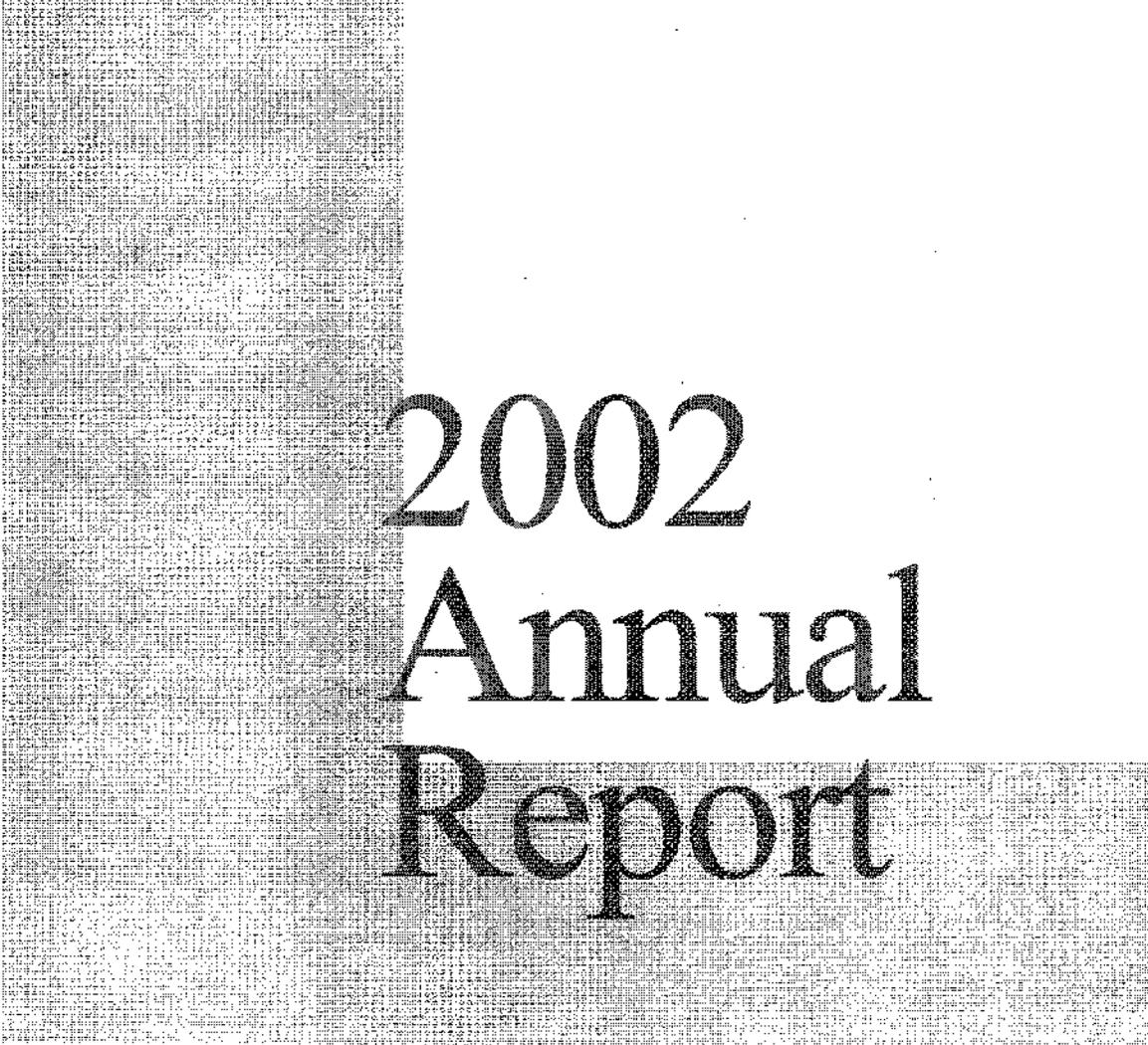


Minnesota Special Education Advisory Council

**SEAC**



**2002  
Annual  
Report**

## 2002 SEAC MEMBERS

**Karen Joyrter, Chair**  
**Cindy Yess, Vice Chair**

**District 1**

Cindy Yess  
Cynthia Unger

**District 2**

Thomas Hammer  
Byron Bland

**District 3**

Kathleen Lubansky  
James Huber  
Idelle Sue Longman

**District 4**

Rijuta Pathre  
Julia Washenberger

**District 5**

Jesus Villaserior

**District 6**

Karon Joyer  
Mary Rodenberg-Roberts  
James Stocco  
Barbara Troolin  
Tim Walsh

