

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council  
Education and Employment  
October 18, 2023

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Good afternoon, everybody. It is now 3:09 and I would like to call the meeting to order. Ebony, would you mind doing the roll call please.

EBONY HAVEN: No problem. Ms. Nicole Banks.

NICOLE BANKS: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Melissa Bayham. Ms. Brenda Cosse.  
Ms. Christi Gonzales.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Meredith Jordan.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Hyacinth McKee. Ms. Mary Tarver.

MARY TARVER: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Vivienne Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Phil Wilson. Mr. Erick Taylor. Ms.  
Ms. Renoda Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: You have six and you have a quorum.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Thank you, Ebony.  
Thank you for attending. Before we start I just want to remind you all of a few rules. For attendees, please wait to be recognized by the chair before speaking. To help the meeting run smoothly please keep side conversations to a minimum and comments related to the topic we are discussing. Also comments about a person's character will not be allowed. Any questions before we get started? All right.

Everyone should have reviewed the July meeting summary which is linked in the agenda you received via email. There's also a copy in your committee packet. Also if you have not signed into the meeting you can do so and your packet should be over there if you have not received them. If there are no objections to the summary we can approve the summary by unanimous consent. Are there any objections? All right. Hearing no objections, the July meeting summary is passed by unanimous consent.

All right. Moving right along. First on the agenda is an update on LRS and the LDOE memorandum of

understanding. At the July meeting it was requested by the committee to get official documentation of the memorandum. We have-- do we have Melissa?

SPEAKER: No, ma'am.

RENODA WASHINGTON: We have someone in her place?

STACY MARBS: Stacy Marbs. I'm with Louisiana Rehab Services. But from what I was told we have to get approval from legal to share that information about the MOU, so I don't have that as of yet. Melissa may be able to present that at a later date.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Okay. Thank you so much. And what is your name again?

STACY MARBS: Stacy Marbs.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you.

STACY MARBS: You're welcome.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Marbs, do you have any other updates from LRS?

STACY MARBS: Yes, ma'am. I did have some information regarding the schools and the assignments and the contacts we have with the high schools. So what we did was we took a summary from each individual region and captured the number of public schools, nonpublic schools and whether there's a TPCA or a fee for service vendor attached to the school. So I could go over that real quick. For region one in New Orleans we have a listing of 71 public schools, 45 nonpublic schools. Seven have a TPCA and 15 of them have a fee for service vendor assigned to them. Baton Rouge region, we have 77 public schools, 36 nonpublic schools. Eleven of them have a TPCA and 29 of them have a fee for service vendor. For the Houma region three we have 13 public schools and seven nonpublic. There are no TPCAs in the Houma region, but 15 of those schools are assigned a fee for service vendor. Region four Lafayette there is 52 public schools, 25 nonpublic schools. We have nine of them that have a TPCA assigned and 21 that have a fee for service vendor. Region five Lake Charles we have 33 public schools, three nonpublic schools. Eleven of them have a TPCA and 18 have a fee for service vendor. Region six Alexandria we have 50 public schools, six nonpublic schools. Three of them have a TPCA, 20 of them for a fee for service vendor. Region seven Shreveport we have 61 public schools, 50 nonpublic. Eleven of those have a TPCA and 18 of them have a fee for service vendor. And region

eight we have 40 public schools, 17 nonpublic, one with a TPCA and 32 with a fee for service vendor assigned to them. Yes, ma'am.

NICOLE BANKS: Can you tell me what is a TPCA.

STACY MARBS: Yes, ma'am. When I said it like the second time. The TPCA is a third-party cooperative arrangement and it's with the local school board or school district and it's a contract between the school and LRS for them to provide the preemployment transition services to the students and their school.

NICOLE BANKS: And I just noticed that my area, the Houma area don't have any.

STACY MARBS: That's not a big deal for them not to have a TPCA because we do have fee for service vendors that are working with those schools and it's up to the school board or the school district to establish a TPCA. For some it may be considered a better route for them to do that. But what it does, the school or the school district is responsible for 78.7 percent of the salary for the transition specialist and then LRS will pay the rest. So in some cases the school districts are not able, and I'm not sure if that's the case. Either they don't want to set up one or they can't afford to put up the funds to hire that particular person or more than one person.

SPEAKER: Can you repeat that.

STACY MARBS: A third-party cooperative arrangement. A contract between LRS and the school district.

RENODA WASHINGTON: I do recall us asking for that information. I'm assuming it was because you did tell us about the schools. But as Nicole was stating, do we have any information on like for her specific-- like how can we get that in writing for all of them, not just third party, but everyone that LRS is servicing.

STACY MARBS: I did bring, I didn't make any copies. It's by region so it starts with region one and goes through region eight. And there's a listing of the school district or the charter school and then the name of the school and then whether or not if there's a TPCA or a vendor assigned.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you so much.

STACY MARBS: Now for those that may not have something by them we have a LRS counselor that's assigned to all of these schools so even if a vendor is not there with them, or a TPCA is not there, the school has LRS's information and which counselor they're assigned to contact. And so

the counselor can still go and do the IEP meetings. If a case is opened we can also provide preemployment transition services and then also be there to help them transition beyond high school into a traditional VR case.

RENODA WASHINGTON: My next question is it factual? Is there a counselor at the school for all blanks? Do we know that to be factual?

STACY MARBS: Yes. They're not at the school. They're assigned to the schools. So someone at the school or the counselor knows that that's their assigned school. And if the school needed to reach out they would call that particular counselor and say hey, we have X amount of IEPs can you come. If for someone reason they can't come I would assume that they are making contact. We have a PreETS flier. We have a PreETS brochure so they can share that information with the student, school and their parent.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you, Ms. Stacy. You provided exactly what we asked for. I have one more thing that I want to ask. Can we get that information as far as those with the blanks? We need contact information, email or something on that if that's fine.

STACY MARBS: I would have to ask--.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Ms. Melissa. That's totally fine. Can you just spread that word?

STACY MARBS: I sure will.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you very much.

STACY MARBS: You're welcome.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Are there any other questions. I see a hand raised. What's your name?

MARY TARVER: Mary Tarver.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Mary, you have the floor.

MARY TARVER: What grade is this starting? Is this junior high or is this high school?

STACY MARBS: This is high school. Starting at age 16.

MARY TARVER: Age 16.

STACY MARBS: Yes, ma'am. Sixteen or 22. Whenever they exit.

JILL HANO: For the TPCA?

STACY MARBS: That's for all the preemployment transition students. Yes, ma'am.

NICOLE BANKS: And they have to have an IEP to get that service, correct?

STACY MARBS: Yes, ma'am. They have to have an IEP, 504 or a documented disability.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Ms. Stacy, one more question. Can we have that paperwork to make copies for everyone. Thank you. Any other questions, concerns? All right. We'll move forward. Once again, thank you, Ms. Stacy.

STACY MARBS: You're very welcome.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Next on the agenda is an update from Louisiana Department of Education. Meredith Jordan with LDOE is here to provide an update on cameras in the classroom. It was also requested that the committee be provided discipline data relative to students with disabilities. Ms. Meredith, you have the floor.

