

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council  
Education and Employment  
January 18, 2023

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Hi, everyone. Welcome to the Education and Employment Committee of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. We will begin with the roll call.

HANNA JENKINS: Ms. Banks is not here. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Here.

HANNA JENKINS: Ms. Cosse. I don't see her on the camera. Oh, we lost her. Ms. Gonzales. Not here. Ms. Jordan.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Here.

HANNA JENKINS: Dr. McKee is out. Ms. Polotzola.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Here.

HANNA JENKINS: Ms. Tarver.

MARY TARVER: Here.

HANNA JENKINS: Vivienne Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Here.

HANNA JENKINS: And Dr. Wilson was unable to attend in-person. Mr. Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: Here.

HANNA JENKINS: Ms. Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Here.

HANNA JENKINS: We don't have a quorum unless Ms. Cosse pops back on.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: We should have a quorum. We have seven.

HANNA JENKINS: I have Ms. Bayham-- oh, Ms. Jordan. Good call. We're good. Nobody leave.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Good. Okay. So now we will do the meeting protocols. Anybody have that available?

HANNA JENKINS: I'll pull that up.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Can you read that for us, Hannah.

HANNA JENKINS: Yes, ma'am. Technology delays. One moment. All council meetings are accessible via Zoom and live streamed on YouTube. Council or committee members will participate via Zoom and shall be considered present when they display a live feed video of their face with their first and last name. Have microphones muted unless called upon by the chairperson or electronically raise their hand to

request the chair recognize them to speak. Once recognized to speak by the chair their microphone shall be turned on. After speaking the microphone shall be returned to mute. Guests may also participate via Zoom or observe meetings live on YouTube. All public meetings shall be recorded and may be made available on the council's YouTube channel as determined appropriate by the chairperson.

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BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. Thank you. Our next item will be approval of the minutes which is included in the packet and accessible online. If we have any corrections, we can speak up.

SPEAKER: And we have a comment in the chat. Hi, everyone. Sorry I couldn't make it to BR today. I don't see the controls I normally have on my screen during Zoom. Can somebody tell me if my camera or my microphone is audible.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Move him to panelist. That's Dr. Wilson.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. Do we have any corrections to the minutes? Seeing none. Do we have any objections to the approval of the minutes? Okay. So the minutes are approved by unanimous consent. Okay. Our next item of business is a letter to the Commission for the Deaf and that is included in the packet at our last DD Council meeting. There were concerns about the Louisiana Special School District and so the DD Council

signed onto a letter from the Commission for the Deaf which enumerated a list of concerns from the public. There were 11 concerns that were listed. And the letter also included a request for a joint meeting of the special school board directors with the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf. And so there's been an effort to get, to schedule that meeting. Right now it's, I have on my calendar it's tentatively set for February 9th. But the Commission for the Deaf will meet Friday from 9 to 1. They'll be meeting in the capitol so there will be a live stream of that meeting on Friday. And I believe on the agenda there will be some discussion. Also, in regards to the special school district, which also on the special school district board, there will be a meeting on Tuesday. They have identified three finalist for the superintendent of the special school district and so there will be interviews and public meeting on Tuesday at the special school district campus. Which is near LSU on Brightside. And I believe, I know that will be also streamed as well. Any questions about that?

ERICK TAYLOR: This is Erick. This is the School of the Deaf that was the situation that they fired the young lady?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. So the superintendent who was Deaf was let go. And then that was like in May, and then the administrator of the School for the Deaf, which is part of special school district, was let go. She was a woman who was Deaf as well. So that raised a lot of concerns. And so my office, the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs has a seat on that board. And so I wasn't appointed to it. I had a staff member appointed to it. Now I am appointed to it. And one of the things I've noticed is that that board-- first off it used to be under the Department of Education. About a year and a half ago it was reestablished as its own independent school board. And what happened was all the policies and procedures, all that went away cause it's a new body. And the body is made up of some people who represent some state agencies as well as some people who are supposed to represent the community. Like the Deaf community, the Blind community.

And the issue is, is that it's a huge amount of

work. If you think about a school board, it's a lot of work. And when you are creating a new school board, I don't think anybody understands the gravity of what the work entails. And so what seemed like some intentional issues I think that it just is that that board, these people got on the board, they think they're on the council such as the DD Council, which is a lot of work, but we have staff, we have a history of policies and procedures that we follow. So this group of people, you know, you have someone, you have an LRS representative, you have someone from like the Department of Justice because the special school district educates kids who are in like OJJ. There's someone from OJJ. These are all people who have regular jobs, probably very intense jobs and then they have this other work that's added onto them. And then you have people who don't necessarily know about education and education policies. And so it just has just snowballed into like what I, and this is my opinion, a lot of dysfunction that needs to be worked out. Also, seeing the legislation where everyone's appointed by the governor and the terms are concurrent with the appointing authority which is the governor's term. So that means the governor, whoever the governor is whenever they leave office everybody on the school board goes away until they're appointed again which is totally dysfunctional to run a school or school system because it's multiple schools. So there's just a lot of issues. So I hope that adds some clarity to some of the concerns, Erick.

ERICK TAYLOR: I'm just asking a question. I'm trying to clarify the question. Once you do the bylaws, how long do the bylaws stay in place then and once you put the bylaws in in place, don't the bylaws supposed to stay once they in?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. But it's a whole new body. So the special school district existed. It existed underneath the Louisiana Department of Education. Then there was a law that created, that made it its own entity. Created a school board. And so when that-- it basically is creating a whole new governing body. So like all the policies and procedures and all that type of thing just go away because it was established through Department of Education. Now it's its own

school board. And so all that type of work to establish those things have not been done.

ERICK TAYLOR: So is it, and I'm not just trying to, so is it fair to say that it wasn't put in place right or?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: That's my assessment. And I didn't realize it until like I really got involved and started looking at like the minutes, you know, really digging in. And it looked like from, you know, if you don't really understand it, it looked like maybe there was some intentional, you know, some bad, someone wanting to do something that's negative. But it's really, I don't see it as that. There could be someone wants to do something negative, but I don't see it as that. I see it as just people who want to serve and it's like it's not been setup. And people don't even realize what's not even done. If that makes sense. When you don't know enough to know what's not been done.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So do they have bylaws?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: There are bylaws. There are no policies and procedures. So, for instance, if someone is let go, there's no procedure for you to say, to go through-- what do you call it whenever you let someone go to do a...

AMY DEAVILLE: Like a disciplinary process or a termination process.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. And so to have it reviewed. So if you let someone go...

MELISSA BAYHAM: Appeal process.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Appeal process. So if you were a teacher in the school, you're let go, you appeal, you're no longer a teacher there. Therefore you have no right to appeal. If that makes sense. That doesn't even exist. So they have some real, real issues. And then like they're only meeting every two or three months.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Do you think it's something that maybe they could get a consultant or someone?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I haven't even been to one meeting yet. Like they had a meeting in November. I got appointed in December. This will be the first meeting. But this is a special meeting that's happening with the selection of the superintendent and

then they have to-- the next meeting is in February. So I haven't actually technically been to one meeting to make those type of recommendations. So that creates a lot of issues with personnel and with parents not feeling comfortable about what's happening there. And so it just kind of like snowballs.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Ms. Polotzola, we have Dr. Michel.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. Dr. Michel.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Can you hear me?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yes, sir.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. And I have absolutely no authority on this, but I realize, Bambi, what you're saying it is a huge job and it will take them years to do it the way they're going about it. Has anyone suggested to them that they go through some policy manuals of a school district that they trust and just adopt it initially and then methodically go through those processes and change the policies to meet whatever their desires. It will still take them a couple years, probably, but they'll have policies in place. The problem that they're going to face like when termination of an employee there may be no policy for an appeals process, but there's still state and federal laws that will guide the process whether the board knows it or not. So they can put themselves at high risk of monetary damages. So that's just a suggestion that I have for anybody that y'all know that's serving on that board because they cannot operate without a policy manual. Nor can their employees survive without one.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Right. Like I said, Charlie, I have not attended. I attended the November meeting, but not as a member of the board. But I did go back and look at all the minutes and all the documents associated with the board meetings and there's nothing about that.

