

Partnership for Community Learning Centers
Design Team Meeting
May 05, 2003

Attendance: Julia Atiles, JoBeth Allen, Pam Paisley, Janet Martin, Jackie Saindon, Paul Sims, Chris Brandt, Madeline VanDyck, Janie Voss, Janna Dresden, Dawn Whipple, Bettye Johnson, Bob Bluett, Lori Ragsdale, Tad MacMillan, Donna Butler, Mary Kelly, Denisse Rivera, Ginger Davis-Beck, Phyllis Stewart, Jenny Penney Oliver, Jose' Boza, and Joel Siebentritt.

Guests included representatives from ACC Leisure Services Department Kent Kilpatrick and Paul Kilgore, and Gwynn Powell from UGA's Department of Recreation and Leisure Services, and Sarita Reddy, Renee Feldman, and Doug Hatch to discuss issues related to students with disabilities.

Agenda Items:

- 1. All welcomed warmly by Jenny Penney Oliver.**
- 2. Discussion about resources for students with disabilities.**

Sarita Reddy (Institute on Human Development and Disabilities), **Renee Feldman** (CCSD Liaison/advocate for kids with special needs), and **Doug Hatch** (local advocate, and teacher with "Multiple Choices," organization promoting independent living).

Each guest has personal and professional experience in the areas of disability services and education.

A preliminary meeting of these three individuals and members of the Design Team was held recently to begin discussion of how the work of the partnership may be sensitized to special needs kids as the initiative moves forward. The mission of the partnership and advocates for the disabled are similar: Success for All Students.

Sarita Reddy was introduced first and emphasized the philosophy of inclusion as paramount. She comes to the Design Team asking how we might support each other in this endeavor. Sarita expressed her excitement about the partnership and its three-pronged approach to school reform.

Sarita stated that we must consciously include people with disabilities in our thinking or we will leave them out of the plan ... unintentionally, maybe, but out nonetheless.

Renee Feldman spoke about her role with the school district, acting as liaison between parents and the district. She is the "parent mentor" director.

Since the initial meeting (noted above), Renee has been contacted by folks at Gaines re: inclusion issues. She was invited to come and observe. She was further asked to consult on the issue of how to develop intervention plans, IEP's etc. for kids with disabilities.

The question was raised: "How do we plan for and train teachers to work on inclusion issues? When children are identified as *at risk* for needing special plans or services, contact her. Doug Hatch is currently organizing, Multiple Choices, one piece of a nationwide system, working with communities to maximize independence for and empower kids to the greatest extent possible. One example of how this works is by linking with nationwide disability resources and matching people, new to inclusion experiences, with very experienced folks. Doug highlighted a group in Arizona that is involving kids in the development of their own IEPs. Involving kids in their own plans can increase "buy-in" and thus success for the child.

Questions and Comments:

- It was noted that resources for kids with disabilities tend to fall off after high school, so kids need to know about their disability and learn how to advocate effectively for themselves before then. It was further noted that special needs services can often be set aside in isolation of the main instructional program of a school.
- JoBeth states that many ideas were spawned from the initial meeting with Doug, Sarita and Renee. She then asks, "How can what they know and offer mesh with what the partnership is already doing?"
- Maybe they could be available to come into the schools to discuss adaptations across subject areas for kids with special needs.
- When we get kids that we do not know how to work with we could call in these resource people.
- What is percent of special needs folks at each school? Usually 10-12 percent, maybe 13-15 percent throughout the school district.
- Is inclusion the dominant philosophy within the district and the disability field? YES.
- Sarita goes to a child's IEP as an advocate . However, when she goes to her own child's IEP she takes an advocate with her because she is in a different role. Note it helps to have another listener, for many reasons.
- Renee's job is to teach parents what their rights are under the law. She provides advocacy and edits a newsletter...a special-ed class at Cedar Shoals prepares the newsletter. The newsletter goes to all students on IEP. Contact Susan Rozier if copy desired. There is some talk about giving copies to counselors and social workers as well.
- Renee is also available to attend IEP meetings. Her half-time position is new in the district funded with combination of state and local dollars.
- Project Wins was mentioned...addressing inclusion issues. (Can we hear more about this?)
- Renee also noted that Gaines School is implementing a collaborative teaching model.

