

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Education and Employment Committee
July 19, 2023

HYACINTH MCKEE: Greetings, everyone and welcome to the Education and Employment Committee meeting for the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. The time is now 3:09. Today is Wednesday, July 19th, 2023. At this time I'm going to ask for a roll call and a brief introduction. When your name is called, please state your name and just give a brief introduction.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Banks.

NICOLE BANKS: Hello. I'm Nicole Banks. I am the chair of the disability council.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Hi. I'm Melissa Bayham. I'm the director of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Cosse. Ms. Gonzales. Ms. Jordan.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Hey, everyone. Good afternoon. Meredith Jordan, executive director for diverse learnings at Department of Education.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Dr. McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Greetings, everyone. Education Employment chairperson, Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Polotzola.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Bambi Polotzola. I'm the director for Governor's Office Disability Affairs.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Tarver.

MARY TARVER: Mary Tarver. I'm a parent from Alexandria.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Webb. Dr. Wilson. Mr. Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: You want to give a brief introduction, Mr. Taylor?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: And Ms. Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Present. My name's Renoda Washington. I am a parent from Lake Charles, Louisiana and a member of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council.

HYACINTH MCKEE: All right. Thank you, everyone. Was

that everyone? Okay. Thank you, everyone. And so now we will review the meeting protocols that we can see they are posted up here. We just want to make note that members should be recognized by the chair before speaking. We will refrain from using acronyms and alphabets that we cannot provide the definitions to. If we need to take a break, we will, but I don't think that that will need to be happening because we're so late in the afternoon. And so they are all presented in front of you. With that being said, the next item on the agenda is the approval for the July meeting minutes. The meeting summary was provided to all the members via email. If there are any questions or corrections, please note at this time.

HYACINTH MCKEE: It's been moved by Mary. Seconded by Nicole. Any public comments regarding this motion of minutes? Any objections or abstentions to the motion on the floor? Hearing none, carries. The January minutes are now approved. We'll now move onto the next item of the agenda which is contractual updates. We will start with the Louisiana Post Secondary Inclusive Education Alliance from Stephanie Carmona.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: This is activity 3.1.1. Dr. Beckers is serving as a LAPIE liaison with the Advisory Council on Post-Secondary Education programs within the Board of Regents. They are currently focusing on disseminating application reminders for the fund. One million-dollars was appropriated to the post-secondary inclusive education fund. A fund for grants for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities at Louisiana post-secondary institutions. This fund was created during the last legislative session with an initial appropriation of one million-dollars. While the one million-dollars appropriated this year is short of the council and LaCAN's three million-dollar ask, we are thankful for the legislature for their continued support of these programs. The LAPIE website is also updated, was updated to make it more easily accessible and to highlight more social media posts. All their posts are used to promote awareness of LAPIE and the available resources. And within this quarter those interactions on social media have increased.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any questions for Stephanie regarding the report from LAPIE?

MARY TARVER: Hey. I don't have any questions, but I

wanted to say that the program, Sparrow was what they called it at LSUA in Alexandria. And they this week just celebrated their first anniversary with their four students and then they're accepting four more so they're going to have eight students on campus this August in this next semester. So it's exciting to see.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Just to add to that if I can. It is really exciting to hear about additional opportunities for these students coming up across our state. One of the things as we talk about LAPIE and as I hear updates about it, I want to do a better job at the department of linking to the opportunities, especially of new opportunities as different post-secondary institutions come up so that even in our school systems, they're aware of these post-secondary opportunities for some of our students with more significant disabilities. And we can increase the numbers of these students who are enrolling in post-secondary where if I don't know those opportunities out there then I'm not going to be able to communicate that option to families. And even a school counselor, knowing where these schools are. So I want to go back with our communications team as well and see if I can link to either the LAPIE website because it list all of these locations, right? Okay.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And I would just like to give my GODA conference plug for this meeting. It's next week and on Tuesday at noon there will be a panel of student and alumni from these programs that Dr. Beckers will be leading that discussion. So I think that will be really interesting. And that's the session on Tuesday at noon.

HYACINTH MCKEE: All right. Any other questions or comments regarding LAPIE? Thank you so much, Stephanie, for the report. Moving onto the next item on the agenda is the contractual update from seminars on hiring individuals with developmental disabilities. Hannah will be giving that report.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I'm actually going to give that. I'm sorry about that, I did not change that. Hannah is not here today. So this is activity 3.2.1. So 23 East was formally O'Neill Communications has developed a plan to start promoting and organizing this webinar series. They have been in discussion with our staff and have approached a partnership with LRS. They are approaching this series as a step-by-step of what employers need to know and do to

make disability a part of their DEI hiring process. They have developed a branding and outreach plan for the webinar series, and it's called Your Next Best Hire. It is a five-part series for employers so that they can see what they need to know on how to include people with disabilities in their hiring process. The webinar series is planned to run from June 21st to August 23rd online. The first webinar, What is Inclusion in the Workplace, was held on June 21st. A recording of this webinar will be available soon. The second webinar was called Getting Started. That was held on July 12, and it covered a few new developments around hiring and discussing how employers can tap into the services behind LRS to add to their hiring practices. And there are three final webinars that are scheduled and the dates for those are July 25th, August 9th and August 23rd. The information and registration links are shared on through our LADDC news. They are on our website and on our social media pages.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Any questions for Stephanie regarding that report?

LAUREN WOMAK: Stephanie, do you know if they reached out to the Workforce Commission, Louisiana Workforce Commission to promote it?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I am not sure, but I can find out.

LAUREN WOMAK: Because they have to register employers. They did like an advertisement on their website.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any other questions for Stephanie regarding the activity 3.2.1 or any comments?

JILL HANO: I have a question, but I think Bambi can (inaudible), if not I am appointing Bambi. For the LAPIE-- never mind. It's in my status report. We're good. Are you busy next week?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I don't have anything on my schedule.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. So there's no other comments, we are going to move right onto the next item on the agenda which is from Melissa Bayham, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services report.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Good afternoon, everyone. I was requested to provide an update on the LRS, LDOE memorandum of understanding. And I am happy to report that this has been approved by both Dr. Brumley and Ava Cates, secretary of the Workforce Commission. So what I did, I provided you with the language of the MOU, that's the handout that I gave you. And so that shows what LWC, LRS agrees to as well as

the Louisiana Department of Education. So it's a lot, so I don't expect you to read this all right now. But certainly after you do read it if you have any questions, I would be happy to answer those. But this is just an agreement of how LRS and the Department of Education will collaborate to provide more effective transition services to students with disabilities including but not limited to our provision of preemployment transition services that are provided within our school districts.

And I'm sure Meredith is going to provide some additional information, but the Department of Education has applied for what's called a disability innovation fund grant which is actually through the Rehabilitation Services Administration which is where we are actually funded. So these are actually funds that VR agencies, vocational rehabilitation agencies were not able to spend so it's put into this disability innovation fund grant. And because a lot of vocational rehabilitation agencies are already involved in disability innovation fund grants like we are with Southern University they also allowed the state educational agencies to apply for these grants this go round, they've had several go-rounds of these grants. So I'm very pleased that our Louisiana Department of Education did apply for a disability innovation fund grant. And I'm sure Meredith will give you better information on that since her department applied. But is essentially to improve our transition services and to do some model demonstrations that we can replicate in other regions.

