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Post-Secondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Debra Hart and Shedita Alston presented an update on opportunities for students with Intellectual Disabilities to participate in post-secondary education. The federal government is supporting the effort with \$500,000 in grants to higher education institutions to develop or enhance programs for this population. The goal is for students to become more prepared so they will be employable.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires that the program include physical attendance (no cyber programs) and that 50 percent of the program be inclusive with non-disabled peers. Eligible students can apply for Pell Grants.

The participants at the conference received a breakdown of programs happening across the country. There are 27 programs in 23 states, with 31 new schools in development phases. Currently five are community college-based programs and 22 programs are in four-year college settings.

The post-secondary programs serve adults with disabilities in the following ways:

- Five programs serve adults only
- Five programs serve individuals 18 to 21 years of age
- Seventeen programs serve all individuals 18 or older
- Six currently active programs provide residential opportunities and 10 of the new programs plan to have residential offerings
- All programs have and are required to support employment and career services.

Go to <http://www.thinkcollege.net> for more information.

SWPBS

- Seventy-one applicants for this year's School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Grants received funding from PDE. This year's focus on the grants is sustainability. Grants will be issued for up to \$15,000. The review of applications will occur in September.
- PaTTAN will sponsor a Bully Prevention Program on November 1 which is open to the public. The advantage to this program is that it fits wells with Response to Instruction and Intervention programs and programs based on a three-tier system of strategies. Scott Ross will be the presenter. The program will be carried at all three PaTTAN centers and several Intermediate Units in the Northern Tier.
- Save the Date - The 2012 Leadership Forum for PBIS is May 23-24 at the Hershey Lodge in Hershey, PA. Some national speakers have been lined up already so mark your calendar and plan to attend.
- It was reported at the Mega Conference that the website **www.pbis.org** receives three million hits per month. Officials used the phrase that speaks volumes. "PBIS is called a movement."



Federal Update

There were 7,000 Office of Civil Rights complaints in the most recent year. This is a 9 percent increase in complaints over the previous year. A majority of the cases are resolved before they have to be enforced through federal intervention. There were 3,500 disability-related cases.

Looking at trends, the government has noticed that there are multiple course cases on diabetes making their way through the courts. Another move that is being looked at closely is when school districts move all special education students to a single school.

OCR is working on some issues that will be of interest to all of us. They plan to give guidance on athletics and disabilities, charter schools and disabilities, higher education, and safety.

The federal government spent \$28 million on Parent Training Centers last year. Parent Training Centers across the country make 21 million parent contacts.



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Bureau of Special Education to Implement Focused Monitoring on Transition

The federal government requires that states implement focused monitoring in an area that can be improved. The PA Bureau of Special Education, with the PA Special Education Advisory Panel endorsement, has selected school age transition (14 to 21 years of age) to post school outcomes.

What does this mean to the practitioners? LEAs (Local Educational Agencies) will be selected and staff from the PA Bureau of Special Education will implement monitoring but the focus will be on transition. Interviews will be held with a sampling of special education teachers, general education teachers, student interviews, a student file review and parent interview. The LEA will have a facilitated Self Assessment on Secondary Transition, which includes 17 pages of items to be reviewed and a status report to determine areas of need and accomplishment.

Here is a sample of the types of questions that will be asked of the special education staff during monitoring.

- Are you directly involved in the student's transition programming?
- If no, do you know who is directly involved?
- Do you collaborate with the person who is directly involved?
- Are you familiar with age appropriate transition assessments?
- Are these measurable post-secondary goals in the student's IEP that cover education or training, employment and, as needed, independent living?
- Are there annual IEP goals that will reasonably enable the student to meet the post-secondary goal(s)?
- Were age appropriate transition assessments used to provide information on the student's needs, strengths, preferences and interests?
- Are any outside agencies involved with providing transition supports for the student?
- If a participating agency, other than the LEA, has ever failed to provide the transition services in the student's IEP, has the LEA reconvened the IEP team to identify alternative strategies for meeting the transition objectives set out in the IEP?
- Is the student receiving transition related instruction/services and activities agreed upon in the IEP?
- Is the student making progress in meeting the annual transition goals of his/her IEP?
- Were the student's desired post-secondary goals considered when the IEP team developed the course of study?
- Do you link the student's measurable annual goals to his/her course of study?
- Have you received training regarding secondary transition for students with disabilities?
- Are you familiar with the Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance?
- Do you provide input for the Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance?