CHARLIE MICHEL: And maybe y'all can check. I can't remember the name of the company, is it Forthright that does the majority of the policies for school systems in the State of Louisiana. I don't agree with all of them, but they have all the policies that are required. They've got to have a starting point at some place. And this is not going to bode

well for employees. And if it doesn't bode well for employees, it will not bode well for the students. So the very purpose they had in mind they're actually sabotaging their own purposes at this point. Maybe not intentionally, but they are sabotaging their own interest.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And that's all good recommendations. I think the other issue is is just a lack of understanding of Deaf culture or understanding, you know, just educating students who are Deaf or Blind. Like no expertise, no relationships with people who are Deaf or Blind and their families. And so like I said, letting go the two top Deaf people in the school district, it certainly was very, left the community up in arms that that happened, you know. And then there's no procedure to follow-through. They don't have any type of policies in place.

CHARLIE MICHEL: That's sad. Very, very sad.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Right.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. You can mute me again.

Thank you.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Any other questions?

ERICK TAYLOR: No. I just don't see how they can run without a policy that's not in place. And the two good people they had with no policy to even look at. Notify if it's in place like it should be. I don't see it.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And so a lot of our students who are people who are Deaf or Blind that certainly could just be that sensory disability, but many of the students also have developmental disabilities. So I think that's where it ties in with the DD Council. And so I think any type of advocacy we could do or assistance is important. Okay. So we'll move onto the next item which is an update from the Department of Education. And Ms. Meredith Jordan will provide the update.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. So last time we met I told you all that I would come back, we had started collecting all of our SPED camera policies and that I would come back and kind of give you all a status update of how many we've got and how many we're tracking down. And I have a tracking list of nearly 200 what I call city parish schools. So our districts

and all of our city ofs. City of Bogalouosa, City of Monroe. And then we have all of our charter schools. And so we have all of our city parish schools. We have all of those policies in hand. It was a task because as you all remember we started collecting early via a survey then we released our EGMS application where we also require them as they budget their funds and tell us what are their approximate costs for purchasing that equipment. Even though they already have the money we still need them to go through their vendors, get their quotes and tell us how much it's going to cost because later we're going to be asking for reporting on how many cameras they've put in, how much on that funding they're spending down each year as they're spending it.

And so we kind of had two places, cause we started early getting them to send them in. Then we had the EGMS where they were also uploaded. And as we got closer to the deadline it's like pick one. So our team was going through these making sure we have them for each and every district and charter. So we're tracking that. Like I said, we have 100 percent of our city parish schools. Of our charter schools-- and so then we looked at who received funding cause I really need to track yours down, right. And so I've got about 36 charter schools who received funding. And some of them was perhaps like just over 3,000-dollars for maybe one self-contained classroom. But of those funded about 36 of the charters we are tracking those down. So we do have some that we are having to follow up on and get those in.

Next steps are following up. I'm having our charter school team help me with that because as you all know people that I am reaching out to may no longer be there. So as you have staff turnover I've got to make sure that we're reaching out to the right people to get these policies in. So I'm also relying on our charter school team to help me get these last policies in. My team had also, just based on feedback and some of the stakeholder input, and that's why I told you we have a list of nearly 200 so that you kind of get the field for how many. So we think about, you know, maybe sometimes our district and parish schools, but then we have all these charters. And so some of my team did as we're going through and we're looking at them flagged



some and sent them back, right. To say, for example, if we pulled up a policy and it was really obvious that maybe it was a paragraph or two and we didn't feel like maybe the board or their legal team had looked at that. We are being proactive based on stakeholder feedback that said well, what if they don't match legislation. Who's reading them. And though the legislation doesn't charge us to do that, we are doing that and doing some spot checks with them. If we get one that's really, really short and I know it doesn't match the length of the requirements of everything that is stated within that legislation we are sending it back and saying hey, revisit this. There's no way this matches. And so that's taking us a little bit more time, right, to get some of those back. So I wanted to bring that to this group to update on.

Also wanted to-- and so that kind of concludes the SPED camera collection update. Also wanted to bring to this group for March BESE I know we talked some in this group about the Youth Leadership Forum, our partnership along other agencies sitting here to support that work this summer and that forum. I'm going to be bringing our allocation to help support that to March BESE which will go to our fiscal agent which is our Families Helping Families of Acadiana. Which I already have a partnership for for family support. So the best route to do that and to provide that financial support for that is to just go through BESE and give them an allocation through our IDEA set aside. So I wanted to kind of give that update here in case anyone was kind of wondering where the department stood on that.

The other two things that I would just kind of open up as you all have any questions for me this afternoon. Two things on the horizon from my team. One, is I'm working on a family learning toolbox and specifically for students with disabilities. And so I would love, appreciate any input around what information would be helpful for families to support their children over the summer. So some things that I think about. How to bridge that summer learning. So during the months that school is out how do I help my child with a disability stay on a schedule so that transition back to school is smooth. How do I help families over the summer prepare for, you know, their

next IEP. Is there some IEP support that we can help provide families. So I'll just say that is a project in the works that I would love any input or feedback on from this group just on what would be good for families to include in that. What are some things they can do at home that's not more, but as I go to the grocery store or around the house what are some things that I can do with my child to support their development.

Second, we are going to begin, and I'll talk more about this tomorrow, but wanted to bring to our education committee our next round of IDEA funding for our state IDEA dollars. Want to open that up to this group too just to start thinking about and having conversations about what we want to prioritize funding around and using our state IDEA dollars. And so I always kind of bring that to the table as we're talking all year long through agenda items what is it that I can do to help support. So those two as I kind of close up, those two things specifically this afternoon if there are any ideas, any thoughts about resources for family learning over the summer with their children and then ways that we may want to or prioritizes you all want the department to think about as we dig through our next round of IDEA budget and funding application. And I think that will wrap it up for me this afternoon.

REKEESHA BRANCH: We have two hands raised. Charlie was first.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Charlie.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. Meredith, my idea as always is going to be greatly complicated, but I think what y'all are doing with the family toolbox has some great potential. And I don't know if it's possible, but if y'all could consider something that would be a video series, you know, but like show parents how teachers are teaching their children math. The biggest complaint we get is that parents can't help their children with this new common core math so there's no support from home because they don't have the ability to do it. They'll show the kids how they learn, but then the kids say that's not how the teacher did it. So I'm thinking if there was a way that y'all could isolate maybe some very basic skills that would translate across the spectrum and show a little portion

of a lesson that the teacher's doing in the classroom or have the teacher just do it and show what she's teaching. But then have the support at the end of that where it explains why they're teaching it the way they do. Because you know what they say, if you show them, you give a man a fish he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he can eat for a lifetime. That's kind of what parents-- they're just craving it. They can't participate in their children's homework and it causes more stress for everybody. So kids with disabilities, and especially kids with emotional and behavioral problems, it makes homework a nightmare which then interrupts the child's ability to learn because they don't have the same kind of opportunities and practices that their peers without disabilities. I mean, I don't know if that's possible, but maybe something y'all can discuss at the table.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Definitely possible.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. Thank you.

MEREDITH JORDAN: We'll do it for literacy as well.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Yes. I get consistent complaints-- and I say complaints, concerns from parents cause they want to do what's right. They want to support their kids and they don't know how. I really get it mostly in math. To date I don't think I've ever received one about language. Although it's a good idea. But if y'all have to concentrate on one area I would say math is priority one and then you can go to ELA.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. Got it. All of that.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. Thanks.

REKEESHA BRANCH: All right. Ms. Mylinda Elliot.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Mylinda.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: Yes, ma'am. I was waiting for them to unmute me. So I'm a parent and a grandparent. I've been around forever. Like close to 30 years. I'm impressed for cameras that you are able to get almost everybody to do something that you could say there something is. Let me say that first of all because there's lots of LDOE staff that haven't seen over years haven't been able to do that.

The other thing is is there some kind of written report or written chart that we could have to see who's at where or what or could there be a written report or

a chart to say who's at where, what, whatever?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. So like a yes or no, Mylinda, like we received theirs and we haven't received this one?

MYLINDA ELLIOT: Well, that would be a great start.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. I mean, I think, you know, for transparency, absolutely, right. Like knowing who has those policies and practices adopted and who hasn't. And particularly for the charters which is where, you know, we have several of those who have not yet. And so I definitely think, Mylinda, that that list is certainly possible. I will also say, and I can send these instructions. So this is public information and it is publicly accessible. However, with a caveat because my team is having to approve all of those electronic grants applications you won't see it as a member of the public until we approve it. But once we approve you can go in, for example I'm trying to think of one. For example, Allen Parish. I can send instructions for how you can go through our public access portal, pull up their SPED camera application and their policy is there. And so the public, there is access in that way too, Mylinda, that I think is super transparent. But I mean, you know, and I'll be the first to admit that it is not always easy to find information, right. I mean, just as an educational agency there's so much out there that it's hard for me to find things sometimes. So I can certainly send how you can access, as a member of the public, these applications once we approve them. So you may not see it because it's still sitting in our queue to approve, but over the next couple of weeks we should be final in those approvals and you should be able to see all of them within that application. So I'm happy to send those instructions as well.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: Great. Thank you.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Ms. Mary Jacobs.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Mary.