**District 7**

Janet Salk  
Terry Beck  
Bob Vaadeland

**District 8**

Sharon Belangex

**Ex-Officio**

Norena Hale, Director  
*Division of Special Education*

Darren Kermes, Acting Manager  
*Division of Accountability and Compliance*

**SEAC Coordinator**

Mary McDevitt Kraljic  
*Division of Special Education*

# 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Overview of the 2002 Annual Report.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>About</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SEAC.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Vision of SEAC.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SEAC Duties and Functions.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Federal Requirements, Procedures and Membership.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Advisory Panel Requirements.....	2
Advisory Panel Procedures.....	3
Membership Requirements.....	3
<b>SEAC Recommendations for Statewide Priorities.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>I. Barriers To The Provision Of Effective Education Services To Incarcerated Youth.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Introduction.....	4
Identified Needs.....	4
SEAC Recommendations.....	6
<b>II. Special Education Workforce Shortages.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Introduction.....	8
Identified Needs.....	8
SEAC Recommendations.....	10
<b>III. Interagency and Transition Issues.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Introduction.....	12
Identified Needs.....	12
SEAC Recommendations.....	14

# 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

## OVERVIEW OF THE 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the activities conducted by the Minnesota's Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) for the 2002 academic year. The SEAC convened on four different occasions throughout the year to identify priority areas of unmet needs and provide the state educational agency (SEA) with recommendations for the implementation of policies and activities to address those needs. Meeting dates and discussion topics included the following:

**November 7-8, 2001:** *New Member Orientation and Establishing Meeting Dates and Priorities*

**December 19-20, 2001:** *I. Barriers to the Provision of Effective Education Services to Incarcerated Youth*

**February 13-14, 2002:** *II. Special Education Workforce Shortages*

**April 11-12, 2002:** *III. Interagency and Transition Goals*

As indicated above, the SEAC identified and focused their deliberations on three priority areas, each of which is summarized in the section of this report entitled *SEAC Recommendations for Statewide Priorities*. Each priority area includes a general overview of the issue, as well as statements of identified needs and recommendations to meet those needs.

## ABOUT SEAC

THE MINNESOTA SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (SEAC) is a federally mandated (34 CFR.300.650-300.653) advisory panel appointed by the Commissioner of the Department of Children, Families and Learning (CFL). Guided by a vision of a public educational system that maximizes the life-long self determination of children and youth, SEAC is responsible for advising the Division of Special Education and the Division of Accountability and Compliance. In this capacity, SEAC's purpose is to provide a broad base of input regarding policies, practices and issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities, ages birth through 21.

## SEAC 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

### VISION OF SEAC

THE MINNESOTA SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL envisions a public educational system, which serves children and youth with disabilities and their families. Through this system, these children and youth will maximize life-long self-determination.

### SEAC DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SEAC ARE STIPULATED THROUGH FEDERAL LAW with regard to requirements, procedures, and membership (see following section). Relative to the State Education Agency (SEA)—the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning—duties and functions of the SEAC include:

- Advise the SEA of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;
- Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities;

Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 618 of the Act;

- \* Advise the SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Act;
- Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities; and
- Advise on the education of eligible students with disabilities who have been convicted as adults and incarcerated in adult prisons.

### FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS, PROCEDURES & MEMBERSHIP

#### ADVISORY PANEL REQUIREMENTS

- Each State shall establish and maintain, in accordance with Secs. 300.650-300.653, a State advisory panel on the education of children with disabilities.
- The advisory panel must be appointed by the Governor or any other official authorized under State law to make those appointments.
- \* If a State has an existing advisory panel that can perform the functions in Sec. 300.652, the State may modify the existing panel so that it fulfills all of the requirements of Secs. 300.650-300:653, instead of establishing a new advisory panel.

Authority. (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(21)(A)(Sec. 300.653)

## SEAC 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

### ADVISORY PANEL PROCEDURES

- The advisory panel shall meet as often as necessary to conduct its business.
- \*By July 1 of each year, the advisory panel shall submit an annual report of panel activities and suggestions to the SEA. This report must be made available to the public in a manner consistent with other public reporting requirements of Part B of the Act.
- Official minutes must be kept on all panel meetings and must be made available to the public on request.
- \* All advisory panel meetings and agenda items must be announced enough in advance of the meeting to afford interested parties a reasonable opportunity to attend. Meetings must be open to the public.
- \* Interpreters and other necessary services must be provided at panel meetings for panel members or participants. The State may pay for these services from funds under Sec. 300.620.
- \* The advisory panel shall serve without compensation but the State must reimburse the panel for reasonable and necessary expenses for attending meetings and performing duties. The State may use funds under Sec. 300.620 for this purpose.

Authority: (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(21))

### MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

The State Special Education Advisory Council shall be comprised of twenty members appointed by the Governor or any other official authorized under State law to make those appointments. A majority of the members must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities. The members shall be representative of the State population and composed of individuals involved in, or concerned with the education of children with disabilities, including:

Parents of children with disabilities;	Representatives of other State agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities;
Individuals with disabilities;	
Teachers;	Representatives of private schools and public charter schools;
Representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel;	At least one representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities; and
State and local education officials;	
Administrators of programs for children with disabilities;	Representatives from State juvenile and adult corrections agencies.