MERIDITH JORDAN: So and just start by following up to what Ms. Stacy just shared and just sharing with the group that we were so blessed she came to our director's meeting yesterday, so we had probably between 80 and 90 special education directors, it was a big room, full audience. Special education directors from our LEAs and charter schools. And one of the things that we did at this meeting was to invite LRS out to talk about all of those options because kind of, you know, we've talked about this a little bit, you know, do schools know that these options exist. And we got overwhelming feedback that the information shared was very helpful. We had folks in the audience, we have new SPED directors. We have people who may have two- or three-years' experience and they were going oh, my goodness. We really stopped and paused and talked about the third-party agreements because essentially, like Stacy mentioned, that can help them get some additional staff. And I always tell people, you know, and recommend that when you have an initiative, and you want to get something off the ground, and you want serious high school transition supports a lot of times you need a champion of that work. And this opportunity, the TPCAs offer that opportunity to have to champion of that work and to hire a transition support specialist or transition assistant to help school systems do that work and provide those services to students. So we were so grateful that she came out and provided and talked about that program.

We also talked about the Paycheck Program while we were in the meeting too. And so I think that is going to really help strengthen our partnership too and help to just communicate these are options that are out there. Because like she just said, you know, we have 15 school systems who

are taking advantage of that TPCA. And so really trying to expose all of them and having them all in that room and say hey, these are the options. Here's how LRS can partner and support you was I think beneficial. I think they'll probably see an uptick in interest in that. So that was really helpful. I really appreciate them agreeing to come out and do that for us.

SPEAKER: Attendance with our students too.

MEREDITH JORDAN: It was so well received yesterday. It was phenomenal. And I don't think our directors-- I mean, we shared the regional office contacts, that kind of stuff, but really diving into what services LRS can partner with to help I think was huge for them yesterday.

So a couple of things. So for cameras in the classroom, a quick update. I pulled our latest spending information this morning and we are just over a million dollars spent from that SPED camera funding. And so we may see that, of course, increase this year as new parent requests come in and now as the school year has started but wanted to provide that update.

I also, I know we linked to some of this, but literally, you know, whatever data this council requests we are more than happy to bring it back. So I hope this at least gives you all some information around discipline. Now this was from our 21-22 school year, right. So the 22-23 school year ended over the summer. We'll be gathering all the discipline data from last year and reporting on that as well. So we report this data everywhere. Federally, state, you know, this is all public information. So whatever the council deems you want to see we're more than happy to give. But hopefully this gives you something.

I will say, so table 15-- and this is part of a really large document. That's why I pulled out the discipline specifically. The first table tells you by parish-- and this shows you a three-year comparison. By parish students with disabilities, their discipline information, what do those removals look like. What percent of their students have in school, out of school and alternate site, or in-school expulsion or to an alternate site and out of school alternate site. So suspensions and expulsions. So a lot of this you will see because of suppression rules and there were so few children that you'll see that less than five notation, less than five percent. So we couldn't give an actual if it's less than five. So that's all data

suppression rules. But you will see some school districts where you will see the actual percent if they had the student population to actually dig into and represent a number, right, higher than 5 percent.

So that's the first table that you see there. And then you'll see table 15B. You'll get a three-year comparison. One of the things that I really pulled out of this and that I think is worth just putting on record is, so it shows you three years 19-20, 20-21, and 21-22. Remember 20-21 was coming off the pandemic year, right. So you see that drastic dip because many schools were still in virtual instruction. Children weren't always in school to be disciplined or show those behaviors in the school setting. So that's the reason for that extreme dip for the 20-21 school year. And then you see in 21-22 some of those numbers start to go back up. However, one of the things I did notice was we weren't at those same levels of out of school suspensions or expulsions that we were in 19-20. So just an observation there.

And then that very last table shows for 21-22 by disability, those removals. So by disability category. So one of the things that you can pull out and see there so when we talked there are very strict discipline rules around students with disabilities. Supposed to be, are, right. Now what you see are, right, so those disability categories where you will say okay, that behavior could be a direct relation to the disability you'll see those are lower numbers. But when you look at-- so one of the things that you notice is other health impairment or specific learning disabilities, those disability categories have higher numbers of removals. Those are those disability categories where it may be more difficult to say the behavior is due to the disability, right.

So, you know, happy to entertain any analysis of this, any questions, thoughts. I will say one of the things as we came off of our regional tour recently, because we kind of recognize that we tend to at the department have people come to us for professional development. So we decided as our team to start going out. One of the things that we have been hearing is that behavior challenges are, of course, increased post pandemic, you know, with different social exposures, interactions or the lack thereof. And so school systems are seeing and requesting support for behavior. So we know at the department we've got to do a

little bit more around that. So we've actually been working on and looking at some really great partners for that. And what more we can offer statewide in terms of behavior support for our children. So trauma informed training. Some things like that across the board. So certainly happy to answer any questions or thoughts around any of this data.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Ms. Christi, you have the floor.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you. Ms. Meredith, the data, is this from the manifestation determination or is this from Jay Campus?

MEREDITH JORDAN: So this data is coming from SIR and those removals. So every time they are removing-- and you'll see a lot of this talks about total, greater than ten days. That is what the feds require us to because, of course, that's when some of those very strict discipline rules. Yes, when you're trying to remove a student for more than ten days.

RENODA WASHINGTON: You have the floor. What's your name?

PHIL WILSON: Phil. This is not necessarily a question. It's a couple observations and then I don't see a really good place to make my comment on the agenda so I'm going to slip it in here. For those of you who don't know I'm the director of the Human Development Center which is part of LSU New Orleans, and we are the state's federally authorized developmental disability center of excellence, okay. And we're actually in the DD Act. We're a named partner along with the DD Council and the Disability Rights Louisiana. So we are supposed to be Louisiana's DD network. So I want to start with a quick observation and then I want to make a comment that may not fit directly right here, but I don't know where else to get it into the agenda.

So first off, the two categories that you named, OHI or other health impairment and specific learning disabilities are also categories that people sometimes when they're doing diagnostics they know there's something not quite, you know, on par with this particular child. Sometimes the family prefers, you know, they're talking and it's like there's a lot of different ways we can go with getting a diagnosis or an educational label to this child so we can provide him or her services. And so sometimes those families will kind of opt and the diagnostician may opt for okay, let's go with OHI or a specific learning



disability. I will say that in my experience with autism a lot of kids with autism end up with OHI labels. Not so many with specific learning disabilities. And the reason I mention that is to make the assumption that these kids may have unexplained reasons why they have behavior challenges may require us to look a little deeper under the sheet and see what's really going on with that child and so forth. At the end of the day I don't think really any of us care what label our child has or our students have if we can provide them the services that they need, right. So that leads me to my comment piece that I just don't know where to put it in here.

But the Human Development Center has made a commitment over the next five years to focus on fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and if I could be so bold as to take a couple minutes. I don't want to knock us off the schedule or anything like that, but may I continue for a minute.

RENODA WASHINGTON: If you get too lengthy.

PHIL WILSON: You know I will. Give me the chain, or the rope, or whatever. Can I ask you a question. Like how many, what's the prevalence of down syndrome?

MARY TARVER: Seven hundred.

PHIL WILSON: Yeah. One in 700. Some people say 1 in 800. A bunch of studies, of course, right. What's the prevalence of cerebral palsy?

JILL HANO: I don't know that now. I think I should.

PHIL WILSON: Not necessarily. It's between one and 400 and one and 500. Again, lots of different statistics in the world. I'm not going to go on much further, but let's say autism. What's the prevalence of autism?

CHRISTI GONZALES: One out of 25.

SPEAKER: One out of 36.

PHIL WILSON: One out of 36 is the most recent number. It just came down from one out of 42. I will say when the earth was cooling off and I was in graduate school it was one in 800. The prevalence number was. Now some of that's an artifact of definitions changing and all that kind of stuff. And some of it something's going on, right. What is the prevalence of fetal alcohol disorder?