MARY JACOBS: Hi. Thank you. I just want to piggyback what Charlie said about the videos. I think that's a great idea. My only request is that y'all keep in mind if y'all do that, that you don't just do it with children that have mild disabilities. I think where parents struggle the most is they tend to get a

lot of information and they see videos with kids that don't look like their kids or act like their kids so it's important that we show them that kids with developmental disabilities can learn stuff too. That it's not just kids with average IQs.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yep. I love that, Mary. We actually have somebody on my team, it's her background is around significant students as well and making sure that we call out in our family support tools for summer learning information and support for families who have children with significant disabilities because it looks extremely different, to your point, than that mild student for sure.

MARY JACOBS: Thank you.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Erick Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: That's good, but the only concern I have is you go to camera things and keep in mind of the safety of the kids because, if I'm make any sense to you, that the safety of the kids because we don't know which situation. We always got to protect kids.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Absolutely. You're talking about their privacy, right? Yeah. So for public access I'm talking about just access to the school system's policy for how they're addressing the law. No student information. No video. No none of that is public access. Yep. Good point.

ERICK TAYLOR: And another question. Y'all teach the parents with homework and stuff with the IEPs with the parents, which I have something to do with that on the IEP because I see a lot of parents don't understand the IEPs and they just say yes, yes, yes and it's not what the kids need. And then when they not receiving their goals that they say yes to. Like if you say, okay, take my child back and forth to the library and come back and do this and it's simple things. And the parents don't understand what they're saying yes to because it's written in a different way.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Right. For sure. I mean, we have the upmost responsibility to make sure our parents do know and understand what's in that document and how we're supporting your children. I know, and we've got several Families Helping Families partners on here. I know they're helping to support us do that. And because I like to dream and be extremely transparent

with this group, we do also as a department have a responsibility to do more to support our parents. And so I can see modules and sessions where we are also from a state department's prospective to also adding supports and helping to develop families and help them understand all of those components of the IEP and what that means. I think it truly does take a multi-agency approach. So from the department our school systems have a huge responsibility and probably the closest and most responsibility to do just that. And then we have our family support centers that also are supporting and helping parents understand what can be complex processes and complex documents and terminology. We're the worst about using terminology and acronyms that aren't always family friendly. And so I think it's definitely something that we have to do better for. And plan specific steps for how we're going to address that.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And I think you're talking about, you know, empowering the parents or educating the parents. I guess there's several things that were pivotal in my life. But back when my son was five years old, which was 18 years ago, the Department of Education had what was called a parent weekend workshop. I did not know anything about education. I had my child's IEP. He was going into kindergarten. He was going to be in a completely self-contained classroom. The butler buildings in the back of the school. I went, we had the IEP meeting that week. I went to the weekend workshop. Learned about all of his rights and he entered kindergarten in a regular education kindergarten classroom with the supports that he needed when I didn't even know that was possible because this was a kid all over the place at five years old.

And so I think about that, and they had like really great people from the department who had a lot of experience. I think we had the Parent Training Information Center that was there. And like it was pivotal. I remember Liz Gary was there and that was 18 years ago. So I don't know, you know, you can look at me and Liz and I think we paid it forward. That was a good investment for that weekend. So I'm just thinking about you find those parents who were like us and the

impact that it could have on our own children's lives and then paying it forward, you know, that we've helped other parents. Like I really feel like that was pivotal for his life. And so I don't know how other people feel about that. That was just a recommendation.

MEREDITH JORDAN: I like that.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Do we have anything else on Department of Education?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Any other ideas about specific funding directions that anybody here has any specifics? We will have formal stakeholder surveys and then we'll have public comment on our application that I'll always bring to this group. I know, like I'm looking at Dr. Wilson and thinking about our transition conversations. And Melissa. But any other input, you know, certainly welcome on directed funding or ideas.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I see Charlie Michel.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Yeah. Meredith, you're going to learn to stop asking questions when I'm here.

MEREDITH JORDAN: That's not true.

CHARLIE MICHEL: One of the things that I think would be really beneficial, I hope you would agree that the rollout of ESSER has been a nightmare. And I think that what I'm seeing from just a very outsider looking in it's like everybody's pointing the fingers at everybody else. State department's saying the teachers don't want to use it. The teachers are saying the state department didn't provide enough training. I remember just like Bambi does, I remember the good old days when the state department provided hands-on training, not webinars, not phone conferences, but hands-on training. Is there any way that y'all can put funding in there next year to specifically allocate training for teachers to be able to use that ESSER in a way that is more efficient? What's happening now is because the program is just not working that's bad for the state department, that's bad for the LEAs, that's bad for the teachers. But the teachers are having to spend so much time fixing things after they've already done it. That takes instructional time away from the kids. That takes resources from the district which in turn takes resources away from the kids. It would be a great investment if y'all could budget some money for

some face-to-face, however y'all do it, it's a huge task, but face-to-face training with computers at the call right there where y'all showing them how to use it. It serves two purposes. It provides training for the people who are going to be using it. It also has somebody there right then and there when the teachers are using it if a glitch comes up y'all know about it and how it impacts the process. So that helps everybody across the board. It's going to require money. It's going to require creativity, but it is sorrily lacking. I'll tell you the first day of school in Jefferson Parish I was there for a meeting with somebody I had been working with for about a couple of years and they couldn't even print it. And now they still can't print some of the instructional pages and they don't know how. They can't fix it, and quite honestly, a lot of people don't have the skills to be able to even do the PR that would make it look less severe. But what ends up happening is the parents leave without a full IEP and that's unacceptable. That's just my idea for the funding next year.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. You're reading my mind. And we're going to have in-person trainings within the next month or two for that. And geared towards users. User groups. Cause that's kind of what we hear too, right. So like pupil appraisal needs separate training than a teacher user and so on. So yeah, for sure. To your point too, you know, it did roll out with challenges and so, you know, definitely not-- and, you know, I believe Dr. Brumley did a great job with the last hearing in saying, you know, that our educators are doing a great job, our leaders are doing a great job. It was not ever intended to be the idea that it was a user's fault, for sure. It definitely had technical challenges. Still has technical challenges, but much better.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Yeah. Bottom line, as this is going through regardless of how much praise the teachers get for working with it the morale is getting shot from the field. I'm stepping away. I'm going back to my special ed director thing, but the morale is being shot down in the field and that's not good for anybody.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yep. Yes. Not what we need in



the profession at all.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Yep. Thank you.

MEREDITH JORDAN: You got it.

REKEESHA BRANCH: All right. We do have a comment from Ms. Nicole Flores. I would like to also suggest for SER training and support for teachers as it begins to be problematic in region four as well. And parents getting progress notes today have a hard time understanding.

MEREDITH JORDAN: So same. Perfect. I appreciate all the input, y'all.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. If we don't have any other comments, we'll go to the next agenda item which is Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, Melissa Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I was asked specifically to give an update on the LRS, LDOE memorandum of understanding. At this point it is at LDOE executive team so we're waiting for it to come back from there before we can provide any information. Cause that has to be reviewed by their executive team.

Other transition type of updates. I just, for our preemployment transition services I just kind of wanted to give an idea of what's been going on. I have three staff members who are assigned to preETS. And one has been on extended leave, the manager for the program. And then we had one, Nicole Miller, who was promoted into a program manager position. And so we do have a new person who has filled her role, Fred Pape, who is from the Houma region. And then we also have Sigman Murell, but his role is primarily with third party cooperative arrangements. So Fred has definitely hit the ground running, but there has been a little bit of lag just because of some different movement going on in preemployment transition services.