## SEAC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATEWIDE PRIORITIES

### **I. BARRIERS TO THE PROVISION OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATION SERVICES TO INCARCERATED YOUTH**

#### INTRODUCTION

IN THE MAJORITY OF CASES, SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES are provided in the child's "home" school or district. However, in some cases, children and youth with disabilities will be placed in a care and treatment facility—also referred to as a "separate site." Examples of care and treatment facilities include: substance abuse treatment centers, day treatment programs, and residential treatment centers. In addition, the term "separate site" also encompasses juvenile correctional institutions, highly restrictive facilities designed for incarcerated youth, many of whom are youth with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). SEAC's attention has focused on this type of setting due to a number reasons, including:

The escalating costs of services in correctional facilities, particularly in relation to the placement of relatively high numbers of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

Evidence that incarcerated youth with disabilities in correctional facilities are not being provided with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in accordance with the federal requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 97).

The lack of a coordinated system of services that provides incarcerated youth with the transition and after care services necessary to successfully reintegrate to their home schools and community.

It is SEAC's position that the development and implementation of comprehensive policies are essential in the creation of coordinated service systems that can meet the needs of incarcerated youth. SEAC recognizes that all types of care and treatment facilities, including correctional facilities, represent an important component of the continuum of services. As such, there is a critical need to provide training and support to ensure that incarcerated youth with disabilities placed in highly restrictive settings receive their FAPE and the necessary after care in order to make successful transitions back to their home school and community.

#### IDENTIFIED NEEDS

1. SEAC HAS IDENTIFIED A NEED TO PROVIDE  
MULTIDISCIPLINARY TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO  
ALL STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES  
TO INCARCERATED YOUTH.

SEAC believes that the most immediate and major challenge facing us today stems from a lack of knowledge and awareness among many groups of stakeholders. This deficit can be observed at all levels, including professionals working in the field of special education and those working in correctional facilities. In addition to training and professional development needs aimed at professionals, there is also a need to train parents and families. Even though it is widely recognized that family involvement is critical in the education and rehabilitation of youth, many families lack basic information about these issues, often finding themselves overwhelmed, and with few opportunities to participate as partners in the decision-making process.

**2. SEAC HAS IDENTIFIED A NEED TO STUDY CASELOAD AND LICENSURE ISSUES OF STAFF WORKING IN SEPARATE SITES, INCLUDING CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.**

Special education and related services (e.g., psychology, social work, mental health) must be provided to incarcerated youth placed in correctional facilities. However, based on the results of monitoring activities conducted by the Division of Accountability and Compliance, many correctional facilities lack fully licensed special education teachers or employ a disproportionate number of teachers with a provisional license. Monitoring results also raise a number of other concerns about the quality of instructional services at separate sites—namely, the general lack of service models from which to provide adequate due process, special education instruction, and transition services. Compounding these problems are high student caseloads of staff working in separate sites, along with high staff attrition rates due to burn-out and stress. As a result of these factors, many have concluded that incarcerated youth with disabilities are not being provided with the services to which they are entitled. To some extent, the problems observed in correctional facilities can be attributed to institutional "mission," where the focus may be placed more on criminal justice and penitence, with only a secondary emphasis on education. Many staff working in correctional facilities are only just beginning to gain an awareness of their responsibilities to provide special education services to incarcerated youth with disabilities.

**3. SEAC HAS IDENTIFIED A NEED TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE TRANSITION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES EXITING FROM SEPARATE SITES, INCLUDING CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS.**

One of the major factors that contribute to high recidivism rates, behavioral regression, school failure, and drop-outs is the lack of adequate transition support to incarcerated youth exiting correctional facilities. Quite often, incarcerated youth receive little or no coordinated support from educational and community service agencies. When practiced effectively, transition has proven to be a benefit for youth exiting from separate settings. Coordination strategies that provide incarcerated youth with transition services that meet their behavioral, social, vocational, and educational needs generally results in higher rates of successful school and community reintegration. However, these efforts are often labor intensive requiring adequately trained transition personnel and coordination at all points within the service delivery continuum. For example, correctional facilities must have access and cooperation of local schools in order to provide children and youth with interim placements before

## SEAC 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

they are fully transitioned back to their home districts. Transition efforts that reinforce youth and family strengths, along with education and community-based programs which provide intensive aftercare and/or supervision of incarcerated youth, all represent components of an effective service system.

### SEAC RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. IMPLEMENT MULTIDISCIPLINARY TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INITIATIVES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH AND CARE AND TREATMENT SERVICES.