And so vocational rehabilitation it is obviously a required partner, and we are happy to partner if the grant is awarded with the Department of Education. We continue to get a lot more school districts on board, but we are not at 100 percent as far as having either a vendor of ours who provides these services in the school districts, or the school district can also enter into what's called a third-party cooperative agreement where they provide state or local funds to draw down the federal funds for transition specialist in their district. We do continue to have districts that are entering into these agreements. We find that these agreements, in my opinion, are best case scenario because the districts have an actual person that they employ with these vocational rehabilitation funds to provide these transition services. Some districts are just very nervous about having outside vendors come onto

their schools. And so we are continuing to promote those third-party cooperative arrangements. And they also help us to draw down additional federal funds that are allocated to Louisiana for our individuals with disabilities.

The only other update I would like to make is we have, and I'm not sure, I wasn't here at the last council meeting, but we have completely rolled out our new supported employment milestone system. As of the last legislative session before last there were some resolutions passed for us to do a rate study. And as a result of that rate study we increased our rates for supported employment. So they have been increased by 3,500-dollars per participant in order for obviously our vendors to have the resources that they need to be able to provide these services to our individuals with disabilities. One thing that other than the rates increasing we did add some additional milestones so that vendors are compensated more throughout the process. And milestone one is now doc search assistance. So this allows the vendor to be paid once they provide job search assistance for the first week. We can make that payment so that the vendors have that funding available for that job develop. Whereas before in the milestone system the vendor did not get paid until they actually placed the individual into employment.

And so our next step is to increase our rates for our other employment services which we are actively working on. We will be increasing our rates for job readiness and placement services, customized employment and time limited job coaching. And so you'll see a similar change or shift in those rates where we will include that service of job search assistance to provide that additional funding support for our providers so they can provide services. LRS continues to have vacancies and I know our vendors do as well and so I'm hoping that this financial support will help them to be able to recruit and retain employees for themselves as well. We continue to, we're up to 63 rehabilitation counselors statewide but I still have 23 vacancies. So we still continuously actively recruit for rehabilitation counselors statewide. We have a continuous posting on the civil service website. So if you know individuals who would like to join our team, please send them to the civil service website to apply to that continuous posting. We pull it every two weeks. So we will definitely see them. But those are my two major

updates. If anyone has any questions. Yes, ma'am.

NICOLE BANKS: So were y'all able to fill that position up in the Houma Thibodaux area?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Are you talking about the rehabilitation employment development specialist? It's still vacant. That is the only, we call that our REDS. It's basically our in-house job developer that we have in each region. We were never able to find a qualified applicant. It's about time for us to repost it. You can't keep it posted but we probably need to repost it. Yes, ma'am.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any other questions? Go ahead, Jill.

JILL HANO: I think I heard you wrong. You have 23?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I have 23 vacant counselor positions. I have eight REDS positions, which is the rehabilitation employment development specialist. Try not to use acronyms. And I have one vacancy for that position and that's in the Houma area.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you.

MARY TARVER: I think we had talked about before on the districts that don't participate or don't have somebody in the school system. Cause we find that a lot, and I don't know if Rapides Parish, do you know off the top of your head, I think before when you reported we haven't been.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yeah. I don't know off the top of my head.

MARY TARVER: So I just wondered how...

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. And I can definitely give updates on specific districts. I can tell you that, and Rapides comes to my mind. At one point we were providing a lot of our preemployment transition services through the JAG program. And Rapides has a lot of JAG programs. And we know-- and JAG is separate, it's always been separate, but we're no longer providing preemployment transition services through JAG. So it's been a little bit slower getting those districts back on board because we were basically doing it through JAG.

MARY TARVER: What is JAG?

MELISSA BAYHAM: JAG is Jobs for America's Graduates. It's a program for at risk youth, I believe. It's actually in the Office of Workforce Development now. It was under the Department of Education and now it's actually at the Workforce Commission.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And why aren't y'all using preETS for

that anymore?

MELISSA BAYHAM: That is not my decision. So JAGs still exist, and the JAGs services are still what they always have been, but they have chosen to fund it differently. They received a significant amount of state general funds, so they were able to fund their program without the use of preemployment transition services, so they decided to do it that way. There was a little bit more administrative functions with our funding because we have progress reports, and they have to invoice per student per district. So since they were able to secure the state general funds that they needed, and they also receive a lot of TANF funding for that because they didn't need our funding, that's why that stopped. But it could, if they lost funding or if their funding was reduced, I could see them coming back.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So I can't rationalize why we would not use federal funding and use state funding.

MELISSA BAYHAM: That was not my decision.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. Not saying it was but.

MARY TARVER: Would they be focusing on students with disabilities?

MELISSA BAYHAM: So this gets a little complicated. But it was very complex because the JAG program does not only serve individuals with disabilities and so you have to ensure that the federal funds do not contribute to the students without disabilities which was very, it was very complex at the funding level. It was actually, we had an audit finding on JAG.

MEREDITH JORDAN: But I wonder does that necessarily mean that those JAG students aren't receiving preETS like through...

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: They may be receiving more services now potentially because they may be receiving services through JAG, and they may be receiving services through a vendor if we have a vendor at that particular school district.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Can we get, and I should know this, can we get a list of what school districts have that cooperative agreement? Is that like on your website or is that something you have to get?

MELISSA BAYHAM: The copy, that list we wouldn't have on our website but it's easy for me to get.

MEREDITH JORDAN: And Mary, to your point too, I was

going to say we're bringing all SPED directors together from all collaboratives and I think it would be beneficial to talk about this opportunity for all of them. Now they're going to go back and partner with maybe a career tech ed or a transition person, but at least I can help communicate that out to our SPED directors. And in the grant that Melissa talked about that we're applying for, that is exactly the model that we are promoting is that cooperative third-party agreement. And our plan is to through this grant and through the school systems we plan to work with come up with a framework that's scalable that any school system can pick up and say here's how I should provide transition services for students including those preETS services. And by large what we find, like Melissa said, if I have a person at the school district through this third-party corporative agreement who is championing that transition work, those are the school systems where we see those inclusive CTE experiences and those inclusive transition practices and really great transition services where like I have a plan the day after I graduate. And so we can definitely...

MELISSA BAYHAM: And I can tell you off the top of my head Livingston Parish and Bossier Parish, they added people to their third-party cooperative arrangements because they're really high proponents of it. The thing that kind of scares school districts sometimes is you can't use your IDEA funds to match. It has to be state or local funds.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And also in regards to information the vendors, is that on your website, the list of the vendors?

MELISSA BAYHAM: The list of vendors, no.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So how do people know who's available?

MELISSA BAYHAM: So the counselors are supposed to provide that information to the students.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Not just for students, I'm talking about for adults.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Correct. We have not put our vendors on our website because it's a fluid list. You know, we renew people, we add people all the time and to update the LWC website it would be a task in itself to request to add. You know, it would be like every week we would be asking to change something on the website.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Do you have vendors come and go that quick like every week?

MELISSA BAYHAM: No, not every week. But we do update vendors on a periodic basis and it's just something that we don't want to be inaccurate on the website, so we've never put it up there.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I just feel like that's information people should have even if it has like effective August 1st. And so people know if they go August 30th something could have changed in that timeframe. Like because I have no idea who the vendors are for employment. I think that makes it complicated for people to really understand. It's already complex to understand the system.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. I wish we had system-- I know when I worked for the Department of Health it was very easy to update things and we don't have that system. Something to look into.