But as far as things that we've been looking at to improve preETS in general, but then also to improve participation with school districts, is we're exploring some different ideas. We currently have a pilot project going on with one of our vendors called Opportunity Now. And that particular pilot is we're increasing the number of units that we allow for that particular vendor because they are doing what's called embedded preETS. Which some of our other vendors do to a certain degree. But basically they are on campus

more often than some of our other vendors typically have been. But what our goal would be though, and me and Meredith have talked about this, we just had an initial conversation about it. But this particular vendor also does this in the State of Texas and in Texas they're actually approved for a Carnegie unit. So they have an approved course. So I really want to look into how we could possibly do that here because some of the school districts the reason why they don't, that we have difficulty participating in certain school districts is because just the logistics of preETS can be complicated because if you have a student, a student may have a disability, but to get them pulled out of a class to attend preETS is sometimes it doesn't fit in their schedule. So if we could somehow figure out how to make that a requirement or at least a possibility for someone to take for credit, we think maybe we could get more school districts on board. So that's something that we just started to talk about. Like I said, this particular vendor has done it in the State of Texas so they have experience in how to do it and through the pilot project they're making good connections with the school districts and how that could happen.

And, you know, I try to attend things as much as I can. I know Meredith has invited me to come to the Jump Start Conference. So I'll definitely be promoting preemployment transition services there. So we are working towards trying to expand services. We're always working to try to improve services. And we have in the vocational rehabilitation system we have these, we call them TACS. So we have the vocational rehabilitation it's a technical assistance center. And I was talking to Fred today about engaging those individuals because they're essentially consultants paid for by RSA grant funding. Which is Rehabilitation Services Administration and they assist VR agencies throughout the country. So preETS has been difficult because it's new and then you're having to engage school districts who this isn't their regulation, this is ours so the messaging's been a little bit complicated. But we are working to try to move in the right direction. Like I tell my staff, the best way to promote the service is to show the success because then

the school districts will want to do it. And we have some very successful preETS programs. So I say all that to say we are trying to progress. We're trying to get in more school districts. And even more importantly, we're trying to make sure that it's a meaningful experience for the students. So those are all my updates. I don't know if anyone has any questions.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Just to add to that too. You know, one of the things that, you know, one of our goals at the February Jump Start Conference which we will have CTE leaders there, SPED leaders there. Kind of a 2.0 to what we started there last year and talking about inclusive CTE programming and how to get students work based learning experiences and provide some of those. All of that can really work together seamlessly I think if they know how to do it. And so to give them and present them and continue to give them their options. Like the third party cooperative agreement at this point is probably one of the best ways and I think, you know, to implement with fidelity having that person who is an employee of the system leading this work via that third party agreement.

But again, we think just giving districts their options. You know, I think it's just time to kind of boost communication around it to show the successes and the models. We have a couple that are going to be presenting with us in February. And then one other thing that I brought to Melissa and she was like yeah, let's work on it together, is launching a transition website together for students with disabilities that houses the applications and the forms and really kind of gives that transparency for families for what is this, what do I need to do to apply and be eligible and really putting all of that out there to make it easier for our families as well. So a lot of different I think ways is what Melissa and I were thinking. You know, multi prong ways that we can help to facilitate this implementation in our school systems.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Dr. Wilson.

SPEAKER: You're muted.

PHIL WILSON: Sorry. Yeah. I wasn't sure what the protocol is here for me commenting. But I'm sorry, I also missed just a couple minutes of the conversation

earlier so if I'm asking a question that's already been covered just tell me to be quiet and I'll try to figure it out later. But so the concern that I think I might have, but maybe not, is that if kids with the most significant disabilities are getting preETS instruction in school with simulated activities or materials or whatever it is, we know that it's not going to generalize to the real world. Because that's just a fact about significant cognitive impairments. So if we are moving to in school classes for preETS and you're talking about kids with learning disabilities or mild cognitive impairments or other types of, you know, physical and other disabilities, that's not a problem because those folks, their brains work in the same way that neurotypical brains work and they will generalize from those settings to the real world. If we're trying to get kids who have significant intellectual disabilities ready for adult life, they are not going to learn what they need to learn in a classroom or in a school when it comes to how to function in the community. So I just have this concern and that's obviously if you look at the Paycheck Program or whatever we have kind of been talking with Meredith a bit about and that didn't happen. So is that population going to be given some kind of special consideration for the different things that they need? That's my question. Kind of a statement question.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. We have to. And our conversations aren't over, Dr. Wilson. So it's still on the table. But yeah, we have to. And what we heard, feedback from our SEAP panel too is our families, our parents want the paid work based learning. Which I agree with, which is what you're saying. That in the community connections and work based learning experience in the community. Absolutely.

REKEESHA BRANCH: A comment from Christi Curtis. Thank you, Dr. Wilson. The other from Nicole Flores is this is very important. And Christina Martin said agreed, Dr. Wilson.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: How many third-party cooperative agreements is there? Like with 15 different districts.

MELISSA BAYHAM: And we have a lot of districts that have been participating for a long time. We have

gotten some people on board recently. But the ones that have it, love it because they have, although they're technically under the administrative supervision of the VR program because we are basically paying for it, it's their staff member. So it's not like we're having an outside vendor come into their school district. I think they really appreciate that. And then the person's always there if there's an issue or, you know. And like especially work based learning experiences, some of these school districts will do this at school and so they have a staff member who's there who might be able to assist, you know, depending on they're not all working at the same time. So they have that support there.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. Any other questions for Louisiana Rehabilitation Services? Okay. Now we'll go to our contractual updates. Amy, go first?

AMY DEAVILLE: Yep. So I'm going to give the update on Louisiana Post-Secondary Inclusive Education Alliance or LAPIE. They have been working with the Post-Secondary Inclusive Advisory Council who is charged with managing the fund that was put in place in the last legislative session. So LAPIE worked with the Board of Regents on finalizing the applications that were used for institutes of higher learning to apply for this funding. Two different applications. One for new funding, one for existing. I'm sorry. One for new programs. One for existing programs.

Dr. Beckers also facilitated a webinar on November 14th that was for institutes of higher learning to get information about this funding and how they apply. And then the launch of the actual applications happened, I believe the next day. The application period for those programs ended yesterday. So I don't have any information about who applied or how many people applied. But that's something to look forward to when we get some information on that.

In addition, LAPIE is always doing ongoing technical assistance with different schools. They've continued to work with Calcasieu Parish School Board in collaborating with McNeese State University and SOWELA Technical Community College to develop programs there. And they've also been working with Louisiana State University Baton Rouge campus who has an interest in

developing a new program. So they're kind of in early stages there. And then continuing technical assistance to Louisiana State University at Alexandria which just started their first cohort of students and their program in the fall of 22. And that is my update.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Do we have any questions about the Louisiana Post-Secondary Inclusive Education Alliance?

REKEESHA BRANCH: None in the chat.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. Our next update.

HANNA JENKINS: All right. Seminars on hiring individuals with developmental disabilities. That's from activity 3.2.1. We're contracted, the council's contracted with O'Neill Communications to conduct employment seminars. O'Neill Communications plans to again take a deeper dive into topics and implement a storytelling format for FY23. O'Neill Communications met with the council staff in November to discuss new topics and potential panelists for the new set of seminars. They also discussed how to get more participation from council members. And we will be meeting next week to go over more ideas and get the ball rolling. So that is my update for you. Questions?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. Seeing no questions or comments we'll move onto our next item on the agenda which is recommendations for the fiscal year ending 24 planning committee. Do you guys have something prepared, staff?

AMY DEAVILLE: No. I'm going to wing it. So the planning committee should be meeting hopefully in March and they will develop a federal fiscal year 24 annual plan. So this committee, the education and employment committee focuses on the activities that are in goal three which focus on education and employment. We're looking for recommendations from this committee for activities that you would like to see happen, that you would like to see continue that we're currently doing. If there are any recommendations that this committee has, we would like to hear them, put them in a motion and then put them before the full council for a vote and then the planning committee to develop the plan.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So when we look at our goal 3, 3.1.1 that has to do with LAPIE and it's my

understanding that we should probably not have to put funding for that for the next fiscal year because there's funding in the...

AMY DEAVILLE: Yeah. Assuming that they receive the funding that we are hoping for next legislative session there really isn't need for us to continue funding.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: But I think there's a million dollars that was already in there that the council voted to keep 100,000.

AMY DEAVILLE: I do think there was some money set aside.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. So that will probably not have to continue through the council which is exactly what we want to happen. And then we have some other items that there was no activity. So, for instance, advocate for increased focus and capacity within Department of Education to address special education. Advocate for support structure in school systems that assure adequate understanding and skill to develop and implement IEP that increase infrastructure for training and technical assistance provided to parents and schools simultaneously. Advocate for educational systems change based on emergent education issues. So those three we didn't have activities for this quarter.