- a. Training and professional development initiatives are needed at all levels of the system, including pre-service training. With regard to the latter, institutions responsible for preparing future teachers and other professionals need to place a greater focus on how to meet the educational needs of all children and youth, including incarcerated youth. Preservice trainees especially need to better understand their roles and responsibilities of working within collaborative service models as state systems increasingly move in this direction. It is essential that future special educators gain a better understanding of such issues as early identification and intervention, cultural competency, utilization of family strengths, and transition services.
- b. In-service activities need to reflect a multidisciplinary approach. As such, strategically planned cross-training opportunities need to be provided to educators and others working in correctional facilities to implement collaborative service systems that reflect best practices and ensure that a continuum of services are available to meet the instructional needs of incarcerated youth. These activities can be facilitated by providing all types of stakeholders with exemplary models of service which can be replicated. Also, merging resources to conduct training activities (e.g., trainers, speakers) can be an especially effective strategy in conducting cross-training for staff. More inservice activities need to focus on the basic "mechanics" of collaborative services provision.
- c. In addition to staff development activities, initiatives are also needed to create greater linkages and support systems for families. Although it is recognized that family involvement in treatment is a key component to achieve successful outcomes for incarcerated youth, families often lack basic information about mental health and transitions service options available to their child. Information dissemination and training efforts need to be targeted to help families effectively navigate the service system, including information on accessing resources and services that facilitate the reintegration of incarcerated youth into the home school and community. In addition, initiatives aimed at reducing family stress and identifying and utilizing family strengths are all areas in which parent training and information dissemination efforts would also be beneficial. These efforts are particularly critical for families representing diverse cultural backgrounds, given concerns about the

## SEAC 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

disproportionate numbers of children and youth placed in highly restrictive facilities within the state, including correctional facilities.

### 2. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A STUDY TO EXAMINE "WORKLOAD AND LICENSURE ISSUES OF STAFF WORKING IN SEPARATE SITES.

- a. Conduct a study of correctional facilities within the state to examine caseloads, workloads, and licensure of special education and related services staff. The purpose of this study would be to determine the current capacity of staff to provide children and youth with the range of programs and services mandated by IDEA. Main points of the study should include an assessment of: (1) staff workload/caseload in relation to serving special education and non-special education populations; (2) qualification and licensure of staff to provide required services, (e.g., specialized instruction, implementation of graduation standards, and transition services to children and youth with disabilities); and (3) current status of practices in such areas as family involvement, cultural competency, and collaboration strategies with school and other agencies. Outcomes of this study will be to: (1) determine current staffing patterns and staff-to-student ratios needed to comply with IDEA requirements; (2) identify specific training and licensure needs of staff; and (3) provide information about models of service and best practices that result in effective special education services.

### 3. IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE TRANSITION SERVICES FOR INCARCERATED YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES EXITING FROM SEPARATE SITES, INCLUDING CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.

- a. Provide support and technical assistance to staff working in correctional facilities in the implementation of transition service models through the utilization of liaisons, due process facilitators, and others (e.g., vocational coordinators). This can be accomplished through the replication of successful service models currently operating within the state, accompanied by sufficient levels of funding and resources.
- b. Implement the actions and recommendations described in *Minnesota State Plan for Transition Services to Youth with Disabilities* and *Minnesota's Self Assessment Process* report.
- c. Implement a continuous, systematic data collection process (e.g., Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process—CIMP) to monitor the progress incarcerated youth with disabilities exiting separate sites, including correctional facilities.

## II. SPECIAL EDUCATION WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

### INTRODUCTION

SIMILAR TO THE REST OF THE NATION, MINNESOTA HAS EXPERIENCED A STEADY growth rate in the numbers of students identified with a disability. This growth has increased the demand for qualified teachers. According to an informal survey conducted by the Division of Special Education, Directors of Special Education throughout the state are reporting increasing problems related to the recruitment and retention of qualified special education staff. Based on the observations of those responsible for recruiting and hiring qualified staff, there are clear signs that some form of augmentation is taking place in Minnesota's special education workforce. One sign has been the dramatic increase in the hiring of unlicensed paraprofessional staff in the past few years. Another has been the large numbers of teachers currently employed through provisional licenses, variances, and waivers.

In addition to these signs of a changing workforce, there is also evidence to support a phenomenon that has been observed on a national scale—the "exodus" of teachers leaving special education. Although attrition rates can only be estimated, due in large part to the reliability in which teacher positions are reported by school districts, there appears to be an upward trend in the percentage of special education teachers who have changed jobs or left the field entirely. This trend is observed in most disability areas where data is available, but tends to be much higher for those licensed in the areas of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), and Mild Mental Impairments (MMI). The increase in special education teachers who have changed jobs in these fields is particularly significant when according to 1998 statistics, 18% of teachers in the area of EBD either changed jobs or quit the field altogether, compared with 8% of those employed in the area of Speech and Language Impairments (SLI). Given the growing signs of an impending shortage of special education teachers that is likely to occur in the next few years, SEAC has engaged in an extensive dialogue to identify current needs as well as generate actionable recommendations that can be implemented by state and local agencies in the future.

