



Date: Revised Plan - January 11, 2011

To: Dr. John Asplund and Dr. Harry Griffith

From: Dr. Julie Cooley, Dr. Anne Wirtz, Anne Dunn and Steve Johnson

RE: Special Education Program Review Study Team and Action Plan

Per your request, a study of our current tri-district approach to providing a high quality, cost effective program for students with special education needs is underway. A team has been formed and a draft of action plan has been developed for your review. An examination of current programs and costs is in process and partnerships with neighboring districts are being explored. The action plan listed below is submitted for your input.

The original plan from October 2010 has been revised to combine like items from the original plan and a possible timeline has been included. Items are not necessarily listed in order of importance.

- Conduct a preliminary review of financial implications, including the cost to duplicate NSSSED programs using current NSSSED staffing information, local staffing costs, and all reimbursements the districts will be eligible to receive based on any potential re-organization. Capturing 100% of the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) funds currently diverted to NSSSED for both general and preschool to be included.
 - Completed in December 2010 and communicated to Tri-District Boards of Education.
 - The decision was made to give formal 18 months notice as required by the NSSSED and member district contractual agreement to NSSSED.
- Project future needs for PreK-12+ programs and how the needs could be met through district program expansion or through external options. Use available data from birth to 3 program and early learning 3-5 programs and actual needs of students currently in NSSSED programs or receive services from NSSSED employees.
 - Preliminary review completed and included in financial projections.
 - Complete a detailed review by March 2011.

- Review current internal and external programs. Evaluate effectiveness based on current curriculum and resource allocation.
 - A former ISBE program evaluator, has been contacted to help design a tri-district program evaluation through observations and input from the various stakeholder groups during February and March. Specifics regarding the evaluation are yet to be determined.

- Organize a parent advisory committee to provide an opportunity to share progress on the action plan and get valuable feedback from parents with students receiving NSSSED services or have had a past experience. A representative of the LF/LB LDA is suggested to share information and gather concerns from the broader group of parents who have students with special needs.
 - Director's met with the LF/LB LDA to request a representative and provide information to the LDA board members in January 2011.
 - First meeting planned for February 2011, date to be determined.

- Determine costs of and develop a resource guide for services needed for "low incidence" needs such as services for students with vision or hearing impairments.
 - A preliminary review of services in Lake County has been explored.
 - A finalized resource will be completed during the 2011-2012 school year if the decision to leave NSSSED becomes certain.

- Identify potential areas for cost savings in current model and through new options; including transportation, partnerships beyond the tri-districts and other sharing of personnel and services
 - A meeting was held in December 2010 with Special Education Director's in Libertyville, Vernon Hills and Lincolnshire. A willingness to share vocational training sites and staff for high school students was discussed and seems feasible, as well as beneficial to students, along the Route 60 corridor. Next meeting is planned for February 2011.

- Determine one-time start up costs, including additional staff, additional administration and any changes that may be needed to schools or additional facilities to set-ups classroom or other new spaces.
 - Preliminary start up costs were included in financial projections, more review is needed, complete by April 2011.
 - Consider a possible community based facility to program for students in need of more intensive school to work transition services. Complete planning during the 2011-2012 school year if needed.

- Review current professional development and training needs that any new options would require.
 - Design a framework to look at the variety of professional development options that may be needed. Complete by May 2011, review and revise if needed during the 2011-2012 school year.

- Complete best practice research on a variety of cooperative structures throughout IL and the provision of special education services, with particular attention to any districts that have restructured in recent years.
 - Continue consultation with Dr. Ray Lechner, superintendent of Wilmette schools, a district that was formerly a NSSED member and now provides special education services locally. Visit Wilmette and Avoca schools which formed a recent partnership to provide special education services.
 - Arrange visits to Barrington and Lake Zurich school districts which were formerly a member of SEDOL in Lake County.

- Research and develop an understanding of special education cooperative agency agreements.
 - Obtain legal support as needed to meet ISBE requirements if leaving NSSED is determined to be a viable option.

- Determine what is needed for an administrator to take assume the role of Director of Special Education with the needed certification. Review all aspects of the current administrative structures in the tri-districts and determine if changes would be needed to support a new model. Complete during the 2011-2012 school year.

- Determine a method of ongoing program monitoring and summative evaluation to assure excellent services and programs. Complete during the 2011-2012 school year.

- If any changes are recommended, determine a strategy to successfully implement and integrate new programs into existing model. Complete during the 2011-2012 school year.

- If any changes are recommended, design a thorough communication plan to inform parents and community members. Continue to utilize a Parent Advisory Committee as needed. Complete during the 2011-2012 school year.