NICOLE BANKS: (Inaudible) 1.4.3.5, are we looking at all of these?

AMY DEAVILLE: Yes. You're looking at any activity that starts with a three.

NICOLE BANKS: I thought so.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So do we have any hands raised? So I know the feedback that I get often is around education. Our parents are really, I think the problems that we have in the education system is really just causing a lot of issues in other areas. It's putting more of a burden on home and community based services, parents are pulling their kids out of school at a much higher rate than it was ten or 15, 20 years ago. And then I've also heard from many parents about the transition into adulthood that we don't have enough opportunities of those traditional services and those job opportunities. And so, you know, we have a lot of these activities that we don't have anything going on. But there's a lot of need. So if we don't have this

ideas now, like I really feel like we need to engage the community because I know the families can certainly share issues underneath this category that there's real needs. I mean, parents are, they're falling a part because these two systems are failing the children and young adults. So I just want to throw that out there as a comment. And I don't know if anybody else has anything they want to say or hopefully have some great ideas.

NICOLE BANKS: So to piggyback what Bambi was saying, you know, that it's a problem. You know, it's something we need to fix. Is it because people are not aware of the programs or is it that it's a program that needs to be developed?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Special education, there are laws in place and there are best practices in place. It's that our system isn't providing that to our children. The same laws that helped my son to be able to go through school, they are in place for the children that are still in school now. And these parents are feeling like their emotional toll is they can't take it anymore. While the right thing is for the children to stay in school and be in an inclusive setting in their community schools they can't, emotionally they can't handle it. So many parents are telling me now that it's much better off keeping their kids at home. Which was like, I would have never said that or even thought that based on knowing that my child needed to be a part of the community. And these parents know that as well. But when they find that that's a better option and that's not good for our system.

NICOLE BANKS: Right. Do they have some kind of liaison between the school system and people with disabilities so we can come together collectively and fix it? Or at least address the need of the child that has whatever issue that needs to be taken care of that's covered under law and that's supposed to be met. Do we have a person like that already designated, a position, a person? Do we have that?

MELISSA BAYHAM: So it sounds like a lot of the needs are identified. And this is just a question. I know the issue is very complex. But I know in my department a lot of like VR is not the way I want it to look and it's primarily because of capacity. Is that



primarily the problem that we don't have enough special education teachers and paraprofessionals to provide-- I'm asking.

MEREDITH JORDAN: So I will say in a preliminary way that we are going to see recruitment and retention data come out soon, it didn't come out this week at BESE, that says actually SPED certification is no longer a top three. That's not to say in terms of like that it's not going to come back or, you know, there's just another top three. So I think that shows strides toward investments to incentivize adding on SPED certification and getting more people trained. You know, it's this like collective responsibility to support our parents. So like I know I have to do more. But it's certainly a capacity issue on my team of eight which is why we partner and rely also so heavily on our Families Helping Families Centers which is one piece. So it's like this collective responsibility I think to support our families. For sure we can do more.

NICOLE BANKS: So I know like Families Helping Families always have webinars on all kind of stuff, just educating people on all kind of things for disabilities and issues. Maybe we can take something to them and see if they can do a webinar and get it out to all of the different parishes. And I know they do that already, I do. I know they do that already. But at least have where what are the real issues that your child is facing specifically and then we can see like okay, they're facing it, they're facing it and we can come up with categories just by the responses of the people and go from there. And then we'll tackle the issues as the top three of how many people-- okay, we have 50 or so or 100 and so people that's dealing with this issue or 75 that's dealing with this issue. And to do that and have a webinar that have at least have that data come together so we can start making some kind of change because it's like going in circles. We already know this. Like going in circles. So it's like we have to concrete put something down and do it. I know a lot of people get up on the Families Helping Families. I've been on a lot of their webinars. And they do have good outcomes so that's just something, you know, to get out there because they do reach a lot of people.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Dr. Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: Yeah. So kind of goes back to an old song here. You know, our state has not done a good job of keeping higher education engaged in significant disabilities, severe disabilities. Whatever program you want to call it. Meredith, I don't know if you have data on the number of teachers who are in classrooms or in schools who are certified in severe disabilities or one of the 12 other names that are still on the licensing or whatever. Because if the teachers themselves are not adequately trained and prepared, then having these sort of add-on things is the only option really that I can think of. I'm not saying those are not good trainings to have, but if it comes back and the parents know more than the teachers do, you know, it's kind of a big issue. And it's a very expensive issue. And one that our state, you know, 20 years ago began dismantling programs in higher ed. And I think some of these things are coming home to roost. I don't know if you have data that would refute that, Meredith, or you know.

MEREDITH JORDAN: No.

PHIL WILSON: If so, I would like to hear it, you know.

MEREDITH JORDAN: I can bring back our educators who are licensed to support the severe, profound, all the different names you listed, significant. I'm even more interested in not just who's holding those certifications, but then who's in the classroom, right. So the number of those individuals who are-- cause I may have retired and I'm holding it, but I'm not practicing. And I hear that a lot, Dr. Wilson, like from our higher ed partners that they are struggling to meet, to get enough pre-educators and individuals interested in supporting and getting that training and documentation. It's also because it's complex and challenging work, it's 21 hours to add on. So as we try to like recruit people and build up educators and say, you know, this is a rewarding field to go in, it takes 21 hours of study to add on a certification in that severe profound group. I think we have to come up with ideas for how to make that number one easier, more affordable for individuals who we need so desperately to go into those classrooms and provide services. So

it's definitely something that I hear and definitely something that I hear our higher ed partners struggle to meet with certain class sizes to justify hiring a professor to teach those courses.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Mary Jacob and then Charlie Michel.

MARY JACOBS: Thank you. I don't know if there's enough time and space tomorrow or the rest of the year for me to answer this question appropriately, Bambi. But I will attempt to. Yes, we get constant complaints over a variety of topics. Right now the hot one is there's no certified teachers in the classroom and we have people writing IEPs and don't even know who's going to serve the kids. But I think what has parents most upset when it comes down to it is that their kids aren't learning. They're not making the progress that they expect them to make in school. And in my opinion, I've been saying this for years, it comes down to specially designed instruction or the lack thereof. We don't have-- and I'm going to tell you I've been in every parish in this state. I have yet to find somebody that honestly knows how to write specially designed instruction on an IEP when I'm in a meeting. They don't even know what that is. And if we haven't figured out that little bit basic, which is the absolute, the absolute big deal of IDEA, that's what IDEA is all about, specially designed instruction and we don't even address that kids will never learn. They're never ever going to learn.

And because our state doesn't do monitoring the way they're used to, and I'm not sure the self-reporting monitoring, the state doesn't realize what's happening in these districts, I don't believe that people don't know. We still have districts that they don't know they can give copies of the IEP to teachers. But, of course, now we don't even know if we can get a copy of the IEP. It doesn't even matter. But, I mean, if we got people around without even copies of their IEP what are you expecting.

But I still think that in my experience as a parent and a lot of the families I've supported some of the most qualified teachers for our kids are those regular ed teachers because chances are they are certified, and they probably know more about teaching

things like reading than that special ed teacher does. Especially when we have a lot of still old special ed teachers out there that was general, that they were those generic teachers K through 12 and really they were kind of a jack of all trades, master of none. So, you know, we don't know how to teach kids how to read. We don't have enough certified teachers, special ed teachers that know how to do the special designed instruction. I mean, I'm just going to put it out there. It's a shit show in schools today. It really is. And I don't know when Dr. Brumley is going to figure that out. And this isn't a reflection on Meredith. This isn't a reflection on-- I wouldn't even say it's him. It's since the pandemic it has become just-- it was bad before, it has become unbelievably bad since then. And yes, parents are screaming and jumping up and down. But what doesn't help me, and I would venture to say none of my Families Helping Families partner centers out there, is that all the state wants to do is keep cutting our budgets and they don't want to give us money to do the work.