- **It was suggested that partnership school representatives and other district representatives go back to your/ their faculties and ask how these resources might best be used.**

Sarita announced next year's **conferences on inclusive education**, March '04 in Peachtree City. Info will be sent to us. The focus will be on employment and adult services as well as much emphasis on school issues. It is an important conference for parents to attend as well. The coordinator is top notch in the nation.

Plan for follow-up on disability issues: These resources and ideas should be discussed at the school level. Future discussion with our resource people will follow.

3. Spring Intersession Summary/Proposal and Discussion for Future sessions

The Intersession Planning Committee was introduced including: Donna Butler, Gwynn Powell, (UGA-COE), Kent Kilpatrick, Paul Kilgore (ACC-LS), Bob Bluett (Chase), Phyllis Stewart (Gaines), and Angela Cobbs and Meri Cambre (UGA grad students in Leisure Studies).

Congratulations showered upon them for their 2nd successful intersession.

Gwynn Powell presented a written summary of the session (photo highlights via powerpoint projector where also displayed throughout the report on intersession).

The report noted the following participation: 167 child participants; 160 UGA students and faculty; 24 Volunteers representing 10 agencies. The focus was on science and the outdoors. Sites included: Memorial Park Zoo, Sandy Creek Nature Center, the UGA Equestrian Center and the local recycling center among others. A complete Spring Intersession summary is attached to the originals or contact Gwynn P for an electronic transfer.

Kent Kilpatrick: Administrator for ACC-Leisure services presented ideas formed by the Intersession Planning Committee, for how to improve the program. Primarily to relocate the sessions from their current sites at Chase St. and Gaines Schools, to two recently refurbished (SPLOST \$) community centers, East Athens Community Center and Thomas Lay Park.

(Full and detailed report providing intersession history, explanation of the current proposal, rationale, and analysis is provided in original minutes).

The following Challenges presented by current intersession programming were listed as follows (abbreviated for convenience):

1. Kids need a break from the school environment
2. the emphasis on fun (while learning) during intersession is undermined somewhat by school environment where emphasis is primarily on learning.

3. School facilities are not structured for camp-like experiences.
4. Mental transition from camp to school can be difficult for kids
5. School environment also influences intersession staff toward more school oriented approach.
6. Some parents still struggle with the calendar transition and drop off kids at the school even though not registered for intersession.

Arguments both for and against the proposed relocation of intersession programming were presented.

Pros include:

- Children and staff get a break from school environment while taking advantage of newly renovated and well equipped facilities.
- Location change provides clear line of delineation between school and camp making transition from one to the other easier for all.
- Parents will quickly note that activities are not happening at school. They will only know to come to ACC facilities if they are actually registered for the intersession.
- Staff can provide a well-rounded experience with emphasis on fun in a stimulating environment.
- Community Centers have full-time staff and one staff person can be dedicated to coordination of intersession activities.
- Two sites will allow for better control of students and programming, allowing students to be divided by grade or school.

It was further noted that many of the students are quite familiar with the community centers. Kent stated that despite these challenges, intersession staff have successfully responded to the daily problems that have arisen during the program.

The cons include:

- Rerouting buses and relocating lunches would require greater planning and coordination, possibly additional resources.
- Parents comfortable with school settings and unfamiliar with ACC facilities may be less likely to participate.
- CCSD and ACC shared liability for participants may become more complicated.

The question was raised: WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP FOR THIS PROPOSAL?

Lori Ragsdale expressed a statement of support for the proposal. JoBeth Allen moved that the design team formally approve the proposal and Lori seconded the motion. All voted in favor of approval after some discussion (noted below).

The proposed move may shift the balance of accountability and investment in the partnership toward the community.

It was noted that this move will only work with the same resource outlay from each partner, including and down to principals' contracts which were extended to meet the administrative needs of program.

Donna added she has communicated with CCSD transportation coordinator. Kitchen and meal coordination is being explored as well.

It was stated that this program is also desired for the Summer. Kent responded that accommodations have been made to allow kids from partnership schools to register for one week at a time. All camps are doing one-week registrations. He encouraged early registration and locking in now due to price restructuring currently under consideration by commissioners. It was also noted that scholarships are available. Where to call: Call the individual centers or the main office 613-3800. Brochures for Summer programming will be sent to each school principal.

It was stated that the relationship we have with Athens/Clarke County Recreation and Leisure Services Department, is one of our greatest examples of partnership cooperation and success to date.