NICOLE BANKS: One in fifty.

SPEAKER: One in ten.

CHRISTI GONZALES: One in 75.

PHIL WILSON: It's estimated at one in 20. The CDC, the Center for Disease Control in Washington, or actually

in Atlanta come to think of it, and the World Health Organization both cite fetal alcohol spectrum disorder as the leading cause of developmental disabilities in the world or in the country respectfully, right. The reason why we are committing ourselves over the next five years to this is that those kids are also ending up in these other categories somewhere or they're being exited from school for reasons that aren't really defensible for us professionals because we tend to lump these kids in with kids who have autism or an intellectual disability or mental health challenges and we're not giving the right interventions. And as a result they are failing, they're frustrated. Their parents and foster parents are very frustrated. It starts a cascade.

I asked before we had a change of leadership to have an opportunity to talk tomorrow to the full council. I'm not prepared to do that now because I didn't really get a confirmation because of the timing of all that. But I'm hoping that the council and Department of Ed, rehab services, that our agencies, other adult agencies will kind of join in. Got a good partnership at DCFS around foster care starting right now. But I think it's something huge that all of you guys as advocates and self-advocates, that this is something that we really need to focus on.

There is some legislation pending. It's called the Respect Act. I think our legislative representatives, congressional legislation is pretty well aware of it. We're going to be going to DC in early November and we're taking some of our students to go talk to them about fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and why we have to watch that line between advocacy and education. But to try to help them understand why it's so important.

And I would go on and on, but I probably have expended my time here. But I appreciate you letting me kind of make that comment because I didn't know how to get it into the conversation. So it's there. It seems like it's an education issue. It definitely is an employment issue. I just close with this is a school to jail situation. These kids appear to be troublemakers, but I could explain to you why it's not that. They're frustrated because basically they have a brain injury. Like if you needed a wheelchair and you couldn't get to the bathroom in a quick way people would understand that something bad is going to happen or something not necessarily bad, but something that you don't

want to have happen, right. If your brain is full of lesions or holes it doesn't have neuro connections that a typical brain has. It takes that brain a long time to process information. And a lot of people that have fetal alcohol spectrum disorders do not comprehend cause and effect. You take that and you try to use what we all kind of think BCBA, you know, if you do this, this is what's going to happen. Try to make it a good thing if you do what we want you to do. Try to at least withhold things if you do a bad thing. Not necessarily punish people, right. That is the approach that many people try to use with kiddos that have fetal alcohol disorders. It doesn't work because they don't recognize cause and effect. You'll hear more. We're going to be sending something out soon from HDC to try to get people who are interested. So even if you yourself aren't a big advocate in this area if you know somebody who might be, especially foster parents. There's a huge, 17 times more likely that a child in foster care will have fetal alcohol spectrum disorders than a child just in the plain vanilla world.

NICOLE BANKS: A question. How is one diagnosed with that or even know that they have going on? Because sometimes parents are not honest and say yep, I was drinking when I was pregnant.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The only thing I remember is their eyes being far apart.

PHIL WILSON: Actually, if I can answer this question. I need to stop when you guys need me to stop. But that's a misnomer. It is not a misnomer that about 10 percent of kids who have what we called a full FASD, full fetal alcohol syndrome will have physical characteristics of the effect of prenatal alcohol exposure which sounds better than fetal alcohol spectrum. Part of the problem is a stigma. When the kids have that really full spectrum, and they have physical characteristics and typically more likely to have an intellectual disability as well as mental health and lots of organ system problems. Those kids are only 10 percent of the total population of kids that have FASD. About a third of the kids have what's called partial FAS and they would have like real, like if you really stare at them a lot or you're around a lot of people with FASD has this kind of look, right. Typically their other symptoms are still there but not as expressed either. And then really the majority of people that have FASD have no

physical characteristics at all. They just have the learning and the brain issues and the emotional and all those other things.

So here's the thing. What makes it really hard to begin to figure out how to deal with this situation is the stigma. Like one of y'all just said, what mother wants to say oh, I was drinking when I was pregnant. Probably not a lot. But understand that-- so the brain starts to form at about day 15 from conception. So the first organ systems begin to differentiate, turn into something, right. That's the absolute worst day for mom to have a drink. A lot of ladies in the room. Many of you probably have had children. When did you know you were pregnant. Yeah, usually a couple months or weeks, right. So there really should be no stigma on moms. It's more of our society has made people. Just like smoking. My grandfather smoked like five packs a day, whatever. But now we know that's bad for you. So we have a lot of things to do and one of the things we have to figure out is how do we kind of get the word out without touching that stigma button. Make people tie it back further.

NICOLE BANKS: You know how when a baby is born it goes through all kind of tests before you can even see the baby, really, if they do. So that's what I'm asking is there some type of test, or something that can be ran, or some kind of diagnosis process that can happen?

PHIL WILSON: Not really.

NICOLE BANKS: So we can nip it in the butt from the beginning.

PHIL WILSON: That's another huge problem. So whatever mom drinks in terms of alcohol is the blood level of the baby is going to be the same as for mom. A glass of wine a lot of people will still tell you that's fine. Just have one. Take a nice warm bath. Have a glass of wine. Relax. It's really hard being pregnant, I don't know. I got three daughters, so I have some sense it's not the world's easiest thing to do. That's really wrong. There's no time when it's okay to drink when you're pregnant because what you drink your baby drinks.

So here's the issue is why it's-- so unless mom had a drink that same day, whether it be alcohol in her bloodstream, there wouldn't be a way to test to see if the child has fetal alcohol spectrum. There is way to tell if the mom drinks in the second or third trimester by looking

at the meconium, the stuff that comes out in the after-birth or whatever. They can do some tests there. But apparently it's not cheap and it's not regularly done unless there's probably something else they're worried about, right. So there's not an actual-- so the way we identify kids that have fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is through these brain-based kinds of things. They don't have good executive functioning which means people like Meredith here probably have eight things to do at the same time. Pretty much the rest of you guys have at least seven to do at the same time. That's called like when you can think about one thing, do another thing and plan something else. That's executive functioning. Or go down the hall, turn left, pick up a can of coke, bring it back, pour it, start the coffee and sit down at the table and make a phone call. All that stuff is like I got to hold a lot of stuff in my head. These kiddos because of a brain injury can't do that. Also because of their brain injury they think really slowly compared to us. As little babies they don't seem that slow, right. Cause all babies are a little slow and whatever. But as they get older our expectations, if you asked a four-year-old, you know, where's the bathroom when you're at someone's house and they don't tell you oh, it's down the hall, GG, or whatever. They don't tell you right away. You think where's it at. Where's it at. And but when you're 15 and you're doing that people think either you're dumb or you're being stubborn or something because yesterday when I asked you, you told me. Today you can't tell me. And it takes so much energy for them to process. It takes like ten times as long for them to do say something or do something. They also have really bad memory. And that's part of that process where it appears they have a bad memory because we have a neuron that goes from here to here. They have to go through all these Swiss cheese holes to get from here to here and back to the connections they have in their brain.

And then lastly, I don't know how this comes into play, but if a neuro psychologist would test and they don't understand cause and effect. A kid could put his hand on a hot stove today and go ah. If that's a typical kid you don't have to say a word to him tomorrow when he comes in, right. This guy would go back there and put his hand on it all over again. That's sort of this cascade that starts with teachers and parents. I have seen you do this before.