I think that if we value education then you're going to put the money where that is so the advocates can do the work that they need to help parents. But when all you're doing is when I go back to my contract ten years ago that was 100,000-dollars and now it's 42,000-dollars. I mean, that's not even a full time person I can put on that. We just don't have the money to kind of stay on top of these people the way we should be able to. We don't prioritize that. We don't have the people at the state that we used to. It's not-- I'm always amazed when somebody says Louisiana's still number 49, 50 in education and healthcare. Well, have you been to a state legislative meeting. What is the last two things they usually worry about. Funding. Education and healthcare. So it's no mystery to me that this is happening. But I think the big problem comes down to that simple fact that kids are not getting specially designed instruction that needs it and that's why we're not moving the needle on those kids. And with Covid all they did is regress. And because nobody knows what's happened with that billions of dollars we've gotten. Billions of dollars we've gotten to help kids. I don't know-- I haven't talked

to one parent that feels like that money ever got trickled down to their kids to help their kids catch up with their loss of learning. In fact, some parishes tell kids that well, your child didn't have a loss of learning. It's like they had a loss of learning before Covid showed up they were so far behind. You're going to tell me they don't have it now. They didn't have access to education for almost two years. So it's a huge problem. I don't know what the answer is to it. It's a huge problem, but somebody needs to wake up and figure it out that, you know, care about these kids and prioritize them because right now it's just not happening. And, you know, I could go on and on about that. I'm not even going to start with the whole preETS program. But yes, we have problems, Bambi. And I'd be happy to complain to whoever, whenever, but I think a lot of it falls on Deaf ears.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you, Mary. Does Charlie still want to speak?

REKEESHA BRANCH: He dropped his hand.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. Somebody else had their hand up?

REKEESHA BRANCH: We do have a comment by Christina Martin. As a parent of a child (inaudible) I'll second this. And then Ms. Christi Gonzales, she had her hand raised as well.

HANNA JENKINS: She's back here.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Christi.

HANNA JENKINS: You're on mute, Christi. Button on the bottom left of your phone.

AMY DEAVILLE: Erick Taylor has his hand up.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Oh, I'm sorry. Is Christi back?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. Am I back?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yes. We can hear you.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Okay. I wanted to talk about what Ms. Jacobs said that some of the regular teachers are getting a lot of the modifications and everything for our SPED kids, but they're not following what the modifications are supposed to be. We're still having that issue. Because even some of the regular teachers, they're just not certified. Even a lot of our SPED teachers are still not certified so there is still a lot of things happening that should not be.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you, Christi.

CHRISTI GONZALES: You're welcome.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Erick.

ERICK TAYLOR: First of all, until we look at special needs teachers have a lot of special need kids in the class and that when we got to get them settled down, we can't focus on all of the special needs kids in the class because when I say we, they the only ones in the class. I think they need more help where they can put them in groups where they can teach them more. And then we need to stop looking at the special ed kids and say oh, we just send them and we just passing them. And I hear that from time to time. As long as they're at school, we're going to pass them. We're going to give them the simplest things to do and we're just going to write the IEP and we're just going to put it down on the computer and we're going to pace topic and every year we're just going to pass them. Until we realize that they students like other kids. They need to get out the special ed class. They don't need to be in the class all the time. They need to be interacting with all the kids that's regular kids. Because if they see that, I hope I'm making sense to you board, if they see interaction with other kids and the other kids see interaction with them, they learn.

When my daughter was out there she learned with the other kids because it pushes her more to want to do when. You just lock a person in one spot hey, this is what I'm trained in my mind to do just to sit in one spot. Every year we're going to teach you how do your ABCs. We're going to teach you how to write your name. Next year I'm going to teach you how to do your ABCs. I'm going to teach you how to do your name. Just paste copy the paperwork and change the dates. When we going to realize they got a mind, they can learn. If they can pick up a phone and get on Facebook and YouTube and click on the games, why they can't learn. And we need to put teachers in place that can handle a group and not just put them with a whole bunch of kids, and they all need one on one. Some of them need one on one. And Ms. Bambi, you know what I'm talking about when you put a bunch of them in there, you got this one need to be changed. That one need to be checked. It takes the focus off the teacher on learning. Until we realize that we need more assistance, that people that wants to

do it. We can get people that don't want to do it either. But we got to get the people that wants to do it. Because we put too much on paperwork and I got this to grade. I'm trained to do this. But that person might want to do it. But we put the ones in some of the ones that don't want to do it.

I hope y'all understand what I'm saying with that because it's got a lot of people that are impatient with disabled people. We get a lot of abuse going on because people is not patient with them because (inaudible). They don't want to feed them. I know I'm kind of getting off topic. They don't want to feed them. They don't have the patience. But they want to learn just like anybody else want to learn. Until we see that and if we don't never see it, it's never going to get fixed. We all have been in this room around somebody that's disabled that wanted the desire to learn. That wanted the desire to speak with the other crew and what they do. Go in the corner, there go your toy to play with like you play with at home. That's not helpful. We got to figure out something that would fix it. And we need to figure out something where they can learn. And that's just my (inaudible) because I have been in the class. I have a son in the class where they put the child in a corner, and they give them a toy to play with all day.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you. Renoda.

RENODA WASHINGTON: I just wanted to just say I agree with everything that has been discussed. I'm a parent of a tenth grader. I'm also a special education teacher. This is my eighth year. I've seen a lot of things in schools and a lot of everything stated is definitely true. I've been in schools where you can have a certification, but if you're not held accountable I can do what I want, you know. If you don't have the heart or the mindset to really deal with children with disabilities or even just have a love for teaching, if you are not held accountable then you will do what you want. As an advocate for my child I've had to enter classrooms whether I worked at the school or not with him and say hey, you know, my son, you know, although he's diagnosed with autism that doesn't mean you give him a coloring book. You know, he's in the ninth grade. He's in the tenth grade. We can't have

that. So of course it's going to look like you're challenging the school. Which I am because you shouldn't be doing that. You should know better. But it goes back if you're not held accountable for these things what change will you make, you know. And that's one of the biggest things that I've noticed from the top on down. If the top is not knowledgeable of IEPs or have a mindset to work with those with disabilities what are the teachers going to do. If they are not held-- it just goes back to accountability for me. And I've seen it. If I didn't have a heart in mind to do my job I probably would be doing the same thing, but that's not my mindset. That's not how I was raised. But now we're just filling spots now. I need someone in this position. I need this and it's kind of like what are school leaders going to do to address that part, you know. Because you can have certified teachers and these things are definitely what should be done. And you can also have people that, you know, are filling a spot. It still goes back, in my opinion, of who's going to call out these teachers for not doing what they either know to do or they really just truly lack understanding and knowledge of it.

Because currently, you know, I know for a fact we have teachers that are doing all of the above. With no accountability. You know, and so as a parent it is very disheartening when you are trying to, you know, advocate and trying to, you know, do so much for your child and you really-- it's just like I've had this current thought where can he go. What can he do. Where's he going to go, you know, to actually get my expectations. But if the school leaders do not have high expectations for their teachers then you're going to get what you're getting. And that is-- it's very, I hate to say it, and it may not be happening everywhere, but I have worked at different schools where I know it is happening and I know it's probably more than likely continuing to happen. So I think that we need to, you know, how we can address these school leaders and administrators on how they can hold teachers accountable getting them training because it's not always just training alone. I think it's, you know, maybe have a consultant to come in to see how we can improve this leadership. You know, maybe there's some



underlying things, you know, that that school may need, the school district or whatever. But like I said, if it's from the top, they're not knowledgeable or concerned, or maybe they have just a lot of things going on. I know with Covid and the pandemic, you know, there's a lot of concerns that are going on. Trying to keep teachers. It's a lot of things. You know, trying to keep teachers from being burnt out. It's a lot of things that school leaders have to consider. But how can we, you know, just help them know that all of these concerns are important and they should be addressed. If that makes sense.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Dr. Michel.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. I had put my hand down when Mary was talking because she covered the topic so well. But there are a couple things that have come up in the last few speakers that I really want to address because they're hitting the nail on the head. One of the things is along the line the thought of teaching classroom management skills has subsided or it just isn't as effective as it used to be. The gentleman that spoke about having to pay too much attention to the students with disabilities, he might be right, but the reality of it is there are ways to mitigate those behaviors. And contrary to what the general public believes, not every child with a behavior problem in a class has a disability. Some of them make choices. So we have to remember there's a whole gamut of things that are playing into this.

The other thing is with the pressure on teachers, on principals, even on students, the pressure has become, whether it's intentional or not, to teach to the middle. Guess where students with significant and mild disabilities fall. Not in the middle typically. So they end up getting lost in the shuffle which just exacerbates the problem with the gap between those with disabilities and those without. And the other thing is, first off, if you have a certificate in mild moderate and you have less than 50 percent students in your class that have severe profound disabilities you're eligible to teach those kids and it's legal and you're certified. But I can tell you I was certified mild moderate and I didn't have any training in the severe profound population. So I was certified, but not

qualified. And that's the problem we're running into quite a bit. And that's through no fault of anybody except the fact that there's just such a limited field of people that are certified and an even more limited field now of people who are providing certifications.