LAUREN WOMAK: I have a question too. This is more the employment side. But like when I was studying rehab in the state and how federal works, isn't LRS supposed to be present at the job centers? Cause I've worked there for eight years, and I've never seen a CRC come through our door.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Okay. Yeah. We are required to have a presence in the comprehensive one stop. So that would be, there would be 15 of those across the state. Not the affiliates. But sometimes it's not a 40 hour a week presence. It could be a counselor, depending on the one stops' needs or if they have, sometimes the issue is space. We don't have an office for our counselor in all the one stops. But there's definitely supposed to be accessibility. In other words, the one stop should be able to easily connect an individual who is seeking vocational rehabilitation to our local office. There should be a process in place for that.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any other questions for Melissa regarding her report? Melissa, at this time are you entertaining questions regarding the memorandum of understanding?

MELISSA BAYHAM: That is up to you.

HYACINTH MCKEE: First of all, thank you for getting this done. We have been working hard for at least, I don't know, Mary, how long have you and I been here, forever, to get a memorandum of understanding between DOE and LRS. So

thank you so much for getting us to this point. It took us some time but it's gratitude that we see this in front of us. But I do have a few questions. I'm noticing the language in the agreement for LRS specific in saying what their accountability will be, what their responsibility would be. But more particularly being specific in what they are committing to provide to this MOU. The language that's used for LRS terminology as ensure, laws are cited, collaboration is mentioned, development. All of those type of words that provide a climate of accountability. My concern is is that when I read the Department of Education's agreement, I see language advise and encourage, advise and encourage, encourage, encourage, encourage. And I think, and I am hopeful that the needs of the public will require more than just encouragement when it comes to ensuring that our students with disabilities are getting that access to the secondary lifestyle that they deserve.

My question is this. Who will be ensuring that this MOU and the deliverables that's on the MOU will be enacted, followed through? Who will be monitoring this. How often will this MOU be monitored to ensure that these commitments will be held? And what will happen if LEAs decide not to take the encouragement from the Department of Ed when it comes to ensuring that the needs of the students are being met? So thank you so much.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So in terms of just to explain, you know, my position as the LRS director, you know, we are the state vocational rehabilitation agency, and we expend all funds and I'm responsible for all VR services throughout the State of Louisiana. But I think, and I'll let Meredith speak to this, the way LDE is structured with the school districts it is different the way LRS is structured with the regional offices. I don't know if you want to speak to that, Meredith.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. And I think as we were taking a look at this, and we had an MOU year's past. Remember, I think when I came into this role there wasn't an MOU signed and so we started working as quickly as we could, we knew this was an important task to this council as well to get the MOU signed and agreed upon. And we definitely recognize the struggle of we can't force our LEAs to enter into these partnerships or how they provide transition services or who they use to deliver those. But I think what we are certainly committed to is putting together, like I

said, I think getting this grant and getting a framework for these services and saying this is the partnership that we believe would make successful transition services. We're certainly committed to doing all those things. There is a challenge there in saying LEA, you must get a third-party corporative agreement. We're just not allowed to have that kind of control and requirement to say you must have this partnership. If that makes sense.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So I'm looking at number 7 where it says advise and encourage LEAs to provide LRS a signed IEP, a signed 504 accommodation plan or other medical documentation of a disability signed by the appropriate medical professional. So that's something that in your role you could not ensure more than encourage that that would happen for that student?

MEREDITH JORDAN: One of the things that we think is going to help this too, and we've talked about it, it's actually written into our grant is to create a shared website. I think if parents knew the documentation and the forms that were required, so that's referring to those forms that are required for parents to sign and actually release that information. And I think what we can do is to help communicate and make sure all of that information is accessible to families and know what's out there and what steps they have to take to be successful in getting these set up for their children.

HYACINTH MCKEE: And the last question was who will be providing the oversight to ensure that this agreement, this MOU is being actualized and when will this MOU start?

MELISSA BAYHAM: It's already started. As far as who will-- so I have a preemployment transition services team of three individuals in my section. And so they would be the ones responsible for this. But then obviously if there are issues at the district level, they would bring them to my attention.

HYACINTH MCKEE: And so from LDOE who's going to be providing the oversight on your end? That sounds like LRS has who will be managing this MOU.

MEREDITH JORDAN: This would be me on my team.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So you personally will be managing the MOU?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So if there's any questions or comments regarding anything with this parents should be

directed to contact you directly?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Uh-huh.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any other questions? Jill.

JILL HANO: Do you have a date that this took affect?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I believe my secretary signed it on April, in April. But I don't remember the date on the actual MOU. If you give me just a minute, I can find it.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So the question-- and so Jill, what's the..

JILL HANO: Y'all know how I love dates.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Right. What's in front of us is nothing that's signed, nothing that has a date, nothing that says when this contract takes effect. Nothing that says this is going to be annually. It's going to be reviewed. And I think to Jill's point, and Jill, I'm not speaking for you. We don't see that here.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. And so I saw this on the agenda, and I did not have time to vet through my department and through the Department of Education if they wanted the actual document. But I can certainly do that.

MEREDITH JORDAN: It's a three-year MOU. So it will go through June 30th, 2025. But we're certainly willing to work together, review, revise before three years if we feel like there's something that needs to be added.

HYACINTH MCKEE: One more question. Where is that written where, is there-- so you're saying there's another document other than this that has all of that for the public to be aware of?

MELISSA BAYHAM: The only thing that you don't have in front of you is the signature page and I think there's a first page, but this was the meat and potatoes, the deliverables.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay, Jill. Thank you. Sorry.

JILL HANO: I think you're looking more for the official contract to see when the dates, when the Is are dotted, the Ts are crossed. And this is bulk of the gist of the MOU.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So I was hoping that we would get everything. Dates when it started, date when it ends. How long it is, you know, the whole thing. And then making that notice for the public.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Okay. I understand.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I wanted to make sure that you had something in front of you for this meeting. And this

particular, this MOU is required for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and so it will be something that continues to be updated.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So perhaps may be the next meeting you can have the full executed contract for the Education and Employment Committee to have and to also present to the full council.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Okay.

MARY TARVER: I do think that one of the reasons why we were asking for this was so that we could see what the progress was. So I think that's an important piece too, you know, if it's that you got to, you have some things in here saying they're going to decide when a student is trying to be eligible then you're going to have things that are going to happen. I think, you know, is there a way that some of these things, I mean, some of these things to be monitored and reported back to the committee? Like for number four just, for instance, I mean, that they're going to have those, if they qualify, then they're going to have an individualized employment plan and by the time that they leave school. So is that something that's like a checkmark like student A has this, yes. You know, is that something, will it work itself to that detail?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I'm trying to figure out as you're speaking how I could report that to you because we serve thousands of students a year. I'll think about how I can report that.

MARY TARVER: Just like as you're looking at this now we know what the deliverables are and when it comes to developmental disabilities as students of this we're trying to monitor who's being served and where the disparities, you know, lay then it's going to help us to be able to see that and, you know, try and work better with Department of Education on, you know, who else do we need to meet with, what do we need to do to get the schools on board because students are not going to be served in every area of the state.

