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**Minutes**

October 21, 2019

10 a.m.

Tennessee School for the Blind

115 Stewarts Ferry Pk.

Nashville, TN 37214

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| **Council Members in Attendance** | **Department Employees in Attendance** |
| Dawn Fry, Chair  Joey Ellis, Vice Chair | Theresa Nicholls, Assistant Commissioner  Joanna Bivins |
| Stephanie Ortego | Kate Martin |
| Darlene Walden | Erin Lavery |
| Angela Jackson | Nancy Williams |
| David Craig | Alison Gauld |
| Chantal Hess-Taylor  Melvin Jackson | Joann Runion  Anika Chambers |
| Jennifer Escue | Michael Holman |
|  | Allison Davey  Crystal McCarver |
|  | Sherry Walker |

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| **Council Members Not in Attendance** | **Visitors in Attendance** |
| Amy Allen | Loria Hubbard |
| Brian Brown  Catherine Knowles  Shannon Taylor  Mary Meador  Mark Liverman | Jennifer Jones  Jennifer Aprea  Kim Kredich |

**Objective**

Provide policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in Tennessee.

**Welcome/Introductions**

**Dawn Fry, Chair**

* A brief introduction was made for the final Advisory Council meeting of 2019. Guests, council members, and TDOE employees were thanked for their attendance.

**Approval of Current Agenda (Guiding Principle Seven)**

**Dawn Fry, Chair**

See AC website ([here](http://www.tennessee.gov/education/article/special-education-advisory-council)) for agenda

* **Action Item**

Dawn advised the present council members to review the October 21, 2019 agenda. As the council lacked a quorum, a vote to approve the agenda could not be held.

* **Final Action Taken**

The Council reviewed the agenda.

**Approval of July 15 Meeting Minutes (Guiding Principle Seven)**

**Dawn Fry, Chair**

See AC website ([here](https://www.tn.gov/education/student-support/special-education/special-education-advisory-council.html)) for October minutes

* **Action Item**

Dawn advised the present council member to review the July 15, 2019 minutes.

As the council lacked a quorum, a vote to approve the minutes could not be held.

* **Final Action Taken**

The council reviewed the minutes. The council made note of the issues surrounding

attendance and agreed to consider new practices which might result in a higher turnout

of members to each meeting.

**Department Updates**

**Theresa Nicholls, Assistant Commissioner**

* Gary Smith and his preschool IDEA team have shifted back to the Special Populations division.
* Theresa made note that the division of special populations is currently seeking to fill the position of High School Intervention and Transition coordinator, recently vacated by Blake Shearer.
* The division is also in the process of filling the IDEA Data Manager position, following Rachel Wilkinson’s departure from the department. (Note: the position has now been filled by Zac Stone)
* The Tennessee Early Intervention Service (TEIS) will soon be integrated into the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD). The transition is expected to be complete by July 2020.

**Department Strategic Priorities (Guiding Principle Seven) Theresa Nicholls, Assistant Commissioner**

* The commissioner has implemented her strategic plan in an effort to align with the governor’s plan for the state.
* The priorities noted in the plan resulted from suggestions the commissioner gathered during the course of a listening tour she conducted.
* An emphasis has been placed on support for students and teachers.
* Success in the two-year timeframe following high-school graduation will be measured.
* The commissioner has emphasized that all students should have access to a high-quality education, no matter where they live in the state.
* Plans will be put in place that will ensure that the academic and non-academic needs of every child will be met.
* Tennessee will enact changes that will make the education profession more appealing, in an effort to attract newcomers and retain experienced educators.

**Significant Disproportionality**

**Theresa Nicholls, Assistant Commissioner**

* Significant disproportionality is not defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
* States are required to define disproportionality and what constitutes ‘significance’ with regard to race/ethnicity for three core areas:
  + identification of students with disabilities (SWDs) overall, and identification of SWDs in six high-incidence disability categories;
  + placement of SWDs;
  + and incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions for SWDs.
* States must define a standard methodology by which to determine significant disproportionality.

**SPDG Update and Data**

**Kate Martin, Senior Director of Special Education**

* The State Personnel Developmental Grant (SPDG) is currently operating under Cohort 2.0.
* The Cohort 3.0 application will be released in January 2020.
* Cohort 3.0 is projected to last from June 2021 – May 2025.
  + Further updates about future cohorts will be made available as details are finalized.

**Early Childhood Licensure Update**

**Gary Smith, Director of IDEA Preschool**

* One of the challenging areas for districts, when it comes to increasing the amount of preschoolers present in a general education setting, is licensure.
* It is the goal of Gary, and his team, to expand licensure to encompass more teachers that currently only have general education or special education endorsements.
* Though there are endorsements that cover both general education and special education, only a relatively small number of educators in Tennessee currently possess such endorsements.
* The idea of a single pathway for both a special education and general education endorsement is being considered.
* The council was invited to give feedback regarding this issue.

**Restraint and Isolation Update Joanna Bivins, Director of School Psychology and Behavior Services**

* The data related to restraint and isolation is presented to the council yearly, and will be given at the following meeting.
* A team has been developed within the department to review the gathered information and brainstorm proactive measures regarding restraint and isolation practices and procedures.
* File reviews have been conducted in districts with increased numbers of restraint and isolation incidents.
* A task force focused on restraint and isolation is being assembled.

**Work Based Learning Standards**

**Kate Martin, Senior Director of Special Education**

* The work based learning regional teams have been working with the special populations division to examine course standards related to work based learning.
* It is their goal to ensure that these courses align to the established standards set forth by the department.
* If the revisions to the standards go before the state board of education, the council will have an opportunity to provide feedback on them.

**Public Comments (Guiding Principle Seven)**

* Kim Kredich, a volunteer advocate in Knox county and parent of a child with a disability, spoke about concerns regarding EasyIEP.
  + It was suggested that greater clarity be added to the EasyIEP structure so that it will be easier to access and understand for those that use it.
* Jennifer, a parent of a child with a disability, spoke about her experience with the administrative complaint process.
  + The administrative complaint was lodged after the school that her child attends failed to provide requested records. As of the council meeting, the complaint process is ongoing and the records have still not been provided.

**Annual Report**

**Theresa Nicholls, Assistant Commissioner**

* The annual report is compiled from information provided by the council and is presented to legislature.
* The council took some time to review the document and then shared their thoughts.
  + For goal one, the council stated that the language is encouraging, but that progress outlined in the report is not necessarily seen at the school level.
  + When discussing goal two, the council reiterated that the language was agreed upon, but that results at the school level are not yet fully realized.
  + It was recommended that measurement standards be put into place for goal three.
  + More information related to discussions that take place at communities of practice meetings was requested.

**New Business/Additional Items (Guiding Principle Seven) Dawn Fry, Chair**

* No new business or additional items were raised by the council.

**Call for Future Meeting Topics (Guiding Principle Seven) Dawn Fry, Chair**

* It was suggested that someone speak about the administrative complaint process.
* The matter of attendance to council meetings will be discussed.

**Closing Remarks/Adjourn (Guiding Principle Seven) Dawn Fry, Chair**

* Dawn thanked everyone for their input and attendance and adjourned the meeting.