### IDENTIFIED NEEDS

#### 1. SEAC HAS IDENTIFIED A NEED TO PROMOTE ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS.

Creative solutions are especially needed in areas where documented shortages have occurred (e.g., EBD, LD, MMI). There is a need to stem high levels of "burnout" and increase flexibility in the manner in which job roles are performed and in contracts issued to teachers. In addition, a need exists to explore various support options for currently licensed teachers to reduce clerical tasks associated with managing student caseloads. Specifically, coursework is needed to help teachers manage and supervise

the activities of paraprofessional staff involved in providing services to students. In addition, efforts are needed to promote recruitment of "local talent." Similarly, the services of retired educators could also be utilized to assist local districts in acting as substitutes or mentors and would increase the pool of fully licensed teachers available to districts. However, a need exists to remove barriers that prevent retirees from returning to the workplace. Training for all school administrators is needed to provide them with a solid foundation about a broad range of issues regarding special education. Training must include information about incentives and other leadership strategies that can be used to reduce teacher attrition in special education programs. Also, there is a need to initiate programs aimed at recruiting more diverse populations into special education programs and providing newly licensed teachers with mentoring opportunities.

2. SEAC HAS IDENTIFIED A NEED TO DEVELOP A SYSTEM THAT WILL FACILITATE THE COLLECTION OF ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT TEACHER SHORTAGES.

Although data collection activities have been conducted to monitor the status of licensed and not fully licensed professional and paraprofessional staff in Minnesota, these efforts provide only a general statistical summary and offer little with regard to specific and in-depth information. A more detailed, systematic data collection and analysis procedure is needed to provide more timely and accurate information that can be used to more reliably predict and help to prevent teacher shortages in the future.

3. SEAC HAS IDENTIFIED A NEED FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (IHES) TO ENGAGE IN EFFORTS AIMED AT RECRUITING AND RETAINING QUALITY STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

Given the shortages anticipated in the next few years, there is a need for institutes of higher education to increase efforts to recruit students into special education teacher training programs. Providing student cohort programs, opportunities for mentorship, and quality student teaching experiences are just some of the many different ways that IHEs can encourage students to enter and complete licensure in special education programs. Efforts on behalf of IHEs are particularly needed to ensure that licensed special education staff reflects the increasingly diverse cultural and linguistic student populations attending Minnesota schools.

SEAC believes that the next five years represent a critical period in which to address the issue of teacher shortages in Minnesota. It is a period in which there needs to be innovative solutions to ensure that a highly qualified special education workforce will be available to meet student needs as mandated through the requirements of IDEA 97.

## SEAC 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

### SEAC RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS.

- a. Identify incentive programs that have been used by other states and local education agencies to attract and retain teachers (merit pay, amend pay scales, develop contractual arrangements that allow teachers to move in and out of programs to avoid "burn out," promoting "local talent," etc.). Disseminate ideas about incentives to local school administrators and others involved in recruiting and hiring special education staff.
- b. Support policies and/or legislation to remove teacher retirement constraints which do not make it feasible for an educator to work after retirement. SEAC recognizes that this group could make contributions as mentors and substitutes and also increase the pool of fully licensed staff to local districts.
- c. Implement staff development activities that help special education staff to more effectively utilize paraprofessional staff in the ongoing management of "paperwork" and other tasks that reduce time that could otherwise be devoted to providing services to students.
- d. Support mentoring programs that recruit and retain culturally and linguistically diverse populations of educators also need to be implemented to ensure that the teaching workforce keeps pace with the state's changing demographics.
- e. Support efforts within the Division of Licensing to identify states and training programs that meet Minnesota reciprocity requirements for teachers licensed in other states.
- f. Support policy or legislation for increased staff development funding to local school districts to provide needed additional teacher training days with financial support.
- g. Support local efforts to use flexible models for structuring the school calendar, school day, and other innovations with time to promote enriched staff development and planning time.

#### 2. IMPLEMENT A DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM THAT WILL FACILITATE RELIABLE AND ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT TEACHER SHORTAGES.

- a. The Division of Special Education and the Division of Personnel Licensing should develop and implement a strategic plan that results in a systematic data collection process used to predict and prevent teacher shortages.

## SEAC 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

- b. Establish a co-funded position with the Division of Personnel Licensing to develop and implement data collection activities and to provide technical assistance with regard to reciprocity and certification and licensure issues.
- c. Implement policies and practices that support efforts of institutions of higher education (IHEs) to recruit and retain quality students in special education programs.
- d. Provide mentoring opportunities to future special education teachers in the early stages of training to increase retention in preservice programs. Also, expand cohort programs to provide students with ongoing support throughout preservice training. Focused efforts are particularly needed to recruit and retain future teachers who represent culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- e. The Division of Special Education and IHE representatives should develop and implement Special Education Teacher Training Institutes around the state to: (1) help staff currently teaching on provisional licenses, variances, and waivers to obtain full licensure, (2) provide training to general education staff to support students with disabilities in general education programs, and (3) increase knowledge and awareness among general education administrators about special education issues.
- f. Advocate for more coursework in both general and special education teacher preparation programs regarding diverse learning styles and strategies to accommodate all learners in general education programs.
- g. The Division of Special Education should investigate the feasibility of creating and providing summer training opportunities for faculty at the nine special education teacher preparation programs in the state. The content of these proposed institutes could be personalized based upon changing state needs; i.e., recent changes in laws and rule, updates on due process standards and teacher paperwork requirements, promising practices related to the findings of federal monitoring (e.g., transition, behavioral assessment, parent training) so that Minnesota special education teacher training programs are able to more effectively work with the Division of Special Education and local school districts in addressing state and local needs.
- h. Institutes of higher education should examine the feasibility of increasing collaboration and coordination among teacher training programs in Minnesota to facilitate access for current and prospective teachers living in all areas of the state.

