ISAC FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE PRESENTS AT THE ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (ISBE) FY2010 BUDGET HEARING

Mike Otte and Jim Surber of the ISAC Finance Committee requested that special education receive priority status for fiscal year 2010 in their presentation to ISBE’s Finance and Audit Committee in Wheaton on December 3, 2008. A few facts shared at the board meeting included:

- 37,137 children, ages 3 to 5 received special education services in 2007.
- 286,122 students, ages 6 to 21, received special education services in 2007.

ISBE has set the following goals for schools and students in Illinois.

- Every student will demonstrate academic achievement and be prepared for success after high school.
- Every student will be supported by highly prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.
- Every school will offer a safe and healthy learning environment for all students.

These goals apply to all students including students receiving special education services. Significant resources must be allocated to special education if these goals are to be met by all students.

Special education funding in Illinois has not kept pace with education mandates and Illinois lags significantly behind other states with reference to funding for special education. The ISAC Finance Committee urged ISBE members to support full funding of mandated special education programs so that Illinois schools can provide appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for all children with disabilities.

Members of this subcommittee include Jim Surber, Mike Otte, Marva Campbell-Pruitt, and Stanley Valentine.
Rick Ramirez, Moline, is the chair of ISAC General Supervision/Due Process subcommittee. Our subcommittee members include: Deb Fornoff (Washington), Suzanne Lee (Champaign), Heather Munz (Freeport), Sharon Slover (Harvard) and Kristine Stanley (Peoria Heights).

The ISAC by-laws set forth the following responsibilities for our committee: 1) Make recommendations on proposed due process rules and regulations; 2) Develop objective criteria regarding the selection of due process hearing officers; 3) Recommend to the Council the need for additional hearing officers; 4) Receive, review and provide input as necessary to the Annual Impartial Due Process Hearing System Report; and 5) Review and make recommendations to the full ISAC Council regarding the state’s overall impartial due process system.

Overview of Illinois Dispute Resolution System

On February 11, 2009, Andrew Eulass, ISBE Due Process Coordinator, presented the ISAC council of the whole with an update of the current Due Process System. Mr. Eulass presented data and discussed in detail the following dispute resolution issues and concerns.

- Current special education dispute resolution functions in Illinois
- Emerging problems and issues facing Illinois dispute resolution
- Current structures and organizations surrounding dispute resolution and how they help or hinder the dispute resolution process as a whole
- First steps (and other long-term steps) to both better define problems and issues, and to identify solutions

In Illinois, there are three principal mechanisms for resolving disputes at the present time:

- State-Sponsored Mediation
- State Complaints
- Due Process Hearings (includes Resolution Process)

Mr. Eulass also commented that several agencies and organizations have been identified as key stakeholders and provide by mandate various levels of input into the current system. The agencies and a summary of their involvement are as follows:

- ISBE – statutes, rules, policies, appointment of some members of Due Process Screening Committee
- ISAC – policy recommendations, ratification of hiring and renewal of hearing officer contracts
- Due Process Screening Committee – review of hearing officer performance, policy recommendations
- Office of the Attorney General - appointment of some members of Due Process Screening Committee, provides advisory forum on policy affecting dispute resolution

Overall, a number of issues and problem areas were noted for discussion including, but not limited to, financial costs of the process, access to legal representation, timeliness of hearings and related legal procedures, and availability of other dispute resolution options. The idea of compiling a potential stakeholders group to begin identifying areas of reform was discussed. Mr. Eulass has agreed to prepare a working draft of recommendations for ISAC to review as it prepares its report to the committee of the whole for action.

(Continued on page 3)
The purpose of the Bilingual Special Education Committee of the Illinois State Advisory Council is to address systemic needs of English Language Learners with disabilities throughout the state. Additionally, this committee is charged with understanding regulations, policies, procedures, and/or programs as they emerge that may impact this population. The committee stays informed of issues, policies and best practices, and uses this information to make recommendations through ISAC to ISBE’s leadership. Other areas of focus include working to improve supports for school districts to provide appropriate educational supports, and to collaborate as part of the statewide Joint Bilingual Special Education Sub-Committee with the Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education (IACBE).

Did You Know You Could Find These Important Items On The ISBE Website Under Special Education?

- Annual State Reports on Special Education Performance
- Information on the Complaint Investigation Process for ISBE
- A Video on Resolving Special Education Disputes

Check it out at www.isbe.net

Save the Date!

The Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council Presents
2009 Illinois Transition Conference
Mission Transition: Destination Success
November 8-10, 2009
Renaissance Hotel & Convention Center
Schaumburg, Illinois

July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008 Dispute Resolution Data

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mediations</th>
<th>Complaints</th>
<th>Due Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Cases Initiated</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>360</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Completed</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>359 (47 full hearings*)</td>
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<td>(as of November 1, 2008)</td>
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*Includes cases initiated before July 1, 2007

Bilingual Special Education Committee Members:
From left to right, Tere Garate, (Chicago), Rahnee Patrick (Chicago), Anel Gonzalez (Forest Park), and Jennifer Naddeo (Barrington)
MISSION STATEMENT
The role of the Illinois State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities is to be a proactive body, advising the Governor, Legislature and State Board of Education on current issues relating to the education of children and youth with disabilities, as well as the unmet needs of these children and their families. It is also the responsibility of this Council to encourage new strategies and technologies, while advocating high standards of excellence throughout Illinois.

PRIMARY ISAC ACTIVITIES
- Joint Agreement Withdrawal
- Commenting on Rules and Regulations
- Providing input on Continuous Improvement Plan
- Due Process and General Supervision input
- Serving on other assignments/committees
- Development of an Annual Report
- Providing guidance on state rules
- Implementing IDEIA

Dr. Patrick Schwarz closed out the conference on a high note, sharing his thoughts and experiences with changing the paradigm From Disability to Possibility. Dr. Schwarz is a dynamic and engaging professor, author, motivational speaker and leader in Education (Inclusive Education, Special Education, General Education and Educational Leadership) and Human Services. Patrick is Professor and Chair of the Diversity in Learning and Development Department at National-Louis University, Chicago.

Next year’s Transition Conference, Mission Transition: Destination Success, will be held on November 8—10, 2009 in Schaumburg, IL.

Please contact Rick Ramirez, Ad Hoc Communications Committee Chair, with any comments or questions at ramirez@netexpress.net or 1-800-813-0392

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Thank You!