

INPUT CONCERNING SB 451

Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education
March 12, 2009

The Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education support the concept contained in S.B. 451 for training of educators to better facilitate appropriate educational services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools. However, we think the legislation can be enhanced through consideration of the following issues.

Suggestions

- ARD/IEP committees are charged with the responsibility of developing an appropriate educational program for eligible students with a disability. The program developed by the committee may include modified curricula, materials, support services, presentation strategies and equipment. The program can also include the knowledge, skills and abilities needed by the educator serving a student.
- The use of specific modifier language in Subsection (e) on page one of the filed bill appears to create a focus on a specific teacher and a specific student. This creates a situation in which the ARD/IEP committee must know the student's schedule and every teacher who will serve the student and what the teacher's skill sets include. In some situations this is not possible.
- It is our belief that in order to protect teaching time and identify the needed training for educators, the ARD/IEP committee may, if needed, identify the knowledge and skill sets needed by educators to appropriately serve the student. The identified knowledge and skills would then apply to all educators serving the student unless otherwise specified. If an educator possesses the skills, they meet the requirement, if they do not, the training would be triggered without the need for additional meetings.
- In listing the expert/knowledgeable persons to be consulted school district employees are not included in the listing. Because many districts have well trained and expert staff members we believe it is appropriate that school district personnel be added to the listing.

Supporting Information

- In schools, counselors and others schedule students into classes. They must take into consideration class size, balancing numbers in classes, the number of preparations a teacher has, and schedule conflicts that arise to accommodate a specific student's elective choices including fine arts/athletics/career and technology courses. The scheduling is further complicated by how many classes of a specific course are being offered in the school's master schedule. It does not appear this was considered when SB 451 was drafted.
- Program reviews for students with disabilities and the identification of specific classes/subjects to be scheduled for the next year usually occur in the Spring of each year. However, the actual class schedule for a student in middle or senior high school is usually not finalized until June or July. In reality teachers continue to be hired and placed in positions even after the school year starts for students. The provisions of S.B. 451 will necessitate additional meetings that will take educators out of their classrooms.
- Unfortunately, teachers leave during the school year and classes may be split to comply with class size requirements thus triggering a teacher change for a student. Students also request changes to their schedules during the school year. These changes may create the need, under the provisions of this bill, for additional formal meetings to consider or reconsider training needs, etc.