JILL HANO: Correct. And that goes again to Dr. McKee's point like what does, that goes back to the contract and what does it specifically say. What areas of the state get served.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I will definitely vet that and make sure I can get that to you next time. But what I did provide you, this is directly from the MOU. These are deliverables

of the MOU.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Nicole, you're being recognized.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. So I know we're trying to get something tangible done as far as like what we see on paper, the measurables. So I work at a school system for a long time and some of the teachers have already developed what you guys are asking for, they developed a checklist. So what they do is they put everything on that checklist. When the student get an IEP, was it delivered to their parents, did they talk to them. It's a whole checklist done. And the student name is just on there. All the student names involved in that particular program is on there and whoever's the administrator they check off and go and make sure that was done, that was done.

Everything's already on a sheet of paper. So I don't want y'all to invent the wheel if it's already done, you know. Because that kind of stuff is like in place. Maybe you guys can reach out to a school district or something like that, you know, they have it in place because this kind of stuff is an easy fix. Very easy to get us something that's measurable. It shouldn't take the rest of the year to get this done. Nor should it take the rest of the year for us to get what we need to get done what we've been asking for. Almost got it, but like Dr. McKee said--

HYACINTH MCKEE: (Inaudible) about five years. In order to see that something is happening now. And I think that's important to recognize that, you know, the two entities have gotten together, they have discussed, they have developed, and they are making steps, right. And that's the concern. I think the position of the families and public that we serve always ends up on the end of accountability, Melissa, right. Words are just words on a paper, you know. Our families are asking for action and they're asking, they're crying out for supports for their children and their families. And so it's great to see this, but it's also, it speaks to the volume of work that we need to continue to do because advise and encourage is still very subjective and it does not give much weight to hold districts accountable for not following through what's on this MOU. And so great on paper. Great for effort. But when it gets actually down to the people, when it gets to the people are they actually getting what they are deserving to get. And that's the concern. And so I'm seeing what LRS is committing to do, and I applaud the

efforts of the two agencies getting together. Any other questions regarding this MOU or questions for Melissa?

SPEAKER: I have one. I heard you say that, you know, you guys service a lot of students and things like that. And I'm kind of just trying to get information. You service like how would we know who are you servicing because...

MELISSA BAYHAM: Are you talking about students?

SPEAKER: Yes.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So first I'm going to tell you, so vocational rehabilitation is required to make preemployment transition services available to all students with disabilities. And so we are, we have eight regional offices and our staff at the regional offices connect with the school districts to provide services to those students. And so I think what we're talking about here is it works really well in certain districts and not so well in other districts. So, you know, we're trying to make this process better to make the collaboration better because essentially at the end of the day we are required to make sure that every student with a disability has access to these services.

SPEAKER: Okay. So it does it include charter school, all of that?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes. It does.

SPEAKER: It does?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes, ma'am.

SPEAKER: Okay. I teach at a charter school, and we don't know anything about LRS.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Okay. Actually, a lot of charter schools--

SPEAKER: I'm only aware but.

MELISSA BAYHAM: For whatever reason we have a lot of charter schools in the New Orleans area that have third party cooperative arrangements.

SPEAKER: Okay. So how can we ensure that all school districts are receiving information about LRS?

MELISSA BAYHAM: You need to make sure your school district is on our list. Which I think we got the list from Department of Education. So we can make sure that happens.

SPEAKER: Can we receive a list of all districts so we that we can, you know, accountability is important. I think somewhere along the line there's, you know, it's just a lot of things probably involved where the ball is dropped.

MELISSA BAYHAM: And we keep a list of districts and where we are with each district. It's a fluid list but we definitely have it.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Nicole, you're being recognized.

NICOLE BANKS: Shouldn't all the districts in Louisiana be covered automatically?

MELISSA BAYHAM: They're automatically covered but I think the elephant in the room I know for LRS is concerning-- though I kind of discussed this earlier. How many school districts are in Louisiana?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Along with charters, approximately between 170 along with charters.

MELISSA BAYHAM: And I have 63 rehabilitation counselors who also serve the adult population. Actually, I was just looking at an audit report today. Back in 1999 LRS had over 150 rehabilitation counselors. And so to say we're managing with a skeleton crew, we are doing the best that we can. Because I'm going to tell you, I mean, this is on LRS just as much as Department of Education. We do not have the resources, the personnel right now to do what I would call a robust effort to get some of these districts. So I try as much as I can at my level to educate. I attended and presented at the Jump Start Conference. Anytime that I can get in front of educators I try to get the word out. Cause I also have staff in my office. So if we have school districts who want third-party cooperative arrangements that's handled by somebody in my office so that kind of takes, you know, takes the pressure off of my field staff and puts it on that particular individual and he arranges everything with the third party. So we're definitely trying, but it could be better if I had a full staff. Does that make sense?

NICOLE BANKS: So the staff is kind of the reason why everybody is not getting served?

MELISSA BAYHAM: To a certain extent. I mean, there's several things. And there are certain districts, I don't know off the top of my head, and it's not a large number, but haven't wanted to play with us for some reason. So it's just there's different things in different areas depending on the particular area of the state. But I can tell you that we could definitely be doing a better job. I'm not going to lie to you about that. But we're trying the best that we can. And my administrative office is trying to reach out to districts as well.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. Because I just think that everybody in Louisiana should be offered this.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. And I want to make this point as well. I think part of the struggle is that, you know, this requirement, and when I say requirement, I hate to say that because this is obviously something that we should be doing. Transition is very important to our students with disabilities. But the requirement for preemployment transition services is through the Rehabilitation Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. And it's very interesting to me we are under the federal Department of Education, however these requirements are not in the requirements under IDEA, for example. So we're having to tell districts it's the law but it's not their law. We follow the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. They follow IDEA. It would be nice if the federal government would put it in both of them. I know that's easier said than done. But it's a little bit difficult if I just come to you and I say Nicole, it's the law. You need to do this. But you read your law and you're like well, it's not in my law. So I think that's one of-- it's not, it's a compliance issue for us, but it's not a compliance issue for the districts so that's, I think, sometimes--

NICOLE BANKS: We're not on the same page.

MELISSA BAYHAM: In certain areas. But I think when districts see what these services can do for their students. Desoto Parish for whatever reason comes to my mind. They do an amazing job with their transition. And I know, I think it was Jump Start, not this year, but the year before they presented. So I think when we get those districts in front of other districts, and they can see what's possible and the outcomes that these students are having I think it's definitely a great thing.

HYACINTH MCKEE: I also want to also encourage this MOU to go out to our Families Helping Families centers as well so they are informed. As well as our LaCAN leaders. Everyone needs to be informed of this MOU. But, I mean, the actual contract, when it started, when it ended and the responsibilities. I think Lauren had her hand raised. Lauren.

LAUREN WOMAK: Two things real quick. I know for time. I think it's also important when you're running for school board to make them aware of it from your end and hold them accountable as well. And I really think Melissa or Bambi

could explain it a lot more eloquently than I could, but the federal match that we all, everybody with a disability needs to be advocating for. Cause when you hear it, you're just going to be blown away. Could you sum it up quickly.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sure. So we have a 78.7 percent federal match, but it requires a 21.3 percent state match. So just to give you some rough numbers. I can tell you we return about 50 percent of our vocational grant back to the federal government because we do not have the state general funds to match the grant. So we receive approximately, it depends on the year, between 28 and 31 million-dollars is what we end up keeping in Louisiana. But our actual allocation, it continues to increase, I believe it may be up to around 65 million-dollars. So also if we had the resources available that would obviously be very helpful.