What's the rule about chewing gum in my class. You can't do it. Okay, so why did you just take out a piece of gum and put it in your mouth and chew it. I don't know. So it's like okay, this kid's a troublemaker. And it starts down this whole thing and the next thing you know that kid hates being in school. He's withdrawn. And on top of all that they get bulled so much just like a lot of other kids that have disabilities. It's a miracle that some folks make it to adulthood and are full talented people. I got to stop.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you. Great dialogue. Appreciate it.

PHIL WILSON: You guys will help us though? The council will help us?

{Council speaking simultaneously}

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Next on the agenda, Ms. Meredith, do you have any other-- oh, we have a hand. You have the floor.

MARY TARVER: When you're looking at that table 15B that's looking at the three school years. When you're getting to the big numbers like the number of children with out of school suspensions and expulsions and we get to 8,500 then 5,400, 7,080 where-- I guess I'm trying to figure out where do those numbers come from because those are big numbers. And in-school suspension total disciplinary removals gets to 31,000.

MEREDITH JORDAN: So yes. And so this is not counting children, I don't believe, but so total removal. So it could be the same child, but multiple removals. But I can check and make sure, Mary. But yes, so it's about the total removals. How many times a student. It could be the same student was removed.

MARY TARVER: So I think whenever I started looking at this online I ended up going to Louisiana Believes, I think. Was there an ask that you're trying to get less out of school suspensions. There was something about, and I didn't print it out, I just looked at it and I thought I would remember. When you're looking at these numbers. You're trying to at least get the kids not to be out of school suspension. You want them to be in school. Cause it certainly is not going to help them to not be in school. So do you know what I'm talking about?

MEREDITH JORDAN: I don't know a bill. But share it with me if you find it and it might trigger something.

MARY TARVER: When you're looking at this did you start doing any analysis and anything come up to you like gosh, this seems-- I mean, like the Covid year I kind of disregarded, but the other years. And I just wonder was there something that is pointing to you to say we need to work on something, and I heard you say maybe the IEPs. I was wondering out of these kids are these kids that have IEPs and behavioral health plans. Do they have an IEP and no behavioral health plan and here they are getting in all this disciplinary action, and they don't have a plan.

MEREDITH JORDAN: And there is no rule of thumb, right, other than federal law is really clear about ten days, right. At ten days those kids have to have an FBA and a BIB in place.

PHIL WILSON: Ten days?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Well, okay. They've got to have one. But one of the things that we talked a lot yesterday with the directors is about, you know, I was in the school system, and we had, you know, we almost did like a 4710. So if there's a discipline referral trying to happen and it's three or four days it's too many. You're missing instruction. But that's not an official. So sometimes local school systems have their own local discipline policies, student code of conduct. Ten days, they don't have a choice. Those students who have multiple referrals and they're being removed ten or more days they've got to have an FBA and a plan in place. I'm with you Mary. It should happen way sooner.

MARY TARVER: So are you saying like the ten days it wouldn't be like it's happening all at once. You've done something so bad you're going to have to be out of school. But I do something in August. Do something in January.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Exactly. And it could total up to ten days. Yes, so not all of those are ten days all at once. It can be an accumulation up to ten.

NICOLE BANKS: Out of school, right, not in school suspension?

MEREDITH JORDAN: So the ten-day discipline rule for IDA is a removal, removal. If it's in school, if it's out of school you cannot continue to remove students with disabilities out of the classroom. It's out or in. We do look at it and report it in this way to the feds, like what does that look like for in school, what does that look like for out of school. But you can't keep changing their

placements. Here is something else that we're being really communicative about with directors and this has been a real interest with the current OSEP information as well as the US Department of Ed and office of special programs there is we talk a lot about with our directors and we hear this. That there are also what I call these passive removals, right. Where the child is, you know, I can't deal with them today. Come get them, mom. It has to stop. We cannot. You know, and so those, that's not captured. If it's not called suspension or expulsion and documented as that. So those are things that I am very passionate about with our directors to stop. And when we're out-- and it's not, right, so in this like you've got school principal, there are a lot of decision makers that are in different levels of that, right. You have school level leaders that we've got to do better educating them around those rules. What you can and can't do. But I do think it starts with school system leadership. It will start with our special education directors communicating that and saying this is not okay. This is not allowable. Don't do it. Don't call mom to come get them. What are the supports in place. You know, what is that behavior plan in place. What positive behavior supports do we have in our school system. So that is something that I've been very passionate about what I call the passive removals. Not even the ones that are documented. But some of those adult behaviors that happen. Not children behavior. Adult behaviors that are resulting in some of our kids missing valuable instruction. If we're going to improve outcomes for our kids we have to stop those practices. And to me that's a very easy thing to do. But it does require communication and nonnegotiable all the way down to those school level leaders who are making some of those decisions. And that's something that I've been very open and have conversations with OSEP about and other states how we address that.

One of the things, because one of the pieces that we do when we have on-site special education monitoring, it's the day before our monitoring team goes out they hold a parent meeting, and they are so valuable. You can get so much information about what is or is not happening. And so those are spaces where we can hear some of those things and then address them through monitoring. You know, because until we know we have those parents who are saying



hey, like I'm called to come get my parent X number of times this week. And, you know, and so those they're passive. They're not documented. But it has to stop. So that's something I'm really passionate about.

MARY TARVER: Also we run into that with Hayden and the teacher saying if you don't come today and we have a field trip on Friday. So now he can't go to the field trip unless you go with him. You need to talk to a mama about that.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. I love, you know, we do, we hear a lot at those parent meetings. We actually talked with our directors yesterday. And not that some of them or most of them are doing it, but we asked them, you know, we're doing on site, and we send you that notification. We kind of do it all for them and send out that notification for that parent meeting in advance so the parents know and can get there. Don't send it 24 hours before we're coming to do the parent meeting. Send it out two weeks in advance so parents can get there because that input is so valuable. You're like the students. They'll tell you. You ask them and they'll tell you exactly what's happening just like kids will. I think that's really valuable. And that's where we hear some of those same stories about, you know, these are some of the passive things happening. What stands out to me is beyond this even what's reported we have work to do and expectations to set around what should not happen.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. I see a hand. Nicole, you're recognized.

NICOLE BANKS: Yes. Thank you, chair. Do they already know the dos and don'ts? Because at this point they should. I won't say they automatically do cause I know they have new people coming in and out all the time. But they should have seasoned people there to tell the newcomers that come in hey, look, when you were into this crisis with this student this is what we can do, this is what we can't do. Before school starts before, you know, all of that to me needs to happen because that would be the part of the problem breaking it down. You already know now. You're an adult so you should already know this is what you can and cannot do and how to handle this.

MEREDITH JORDAN: I think it's two parts. So we're about to open up some statewide training and PD modules that school systems can also use with school level staff cause I think that's, you know, the part about being a state

agency is we're doing a lot of support for that system level leadership. But we also recognize we've got to do more to get to teachers, to parents, to kids. And so it's two parts. One of it is I think opening up some of these statewide modules. One of them we're in the process of choosing them and they're developed by, y'all probably are familiar with LRP. It's a national organization around special education law. So part of it is they need to know the law because discipline law and students with disabilities is very, it is one of the pieces for IDEA that's very black and white.

