

NEW YORK HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTER FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE
Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling

Mid-State Regional Meeting MINUTES and UPDATE

Le Moyne College

February 11, 2011

3-4:30 pm

Attending Members

Bud Cooney, LeMoyne College

Bryan Duff, Wells College

Karen Howard, State Department of Education

Courtney Dolan (preservice teacher) & Kim Wieczorek, Cazenovia College

Tom Bull, Regional Field Facilitator for S³TAIR Project, Syracuse University

Patrice Hallock, Utica College (by phone)

Sharing of highlights from January 21 phone conference of Task Force liaisons from all regions

Combining fall Statewide meeting of the Task Force with fall meeting of NYSATE/NYACTE

- Bryan and Kim reported that the Oct. 2010 combined meeting got very favorable reviews from liaisons.
- Attending members agreed with this positive evaluation. They noted increased participation in the regional meeting in October and the financial and logistical benefits of participating in two major events at one time.
- Bryan and Kim reported on some of the scheduling problems for Oct. 2011, assuming another joint meeting.
 - Conflicting holidays and events
 - Yom Kippur: Oct 7-8
 - Sukkot: Oct 13-19
 - Shemini Atzeret: Oct 20
 - Simchat Torah: Oct 20-21
 - NYS CEC's annual statewide convention: October 21-22 in Rochester

Region-to-region differences

- Bryan and Kim noted the variety in the work of the different regions

Next Steps: Bryan and Kim will invite other liaisons to our April 8 Inclusion Symposium as a gesture of courtesy and collaboration.

Updates and discussion about April 8 Inclusion Symposium

Reminder about Feb. 14 deadline for online registration

- Bryan clarified that this deadline is for Task Force members to register and that this information is important for planning and for pricing the Symposium for inservice teachers
- <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SymposiumAttendance>

Next Steps: This weekend Bryan will send out a reminder email to Task Force members so we can get an accurate count of Task Force attendees.

Update on preservice attendees for the Symposium

- We have 47 preservice teachers signed up (awaiting forms from 3 IHEs).
- Bryan noted that the sign-up sheet he created should have included a space for preservice teachers to indicate the grade level(s) they plan to teach. Such information will help us place students in the most appropriate breakout sessions.

Next Steps: Kim will email Symposium “point people” at each IHE to get grade-level info about preservice attendees. Kim also will follow up with the 3 IHEs from which we do not have sign-up sheets.

Update on schools/districts whose inservice teachers have first priority for Symposium attendance

- Introduction of Karen Howard, who works in the Central Regional Office for New York State Education Department in Special Education Quality Assurance (SEQA)
- Karen works with Suzanne Jackson, the Regional Supervisor in her office, and also with SESIS personnel in Tompkins and Auburn Counties – to find schools who could benefit from the 4 strands and presentations at the April 8 Symposium
- Districts recommended are:
 - Cato-Meridian
 - Auburn City
 - Ithaca City
 - Dryden
 - Southern Cayuga
 - Groton
- All of the schools listed are working on at least one of the 4 strands (differentiated instruction, co-teaching, literacy strategies, positive behavior supports).
- Karen noted that district personnel are really interested in the “nitty-gritty” pieces related to the range of learners and abilities, to documentation of progress on IEPs, to the process of modifying curriculum – to practical issues.
- We discussed how the costs seem reasonable (\$30 for individuals, with team costs increasing by smaller and smaller steps, up to \$100 for a team of 5).

Next Steps: Bryan will send flier and sign-up sheets to Karen Howard, who will forward flier and sign-up sheets to appropriate schools and contact people.

Confirmation of breakout session presenters

- We discussed and worked to confirm the following presenters for the breakout sessions
 - Co-teaching
 - Childhood-focused: Tom Bull and group from Sandy Creek Elementary
 - Adolescence-focused: Bud Cooney and group from Wellwood Middle School in Fayetteville-Manlius District
 - Differentiation
 - Childhood-focused: Linda Stummer from Oswego City School District
 - Adolescence-focused: Jessi Felice from Port Byron Central School District

- Positive Behavior Supports
 - School-wide: Carlo Cuccaro from Fulton City Schools
 - Individual: Amanda Fenlon from SUNY Oswego
 - Literacy
 - Childhood-focused: Donna Dennihy from State Street Elementary School in Skaneateles, on team teaching for literacy and writing in the content areas.
 - Secondary-focused: Bobbi Schnorr, from SUNY Oswego on comprehensive literacy planning for all learners
- There were some questions about areas of focus, specifically, for Bobbi and for Amanda and Carlo.

Next Steps: Bryan will email all presenters with a formal invitation (previously, confirmations happened through Task Force members close to each presenter). The invite will include info about audience, payment, and a chance for the presenter to clarify or revise the focus of the breakout session.

Updates and discussion about preservice mini-grants

Note: Courtney Dolan, as a student and as one of the pairs who applied for a mini-grant, was asked to leave the room during this discussion.

Summary of applications received

- We considered the summary appended to these minutes.

