. The intensity of support needed at Sparks is equivalent to full time administration, mostly because of the special education needs at the campus. Ms. Boroughs and her teaching staff have coordinated with

curriculum and identified a reading improvement program for implementation this academic year. The program targets student reading progress utilizes a pre and posttest and charts growth for individual students.

### **Regional Day School Program for the Deaf (RDSPD)**

DiAnne Allison provides supervision for The Regional Day School Program for the Deaf, which is currently serving 60 students from birth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, (40 enrolled in K through 12, with 40% of this group participating in mainstream, grade-level classes). At the high school level, Girls rule! One girl is a second year cheerleader, two are on the basketball team (junior varsity and varsity), and one is an officer with ROTC.

There are three (3) infants in referral. Two students graduated last May and are enrolled in post-secondary settings. Eighteen students have cochlear implants- see the link for more detailed information on cochlear implants <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/coch.asp>

Denton ISD serves as the fiscal agent for the Regional Day School's shared service arrangement (SSA), which includes school districts and SSAs in the counties of Cooke, Denton and Wise encompassing 25 school districts. In addition to the 60 students enrolled in the RDSPD, support is available for 98 other students who have hearing impairments but do not qualify for participation in the RDSPD. These students receive services of a professional during ARD meetings, access to ARDed equipment, and evaluation. Thirty-seven of the non-RDSPD students are Denton ISD students.

The above summaries are just a sample of the activities occurring during this academic year to assure that students with disabilities receive full benefit from services provided. Staff in each discipline work diligently to assure compliance with standards of their governing entities, IDEA, school district expectations as well as parent expectations regarding the delivery of instructional and related services.

All efforts paired with the instructional delivery provided by classroom teachers have yielded success for our students as reflected through our students' collective performance on state assessment. The information provided via Attachment C-1 is reflective of student performance on off grade level assessment, within in each slide is a narrative statement on student performance for grade level assessment. The ARD Committee Decision-Making Manual is provided as an additional resource (See Attachment C-2)

Students with disabilities are now being assessed through the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) on grade level, general curriculum standards beginning spring 2008. An attachment is provided as an overview of the ARD Committee Decision-Making Guide on State Assessment. Students with disabilities may be



considered for assessment via TAKS, TAKS Accommodated, and/or TAKS Modified. Students eligible for assessment on TAKS Alternative must be assessed in all testing areas (math, reading, writing, etc.) exclusively with TAKS Alt. (See Attachment D)

The special education department is providing training for special education teachers and campus ARD committee participants regarding options for testing and participation requirements for some forms of assessment such as TAKS M and TAKS Alt.

Overall, our department has addressed issues related to the over-identification of African Americans in special education by engaging a multi discipline taskforce and reviewing data that may reveal patterns of referral and ultimately identification of African American students. This taskforce has been evaluating available data for the past three (3) years, and while over-identification is still a concern, the numbers are beginning to decrease. Some of our activities involved the provision of leadership in establishing uniformity to the pre-referral process across the district, and training for campus administrators on closing the achievement gap. The administrators' training was led by Mychal Wynn, a national speaker from Georgia. His expertise is educational disparities among African American students. Mr. Wynn was also available to discuss with parents tips on how to be better engaged with the school and how to positively advocate for their students. A link to Mr. Wynn's website is included <http://www.rsublishing.com/id6.html>

### **III. Staff Development**

As in previous years, special education and curriculum plan collaboratively regarding professional development opportunities for district staff. This academic year, special education training for general educators is occurring in areas such as, differentiated instruction for general education personnel participating in inclusion, strategies for general educators working with students with Autism, and the legalities of special education. There is also a cross training series for paraprofessionals in special education and bilingual education. The department also offers support for campuses that are implementing inclusion. Currently inclusion is implemented on campuses as follows:

Hawk, Nelson, Navo, McMath, Ryan High, Guyer, Pecan Creek, Ginnngs, Hodge, Wilson, Strickland, and Ann Windle. Each campus team coordinates with an independent consultant to discuss their vision for all students, once the expectation is clearly outlined; a training plan is developed and implemented based on the needs of campus stakeholders. Follow-up consultation is available as needed. The special education department assumes financial responsibility for the consultation and training.

#### **IV. Financial Support**

Denton ISD provides needed personnel units for each new campus as well as the necessary materials, and furniture needed to open a classroom. Supplemental items are purchased by the department as appropriate.

Common workspace is planned for the special education department through the passage of the 2007 Bond. This is a most welcome opportunity, which we embrace with enthusiasm. The potential of having all department team members working from one location will foster better communication and planning among the staff.

As the growth of the district continues an assistant director or an additional special education supervisor is clearly needed, along with an educational diagnostician for case management for students living in residential facilities.

Instructional materials, supplies, hardware, software and other items as they relate to instructional delivery are jointly addressed between district funds and special education funds.

As ARD committees discuss supports needed for students, the special education department makes every effort to address those needs in a timely and efficient manner.

#### **V. Program Success**

Students with disabilities are making gains on state performance standards, being included in general education settings at higher rates, participating in extra curricular and co-curricular activities and acquiring skills needed to become self-advocates.

Personnel are providing services for students that extend beyond the traditional school day such as in-home training for students with autism, social skills training, family counseling and the physical education unit for youth in juvenile detention.

Professional support staff including the director are representing the district at the National level in relation to innovative activities available for our students with disabilities. The DFW Regional Association of School Psychologists' leadership team's top three elected positions are held by Denton ISD LSSPs.

Collaboration with agencies that provide services for adults with disabilities is on going, as well as interactions with the area universities and community college.

Businesses within Denton such as Albertson's, Calloway's, Holiday Inn, Goodwill, etc, are welcoming students with disabilities within their environments as a means of extending the classroom beyond the school building.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities are engaging in off-campus community activities at a higher rate than in previous years. They are now involved in a minimum of four (4) community experiences that are related to Individualized Education Program

(IEP) goals.

Campuses involved in inclusion are reporting gains in student achievement, a decrease in inappropriate behaviors and a more positive tone throughout the campus.

The Sparks campus celebrated the high school graduation of its first student. The October 3, 2007 ceremony was attended by over 130 guests including district staff, family and facility personnel.

Attachments:

Attachment A	Enrollment report for students with disabilities by campus
Attachment B	Final report from Kansas University on Self-Determination
Attachment C-1	SDAA II summary performance all grades all subjects
Attachment C-2	Power Point overview on ARD committee decision-making
Attachment D	ARD Committee Decision-Making Manual
Attachment E	Brochure on Special Education in Denton ISD