And I think the second piece to your point, Nicole, is about the strategies and the supports. And so we do have a lot of vendors who are really great at this that I think we could partner with and do more to help. And we're seeing this even our general educators, right. So the vast majority of our kids are in general education settings which is great. It's where we want them. In high-quality instruction supported by a special educator when they need it or related service provider. But getting those strategies for all teachers. Not just special educators, but even general educators who, you know, sometimes whether they do or not they may feel like I don't have that training, I don't know what to do. That's the SPED student. And so getting them the comfort of here are the strategies, here are some things that I can do in my classroom to keep them included and to help support those behavior needs. So I think it's a two part. What does the law say and what are the strategies.

NICOLE BANKS: I'm just saying because I'm a teacher and half of my class I have like 27, 25 students in each class and about half of the class is accommodations and they get all this, you know, they need all this extra stuff. But I've been working with students with disabilities before this. So I know, but they have other people that don't know at all.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah.

NICOLE BANKS: So, you know, I just think just for maybe next year to think about having that training in the summer or making it required for all teachers or really everybody that's a teacher. If you have a classroom and you're teaching in Louisiana you need to have it because you're going to deal with a 504 or an IEP student because they're in your classroom. They are. They're in your classroom.

SPEAKER: And we need to look at it as all students.

NICOLE BANKS: Exactly. Exactly.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Because if you do the modification for one it helps for all of them.

NICOLE BANKS: It really does because not all students are diagnosed and something is clearly wrong with them, you know. Not every student is on an IEP or a 504 plan and has something not quite right with them.

SPEAKER: Some of those things have to start at the top.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Great conversation. I saw hand. Just make sure we're mindful of time.

PHIL WILSON: I'm not really recommending what I'm about to say, but maybe there's a way to take something like LRP or some other entity has put together. So at LSU we all hate this, but it really kind of works. Our information technology people, they have what they call required compliance trainings. And it's the same boring, ridiculous training. It's all web based so you read some things and then you have to take a test. And, you know, I don't even read it anymore because I've been working there 25 years. But, I mean, people don't learn and retain stuff. A training in August or July. But if you can figure out if schools must have intranet kind of stuff for their teachers and related service and administration folks, maybe there's some of these basic things like that could be modularized and have a little test. If you miss more than three questions of the ten you have to do it over, right. And it's all annoying, but it really does do end up...

RENODA WASHINGTON: As a teacher that is part of our job description. You know, so we need to be able to, you know, everybody needs to know these things just as Nicole stated. So mandatory trainings for all teachers. Not just SPED teachers, all teachers.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Be careful with how we talk about students with developmental and intellectual disabilities. There is nothing wrong with them for being in a world that is built for neuro typical people. There is nothing wrong with them for being different than neurotypical people. They just are.

RENODA WASHINGTON: I agree.

PHIL WILSON: Absolutely.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Any other hands, questions, concerns?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Last thing. Many of you may have already heard that we are in the process of interviewing and hiring a special education ombudsman for our state to help support and streamline supports for our parents. So this will be a first for our state. We're not the first state. There are a couple other states who have special education ombudsman or ombudswoman. But we are going to have our very own. So we're excited about that. And as we hire that person and we start to communicate and get information out about how to communicate to that person, how to find that person. Of course that's the whole point is it's not meant to be a secret. So when we get that person's contact information out there, I'll definitely share that update with the council as well. It should be soon. Before we meet next time.

RENODA WASHINGTON: One second. We're going to move on with the agenda. I'll get back with you, but we need to move on. Is that all?

MEREDITH JORDAN: That's it.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Okay. Ebony, we're good? All right. Guys, the time is 4:05. Let's continue with what's on the agenda. Thank you, Meredith so much. And everybody that has contributed to this discussion. Great conversation. Now we will move onto our contractual activities. Ebony, will you start us off with Louisiana Post-secondary Education Alliance.

EBONY HAVEN: This is activity 3.3.1 in the status report. It's activity 3.1.1. I think I might have said 3.3.1 initially, but it's 3.1.1. And Dr. Belinda Beckers is still serving as the LAPIE liaison with the advisory council on post-secondary inclusive education programs with the Board of Regents. The advisory council is currently focusing on disseminating application reminders for the post-secondary inclusive education fund. They will be having a meeting on October 31st, and I think at that meeting they're determining how they're going to use the additional funding that they received during the 2023 legislative session. So in total they received a million dollars for this last session. So they're going to determine how they want to utilize that funding at the next meeting on October 31st. But Dr. Beckers is continuing to provide technical assistance and this last quarter she provided technical assistance to LSU on the Baton Rouge campus and the University of Louisiana at Monroe. So that

is the update for LAPIE. Anybody have any questions?

RENODA WASHINGTON: No questions? All right. Thank you, Ebony. Now Hannah, will you give us an update on seminars on hiring individuals with developmental disabilities.

HANNAH JENKINS: Yes. That's activity 3.2.1. 23 East formally O'Neill Communications completed Your Next Best Hire which was a five-part series on employers need to know on how to include people with disabilities in their hiring processes. The recording of these five webinars can be found on the YouTube page, the council's and the council's website. Five sessions was building DEI the workplace, getting started, the impact for employers, benefits for employers and recruiting employees with disabilities. So all of these webinars are up and those will be, the recordings will be shared via social media. Questions?

EBONY HAVEN: I don't have a question, but I did want to mention one more thing for the LAPIE, for the LAPIE activity. Dr. Beckers and her team did produce a new LAPIE video. It is really excellent, so we'll be sharing that on our social media as well. She shared it with us, I want to say, last week so we'll be pushing it out.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Okay. Any questions for Ebony or Hannah?

MARY TARVER: I just wanted to mention about the LAPIE stuff. It started last year was the first class we had at LSUA in Alexandria and two of the moms that started it they were recognized from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana and got the angel award honorees this year because of the efforts that they made to start that there and work with the universities. It's exciting to see it started right here at a council meeting a few years ago and now it's across, you know, it's getting bigger and bigger across the state and more people are realizing it.

SPEAKER: What's the acronym for it again?

EBONY HAVEN: The Louisiana Post-Secondary Inclusive Education. The Louisiana Alliance for Post-Secondary Inclusive Education. I'm sorry.

MARY TARVER: We love some initials.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Any more questions for Ebony or Hannah? All right. We are at 4:10 and I would like to bring it back to Ms. Meredith. I don't want to call you Dr. Phil.

PHIL WILSON: You can call me anything.

RENODA WASHINGTON: We're going to give the floor back to Dr. Phil. He has some more things and I do like this conversation that we're having. I just want to make sure that we get everything on the agenda, so we don't go past time. So now since we've gotten everything on the agenda, and we have more time I would like to bring it back to this discussion.

PHIL WILSON: I just had a question for Meredith about the ombudsman. Which I think is a long-needed kind of thing, you know. But so what has the department given much thought, and don't take this as like a backhanded compliment, but I'm thinking that if I were a parent that had a longstanding, you know, I don't feel like I'm being heard kind of thing and then I hear oh, the Department of Ed is going to have an ombudsman or ombudswoman I don't know if I'm going to believe that that's-- you know, what have you done to try to make it clear that this is an independent person. Are they employed by the Department of Ed. Who do they report to. Oh, I report to Cade. Well, is this really-- I'm not saying that it wouldn't be, but you know how perception's.

MEREDITH JORDAN: It is. It's definitely something that we talked about internally. And I know most of you also probably saw the recent audit report that came out around our complaint process. This was one of the recommendations and we had kind of started talking with them about it already anyway as well. It was definitely something we agree with. The hard part is is that we can't tell BESE to hire someone. You have some states where that person is also under the board, right. So I think our stance was we can only do what we have the control over to do in terms of hiring or saying hey, this individual is needed. Some states you have that person that is created or a position like that that's created by legislation. So we didn't have that, right. Sometimes it's a person who's under the state legislature or something like that. It will be, this individual will be an employee of the department. So but it's kind of what we had the control to do, right, in hiring decisions and creating. And to be very clear, we didn't get a new position for this. We kind of re-purposed a different role, a different position.

