

*Feasibility Study Group Meeting
November 24, 2008
9:30 am – 12:30 pm*

Attendance: Ruth, Kathy, Jill, Jacqui, Jonas, Pam, Anne Louise

Ohio CALI conference– Michigan model seems to be a great model for technical assistance – regional centers and university partnerships that involve interagency collaboration. Overarching recommendation will be a Center – each theme and recommended action should align and link to support this overall direction this centralized project/approach. The big picture is a systems change approach to working with children and youth – the Center would be the infrastructure and building to house this approach. This is about systems change.

Draft/Outline Commentary: ALT – went through the bill and made sure each component from the legislation was included in the draft. ALT/Jacqui shared draft and outline for sections. Pam/Ruth shared draft outline. Kathy/Jonas shared draft on recommendations. Overall comments on the draft – more process details and descriptions of the meetings/involvement activities should be included in the Introduction.

Preliminary Gap Analysis

The themes generated from the data collection can be framed into statements of need or areas of concern that have recommended actions aligned with each that will structure an overarching goal to develop a Center for Excellence model in Connecticut. Center for Excellence models (like Michigan) can be used as the model for where we aspire to go and will be a blueprint for the resources we need to secure and steps we need to take – a gap/frequency analysis will allow us to outline where we are in comparison to a best practice model/Center.

We did not go through all of the themes but worked on the following:

Themes	Key Finding Sources	Need/Gap	Recommended Actions
Social Skills	Survey, public meetings, literature, open-ended text box entries	Students need opportunity to work with peers and practice the instruction that comes with social skills. Curriculum does not contain social skills development component.	Resource center that has the latest training and materials for Birth – 21 that can be accessed physically and electronically for those looking for social skills materials and techniques.

		<p>Hidden curriculum that students miss – need for the curriculum and teaching tools to work with students to address challenges that come with the hidden curriculum.</p> <p>Secondary level students have much different needs than the early and middle childhood and school personnel are unaware of ways to support in this area.</p>	
Communication			
Behavior Management			
Understanding the Spectrum		<p>Lack of general core of knowledge about ASD as a developmental disability.</p> <p>Do not understand universal intervention and support strategies to meet the individual needs of children and youth with ASD/DD.</p>	Common principles for supporting students that all schools are aware of.
Well-functioning Teams		<p>New teachers unclear on how to work with paraprofessionals</p> <p>Other agencies will be working with paraprofessionals in the IHE and community-based settings (as students transition into adulthood) and need to have a consistent understanding of how</p>	

		paraprofessionals are involved and supporting students.	
Meaningful Participation for children and youth with ASD/DD and Climate of Relationships (formerly inclusion)			
Resources	Survey, public meetings, literature, open-ended text box entries	Regional inequities exist– different regions of the state have access to varying levels of expertise, services, and to evidence-based practices.	Regions specialize in certain areas – districts could call up a Center with their need and match them with expertise across the state. Regional expert teams
Parents as Partners			
Continuum of Services			

Other problems/needs that were identified by feasibility study group:

- Developmental disabilities: more information needed from this population. Not enough representatives with this DD population.
- No cohesive plan for training or model for training may lead to inconsistent implementation.
- Multiple initiatives in place for districts- having opportunities to use what is currently in place or efforts underway and either elaborate on them or modify.
- Need for someone to pull together the resources in one hub into the Center.
- Resources and funding remain unclear – this could be muddy for legislators and other readers.
- The principles of inclusion might need to be clarified for this report.

Additional Discussion:

The university relationship needs to include a focus on serving practitioners and not just grant funding and research (which is also critical but secondary given needs assessment findings).

The activities of the Center should not be solely financial – focus on programmatic needs and expertise. The universities will need to interact and support each other.

Advisory board – role of UCEDD and others with federal or state mandated roles – should be included in an advisory capacity. Perhaps there is firmer language about the role of an advisory board with respect to a Center. Jonas suggested framing their role in the context of an *Executive council*, a group assigned that will have more say in the development, growth, and implementation of the Center and/or over the execution of a state plan might be an effective way to describe oversight needs.

If multiple stakeholder and/or vendors become involved in this effort (i.e. Center) we do not want the separate entity/silo approach to educating students – modules and training curriculum can transcend multiple areas. Experts in their areas could be responsible for developing tools and materials but cannot or should not operate independently or outside of the conceptual framework for this state plan.

University/PD/SDE partnerships – Connecticut has not been a partner in PD/training through or in partnership with the IHE like other states. This is an area that should be investigated further.

Look at current initiatives in the legislation such as the bullying and see where we can recommend addressing the needs of children and youth with ASD/DD. New certification regulations/professional development CEU – X hours allocated to working with low incidence disabilities. Paraprofessional training requirements reviewed and revised. Focus on policies and practices that can be changed at the SDE/B23 levels. State data/registry to include subgroups of ASD and coding for developmental disabilities.

Concerns with Center Approach for Further Discussion/Exploration:

Systems change model involves getting multiple stakeholders on the same page – RESC, SERC, IHE - There will need to be some consistency and comparability for all families. We can work with the RESC teams – don't think they have an issue with a Center of Excellence as a central party coordinating efforts, particularly if this new Center brings together collaborative partnerships. Another concern is making the Center too ASD/DD specific when there's an opportunity to reach all school personnel across all categories – many of the findings/recommendations are relevant to supporting all children with disabilities.

At undergrad level it should not be about teaching kids with ASD/DD – this occurs (or should occur) at the grad level.

Legislative intent is a statewide plan and coordinated approach to resources and agencies.

Recommendation Comments –

- Certificate programs (not certification) or endorsement areas – course modules and sequences – how does this work?
- Knowledge of best practice techniques for those working with ASD/DD – all stems back to knowing enough about the disabilities to plan an effective program.
- Teaching modules for teachers to share with their preservice students is one way to begin consistency in preservice preparation for this area.

- The special education 36 clock hours – can we recommend evaluating the content of requirements that are part of this state regulation?
- Federal legislation on the IEP page 8 – guidance document that provides details on what training might be considered.
- General awareness training for all – we don't want to lose some of the basic awareness components that can be part of training.
- Paraprofessional training may have a strand option that is specific to meeting the needs of children and youth with ASD/DD.
- Conceptual framework may be more appropriate vocabulary since there are so many changes in place and systems involved.
- Data bulletin on some of these areas – look at what's in place and a Center could provide additional guidance on some other areas that are in place for all students.
- Data collection may not be a part of these recommendations for this state plan; Jacqui commented that this recommendation is typical in other state plans.

State could put out an RFP to build a Center for Excellence – the RFP components could be outlined in advance using the Michigan model. We outline the requirements based on this model. We could do a MOU. Who would be the partners? The UCEDD is the designated DD agency (Pappinikou). The grant award can also be structured to award extra points for collaborative partnership.

Ruth is going to revise the themes and write a paragraph on the components of the Center.

ALT announced an internal meeting at the SDE to discuss some of the findings and preliminary recommendations to get perspectives and feedback from other bureaus such as certification and support services.

December 4th: 12:30-4:00 in Davis Hall at SCSU.