### III. INTERAGENCY AND TRANSITION ISSUES

#### INTRODUCTION

THE SECONDARY TRANSITION REQUIREMENTS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA 97) underscore the concept that the fundamental purpose of education remains that of leading young people with disabilities to productive, purposeful lives as adults in society. The transition service requirements are based on two conceptual principles: (1) to help students and families think about their life after high school and identify long-range goals, and (2) to design the school experience to ensure that students gain the skills and connections they need to achieve those goals. While the concepts behind effective transition can be applied at many age levels, including birth to kindergarten, it is a particularly critical issue to address for youth ages 18-21, since these individuals will soon be faced with the challenge of navigating through a complex system of services as they strive to achieve postsecondary, employment, and community living goals.

To effectively meet the transition needs of youth ages 18-21, substantive changes will be required for the current system of services, including ways of thinking by people who deliver these services. One important area in which change needs to occur is between local education and county service agencies. For example, agreements regarding the sharing of information, the clarification of roles in the transition process, and agreed upon funding mechanisms *before* school and county staff engage in the planning process are just some of the many issues that impact effective transition planning for youth. Resolution of these and other issues will be necessary to implement a model for a successful transition process that articulates: (1) the role of education in preparation for the transition, (2) the "hand-off activities which need to occur once the student receives a diploma and prepares for the next phase of their life (often involving the participation of county service providers), and (3) the collaborative processes necessary between local education and county service agencies to ensure that services are provided, including a feedback loop to identify gaps in services.

How successful special educators and county service providers will be in preparing young people to meet their adult living and postschool objectives represents a critical test for local education and county agencies. Clearly, passing or failing this test will have clear and dramatic implications for the quality of living of students once they leave school. Recognizing that the effectiveness of transition services is contingent upon the collaborative efforts made on behalf of educators and community service providers, it is imperative to develop interagency agreements that promote agency involvement, resource sharing, clarification of roles and responsibilities, and training activities for all who have a stake in this process, including students and their families.

#### IDENTIFIED NEEDS

1. SEAC HAS IDENTIFIED A NEED TO PROMOTE INTERAGENCY INVOLVEMENT AND COLLABORATION.

In many parts of the state, educators and county service providers alike lack awareness about the transition requirements of IDEA. As such, many are uncertain about their roles and responsibilities in the provision of a "coordinated set of transition activities." This lack of awareness is manifested by gaps in services and, quite often, an over-reliance on special education to provide services and supports for which other agencies are responsible. A lack of awareness of defined roles and responsibilities, along with unclear cost and resource sharing guidelines, frequently lead to service gaps and ultimately, to limited transition opportunities for students 18-21. The transition service requirements of IDEA can only be realized when a "seamless" service system has been created—one that provides students with a collaborative model of school-county transition services that includes a full array of job training, postsecondary education, supported employment, and vocational education opportunities.

Currently, Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) are deployed throughout the state to address transition issues and include representation from both education and other community services, including county agencies. However, the progress of CTICs to influence effective secondary transition practices statewide has been uneven and at a generally slow pace. As a result, the capacity of CTICs to effect systems change has been limited and the roles of many of its members remain largely undefined. Despite the current difficulties, it is anticipated that CTICs will grow to play a critical role in establishing transition service coordination among education and county agencies as Minnesota implements the IIP process, which many see as a true "catalyst" for future collaborative initiatives.

2. SEAC HAS IDENTIFIED A NEED TO DEVELOP NEW AND CREATIVE MODELS OF SERVICE TO MEET THE TRANSITION NEEDS OF STUDENTS 18-21.

Many of the issues faced by educators in the implementation of effective transition plans for students is directly related to a need for increased education and training for special education and county service providers. There are many who believe there is a need to "think differently" about how transition services are provided to students, especially in the current climate of statewide budget cuts and the universal recognition that systems need to be coordinated and layered, rather than episodic and fragmented. Thus, new models of practices and staff training need to be considered to allow for the development of a new "breed" of professional whose skills include transition, community integration, and wraparound competencies. Some have suggested that public-private partnerships might be explored, as well as examining changes in job roles (e.g., Work Experience Coordinator) to expand employment opportunities for students. Achieving these objectives will be contingent upon the progress of parallel efforts made at the system level, both from the "top down" and from the "bottom up" that result in truly effective, collaborative transition services for students 18-21.