LAUREN WOMAK: How many of us have a family member of a child with a disability in our family. And it's going to affect the population getting older. It affects everybody and I think (inaudible) and that's something why I joined the council too is because I think if more people knew and people held lawmakers accountable that they need to, it's a good investment.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Definitely agree. And also those third parties, when the districts provide those matching funds those are new federal dollars we're able to pull down. We get a little under 8 million-dollars of state general funds, but if you do the math, it's not going to come out because we're able to draw those additional funds other than the funds we draw down with the state general funds with the matching funds from the school district.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And I would just like to say this all comes back to what our expectations are for people with disabilities. I think, I mean, I feel like we have done so much, I know while I've been in my role in this administration we've done so much for people with disabilities but the one area that we have failed is what Melissa just described. Because we could be getting this federal, such a tremendous amount of federal funds, be able to staff her office to be able to do this outreach, to be able to have more robust services. And we haven't done that. And so I think it comes down to our advocacy. So I think as a council as we move forward is to really think about like what Lauren was just saying is that we need to start prioritizing employment. We need to understand what

they're talking about, what employment's talking about with transition and really advocate for that in the way we've advocated for home and community-based services. And we moved it forward for home and community-based services because I think there's an understanding among our developmental disability community that people should be able to live in their homes in their community, but people should do more than just live. They should have every option that somebody without a disability has. An expectation of work and post-secondary education and all those things. And so we need to move the, I think the council and the developmental disability community's mindset forward that we've made this progress in home and community-based service, but we need to have full and inclusive lives. And that really needs to be a focus on employment. We've done a good job at post-secondary. We have some options. We can expand that. But people need to be able to go work where they want to work and have those opportunities like anyone else. I challenge the council to really kind of start focusing their attention in that area.

LAUREN WOMAK: Instead of okay, how many people that work and have family members. We all overlap some kind of way.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And just one last statement. I think that also when we don't have that expectation of employment and those opportunities that works backwards into our education system because then we have an education system that doesn't see students with disabilities as having anything meaningful once they exit the K12 system. So they don't see the investment as a priority because they see these kids are just not having anything when they become adults. And so I think we can shift the mindset going backwards if we can have more opportunities for these students as they become adults in employment.

LAUREN WOMAK: And it's possible. Other states do it. It's not impossible.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Well, thank y'all so much. I believe that if there's no more questions for Melissa, Melissa always does a pretty decent job being on the hot seat. She does a really good job of that. If there are no other questions and comments for Melissa we're going to move onto the next item of agenda, Louisiana Department of Education update from Meredith Jordan and Dr. Cade Brumley.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Wonderful. Well, I'll invite Dr. Brumley up to join me. I was so excited with his busy schedule that he was able to come and spend some time with the council and with our education and employment committee and really talk to us and let him get us kicked off today about some of the work that we are doing.

CADE BRUMLEY: Thank you all for having me. Appreciate the opportunity to be here. And I've enjoyed the conversations and can tell you I learned some things about some of the needs and opportunities ahead. So thanks for sharing that information with me. On the educational space, particularly K12, we know that we still have a lot of work to do in providing the education that our students with exceptionalities need and deserve. And also better supporting families. I often say that our students with disabilities or our students with exceptionalities they have some of the most passionate family members in the entire educational system. And I think, unfortunately, I don't know that that's a good thing because that means they've had to fight so long for everything they received, and it just shouldn't be that hard. And so we know that we have work to do. I will tell you some things that we have done that I think are really important and helpful. And in sharing these things I'm not suggesting in any way that we've arrived, I'm just saying these are some good positive movements. I think number one is at the department we shifted the diverse learners division, which Meredith leads and is so accessible to everyone and helpful. We've shifted it under the teaching learning department because we really believe that whenever we're having conversations about reading or math or science or what high school looks like we need to have the voices, all those voices at that table so that we're not isolating and leaving out a very important subgroup of our students. That moved happened. I think that's been a positive move. Another thing that's happened is Meredith has done a good job with working with special education directors around the state to try to bring that collaboration back together and those networking meetings together so that sharing of ideas and challenges can be facilitated.

The next thing is one of the things we noticed is that throughout the State of Louisiana there is a lacking in terms of individuals who can, in school systems, lead special education departments. That skill set is in high

demand and unfortunately, we don't have adequate supply to meet that demand. And so we are continuing to run our special educational leadership fellows program. And we just actually graduated a new set of fellows. And so they are being mentored by more experienced special ed directors from throughout the state. So that's a program that runs throughout the course of the year. And we're doing that again. But I feel like if that would have happened 10 years ago or 15 years ago we wouldn't be in such a dire need of special education leadership talent across the state. So that I think is important.

Another thing that's important is the work of the advocates and individuals in this room around the special education camera law. You know, we were happy to support and speak for that and have conversations with legislators around that, but I just want to be clear like special education advocates are the ones that really pushed that across the finish line. And so we are going to have our first set of reporting on that very soon. I know Meredith will share information about that. Sometimes there's some frustration from individuals that more systems haven't put all the cameras in the classroom. But the way in which that law was crafted says the parent has to request the camera. And so that probably hasn't happened as quickly as people would have liked for it to happen, but it's in many ways a byproduct of the way in which it was crafted. I want to let the group know that in this year's executive budget we put in, and the administration thankfully granted and the legislature approved, we put in a 10 percent upkeep dollar amount. So eight million dollars was set aside for the cameras installation last year, but we know every year there's upkeep to those cameras. And so we just determined the 10 percent rule and so we had made an 800,000-dollar request this year and thankfully that's included in the budget.

Another important piece I think is special education teacher pay. We requested from our legislature and were able to get 25 million-dollars in funding for what we call differentiated compensation. Which really has four different areas. And what that means is is that school systems, their governing boards, their superintendents are going to have an additional set of dollars that they can use for key areas. And one of the areas that we've highlighted and that we've called out alongside high school

science and high school math is K through 12 special education. And so what school systems are going to be able to do is they can take this pool of money that is their pool of money, and they can say you know what, in our system we're going to prioritize special education teachers and they can pay those teachers additional dollars. So they may want to decide they want to pay special education teachers 5 or 10,000-dollars more than other teachers as a driver to move people into that particular body of work. We feel like that's really important just from a market prospective because maybe it will incentivize some people who previously had not thought about a career in special education to go and do that work. So we're thankful for that. That goes into effect this particular year.

And then the last thing I'll mention is-- well, actually two things. I know it's late in the afternoon but a couple things. One, we just launched our special education playbook which has gotten a lot of good national attention and it centers around making sure students with disabilities have access to core content instruction with the highest level of teachers and giving them additional time to experience that learning. And that document isn't like we're done, it's over. It's a living document. And as we get feedback and hear from people of places to get better, we'll do that. But that's already garnering a good bit of national attention.