PHIL WILSON: I mean, is there any possibility or any thought, has any thought been given to looking for a third party? And, you know, like I don't know who to say, I'm

not looking for HDC. We have Disability Rights Louisiana is a nonprofit who has the sole reason for existence is to make sure people's concerns about equity and proper treatment and all that are. I mean, if you had, I don't know whether entities exist, you know, there may be something I'm not even aware of. It doesn't necessarily have to be disability thing. But if there was a third party I think that what you really want is you want people to really tell you what-- yeah, you would have that coming out the gate. And I just, you know, I just don't know if that's something that was given any thought. And I realize that may have been thought of by, you know, at the superintendent and/or BESE level. But if that's something to carry back if it's not too late to think about that then that would be sort of a recommendation.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thoughts.

NICOLE BANKS: I have a thought. So are you saying that because let's say they haven't found this person or the ombudsman thing or whatever. Are you saying that they should like get a third party because you don't think that the people, you know, that the community is going to be honest about what they're getting and what they're not getting. Is that why we need the third party?

PHIL WILSON: I think there are some people who would just not trust that this really is an independent and, you know, somebody above that person who's paying their check is not going to put pressure on them for this or that. I'm not saying that's really what would happen, but I am saying perception is reality to a certain extent. Just a thought. If it's not an issue, then it's not an issue, but it would seem like an issue.

MEREDITH JORDAN: I think definitely this person and I think to a larger extent even after beyond the report that came out is so much trust building between this person and our parents and families is going to be huge. Even to your point. Even if we contracted with someone you're still technically paying, right. Like they're not a permanent employee, I guess, but you're still paying their contract.

PHIL WILSON: Contracted with an entity and they pay salaries then they would be an employee of that entity. It's not the biggest-- I mean, I think it's fantastic effort on the part (inaudible) to address something that has really been not well handled for the last 25 years that I've lived here.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. And I think giving parents that first line in a contact, you know, because right now, you know, there are a lot of times that parents talk me to work, they talk me home. It's great. So we have that on our team. We're supporting parents on our team. You know, you have our dispute resolution coordinator who is doing parent contact as well. And so I think definitely getting one person that's that go-to, that frontline person for our parents. Sort of that liaison, you know. Here's my question, where do I even go to get an answer.

PHIL WILSON: Will LaCAN or one of the groups that the council have be actively pushing this out so that people will know? Cause I would think a lot of people that have issues or feel they have an issue would go to LaCAN. LaCAN regional folks help make people aware that would help too, I think.

NICOLE BANKS: There's only going to be one for the whole state. That's too much. When you said one I was like no, that's not what she really means. That's going to be a lot for that person.

SPEAKER: What's the salary?

MEREDITH JORDAN: I'm not sure.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Around the state department?

MEREDITH JORDAN: The application is closed.

{Council speaking simultaneously}.

MEREDITH JORDAN: So that will definitely be something as this person-- because this is new for us. This is like unchartered water. And like really gauging, you know, what will those incoming calls, those incoming emails look like. We kind of have an idea. We have a call center.

PHIL WILSON: How many calls do you get?

MEREDITH JORDAN: From parents specifically around special education, it's a couple a day. You could go some days where there are no parents who call. But I do think once we say here's the person that we'll get a flood for just a bit.

STACY MARBS: When there are situations like this now what happens or where do these calls go? Who do they contact if there's a problem?

MEREDITH JORDAN: So right now they are either emailing our special education (inaudible). They're also emailing, some will email our dispute resolution inbox and we also have a call center. One of the things that came out from the audit report-- but when you're talking about



a call center you're talking about people with general knowledge, right. So they weren't getting a person who has experience in special education. So a lot of times our call center may focus them to us or focus them to the right people. But we are discussing how-- and we've done, since the audit report, some training for our call center because there were tests done and parents would get different answers, right. Depending on who you got at the call center. We've done some training to do some Band-Aid quick repairs. But one of the things now we're going to have a person that we're really going to try to funnel all parents to, figuring out what that call center, you know. And I don't know that this is how it will happen. Press one. You know how you get those calls. Press one for special education, you know. Press one for our special education ombudsman. So really figuring out how we funnel. So we do have a call center. So we do know a little bit about what the volume is right now. A couple a day verses, you know, some days (inaudible).

VIVIENNE WEBB: So I'm wondering if we have something that we could potentially add as an agenda item. Should we add legislation to contract with outside entities to provide ombudsman to the legislative agenda?

MEREDITH JORDAN: You certainly could. I don't know how they would feel if we already have a position that we're in the process of filling. I don't know if they would approve another. But maybe, you know, if we see hey, the department is getting inundated, this one person and maybe there's another.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Jill, you're recognized.

JILL HANO: So like I just don't get the difference. We have one state ADA coordinator so now we have one LDOE SPED ombudsman. So like, I mean, in my mind she's not going to be as overworked as the AD-- actually, I rather be the SPED ombudsman than an ADA coordinator.

RENODA WASHINGTON: I'm sorry. I have to go back before you were recognized. Ms. Christi had her hand up. I'm sorry about that.

CHRISTI GONZALES: That's okay. Just a quick thing. In our rulebook that will have to give out to every parents that's usually on the fourth page is where you would see that. Most parents do not even open the book. So if there's any way y'all can put it on even the cover or the first page. I mean, we do show them, but after two pages

they're done, to be honest.

MEREDITH JORDAN: A page where it list the Families Helping Families.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. But it's on the fourth page. It's like way back there. It needs to be upfront, just as a thought. I really do think that would be helpful to the ombudsman or whoever the person comes in. And that way the number and everything is right there printed on the blue book. There's no room for, you know, any negative connotation or anything like that. So I think that's one thing that needs to be brought up, you know, and move it from the back or middle to the front. That way there's no misconception.

SPEAKER: Do you all have a team that's working with the ombudsman? Cause I just really have a great concern on that individual.

MEREDITH JORDAN: So one of the things that will be really helpful is we have in the department, we also have a person who helps our private school parents. So, you know, having this person also work with our private school ombudsman to help with, you know, what are some of the things that she sees. How does she help parents. You know, will be helpful for this person to partner with them. They'll of course have access to me and my team. And one of the other things that I think will be really helpful for this person and for us, it's new in our state, is to connect our ombudsman or woman to another state's special education ombudsman. That way they can kind of talk about hey, what's helped you be successful in this role. How have you had to manage tasks. You know what I mean. Plan out, have your calendar where-- because we do expect that this person will be providing parent support daily, right. Parent communications, emails, phones, working with school systems, helping them resolve those disputes and work together. And sometimes we get a lot of just general they're just looking for general information or questions and for whatever reason they didn't go to their local school system. They came up to us to ask and of course we're not going to bounce parents around and so we answer those general questions. So some of it is not always dispute related or I don't agree with my school system. Sometimes it's I'm looking for this or I need information on this. So this person will also answer just some of those general information or information seeking questions too. But I

think a couple of things we can do to help support this person. I am hearing y'all say y'all are concerned about this individual. I'll have to bring them here to meet y'all.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right, guys. It is 4:26. I do want to reiterate let's be mindful of our time. Let's be mindful of what we're discussing and let's be mindful of being recognized by the chair before speaking. Okay. Yes.