Selection criteria

- Attendees wondered whether we could fund all 15.
 - This would amount to \$100 for each of the 30 participants, instead of \$150 to each participant.
 - Concerns about the already large panel that would be presenting at the Symposium – already a bit unruly with one of each of the pairs presenting as part of this panel.
 - Attendees noted that applicants surely knew this was competitive, that it is fine to fund just 10 as was proposed.
- How to narrow down to 10?
 - Quality of answer to #10 on application (about how grant recipients would spread the word at their institutions)
 - Patrice raised the question – did applicants know, as they applied, that #10 was a key selection criterion? If not, is it fair to use #10 as the key selection piece? Bryan suggested that his fairly detailed instructions on #10 suggested that students should take the question seriously and not “skimp,” but in the end, the consensus of attendees was that it was not fair to penalize students for brief answers, especially where we had access to other differentiating information about the applicants.

- Should we ensure that, among the grant recipients, there is at least one pair from each institution that had applicants?
 - Attendees agreed that there should be at least one pair from each institution that had applicants.
- Should we ensure that all S³TAIR schools in the region are visited?
 - Chenango Forks was one of the top choices of some of the applicants. However, Tom Bull noted that, despite its Mid-State location, the school is not within his “jurisdiction.” While that doesn’t rule the school out of bounds—Tom could work with the RFF who is responsible for Chenango Forks—it was agreed that trying to keep the preservice teachers at schools with which Tom has relationships would simplify logistics.
 - Tom also noted—in line with a point that has come up several times since these mini-grants were proposed—that some of the S³TAIR schools in our region clearly provide better inclusive models than others. It was agreed that Tom would try to work with grant recipients’ first and second choices of schools (which almost certainly represent geographic convenience) to get the most convenient and inclusive placements.

Selection of grant recipients

- Selection of 10 from the 15 applications
 - If there was just one application from an institution, that one application was automatically chosen (1 each from Cortland, Syracuse, and Binghamton).
 - For institutions with multiple applications but no representatives at this meeting (Cornell and Elmira), we used the depth of answers to question #10 as the selection criterion.
 - For institutions with multiple applications and with representatives at this meeting (Caz, Wells, and Utica), we selected the top applications using a combination of answers to #10 and our “insider” information about applicants (e.g., asking ourselves who would likely be the most insightful observers and compelling speakers for the sharing-out required for the grant).
 - To select the final two recipients, we discussed remaining applications from the three institutions with multiple applications and with representatives at the meeting (who could comment on the applicants and who could commit clearly to supporting these applicants). Again, we used a combination of answers to #10 and our “insider” information about applicants. One applicant from Utica and one from Cazenovia College were chosen.
- It was agreed, with Bryan taking the lead role in self-flagellation, that the application and selection processes were imperfect. However, there also was a consensus of enthusiasm for the number of applications we received and for the effort to get preservice teachers involved.

Next Steps: Bryan will email all applicants to inform them of decisions. Bryan and Kim will work with Tom Bull on logistics for visits. Bryan and Kim will use email to discuss “look fors” with pre-visit coaches at IHEs.

Update on the proposed re-purposing of the money previously designated for visits by teachers from a number of high-needs schools to demographically similar inclusive schools

- Bryan reminded attendees that the proposal to re-purpose this money to support the nascent Dr. Weeks-Salem Hyde partnership was brought up at the last regional meeting and that it won unanimous approval there. He also reminded attendees that an email was sent to the whole membership after that meeting, opening the floor to comment for about a week. In that time, 4 comments were received: three supported the change, and one voted against it. Also in that time, representatives from state ed and Brian Pulvino were consulted, and they all approved of the use of Task Force funds to support the partnership.
- As Tom Bull would do the bulk of the work to facilitate this partnership, Bryan and Kim proposed to allocate part of the \$3600 for a stipend for Tom. Tom noted that this was part of his job as S³TAIR RFF and that he did not wish to receive the stipend. Therefore, we will designate the whole amount to help Dr. Weeks with mileage, subs, materials, and stipends (for those teachers and administrators at Dr. Weeks who will take the lead in documenting the results of the partnership and in liaising with the Task Force at our April 12 meeting and at the end of the summer, when we have requested a written report on any changes in attitudes and practice at the school).
- Tom Bull reported on his visit, with George Theoharis, to Dr. Weeks
 - There is a core of people interested in reform for inclusive practice led by some administrators and teachers
 - The core is interested in moving forward quickly – by September
 - There are questions about the commitment of the entire staff
 - Discussion of visits to Roberts K-8 school as well as to Salem-Hyde
 - Tom discussed how the “big wrinkle” in the partnership is that Dr. Weeks will not be in its own building next year due to renovations in the district
- Tom invited attendees to join him for an after-school meeting with Weeks on Wednesday, February 16

Next Steps: Kim and Bryan are developing protocols for Dr. Weeks personnel to obtain funding for various uses; Tom will continue to meet with Dr. Weeks personnel to discuss their needs.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 with thanks to Bud Cooney for hosting!