The last thing I'll say is I talked to a group of parents who were concerned about our dispute resolution process and how IEP decisions and other conflicts are resolved. And so I shared with them that we would commission an independent study to look at our dispute resolution process. So we did commission an independent study to come in, review that process. Meet with parents. Meet with Families Helping Families. And so they pulled together a report and a set of suggestions for us on how to get better. So really excited to have that in our hands and we're looking through that to see what revisions we would like to make or should make to that process. So I said all that to say we're actively engaged in trying to do better. It is a continuous improvement process, and we have a long way to go. But we are committed to try to continue to do better and glad to be here to share some of that information with you all today. Meredith.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Great. So I have just a couple of

items to piggyback on a couple of things that Dr. Brumley mentioned. So you all actually have access to a link, it's on the full council agenda, I didn't catch that before yesterday, to the local Special Education Advisory Council reports. But I want to talk a little bit about it today. I won't really go into it tomorrow. But we have posted on our website per that legislation we began collecting local Special Education Advisory Councils', their annual report of activities for the 2022-2023 school year. We started communicating this requirement very early. Probably, you know, midyear to last year, December or January that this was coming. This was the first year, because as you all know, every time we add another thing for our school systems sometimes there's a little bit of a curve to say hey, you're required to do this. Great. Thank you for pulling that up. So this is posted now on our website and so you can literally go and click for every single school system and access their local annual report that tells you activities for what their local special education advisory council did in that year.

We are still following up. You all know it's always my goal to have 100 percent of this information for you all. But you will see that we did not receive these from some schools systems so we're still following up and we will update this as I get additional reports. And we'll update it and repost that link so those are available to the public. And again, this is an annual requirement so same time next year we're going to, I believe legislation says they have to submit them to us in May. And so we gave them the whole month of May to get these reports and get these links in to us. I feel like this is really accessible instead of giving you all hundreds of pages of reports. Go to the school system that you're interested in, click on the link and there's your report. And so again, this is something that will be an annual requirement that my office will administer and help support our school systems with this requirement each year. So I wanted you all to see this and have that in case you have any questions about it.

The next thing Dr. Brumley mentioned a little bit about SPED cameras. I know that's a big interest to this group. You all had a great impact on that particular legislation. We brought a report to BESE in April about how much of that funding had been spent. And remember really last year was the first implementation. Also remember that that

legislative funding wasn't designated until the 2022 legislative session. So to start this school year was when we started the process of getting that funding out. And so really, I mean midyear around December or January where school systems really had that funding in hand and said okay, let's start making a plan and accepting requests from parents. So we did an April report to BESE that based on a survey we sent we tried to get some preliminary data about where these cameras are being installed. How much money had been spent. I'm happy to report you'll see we're bringing an August BESE report, so I don't have that report for you, but I can send it to this group once it's finalized as we bring it to BESE, that our school systems have spent over a million dollars of that 8 million-dollar allocation that they received from the legislature. Whereas in April-- so those expenses have gone up which is what we and I think stakeholders and the public want to see. That as parents request that the cameras are being purchased and are being installed. And so what you'll see on that August BESE report is for every school system who received funding you will see what was their total allocation. We actually had them report to us in our grants management system how many special education classrooms they have that met that requirement because those are not, that's not information that we would have or track as far as how many special education classrooms that can change year to year based on your population.

You will also see there how many parent requests. We asked them to tell us how many parent requests have they received, how many of those have they granted and how many cameras have been purchased and how much of their funding have they already used. So it will give you quite a bit of information, good information representing the 2022-2023 school year. And again, this is something that we have committed to updating BESE on annually or, quite frankly, as they request it. And so this will be an annual request, data request that we are doing to keep track of how much is being spent, how much do school systems have left from that initial allocation meant for purchasing and installing those cameras. So stay tuned. I will send you all and share that report that will go to August BESE. But I definitely wanted to give you all an idea quarterly of what that's spending. We're approximately at 1 million-dollars now.

And Dr. Brumley mentioned it, of course some of the big work that we have been doing in our office has been around adopting high quality research based instructional practices to really improve outcomes for students with disabilities. And what we know based on research needs to happen with students around inclusive practices, educational instructional practices in our state. And I believe that as we support school systems in implementing these practices looking at their schedules, looking at the structure of these students' day, do they have intervention time built into their school day equitably for students with disabilities to also participate in that direct intervention that only then will we begin to see outcomes improve for our students with disabilities in our state. And with that I think we'll open it up to entertain any questions about any of that information we've shared.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Anyone has any questions? Mary.

MARY TARVER: I wanted to make a comment about the cameras in the classroom. Our son is in a self-contained classroom. Our classroom met the requirements, and it was a very, very seamless process for Rapides Parish. We did get the camera in our classroom. And so to sit here as we talked about it for so long and then see it happen, I was very pleased. I did not know that was, you know, the request was made last year. We had it put in place last year, so I don't know if once the camera is in there do they have to do something every, you know, every year?

CADE BRUMLEY: No. I mean, it's upkeep dollars. They have the 8 million-dollar access which is initial installation. But we didn't want a system to feel as if they didn't have dollars for upkeep of that if they needed to make a repair or needed to make a replacement. So we just decided on 10 percent of the initial. And so that will flow into the systems as well. And that's the money they can use should there be an issue with that particular camera in your son's classroom.

MARY TARVER: I know that they had to I think send the policies. On a policy standpoint will I have to ask for the camera to be put back in use? It's there now, I know everybody had to sign off that the cameras going to be activated in our classroom and everybody did. So I just wonder is there something that I need to do now to remind them or to see if there is something that they need people to sign ahead of time, so we're not delayed, or it takes

them months to get everybody to sign off on that in the classroom. I didn't know what those details look like.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. That's a really good question. We started initially getting questions from school systems like what do I do, right, like if I have a parent request, I install those cameras, what do I do with the rest of the fund. What if your son changes classrooms. So I would say stay close to your school system and if he's in the same classroom you shouldn't have to do anything. But as I think about a student moving through a school system or potentially changing special education classrooms then that may have to initiate another conversation about that classroom, right.

CADE BRUMLEY: I do think you'll see less movement though. Whereas schools were more fluid before moving classrooms, I think you'll see less of that.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I mean, there's nothing prohibiting a school system from putting cameras in every classroom. They could have a policy. So it's really the school system's policy to really look and see what it says.

MARY TARVER: Our policy, to see it. I didn't know if I needed to make another. But like are y'all going to flip the switch for the next school year.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: See, like you said, the parents had to sign off that were in the classroom. If there's different kids in the classroom, if that's part of their policy, they would have to do that again. But there's nothing that says they have to take the camera out.

MARY TARVER: I was just wondering to have them flip the switch back on and say yes, we're doing this again and have everybody sign it or whatever.

CADE BRUMLEY: And some systems, and Meredith you have more examples, some systems are more proactive, and they just went ahead and did cameras across the board.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. In those special ed classrooms that they knew were fully self-contained.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Some of them had the money. We'll go ahead and do it. There were several.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any other questions or comments at this time? I just wanted to say moving-- go ahead.

NICOLE BANKS: I had a question. I know that we need to work on our cameras or whatever in the classroom and we require for, you know, them to have it, but I'm guessing the verbiage is stating that it has, like a parent has to

ask. Now for the parishes or for the districts that has adopted it, and just did it because they had the funding, could that be a suggestion sent out to the other ones? Just a suggestion because, you know, I feel like a parent shouldn't have to ask. If the funding is there, put it in there.

JILL HANO: I mean, also privacy laws too. Like, I mean special ed, you don't want your kid being videotaped without having like going through proper channels.

