



SUPPORT FOR S.B. 2044

Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education
Senate Education Committee Hearing: April 7, 2007

Prior legislation put in place a process in which district- and campus-level planning and decision-making committees were created for the express purpose of assisting the district or campus in making the best decisions for improving student achievement and services at each respective level. This process has provided valuable assistance in this effort. However, we believe that fine-tuning the committee membership will further enhance the ability of the committees to assist in the ongoing process of improving services to and the performance of all students.

The proposed legislation requires that one of the professional educator positions, when practicable, on each committee be filled by a professional who has a primary responsibility for addressing the educational needs of students with disabilities. This professional could be a teacher, a special education support person or a special education administrator. Why is this important:

- Special educators are in the business of facilitating positive learning experiences for students who may be challenged by the process;
- Special educators are trained to address the needs of students with learning difficulties;
- In recent years best practices being implemented in school districts have regular and special educators working hand-in-hand to address the needs of struggling learners;
- Special educators are focused on developing and implementing instructional strategies that provide greater access for all learners;
- The desire for improved performance of students in the aggregate will be greatly facilitated by the improvement of students not currently doing well in the classroom and on assessments;
- Special educators are trained in strategies to assist struggling students to gain better access to the regular curriculum and be successful in their educational experience;
- Many special educators are implementing universal design for learning methodology which creates learning environments and materials that allows all students to be active and successful participants in the learning process;

- The recent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) places an added emphasis on pre-referral services to be provided by regular education for students who are struggling in school. The strategy is called Response to Intervention and refers to how a student responds to meaningful interventions in the regular education classroom before consideration of special education services for the student; and,
- Ensuring that the expertise, experience, perspective and voice of a professional with experience in providing services to students with disabilities is sure to enhance the committee decisions regarding student needs of all challenged learners.