PHIL WILSON: So it seems like we have two networks. We have Families Helping Families, and we have LaCAN. And we typically at HDC we know we're 50 people and we can't change the state on our own. So when we approach our work what we do is we attempt to build a capacity that exist within the communities where the issue lies. It seems to me it's taken a more of a tertiary, you know, step it back approach if you only have one person is to build the capacity of the LaCAN leaders and/or Families Helping Families so the complaint comes in either through wherever it comes from. It may come through Families Helping Families and be communicated up to the ombudsman or the Families Helping Families person would say you can call this person at this 800 number and it's confidential and all that good stuff. But what could happen in that situation is then that ombudsman is probably hearing similar complaints or issues around the state and would have the wherewithal and over time build a toolkit for things like this. Then the ombudsman can assist the local person in that region or community to be a face that somebody recognizes as a support and kind of do that piece from a distance. And when it gets to a head where it's boiling or whatever then that ombudsman, there has to be some kind of okay, the temperature is now 200 degrees, we have to get some ice on this thing and cool it down, right. But I don't think one person can do what is needed. But I think there's, you know, 15 or 20 people around the state that could be part of a network that that ombudsman, woman can work with. And I think over time you could have something that would work quite well. That's my recommendation.

RENODA WASHINGTON: I agree. Ms. Meredith, have you guys considered all these things or?

MEREDITH JORDAN: So we definitely have our partnership with Families Helping Families still as an agency. And so

we definitely have talked about, you know, this person will literally have a really wonderful, landscaped view of what are the issues, what are the concerns of parents. And to be able to say here are some of the systemic things, here are some of the things that we are hearing more often. And that can change, right. And better help to-- we do some capacity building sessions with Families Helping Families, just getting that information out there. Whatever the questions that are coming. If it's question about April Dunn. Questions about high school graduation requirements. Then we can get that information and slides and presentations that they can then go into their networks and deliver. And I would see this ombudsman doing something very, very similar to what you're saying and being very connected to our Families Helping Families joining me on those check-ins with them where we tell them what we're hearing, they tell us what they're hearing, and we can kind of really work together to help solve and support our families. So I can definitely see that working in that way.

PHIL WILSON: If I could I want to take it back to your comment about the legislative piece. To me if there was an ask it might be to provide some more resources to whatever the network is to have those regional people a little more time, or a little higher pay, or whatever it is so that the ombudsman who's the one person has more of a network of people in each region to work through to help solve problems. I could see that as an ask. It's not asking for more. Something you already have.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. More resources, yeah.

PHIL WILSON: And we're also supposed to have a special education advisory council in each school district. That would be another place to put some resources. Trying to solve it from one person is just not going to work.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Speaking of that advisory council, Meredith.

MEREDITH JORDAN: So the local special education advisory councils. So that's one of the things maybe we can put that on our next agenda too is to get some input from you all. Cause I know we've talked a little bit. We've talked a little bit at our SEAP, state special education advisory panel, my panel, is those reports and how-- and I know we've heard some comments around, you know, maybe the department should put out a template. And so I

think hearing from you all what you would like to see as the community, as parents what information would you like to see on their annual reports. And I'm more than happy to develop something alongside our SEAP and put that out for our school systems to use as a template for what that annual report can look like. Because they do all look different because there was no template provided.

CHRISTI GONZALES: For our SEAP meetings is there any way we could get more information? Like whenever we have our meetings so other people could see. Because the last meeting it was very informative but all that was listed was the motion and the motion passed. Motion, motion passed.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Our minutes?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. I was like that was an awesome meeting.

MEREDITH JORDAN: We use a standard template, but that doesn't mean we can't...

CHRISTI GONZALES: I went back to look over the minutes. So I think that would justify some of the...

MEREDITH JORDAN: Absolutely.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Okay. Thank you so much.

SPEAKER: Do you all have something in place where you support principals as far as meeting with them, providing them with information as far as the importance of their staff following and implementing these laws?

MEREDITH JORDAN: We do. We have principal webinars. I'm not on all of them so there's not always a special education topic on principal webinars. But it's definitely something we have to do more is support our principals. We're not currently-- now some of these modules, things like that, certainly principals could use. So some of it is getting them information that's accessible that they can use with their teams to support. One of the things we find really difficult, of course, with principals and teachers is pulling them out of the classroom for professional development. They have enough of that even from their local teams. She's like no, we don't. You know, competing with local PD and then state PD it's hard to pull from teachers and principals during the day. So we kind of have to be cognizant of trying to do some of that in the evenings too for some of them. But yeah, I think there's more we need to do with principals.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right.

CHRISTI GONZALES: One last question. How's the

special ed playbook, I know we've heard some good things about it. But I know some of our inquiries, you know, Louisiana's different and if it's not you must do this they usually don't do it. That was one of our that we wondered how many schools have said oh, yes, this is great information. I know it's awesome, but the thing is how many schools really are going to put it to work in the classroom.

MEREDITH JORDAN: So what we're actually seeing we've had some I call them top growth discussions. I have done them for two years now. Our school systems who are demonstrating top growth for students with disabilities on state assessments we're kind of having, we have those conversations. We just did the second round of those this year. One of the things that we are finding is those school systems who are showing growth are the ones who are I wouldn't say anyone has fully implemented best practices for students with disabilities instructionally. But those who are demonstrating top growth are those who are starting. They've done something. They've done it to an extent. They have high-quality intervention. They have intervention built in the day equitably for all kids. They're exposing children and using high-quality curriculum.

And so, you know, I wouldn't say, Christi, that we have school systems that are implementing that 100 percent and that all things are perfect around supporting students instructionally. We have gained a lot of momentum. So we did a regional tour. We really dug in. We chunked the playbook. We read it together. They started to self-assess where am I with school systems. They created action plans. And so we required a three-person team. The school superintendent, two academic officers, special education director. Now some of them, we didn't turn anybody away, some of them brought school principals. Some of them brought school principals that they're trying to bring on board, right. And say here's what we should be doing for students with disabilities. Some of them brought pupil appraisal or SPED teachers. And we got a lot of great momentum. We got a lot of great feedback.

Some of the key action steps that they are out doing right now is we told them, you know, one key action is we need to go back, we talked about when you're doing walk-throughs and you're doing school visits to your

campuses with your leadership team are you visiting those classrooms where our students with disabilities are. Sometimes those are the classrooms that we skip. We had a lot of difficult and hard conversations, but I felt very received. I felt a lot of positive. I was so excited for-- not all superintendents came, right. But the superintendents who are in the room and the school system leaders alongside their SPED person really showing that supporting our kids with disabilities has to be a joint effort. It's not one person. They're all of our children. And so I think we've got a lot of great momentum. A lot of great action steps. They talked a lot about going back, talking about their data, digging into their students with disabilities data. Doing learning walks. Going into their school systems to see what's happening in those study skills classes. What's happening in resource. What does intervention look like. How is it high quality intervention. Is it tied to their curriculum where they're really going to close achievement gaps and help grow those kids in reading and math. And so I feel like we have really great momentum, but we're so early in implementation. It's literally step one. And it will have to be a journey to really redefine and reimagine special education and how we're supporting our students in our state. But I think we've got some things in writing. We've got Nebraska, a couple of other states that have reached out and said hey, we want to copy this. I'm like I don't have time for you. I've got to do my kids.

CHRISTI GONZALES: It's a great beginning. I think it's wonderful and especially for our kids because if you do one or two you can do five to ten regular children along with it who might need the support. So I just thank you.