NICOLE BANKS: Yeah. But that was sort of kind of the point of us putting cameras in there for the safety of our kids that were self-contained, and they couldn't speak for themselves, and things were happening in the classrooms. So that was the point of us putting those videos in there. Cause they had too many complaints and stuff of things happening and nothing was being able to be proved. It was he say, she say. So that was the point of the cameras. Even if they didn't have permission or not, I feel like if you know it's a self-contained thing and the law already required and the federal funding has already been established, it should just be put in there.

CADE BRUMLEY: This is state funding that our state is committing to these funds. And we're thankful for that. But for whatever reason that's the way which the law was crafted. So you may have some advocacy and you may have some conversations and that could be adjusted if that's the will of the community and legislature, but right now it seems that that's how that's doled out. But I like the approach that some systems have taken that they're just saying we're doing it, we're doing it across the board. I mean, I think that's the simplest thing to do. But the law doesn't provide for them to be mandated to do that in the way that it's written.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay.

ERICK TAYLOR: Can I say something? During the school year if we don't put our kids in a self-contained class (inaudible) and say is it all right for my child to be in that class with a camera in the class?

CADE BRUMLEY: Well, I think that they are doing that. And the instances mentioned earlier by virtue of requested that they're having to do some work with all the children in the class that there's parent information so that everyone's aware.

ERICK TAYLOR: So if they doing that, I mean, we do have

kids that can't speak for their self, and we definitely have a lot of stuff that goes on in the classroom that's hidden. And we had so many incidents that gone on in classes that kids that can't speak for themselves have been caught or not. The cameras is a good idea to be in the classes. But also, we have to look at safety in certain ways for them. But if they sign a thing stating that they know they're in the classroom, I mean that should do it right there.

CADE BRUMLEY: Yeah. I mean, the way the law is written though it essentially says that the parent has to request it. Now that law could be altered. It could be amended. But right now that's the way it's crafted. I think you all raise really good points here, but that's the way the law was crafted and exist today.

MEREDITH JORDAN: And I haven't heard from school systems that this idea of letting the other parents and individuals know hey, there's being a camera placed in here that that's hindered. I haven't heard that has happened. Doesn't mean it hasn't. So like when I start saying there's going to be a camera in here and someone has said no, we haven't, probably the other parents in that room are probably thankful too.

CADE BRUMLEY: And maybe there's an opportunity through all our various outlets just to continue to remind parents that that's an option.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I have a comment. I guess as a comment, and I made this comment, similar comment at a Special Ed Advisory Panel several months ago. But I think from what I hear from parents is the issue is around monitoring. And that in the past 10, 15 years ago there were monitoring teams that went into districts and looked at certain things. And there was an interdisciplinary team of people that went in, and they were able to give feedback and school districts were able to take some proactive measures to do whatever was needed. And at that time we were looking at the plans and there was some really, I thought could be potentially really good resources for school districts. But I felt that if school districts aren't pushed in a way to say this is where we need to improve, they may not be as willing to access those resources. But those teams could really give some good feedback to the districts. I think it did at the time when they were in place. And so now districts are monitoring themselves as kind of the process of doing self-monitoring,

that type of thing. And I think that there's some concern that that's not always identifying the issues are helping them to consider other ways that they could do things better and to provide services for those students.

CADE BRUMLEY: Yeah. I mean, it was mentioned earlier, I think this is a function too of budgets that were cut and there were the staff that were previously engaged in that. And it was like 10, 15 years ago was substantially more than it exist today. So we do have this self-based component to an overall risk-based monitoring system. But it does lead, depending on where someone is on a spectrum, it can lead to individual on-site reviews, corrective action plans. There are other options that could be utilized, and I think need to be explored moving forward if correction doesn't happen. That historically haven't been used. But I think we need to start looking at those and exploring those. Yeah, Bambi, I think you raise a really good point that we have to continue to think through about what might be best.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And I think in that conversation was about using the IDEA funds. And I don't know if there was any change made to that, but maybe moving forward that those IDEA funds can be utilized to be able to have those monitoring teams in the future.

MEREDITH JORDAN: We talked about that, about expanding some of those. Our SPED monitoring team, right, is a team of about five individuals. Like Dr. Brumely said, we have some self-assessments depending on where you fall in the risk-based assessment monitoring leveling system. Or there could be desk monitoring or there could be some on-site monitoring. But we've also been talking about like how do we access more of the desk or on-site monitoring. What does that look like. What capacity is needed. Definitely.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I think in the past like people from other districts they would move and monitor one another and give that feedback. And I know that there's shortages of staff, but I think that would be a really important thing to look at.

CADE BRUMLEY: Yep.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any other questions or comments?

MARY TARVER: I have one more. I think one of the things that we have struggled with is the other services that are part of an IEP. Communication being one. Our son

is verbal when he wants to be with certain words and other times he's not and we're struggling with communication. Speech therapy at school, having the therapies and the resources that they need. I think they just kind of depend on-- the practices that they use are not consistent throughout a school year or even we've tried to do low tech some computer stuff. And so we've struggled with that. And I think sometimes just kind of hearing about some of the other resources, the other wraparound services besides the teachers', you know, pay and their shortage. That the other services are out there. When you're getting 30 minutes of a speech therapist in 6 weeks or whatever it is and for a child that's pretty nonverbal it has not been, I don't think, I know it's not meeting his needs. And now we're struggling as he's getting older that that leads to he's not in daycare now and then we tried a little summer camp and then, you know, it's for typical kids and that didn't work because a lot of it was communication. And so I felt like we were...

CADE BRUMLEY: May I ask a question? Feel free to not answer. That's no problem. But do you feel like the providers are available through your community and they're just not being utilized or is there a lack of providers?

MARY TARVER: Right. I think that, you know, there is a speech therapist that is for several schools. So that one person is trying to meet all the needs. And even in our classroom you'll see that she'll, you know, maybe it was supposed to be Hayden was maybe supposed to have a time, a dedicated time with her and she's pulling, you know, trying to meet the needs, pulling in the other kids so that she can maybe see them twice a week because half of it's this student and half of it's that. So I know that they're trying, I just know that that resource, especially speech for us, has been one of the things that we struggled with. And when they, you know, it's frustrating for the child and for the speech therapist and for the teacher and it just snowballed even with a device. I don't know if you know but people with-- well, our child can be very hardheaded. And so, you know, when they meet that I feel like they're stretched so far that when they get a little bit of resistance on he doesn't want to use the computer today they're more likely to say okay than have the time that they would have needed to spend with them. So I know that besides the teachers the other speech for us is one that

we struggle with.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So Mary, typically a chair would jump in and say oh, no. Let's stay on the agenda. Let's this and all that and try to do all those Roberts Rules. Mary's story is so important because she's not the only mother that's experiencing this. There are thousands of parents, thousands of family members. And so Mary has been on this council, how many years, Mary, I have seen Hayden grow. We all have seen Hayden grow. And there's siblings on this council. There is parents on this council. There's spouses. There are self-advocates on this council. And so it was important, Mary, for you to be able to share your story so that your baby is not seen as just a number or a name or on a document. And so the passion in advocacy from the stakeholders, in my opinion, always come from a space of their hearts. And so yes, we're going to come at you with the hard questions. Yes, we're going to come at you and you're going to feel like oh, my goodness, this seat is so hot. Melissa has been sitting in burning seats. Bless her heart. But it comes from their heart. And so I do want to say that moving diverse learning division to teachers learning department was one of the best decisions that I think you all have made. Because it allows for us to sit in the place where we need to be right alongside educators. Previously we were in the opportunities, and I don't even want to talk about that, that was not where we needed to be. And so moving us there I believe puts us in a better position.