And another thing is the turnover rate of those who are certified and those who are teaching in the classrooms is so great when we get a wonderful professional development for those teachers that are teaching special ed we have to do the same thing over and over every year because the turnover rate is so high. I have had an experience where 80 percent of my special ed staff left and they went because they go into regular ed because they realize special ed's not as easy as they thought. So we need to make sure that we have some sort of ongoing tiered professional development so that I don't have to take the same professional development every year, but every year there's something for the beginning teacher and something for the seasoned teacher.

And the last thing I want to say is there's a culture in the schools, and I'm not pointing an accusational finger. This is just a reality. And the culture in the school is many principals just, not all of them, but many, too many just don't care about special ed students. They don't really do anything to add to their school performance score, they don't frequently do anything to add to their athletic teams so that's not on their priority list. And how many times, I wish we could collect this data, how many special ed teachers that are certified or not certified are also coaches. The reason for that is because it's an easy, and I'm putting that in air quotes, you can't see it, but I'm putting that in air quotes, it's an easy job and it's flexible. Again, air quotes, for the coach. It ends up being we have a coach who is teaching special ed. We need to move from that to a teacher who is teaching special ed. A teacher who is also coaching. We have to remember the priority has to be on the teaching and it's not. When I was a principal-- well, actually when I was special ed director I was not loved because I would never let a coach leave the school early to go to a baseball game out of town. Bottom line is your responsibility is to

the students that you're responsible for and that's not your coaching team. You can get in your car after school and go. That does not happen in almost any other place. So the culture is what's the burden. The culture of the principals that don't really care and the superintendents who don't insist that the principals take appropriate action. We've got the turnover rate and we've got (inaudible) that's pressuring everybody from all sides. And the only people that lose in every one of those scenarios is the students. That's what the parents are feeling.

And the one thing I kind of disagree with Mary Jacob on, it got worse during the pandemic. I'm here to tell you it didn't necessarily get worse during the pandemic, we just saw the effects much more clearly. I think it's always been this bad. We just haven't realized it. The parents haven't realized it. The community haven't realized it. It was just not (inaudible). So other than that, that's it. I'm done. But this is an age-old problem and it does have to do with lack of capacity at the state department, lack of capacity in the superintendents' offices, lack of capacity in the special ed directors' offices. Because certification, you don't have to have any experience in special ed to be a special ed director. Lack of capacity in the classroom. That's it. I'm sorry. Thank you.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you, Charlie. Dr. Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: I think it goes back to, I can't remember if it was Mary or somebody else, but the way we do school accountability, school district or school accountability, these things don't get brought to the fore. No one cares about my past, but I will say I worked in the Colorado Department of Education like 25 years ago or actually little longer than that. And we did, you know, we had a huge team from the Department of Ed. We had our equivalent of Families Helping Families in Colorado. And we had other people that were tangentially involved. And we all had, you know, duties when we went to a school district to interview parents, to interview teachers, to interview kids, look at policy. All that stuff. And that's where the stuff that Charlie was just talking about it comes to the surface then. And right now I don't know how that's

going to come to the surface the way we do accountability in Louisiana for our schools.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And so this is, and Bambi, after hearing all you guys one thing that I have noticed and I brought this up at other meetings, I mean I wrote down a list and I didn't even write down everything that everyone says and there's no way-- it gets back on focus is our action plan. But I've been around on the DD Council for long enough to remember things that no longer exist. We used to have LaTEACH which was part, and we integrated it with LaCAN. We used to have staff here on the council staff that was extremely knowledgeable. I have gone to meetings where these items are being discussed, we do not have our advocacy organization. And just to go back, the DD Council, this is not everything falls on the DD Council, but this is a DD Council meeting. And so we need our advocates to be advocating that our Families Helping Families need more money, that we need specially designed instructions, we need our SPED monitoring back. All of those things are big issues and we need people at every meeting, whether legislature, the Department of Education, workforce meetings, wherever it is we need to build that capacity because we need the advocacy. And that just, it has really diminished over the past decade for the council. And so my recommendation is that we have some advocacy, I mean, some items on our action plan that builds that back up. I don't know what other people's thoughts or ideas on that. But I'll open the floor for responses.

NICOLE BANKS: Is there a way that we can get like, you know, like you said somebody need to be present at the legislative at every single part. Do we have where we can get communication in a sufficient enough time so that people can attend if they want to attend because I don't ever get anything.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: That's part of what I'm saying. In the past we received pretty good information what was happening, and it was action alerts and that type of thing. And not to say that we've totally went away from education, but it's just been a dramatic decrease. And if we're not showing up at every single place and having a plan, it's not happening. And we need to have that right now. And we have good, I mean, I think we

have people within the departments who they need our help to advocate to the people above them. The department used to have a really large special education department. It's been diminished a lot. Like we need to have a force and bring the force of our advocacy. Our parents are calling our Families Helping Families centers, they're calling us and telling us what's going on. We need collectively for them to show up with their kids who they pulled out of school because they can't go to their schools anymore. That they're having to home school. Let them show up at the BESE meeting and ask them what we are going to do and ask for the things that need to be done. Like that's the type of force that we need to bring because our families are really, they're struggling.

NICOLE BANKS: So that sounds like a town hall meeting sort of type of thing to get some kind of communication out to have like a town hall meeting on a Friday or Saturday or something like that.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: That's not what I'm saying. Organize where people are showing up. We have a system kind of like our LaCAN. It is part of LaCAN, but we've diminished that advocacy, I find, in the part of education when we brought them together. And not intentionally. But just the advocacy is not the same.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I don't think it was the combining. I think it's because we lost all of our education experts. The combining, whenever we combined we still had our education experts and we still went to the BESE meetings. We still went to SEAP meetings. We still sent out action alerts. But it's pre Covid once we started losing all of our expertise that diminished. And so I think a majority of the time when stuff doesn't get sent out now, and I don't want to overstep speaking for other folks because education is not my expertise, so I don't write the education alerts, I never have. But I know my limits. And so I think that's been some of the things if we don't know about a particular topic or if we don't have information, enough information to really put together a thoughtful idea or a thoughtful plan of action. Because a lot of times we don't have the luxury of sitting in this committee before something happens to be able to brainstorm with people that are in the know of what we

need to do and how we need to take action. We may only have 24 hours or less and that's not enough time for us to educate our LaCAN leaders on what's going on, to get families together. So I would agree. I can identify, yeah, our education advocacy is a missing piece. I think until our education expertise gets beefed back up within our staff I don't know that that's something that we can address immediately. Or I don't know how to address it immediately. And I think we have taken steps to begin addressing that. But when you lose collectively 50 some odd years of experience, you don't build that back up in a year. So yeah, I also say that to say I don't think splitting up and re-creating is going to help either.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: No. And I'm not saying that. I'm saying that the capacity we had in the past, it's diminished.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And it also, I mean, there were some positives, if you will, when it was separate because we did have that capacity to really have staff that could focus on the home and community-based side. Really have staff that could focus on the education side and really beef up our advocacy on each end. But financially it didn't really make sense. It also, the whole idea was to kind of unify the council's advocacy efforts. We already struggle enough with getting people to identify the council and LaCAN are one in the same. But then you have LaCAN, LaTEACH, all these various things that get kind of complicated.

MEREDITH JORDAN: You know, like when we talk about capacity, even for the department, like going to house appropriations where we're going to ask for additional money, positions are hard to get. That's really what we need, people and positions to build capacity of the team and to do like we hear a lot from stakeholders. We want people on the ground in our school systems monitoring for compliance. That requires a lot of people. We're talking with charters, you know, nearly 200. And so, you know, that would be really helpful. I know it's important to Dr. Brumley. He's going to ask for more money specifically for our team. But it's like more positions would be better. Verses, you know, contracting out certain things. Having full time people to help do some of the compliance and the

support would be helpful.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And we hear the same thing from LRS. The salaries that are being paid to our LRS counselors are really not sufficient to be able to hire. So like we need the expertise on the DD Council and we need to build the capacity. If we need to have two LaCAN leaders in each region. If that's what the capacity is needed, I mean, advocacy is what this council is about. So if it cost another 500,000-dollars and we can address these issues and be a force whenever we go and ask for these educational issues, then to me that's worth it because our families like they're literally falling apart and we're just not doing enough to be able to meet these needs. And then it's just going to snowball. Then these kids won't be able to get jobs. These kids won't be able to live independently. And then it just snowballs into everything else that we do. So that's my recommendation.