3. SEAC HAS IDENTIFIED A NEED TO CONDUCT FOLLOW-ALONG AND FOLLOW-UP MONITORING ACTIVITIES TO DEMONSTRATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESS EFFECTIVENESS OF TRANSITION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS.

Many students with disabilities are exiting the educational system receiving little or no support from either educational or county service agencies. As such, few students are

## SEAC 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

provided with continuous transition planning options when exiting school and no mechanism is in place for tracking their progress. Currently, few service systems include continuous improvement performance monitoring as part of strategic planning activities even though studies clearly show that students with disabilities are at higher risk for experiencing a number of social problems (i.e., high unemployment rates, over dependency on social welfare) once they leave school. As such, there is a need to develop and implement research activities to determine "what has worked" or "not worked" in the delivery of transition services for students 18-21.

### SEAC RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. IMPLEMENT INITIATIVES THAT PROMOTE INTERAGENCY INVOLVEMENT AND COLLABORATION.

- a. Develop and implement initiatives that clarify the roles and responsibilities of local education and county agencies to develop a continuum of services that promotes family and student involvement and meaningful employment activities that emphasize natural supports. Initiatives are also needed to promote the early involvement of county and community service providers in the transition process and in creating flexible funding options in a period of budget cutbacks.
- b. New and creative ways of thinking are needed about the way services are delivered, including the development of public-private partnerships and the reconfiguration of current job roles that reflect an interagency perspective. Cross-training initiatives, changes in current areas of licensure, and efforts to simultaneously implement "top-down" and "bottom-up" change are essential.
- c. Support funding and leadership opportunities to Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) that promote program planning and decision-making leading to enhanced interagency involvement and collaboration efforts. Adequate support of the state's CTICs is a critical step in establishing collaborative relationships between local and county agencies.

#### 2. DESIGN FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH STRATEGIES TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVENESS (E.G., "WHAT WORKS") IN THE PROVISION OF TRANSITION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS 18-21.

- a. Develop and implement a continuous, systematic data collection process (e.g., Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process—CIMP) in which CTICs are able to assess transition outcomes for students 18-21 with disabilities upon exiting school. A key component of the data collection system should include consumer reports in order to identify effective practices and strategies.

Minnesota Special Education Advisory  
Council

# Special Education Workforce

## Shortages

Summary of SEAC Recommendations on Special  
Education Teacher Shortages in Minnesota

[Annual Report Home](#)

### Workforce Shortage Issues

**Similar to the rest of the nation, Minnesota has experienced a steady** growth rate in the numbers of students identified with a disability. This growth has increased the demand for qualified teachers. According to an informal survey conducted by the Division of Special Education, Directors of Special Education throughout the state are reporting increasing problems related to the recruitment and retention of qualified special education staff. Based on the observations of those responsible for recruiting and hiring qualified staff, there are clear signs that some form of augmentation is taking place in Minnesota's special education workforce. One sign has been the dramatic increase in the hiring of unlicensed para professional staff in the past few years. Another has been the large numbers of teachers currently employed through provisional licenses, variances, and waivers.

In addition to these signs of a changing workforce, there is also evidence to support a phenomenon that has been observed on a national scale—the "exodus" of teachers leaving special education. Although attrition rates can only be estimated, due in large part to the reliability in which teacher positions are reported by school districts, there appears to be an upward trend in the percentage of special education teachers who have changed jobs or left the field entirely. This trend is observed in most disability areas where data is available, but tends to be much higher for those licensed in the areas of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), and Mild Mental Impairments (MMI). The increase in special education

teachers who have changed jobs in these fields is particularly significant when according to 1998 statistics, 18% of teachers in the area of EBD either changed jobs or quit the field altogether, compared with 8% of those employed in the area of Speech and Language Impairments (SLI). Given the growing signs of an impending shortage of special education teachers that is likely to occur in the next few years, SEAC has engaged in an extensive dialogue to identify current needs as well as generate actionable recommendations that can be implemented by state and local agencies in the future.

## Needs Identified by SEAC to Address Workforce Shortages

### **1. SEAC has identified a need to promote activities to increase recruitment and retention of special educators.**

Creative solutions are especially needed in areas where documented shortages have occurred (e.g., EBD, LD, MMI). There is a need to stem high levels of "burnout" and increase flexibility in the manner in which job roles are performed and in contracts issued to teachers. In addition, a need exists to explore various support options for currently licensed teachers to reduce clerical tasks associated with managing student caseloads. Specifically, coursework is needed to help teachers manage and supervise the activities of para professional staff involved in providing services to students. In addition, efforts are needed to promote recruitment of "local talent." Similarly, the services of retired educators could also be utilized to assist local districts in acting as substitutes or mentors and would increase the pool of fully licensed teachers available to districts. However, a need exists to remove barriers that prevent retirees from returning to the workplace. Training for all school administrators is needed to provide them with a solid foundation about a broad range of issues regarding special education. Training must include information about incentives and other leadership strategies that can be used to reduce teacher attrition in special education programs. Also, there is a need to initiate programs aimed at recruiting more diverse populations into special education programs and providing newly licensed teachers with mentoring opportunities.

