

Members

Rep. Greg Porter, Chair
Rep. Sheila Klinker
Rep. Rich McClain
Rep. William Ruppel
Sen. Robert Jackman
Sen. Thomas Weatherwax
Sen. Connie Sipes
Sen. Billie Breaux



EDUCATION MATTERS EVALUATION COMMITTEE

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: July 27, 2000
Meeting Time: 1:30 p.m.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St.,
House Chambers
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Rep. Greg Porter, Chair; Rep. Sheila Klinker; Sen. Thomas Weatherwax; Sen. Billie Breaux.

Members Absent: Rep. Rich McClain; Rep. William Ruppel; Sen. Robert Jackman; Sen. Connie Sipes.

Call to Order. Rep. Greg Porter, Chair of the Education Matters Evaluation Committee, called the meeting to order. After an introduction of the committee members, he reviewed the charge of the committee which was to study the impact of the ISTEP graduation exam on students with learning disabilities. He then asked Bob Marra, Director, Division of Special Education, Indiana Department of Education, to provide the committee with an update on the progress of students in special education.

Update on the Progress of Students in Special Education. Dr. Marra stated that last year the Department did not gather data on the exceptionalities of the students who took ISTEP. As a result of the committee's work during the previous year, the Department developed a student information questionnaire that all students must complete prior to taking ISTEP. The completed form will enable the Department to compile aggregate statistics on ISTEP scores of students in special education by exceptionality. The Department will then be able to share aggregate information on how well students with specific exceptionalities performed on ISTEP.

The Department conducted a survey of students in the classes of 2000, 2001, and 2002. Based on information from the majority of large school corporations, for the Class of 2000 55.5% of students with disabilities passed both sections of the ISTEP. No information, however, was

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available for the Class of 2000 on how students with exceptionalities did on the exam. Of the total who did not pass the exam, 23% will graduate through the appeals process. In total, 78% of students with disabilities received a high school diploma.

With respect to due process complaints, as of July 2000, the Department had not received a complaint. Parents and care givers are able to file a grievance with the Department if they disagree with decisions made by the school corporation relative to graduation decisions. The lack of complaints filed with the Department suggested a resolution of concerns at the local level.

With respect to the Class of 2001, 34% of students with disabilities passed the language arts section of ISTEP; 28% passed the math portion. Students who have not passed are now participating in remediation and have two more opportunities to pass the test.

With respect to the Class of 2002, 31% have passed the language arts section of the test while 29% have passed the math portion. Dr. Marra noted that the portion of students who passed both sections of the test was higher for 2002 than for 2001. He noted that although the scores were not what the Department would like yet, the scores were headed in the right direction.

Dr. Marra distributed a hand-out pertaining to the alternate assessment. He noted that with the right educational support, programs, and services, any student with a disability can progress. The Department during the past year trained 1,562 teachers and administrators on the use of the alternate assessment.

The alternate assessment, entitled the Indiana Assessment System of Educational Proficiencies (IASEP), documents individual student growth; documents student progress from year to year; and may be used as a progress report to parents or care givers. The assessment may include samples of student work documented through audio clips, digital images, video clips, and scanned images. Such documentation has proved helpful in demonstrating progress from year to year.

IASEP provides for individualized assessment. It also documents use of assistive technology and augmentative communication. The assessment connects student progress with student goals which directly relate to state academic standards. Documentation of student progress is easily transferred from school corporation to school corporation to facilitate student transfers.

Nine other states are using the Indiana alternate assessment. Fishback Elementary School in Pike Township uses the alternate assessment to document the progress of all students.

Rep. Klinker expressed her concerns that the appropriate accommodations were not always available to all students who required accommodations.

Dr. Marra noted that the Department is promoting the training of new teachers in the use of accommodations. Training in accommodations is now provided at Ball State University, St. Francis, and Purdue University. Teachers need instruction on the use of accommodations in daily classroom learning before training on accommodations for testing.

Dr. Marra indicated that a change in the federal law in 1997 required all students to participate in the test. Many parents and teachers believed that not enough time was allowed to prepare students.

Rep. Klinker expressed her concern that some school corporations gave waivers to students whereas others did not. The availability of the waiver was not consistently applied throughout the state. She noted that in her informal survey of high school students, only three of thirty-five

students indicated that the state should not test students. Parents and care givers, however, expressed more opposition to the test.

Dr. Marra indicated that schools need assistance on how accommodations are given. New rules governing special education identifies the teacher responsible for ensuring that students receive appropriate accommodations. The state needs to help school corporations and administrators implement the accommodations appropriately. Training at the undergraduate and graduate levels should help.

Rep. Klinker suggested that there should be multiple measures of achievement and not just one test. Some students indicated that the test should be given in the sophomore year. Many students had not had the appropriate classes prior to taking the test. Rep. Klinker understood that the state set the test at an earlier date so that results would be timely.

Sen. Breaux indicated that in an informal survey of leaders of the NAACP, 90% indicated that the test should be discontinued. She also was concerned about teacher training.

Dr. Marra noted that there are 60,000 general education teachers. The Department does not have the resources to train all teachers. However, the Department has provided training to 1,500 teachers and administrators. These individuals are expected to train more teachers at the local level. The Department has also provided some extra dollars to pay for training in this area. The Department has also been working with universities to enable any professor to access the training program.

Sen. Weatherwax expressed his concerns that state requirements are not always adequately or efficiently disseminated to personnel who need to know at the local school corporation level.

Public Testimony. Amelia Cook Lurvey, COVOH, expressed concerns about the confusion surrounding the use of the alternate test.

Roger Thornton, Indiana Superintendents' Association, expressed his concerns that there has not been a strong training effort. Superintendents do not always know where the education policy is headed because it can change from year to year. He commended Dr. Marra for his efforts, but more information dissemination is needed. The process has imposed different graduation criteria than what may have been the practice. He suggested that the state keep the target static so that training can work.

Marilyn Edwards, Indiana State Teachers' Association, noted that so many individuals are involved in the process, that the information may not be disseminated to the front line until late in the process. Communication is where the process is falling apart. Individuals who need the information are not receiving it in a timely manner. Too many guidance counselors and principals are not adequately informed.

Upcoming Agenda. Sen. Breaux indicated her interest in being kept informed about communication efforts that are taking place.

Rep. Klinker indicated that she would like to hear additional information on the IASEP.

Adjournment. Rep. Porter adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.