REKEESHA BRANCH: We have a few statements in the chat. First statement was from April Hampton. I agree. They should not be totally contained. I advocate for my son and hold them accountable. The next statement was from Christi Curtis. Inclusion, inclusion, inclusion. No matter how severe the disability every individual should have the opportunity to interact, learn, participate and socialize with their same age peers. This is not happening. The next statement was from Christina Martin. A perfect example would be my daughter who is in first grade who has not one academic goal in her IEP because they cannot even reach functional goals in class. She still receives a report card that was graded with tier one standards. I believe that is also discouraging to teachers and students with severe disabilities. The next one is from Mary Jacob. This teacher is 100 percent correct. We don't have a teacher shortage. We have a teacher burnout problem. The next statement was from Charlie Michel. It's the burnout problem that is contributing greatly to the shortage problem. The next one is from Mary Jacob. We used to do that in Louisiana. And Nicole Flores stated having parents and advocates at education meetings such as BESE, SEAP and SEC et cetera is vital, but is a lot to understand and would love to

be a part of ideas to help that. And that's it.

NICOLE BANKS: So I know we always need to be at the BESE. And those two other organizations, that's where we really need to be present at, right? Those meetings.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: The legislature. I mean, what my recommendation is is that we need staff with expertise in education and employment and that we utilize that to build up our advocacy in regards to education and employment.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Do they have vacancies right now? Do you have vacancies? No.

NICOLE BANKS: We have to create a position, right?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Do you have the TO to do that?

MEREDITH JORDAN: No.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So that would be a legislative thing. They would need the TO and the funding.

NICOLE BANKS: There's no opening, there's no vacancies, there's not even a position created for that so. And I know you said y'all had that in the past, but I guess it just went away.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I would say the council needs staff with expertise in education and employment. I don't know what the next steps would be to address that.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Since it is an action plan you probably have to focus on the advocacy piece because I don't think your action plan can deal with staff.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Right. So what would we fund?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I don't know, but it sounds like there's a deficiency in education. I don't know if there's some training. I don't know.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: But I don't think it's just training. Like we need to know when things are happening, and we need to show up and advocate. And we need to have a system that does that. So I don't know how to make this, I mean, if it's part of LaCAN, we're already at our top of the budget with LaCAN, right?

BRENTON ANDRUS: I mean, I do plan on asking for more money for LaCAN from the planning committee. Not necessarily for that, but in general you want to pay a living wage to LaCAN leaders to make sure we keep them around. Offer incentives for the work that they do. Offer professional development type things. So LaCAN



is running leaner now than it has been in the past. We used to fund it at 250. I think we're currently at 215.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. I think we can't go over 250 though because of some rules.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Not that I'm aware of, but we would have to look into that. I don't know of anything. We ended up at the 250 because that's what the funding was for LaCAN and LaTEACH at the time and when we merged, we did it together. And then we ended up shaving off some money because where we were paying you might have had two leaders in a region and some regions we ended up breaking it down to one leader in each region so we were able to shave off some of that.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: There's some reason, I remember, been here a long time, it doesn't go over 250.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Is it a contract?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: It's a contract issue. It creates all kind of problems is what I remember Shawn saying. That if you go to 250 it creates a big issue if you go over that with state. Do we have another comment?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Nicole is saying LA SEAP is next week. And then Charlie Michel said could the action plan specify efforts to find a resource who can collaborate with DDC in order to get the experience and knowledge we are looking for. And then Ms. Mary Jacob stated a DDC staff member needs to have a job goal to attend all education meetings.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I think something similar to that has already been established.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Kelly Monroe stated if you go over 250 you have to put out an RFP. And Nicole Flores stated RFP issue.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And Mary Tarver has her hand raised.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Yes.

MARY TARVER: Hey. I was just going to say I do think that it is something to put on an actionable item for our planning because we do have a gap in maybe the information getting back, the pieces. And I think Brenton you were saying that y'all did have somebody who, do y'all have somebody who is going to all the educational meetings, the SEAP and all those?

AMY DEAVILLE: Ebony has been going to most meetings. But we've been a staff of five for a long time so getting to every meeting is just not possible.

MARY TARVER: Well, I think to Bambi's point is that there are some meetings that are going to, for us, from an educational and rehab committee that those meetings would be high priority and before we did have staff, I mean, I don't think that LaCAN is the answer for somebody going to those meetings. I do think that we probably need to have a discussion and it might not be to go on this planning document, but I do think that we need to have somebody who attends those BESE and SEAP for sure on behalf of the council. I think that it's very important for us to get that information, have it back to us and not everybody on the council lives and can even come close to going to any of those meetings. But that is a gap we're missing from prior years.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. And just remind everyone we have three minutes left.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. So who gets a communication out when they have meetings for BESE, SEAP and all the other accolades? Like who gets...

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I don't know that it's going out regular.

NICOLE BANKS: Like, okay BESE's having a meeting about this. Even though it's not mandatory or whatever you go, do you at least get the memo like hey, they're having a meeting or hey, this person is having a meeting at this time, this play.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I get all. I'm on the BESE. You're talking about do I get notification? I'm on the list serve.

NICOLE BANKS: Yeah. You get all the meetings even if you may not think that someone on this council live far enough or not. You don't know their schedule. I feel like that should go out to all the people that at least sit up on this committee so that if we want to go, we have the option to go. But I don't know about any of those meetings at all.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. So I think that I like I think what Charlie had said. Maybe the solution would be like a contractual thing since we don't have the staff maybe have...

HANNA JENKINS: Action plan to make special efforts to find a resource who could collaborate with DDC in order to get the experience and knowledge we're looking for.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. Maybe that's a way around it to have a contractual relationship with someone with that education expertise we're looking at. And also to be able to stay up to date and keep us aware of what needs to be actionable item. Staff just go there and speak on what the council's position is or is it the activate advocates to attend or to write letters or those type of things. Like I think that might be a good thing to put in the action plan.

REKEESHA BRANCH: And Nicole Flores stated just a note like today the DDC committee meetings are the same day as BESE meetings.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. So we have zero minutes left. Anyone else have anything they must say before the meeting closes? Okay. So do I need to make like any of the recommendations?

AMY DEAVILLE: They were not all action plan recommendations. We have them written down. And even Charlie's recommendation I need to look into. They will make it to the planning committee. I don't know that you can make a motion on Charlie's. Well, not you because you're chairing the meeting but.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So is there any motion that you want to make a recommendation to the full council?

PHIL WILSON: So I'm not sure if this works or not, and I don't think I'm allowed to make motions because I'm not with you guys today, but it seems like if somebody could make a motion to have the executive director and the council look into some restructuring of how the funds are spent so that we can kind of put some resources into, sounds like primarily education, but I also heard employment. So that we could have somebody with expertise either who is a council member or is a contract from the council member to go to these important meetings and speak on behalf of the council and bring information back to the council. Is that kind of what you were getting at, Bambi? Trying to figure out what the action.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I think so. Did you get that, Hannah?

HANNA JENKINS: Not exactly. And I know we will need someone who's here here.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Right. So the only people who can make motions right now are Erick, Renoda, Melissa, Meredith, Mary or Vivienne, correct?

PHIL WILSON: Parents or self-advocates-- oh, I see what you did. Never mind.

ERICK TAYLOR: I'm going to just put this out here. I think we need to look at this some more before we even write it to the council as a whole as this group to really figure out what do we really need do before we put something on the table. What we need to do with the funding. Because this is serious, guys. And I don't think one day we're going to figure this out. This not going to be a one-day thing. Just need to really look at it.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. So if that's the agreement, I mean, we certainly can make motions at the full council meeting. So if there's thoughts if we think about it tonight and hopefully somebody comes up with really great recommendations we can make those at the full council meeting tomorrow. Are there any other discussion on the topic? So Vivienne's asking for someone just to share. So what Erick suggested is that we kind of wait and talk about it more and think about it more and not make any recommendations at this moment. And I followed up with that recommendations or motions could be made to the full council meeting tomorrow. Is that okay, Vivienne? Okay. Good. Okay. So if there's no other comment on the recommendations. Any announcements?

HANNA JENKINS: Council meeting tomorrow 8:30 a.m. Bright and early.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. So we'll see everyone tomorrow for the full council meeting at 8:30. If there's no objection we'll adjourn by unanimous consent. Thank you, guys.