### **2. SEAC has identified a need to develop a system that will facilitate the collection of accurate information about teacher shortages.**

Although data collection activities have been conducted to monitor the status of licensed and not fully licensed

professional and para professional staff in Minnesota, these efforts provide only a general statistical summary and offer little with regard to specific and in-depth information. A more detailed, systematic data collection and analysis procedure is needed to provide more timely and accurate information that can be used to more reliably predict and help to prevent teacher shortages in the future.

**3. SEAC has identified a need for institutions of higher education (IHEs) to engage in efforts aimed at recruiting and retaining quality students in special education programs.**

Given the shortages anticipated in the next few years, there is a need for institutes of higher education to increase efforts to recruit students into special education teacher training programs. Providing student cohort programs, opportunities for mentorship, and quality student teaching experiences are just some of the many different ways that IHEs can encourage students to enter and complete licensure in special education programs. Efforts on behalf of IHEs are particularly needed to ensure that licensed special education staff reflects the increasingly diverse cultural and linguistic student populations attending Minnesota schools.

SEAC believes that the next five years represent a critical period in which to address the issue of teacher shortages in Minnesota, it is a period in which there needs to be innovative solutions to ensure that a highly qualified special education workforce will be available to meet student needs as mandated through the requirements of IDEA 97.

## SEAC Recommendations for Workforce Shortages

**1. implement policies and programs to support and promote recruitment and retention of special educators.**

- D Identify incentive programs that have been used by other states and local education agencies to attract and retain teachers (merit pay, amend pay scales, develop contractual arrangements that allow teachers to move in and out of programs to avoid "burn out," promoting "local talent," etc.). Disseminate ideas about incentives to local school administrators and others involved in recruiting and hiring special education staff.
- Support policies and/or legislation to remove teacher retirement constraints which do not make it feasible for an educator to work after retirement. SEAC recognizes that this group could make contributions as mentors and

substitutes and also increase the pool of fully licensed staff to local districts.

Implement staff development activities that help special education staff to more effectively utilize paraprofessional staff in the ongoing management of "paperwork" and other tasks that reduce time that could otherwise be devoted to providing services to students.

Support mentoring programs that recruit and retain culturally and linguistically diverse populations of educators also need to be implemented to ensure that the teaching workforce keeps pace with the state's changing demographics.

- D Support efforts within the Division of Licensing to identify states and training programs that meet Minnesota reciprocity requirements for teachers licensed in other states.

Support policy or legislation for increased staff development funding to local school districts to provide needed additional teacher training days with financial support.

Support local efforts to use flexible models for structuring the school calendar, school day, and other innovations with time to promote enriched staff development and planning time.

**2. Implement a data collection system that will facilitate reliable and accurate information about teacher shortages.**

The Division of Special Education and the Division of Personnel Licensing should develop and implement a strategic plan that results in a systematic data collection process used to predict and prevent teacher shortages.

- Establish a co-funded position with the Division of Personnel Licensing to develop and implement data collection activities and to provide technical assistance with regard to reciprocity and certification and licensure issues.
  - Implement policies and practices that support efforts of institutions of higher education (IHEs) to recruit and retain quality students in special education programs.
- D Provide mentoring opportunities to future special

education teachers in the early stages of training to increase retention in preservice programs. Also, expand cohort programs to provide students with ongoing support throughout preservice training. Focused efforts are particularly needed to recruit and retain future teachers who represent culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

- The Division of Special Education and IHE representatives should develop and implement Special Education Teacher Training Institutes around the state to: (1) help staff currently teaching on provisional licenses, variances, and waivers to obtain full licensure, (2) provide training to general education staff to support students with disabilities in general education programs, and (3) increase knowledge and awareness among general education administrators about special education issues.
- Advocate for more coursework in both general and special education teacher preparation programs regarding diverse learning styles and strategies to accommodate all learners in general education programs.
- The Division of Special Education should investigate the feasibility of creating and providing summer training opportunities for faculty at the nine special education teacher preparation programs in the state. The content of these proposed institutes could be personalized based upon changing state needs; i.e., recent changes in laws and rule, updates on due process standards and teacher paperwork requirements, promising practices related to the findings of federal monitoring (e.g., transition, behavioral assessment, parent training) so that Minnesota special education teacher training programs are able to more effectively work with the Division of Special Education and local school districts in addressing state and local needs.
- Institutes of higher education should examine the feasibility of increasing collaboration and coordination among teacher training programs in Minnesota to facilitate access for current and prospective teachers living in all areas of the state.