Phyllis asked how parents would choose which site? Site selection will depend on how the program is planned. We want to avoid overburdening transportation services and meal coordination aspects of the program.

Plan: Consult with the Superintendent and get lawyers discussion the liability issues of the proposal. Jose' Boza will take leadership for following up with the Superintendent on this matter.

4. Update on Partnership School Testing Dates

Ginger Davis-Beck provided a written report on Consideration for CRCT, 2004.

The DOE has scheduled CRCT for April 12-21, 2004 for all schools. And while they state they may consider accommodating alternative dates for Year Round Schools in future years, there is no mechanism for changing the testing dates for 2004.

This timeline will result in extremely short time windows at partnership schools, for determining student promotion and retention status, and including any potential appeals process for students who are retained.

Third grade Promotion/Retention rules tied to CRCT take effect Spring '04; add grade 5 in year 2005.

About appealing a student's retention:

The principal will review every case so that there is equity for all kids in appeals process.

What do we know about the appeals committee? The teacher, parents, and administrator are all involved. Either may appeal a retention. The law states that evidence must be presented to suggest that promotion is valid. If the committee is unanimously in favor of promotion, the child may be promoted despite the fact that standards are not met.

What actions need to be taken at this time? No action to be taken now. The report is provided for informational purposes. Recommendation: We should not change timing of CRCT testing at this point due to the constraints cited.

5. Discussion of roles and composition of Design Team:

Janie Voss states that Gaines faculty want a consistent person to be spokesperson for Design Team information, possibly using a rotation system to allow for new representatives to be included as well. Use of a democratic process to pick new folks was recommended. Current representatives are undecided as to who will remain on the team.

Betty Johnson states that 3-5 representatives would be desirable including para-pros and representation from special areas. Chase St. also leans toward a democratic process to choose representation from the pool of interested parties.

The question arose: "Would 3-5 reps. include or not include principal/ resource center coordinator?"

Clarifying how Design Team information is shared now...it was suggested that:

- Design Team issues always be placed on faculty meeting agenda;
- A *suggestion/question* box be located centrally for faculty use at each school
- Currently info is posted and sent on to email list at each school.

It was suggested that 2-way communication be encouraged if at all possible.

- Design Team minutes should also be done more clearly highlighting decision points and referring to numbered items when possible.

6. Update on hiring.

Phyllis S. listed 4 and possibly 5 teaching positions for which hiring is in process. Additionally, *Literacy Coach* positions are also opening.

It was noted that both Design Team members and UGA volunteers have served on the interview teams.

7. Road Trip to KY Report:

The following comments were made regarding this trip by several members of the partnership to learn more about Family resource centers.

Rewarding to visit and see first hand what is done... whatever could be done was done, no limits. A key ingredient was the coordinator of the center. Importance of leadership and coordination of efforts was highlighted

The head of FRS's for the Kentucky's State Dept. of Ed. stated he did not know of a congress-person there who would challenge the centers. Photos were taken and a full trip report is being compiled and written. It may be placed on the list serve.

Overwhelming, much information was received.

The schools racial and ethnic demographics were different from ours. The schools were high poverty.

The FRC focused on the entire family. The top priority is meeting the whole family's need before pushing an academic focus.

Once parents are on site at the resource center, they organized themselves and were not a worry for the administrators. Some parents were there daily. Parent leadership, empowerment was emphasized.

Meaningful, engagement of families, Removes barriers and excuses.

The vehicle we need in the CCSD to get to where we need to be as a community.

How do we make that happen? Synthesize the efforts. Creativity, relentless energy to breakdown barriers. We are moving in that direction.

CCSD has an interest and concern about developing resources for the whole district. These two schools are "brewing pots" for resource development across the district.

Integrating FRC program into designs for new school facilities. It is a challenge because the FRC model was not part of original plan. Can the model be retrofitted to our new building plans?

8. Announcements:

- ED TRUST CONFERENCE: This fall Title "Zap the Gap" Proposals due by May 30. Encouraging attendance to see what is working throughout the country. Washington, DC Nov. 6-8 www.edtrust.org for more info.

Question Will Professional Development funds be available for this? At building level not district level. Contact Pam if interested.

- Do we want to submit a proposal for the National School Board Assoc? Registration is expensive. The question was referred back to Jackie Saindon.
- Meeting adjourned at 5:10pm

Submitted by Joel Siebentritt