

# Annual Public Meeting

## Education Service Center – Region 2

### January 12, 2009

The Education Service Center, Region 2, hosted an annual “Public Meeting” on January 12, 2009, in collaboration with the 19 other Texas Education Service Centers (ESCs) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). This meeting is part of the Texas Continuous Improvement Process that the State uses to identify areas needing improvement and implement strategies to improve the provision of special education in Texas. The origins of the TCIP can be traced back to September 2000 when the Office of Special Education Programs monitored the state using the Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process.

The results of the 2008-2009 regional meeting whereby invited stakeholders were asked to provide input to three questions is shown below:

#### **Question #1: Parent Participation**

How can school personnel and parents communicate better in order to improve services for students with disabilities?

- Have special education parent liaison help close gap in communication and/or a special education case manager at campus/district.
- When parents hear that they are saying the same as the school in different words, then progress is made; make special education language easier for everyone to understand – avoid acronyms and technical words.
- Administrators must first believe in diversity and set the tone for communication between the school and parents. Train school staff and parents together on how to communicate effectively – conflict is often caused by misunderstanding.
- Mandate that all general education teachers receive SPED 101 courses, similar to those involving gifted-talented; have more specialized training in disabilities.
- Prevent parents getting attorney involvement in the initial stages by building a long-term relationship with them; attorneys breed mistrust.

#### **Question #2: Suspensions and Expulsions**

How can parents and schools support learning for students with disabilities who have especially challenging behaviors?

- Offer more options for taking tests (examples, instead of a written test, do verbal test; or prepare a project/essay). Have universally accessible instructional materials available to special education teachers.
- Schools need to be more proactive with students having behavior problems and avoid labeling them and find out why they are behaving inappropriately – look at eligibility; have a behavior modification program.
- More vocational training needs to be available to students (not necessarily for just special education students, either). For those interested in that route, have an alternative reward such a certificate of completion (plumber’s helper, mechanics helper, etc.). Not all students are geared towards “ideal graduation.” The 4X4 is causing us to lose track of this student. Co-teach core content area with a shop or Ag class to make it more hands on with practical examples to engage students.

- Keep students on campus as much as possible; extend the school year; have gang prevention program in place.
- Continue reading intervention into the secondary level due to students not being able to keep up, resulting in negative behaviors.

### **Question #3: Secondary Transition**

What needs to be done so that parents, students and members of the community understand that goals after graduation may include apprenticeship opportunities, vocational/technical skills training, higher education, and military service?

- Goal setting should start in elementary school; set realistic expectations early (a high school student with a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade reading level probably won't be a pediatrician); college may not be for all – vocational training instead.
- Parents may be limited by where they live in finding job skills for their children.
- Include people in the community; bring in the business sector.
- Have college/career nights; always have resource lists available to give to parents (DARS, Craft Training Center, etc.).
- Mentors, particularly from the community, are the keys to understanding these goals. Too often, students and their families have few avenues available to uncovering information that can lead them to programs and other opportunities. Mentors establish and create faith in systems and reaffirm personal integrity and diminish fears of the unknown.

***If you would like to be considered as a parent or community member stakeholder for the 2009-2010 annual Public Meeting to be held on February 4, 2010, please call Debbie Isaacs at 361-561-8501 or e-mail Nori Mora at [nori.mora@esc2.us](mailto:nori.mora@esc2.us) .***