Here are sample survey questions for the general education teacher.

- Are you familiar with the content of the student's IEP, including post-secondary goals that cover education or training, employment and, as needed, independent living?
- Do you adapt and modify the general education curriculum based on the student's IEP?

Comments or questions about the items in this newsletter may be directed to:
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Many current updates and other helpful information on Special Education can be found on the PSEA website. Go to www.psea.org Teaching and Learning > Special & Gifted Education



- Are you and the special education personnel working together toward meeting the student's transition goals?
- Is the student receiving the supports and services pertaining to transition services agreed upon in the IEP?
- Are necessary supplemental aids and services as required in the student's IEP provided to support this student in general education?
- Is the student making progress within the general education curriculum?
- When a student with a disability is included in your class, do you have the opportunity to provide information to the IEP team regarding the student?
- Have you received training regarding secondary transition for students with disabilities?
- Are you familiar with the Summary of Academic and Functional Performance?
- Do you provide input for the Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance?



Where Does the Money Go?

Two percent of IDEA funds go to supporting special education staff development organizations that do research and help with collaborative efforts. Here is a partial list of groups that receive money. You should recognize many of them as they are among the who's who in special education.

- National Center on Educational Outcomes - working on alternate assessments
- National Professional Development on Autism Spectrum Disabilities
- CADRE - Informal dispute resolutions
- SISEP - implementation science
- Personnel Preparation - \$90 million due to the upcoming 21 percent increase in faculty retirements in special education. Funding 884 doctorates to help fill the gap (but this will not be enough). Funding 55 percent of all special education doctoral programs in the country.
- IRIS Center
- Stepping Stones to Technology - \$100,000-\$150,000 grants to support O and M Training and 100 papers published in journals
- Family Center on Technology and Disabilities
- Bookshare - 142,000 students registered. 2,242,000 digital books downloaded in a single year.
- Model Demonstration Projects
- SPDG grants - Pennsylvania has received several of these state grants to support staff development. PA uses PaTTAN to deliver the services. Current grant money goes for training paraprofessionals, school psychologists and sign language interpreters.





Lunch with Mary Bell

The name should sound familiar to everyone in education. Mary Bell is the President of the Wisconsin Education Association Council. I had the opportunity to have lunch with her this summer at a conference on Common Core Standards.

The first thing that runs through my head is what conversation should I engage her in? Do I ask all of the typical questions? Think of how many times she must have been interviewed over the last several months. I had heard stories from some of the five PSEA UniServ representatives who volunteered to go to Wisconsin. What was it like working with our educator brothers and sisters and generating support within the Wisconsin community?

I decided to start with what was then the upcoming recall elections for some of the legislators who voted for legislation that took away workers' rights and some legislators that were in hiding to delay the vote. I knew the elections were going to happen in the summer but had not seen a recent update. After introductions I asked her if the recall elections process was going well. She was able to report that the outlook was bright to get a majority of the recall elections to go in favor of educators. She added a cautionary note. She said that what was lost with the governor's signature would not be repealed immediately, and the damage had been done. Her estimation was that it could take at least 10 years to regain what had been lost. Her hope was that this awakened the membership and members of the community that education was determined by elections, politics and politicians.

Mary's eyes brightened when she told this story. She said that her state is pretty big and not all members of the association could get to Madison to protest. They held rallies and protest parades in small towns all over the state. These rallies really got the attention of the communities. Many towns had never had a rally beyond those held for football games. All of a sudden there were several hundred people marching up and down the streets of these "All American" towns. The community saw their neighbors marching in protest of the ill-conceived legislation. Her hope is that both the membership and community will remember this past spring and be active participants in the election process.





There were some other observations the president made during our meal of Thai stir-fry noodles and oriental chicken. A great exodus occurred this summer when huge numbers of long-term educators decided they had enough or could not afford the negative impact the legislation was going to have on them personally. The number of members that retired reached an all time high for the state.

Another observation she made was the support that Wisconsin educators and the Association received during these difficult times. She could not say enough nice comments about NEA, state affiliates and the general public. There was an outpouring of personnel and communications to lift spirits that was greatly appreciated.

The meal time went so quickly. I thanked her for her efforts and for taking the time to share some of her experiences. We, in Pennsylvania, saw in Wisconsin what issues we would be facing. I saw our members and their families step up to the plate and contact legislators over and over again over such issues as economic furloughs, vouchers, and the state's education budget. Lesson learned: we must be vigilant.



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