MEREDITH JORDAN: I think the hardest one for people is going to be our third best practice which is content strong. So in a world where there are staff shortages that is a hard pill to swallow right now. But one of the things we can start having hard conversations about is the individuals that we are putting in front of our children. The expertise that they have and some of the adult practices around staffing. And the people we're putting in front of our children. And so I think we can do better. It will be hard, but we can do better.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. All right, Dr. Phil, three minutes.

PHIL WILSON: I just want to jump on what you just said in a positive way and say that I've been saying for the last 15 or 20 years that one of the things that Louisiana has failed miserably at is the dismantling of the personnel prep programs in this state. Meaning the special education programs. We have no severe disabilities inter training programs. We have one program for teachers of the blind. We have one for Deaf, Hard of Hearing. I'm not sure. And when we went to the Teach for America kind of a model, like we can get teachers certified in a year or less we just basically threw away our commitment to what you are just speaking to. And, you know, that's something that we need to-- you seem to know about legislation. I'm not very good in that area, but that's something that really I haven't heard our governor elect really be much of an advocate around higher education in these low incident kind of areas. I hope we can get his ear.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Can I respond?

RENODA WASHINGTON: Yes, ma'am. Go ahead.

VIVIENNE WEBB: I love advocating for change in legislation and like to do change through legislation. One of my big things is I want to amend Bulletin 1508.

PHIL WILSON: That happens on a regular basis.

MEREDITH JORDAN: We're going to open 1508 this year. That's me and you. That's the department. That's not legislation. Let's go. We might not have enough time but tell me what you want to do.

VIVIENNE WEBB: So basically with IEPs lots of students are having trouble getting them even though it's very clear they need them. But there's a clear need for them in the classrooms. The teachers see it, but they're not addressing it. Counselors and principals see it, but they're not addressing it. And then also it blocks medical access. Like they rely on things for-- you need an IEP to get a waiver. You also need-- they try to diagnose you with autism through the school.

PHIL WILSON: It's not a medical diagnosis.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Exactly. And they say they're not doctors, but they're trying to play doctor with us. Which is a big problem because I have an autism diagnosis and I'm trying to go through the IEP process right now before I get to college, but they looked at me and they're trying to say oh, but I'm fine. My grades are high. I don't have autism even though it's very apparent my problems are autism



related. So I would like to-- I see that happening with other students as well and I have seen it happen with several other like diagnoses. Not just autism, but ADHD and other things. Also mental health related things. Not just developmental disabilities. And I would like to change that so we can have easier access to IEPs and so that it doesn't block access to waivers and stuff like medical things because I don't think that's right.

NICOLE BANKS: So I just have a quick like maybe question. Do you have to have a disability to get an IEP?

MEREDITH JORDAN: You have to meet eligibility via 1508 criteria.

PHIL WILSON: What that really boils down to is you don't have to have a medical diagnosis. What you have to have is criteria 1508 which relates to your ability to benefit from the general education curriculum. So if there's something that, you're dyslexic or something that could be a medical thing or it could just be oh, you know, you can't read as fast or comprehend or whatever so that's going to, you know, impair you. A person who's completely blind might not qualify for special education if he or she can read Braille. But they would get a 508 to maybe they need mobility training or something like that. So it is a murky thing.

And I think back to your point it may not be so much of wanting to get a Medicaid waiver. Because a Medicare waiver just simply means you have a need for basically 24-hour care in a facility. But you're going to get a waiver for those services because you can live in the community if you just give me some other things to help me address those handful of things, like in your case, that are really making your life challenging for you to achieve what you want to. So I wouldn't couch it in terms of a waiver because I don't think that that's probably what you're looking for. You needed services, adult services that may be mental health, may be transportation. I don't know what they are, but that whole waiver thing might be asking for a little bit more than what you really are looking for. But go ahead.

VIVIANNE WEBB: But in general medical related things, that shouldn't have to be school related at all. We don't have access to because the school has to go through it first and the school's not a doctor.

PHIL WILSON: That's correct. Medicaid is always

going to be the payer of last resort. So the school has what you need and then they're arguing about who does what. It leaves you stuck.

VIVIENNE WEBB: That and I have to flunk out of school in order to be deemed autistic enough. But I am the type of person who strives for perfection, and I cannot handle having a bad grade. Like I get mad if my grade goes below a 96. So if I was flunking I would probably hate myself. It wouldn't be good. But basically I have to flunk out of school for them to give me accommodations. However, I would be out of school by the time I flunked. They don't want to accommodate us at all.

PHIL WILSON: But you should be able to get those accommodations through a 508 plan.

VIVIENNE WEBB: 504?

PHIL WILSON: 504. But you should be able to get those accommodations not necessarily with an IEP.

VIVIENNE WEBB: I should have had them already.

PHIL WILSON: Right. It sounds like you have an open ear for getting some good ideas to be heard for the department to consider for sure.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Great discussion. Any other questions anyone may have? Any other concerns? Any announcements?

MARY TARVER: I know there's a whole lot of new people on this committee, but I've been here for nine years, and this committee is my last meeting. But we have seen so much change in this short amount of time. You'll never learn it all. But pick the things that you want to start working on and work towards it together. I cannot tell you what a change we have seen with Department of Education since you've been here Meridith. As I sit here today and say I know LAPIE, we got those kids, you know, in college. And we worked on all those things that are on that action plan and on our legislative agenda. And all of those things, it comes from here. So please know that you cannot ask a stupid question. You cannot-- you're always learning. And we help those people who come here from Department of Education, from OCDD. From all of those departments that give us those meetings' notes tomorrow and you're looking through them or you're like I don't even know what they're talking about. Take time to try to get a little hunk at a time and you will make a difference. I have seen it and it's remarkable. So I appreciate that I've been able to

work with so many people and learn so many things. The DD Council is very important and I'm so excited that I've been a part of it. I'll watch y'all on the YouTube channel.

JILL HANO: Were you there when they were first talking about LAPIE? That's amazing.

MARY TARVER: And LRS. There's a whole lot that goes on. We do tend to be more educational (inaudible) LRS sometimes.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Well, any other questions or concerns? It is now 4:52. All right. So I would like to thank Ms. Meredith for those words and thank her for personally encouraging me. Thank you so much, Ms. Mary and too, Ms. Webb. I have often looked up on you, Ms. Webb, and you really inspire me. You speak so well. You speak so confidently at every meeting, and I'm always inspired by you. So thank you for always contributing and having such great wisdom. Thank you. Also to Ms. Stacy, thank you so much. Appreciate it. And also to Meredith as well. I appreciate you and your contributions to this committee. And also Dr. Phil, thank you so much today. Great information. Great insight to the council. Thank you so much for attending. And also to everyone else, Hannah, Ebony and everyone, thank you for your contributions today. Tomorrow is the full council meeting which will begin at 8:30 a.m. Any other announcements that anyone need to make?

PHIL WILSON: I have a quick one. You guys might get bored when I talk tomorrow at our agency thing because I'm going to try to get a little bit of this discussion about FASD out for the full council. So instead of talking about what we did last quarter, it's in our report. So just nod off when I talk.

RENODA WASHINGTON: On tomorrow there may be someone else chairing and you may not get the same.

PHIL WILSON: I'm on the agenda. I know that.

RENODA WASHINGTON: I'm just letting you know. You're going to be thankful for me. Any objections or anything? All right. I hereby adjourn the meeting at 4:54.