I think the ask is accountability. And I think the concern is, and you can hear it in his voice, the concerns of people say monitoring. When people say compliance, which that's like the C word. Nobody wants to say that word. But our parents are asking for that. I will say that I do see a work in progress. Mary, do you agree?

MARY TARVER: I do.

HYACINTH MCKEE: And It's hard for me to say that because I'm always (inaudible). But I do see a work in progress, and I do see a willingness. But it was the advocates, and it was the stakeholders with the classroom, the cameras the classroom. It was the moms that got on the news that said this is what's out here. This is what's happening to my son. It was the advocates and the families going to the state capitol. It was them. They are the reason why these cameras are in the classrooms.

The research-based instructional practice, Meredith, keep doing that because-- and whatever report you have on that bring to the Education and Employment Committee and give it to them ahead of time so they can dissect it and give you support and feedback on it. I just was trying to question on SEAC reports. I have not been on the website. I haven't clicked it. But does it reveal discipline data for students with disabilities who have been suspended? I'm concerned that there was a time when we used to receive reports of the number of students with disabilities who were suspended out of school, in-school detentions. I'm sorry to say even restraints. That's a horrible word. But the DD Council used to get that data every single quarter from all of the districts. We need to know if our kids are being put out of school, if our kids are being isolated, if our kids, you know, we need that data. And we used to have it every quarter. And so I'm asking that the committee continue to put DOE in the hot seat and ask for that data every quarter. We need to know what's happening. And Meredith, by race and ethnicity, grade level, school district. I mean it's a lot, but we used to get it every quarter. Charter school. That kind of information we're going to need to have. Because we need to know what's happening with our kids. We need to know what things are in place for them. So with that being said, are there any other questions for this committee for this report from LDOE? All right. Well, guess what, we are finished with that part of the agenda. Now we'll be moving onto the update on the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf from Bambi Polotzola.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And I think that may have been intended to be the Louisiana Special School District because I think that would apply more to this committee. But I'm on both of them so I can give information. The Louisiana Special School District I think I reported at the April meeting they have a new superintendent who started May 1st, Dr. David Martin. Seems to be just a really great leader, dynamic. The community, the teachers, parents, alumni all are really excited about his leadership. They are in the final stages of getting a new principal for the Louisiana School for the Deaf and the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired. The national search, community involvement. They put together a team to review those nominations. Like the teachers selected a teacher among

themselves. A parent was on it. It really was an engagement that everybody was helping to make that selection and so that's exciting. He really wanted to have leaders who were experts in Deaf education. Experts in visual impaired education. And also, they have the Juvenile Justice System under the special school district. So all of that is really exciting. He comes from Tennessee School for the Visually Impaired and there he did, they had really robust regional leaders that held like for those students that were still in the school district that didn't come to the centralized state school, that they were helping those school districts to work with those students that had visual impairment. I think his idea is to have that to be that resource to our local school districts for those kids that are Deaf or visually impaired that are still in the regional school district. So it's really exciting. I would encourage everyone to really try and support the special school district in their efforts. And, you know, I know that it takes some for parents to be able to feel comfortable that that's the best placement for their kids. And I know we as a DD Council we promote inclusion. And it's a little bit different whenever you're talking about say Deafness because the least restrictive environment is an environment where they're with other students who are Deaf and speaking ASL. Sometimes it's very restrictive to put them in a class where nobody else is speaking ASL and they're the only ones in it. So it is a little bit different mindset than what we're normally used to, but it's good if we could have a quality school that parents have that choice where they can either stay in their local school district if they choose, but they have that choice of somewhere to really get quality service in the state.

And then in regards to the Commission for the Deaf, Melissa might have to help me to-- I think you're going to be on.

MEREDITH JORDAN: I am.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. Meredith is going to be added. So we'll have Department of Education. We have LRS. So I feel like the commission has moved, that is one of our success stories I would say over the past seven years. And really looking at some ways in which I think people who are Deaf can access voc rehab more successfully. Looking at-- trying to think on what I was trying to think about. They have a new-- (inaudible) is who they're contracting.

And I'm trying to think what it is they're trying to do. I'm so sorry. I'm drawing a blank on it. And Melissa's not helping me. So interpreters, having qualified interpreters. So a registry. Not all interpreters are created equally. And one thing that I think is important for us to understand when we're dealing with the Deaf community is that ASL is not English. It's another language. I took one ASL class and it really is a different language. Sometimes I think those of us who are hearing think they're just translating word for word, but it's not. It's different. And so to have quality interpreters like they created a registry to have qualified interpreters.

They're also looking at different models of the way the commission, this is what they're doing, looking at different models the way the commission can be set up within the state that really amplifies the voice of the Deaf community and gives them access to services. Because often times I think that we look at things different from a hearing prospective and sometimes maybe not as receptive to the Deaf prospective and they really need to have that autonomy to be able to say what it is they need as a community. Just like the developmental disabilities community does. And so they're looking at some models in other states to get ideas of what's the best way to be able to have a really good commission that really serves the Deaf community. So I think that's about-- there's a lot of other good things going on.

There was someone who was Brandy Bordelon who is Deaf, Hard of Hearing individual who was recognized by FEMA for her work in outreach to the Deaf community in regards to disaster and emergency preparedness. So she was recognized like nationally for that work which is a really great thing for our state since we get hit so hard with disasters and we have such a large population of Deaf people. I think that's it.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Any questions for Bambi Polotzola?

JILL HANO: When's the GODA conference?

HYACINTH MCKEE: When's the GODA conference?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Next week. And the link is on my report for tomorrow to register.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Any questions for Bambi? Any comments for Bambi? This is my last education and employment chairing meeting. It has been, I want to tell

y'all it's been fantastic but then-- I'm going to say it's fantastic because we're live on YouTube. But I will say that it's been very interesting. I have learned from the best people here. Like, you know, the thing about the DD Council you have to come prepared. You have to come bringing your A game. You have to know this policy. And there are so many, I'm surrounded by so many wise people, right. Mary and I have been here forever with Jill. Jill's been here forever.

JILL HANO: I'm, according to YLF, I'm, the official term is I'm an elder.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Jill was here I think when I got here, and I know I've been here for a minute. Bambi, listen, it has been a pleasure to work with you, to learn from you, to just witness your advocacy. And I just want to say to you thank you for allowing me to serve next to you. I remember my second meeting I was like what is this and you were like welcome to the council. So I want to thank Bambi, Melissa. You know, Meredith. Listen, there have been several of you (inaudible). So again, thank you. I've seen people go from certain positions and now they're like leads. I ain't going to say anybody by name. Wink, wink, wink. Good to see them too as well. So it's been a pleasure. Committee, keep your feet on the necks of the state agencies. Yes, I said it. Quote it. Put it wherever, on my tombstone. Keep advocating. Keep speaking up. Know your policy. Know the data. Hold people accountable. The torch is being passed. There are many people before you that fought for this council, that fought for a platform for us to be here. It's up to you to lead us moving forward. And so I'll be watching from the sidelines cheering. But it was a pleasure to serve. It was a pleasure to be here with you all. With that being said, any other comments? All right. The meeting is adjourned.