

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly Residential School Changes

This is a report of the current status, pertaining to information needed through HB 868, of the NC School for the Deaf in Morganton, Eastern NC School for the Deaf in Wilson and Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh. The Exceptional Children Division of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has assumed the responsibility for overseeing the transition of the three residential schools from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Public Instruction. Each of the three programs is considered a Public Separate Residential Program under both Federal and State Special Education statutes and policy. All children attending each program have an Individual Education Program (IEP).

The Exceptional Children Division (EC Division) under the leadership of the Director, Bill Hussey, is developing a strategic planning model for each of the three programs. This process will meet the statutory guidelines set forth in HB 868; **SECTION 12.(a) The Department of Public Instruction shall study and develop recommendations on educational options, including residential services, for students with visual and hearing impairments. The Department of Public Instruction shall report its findings and recommendations from the study to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on or before January 1, 2014.**

The EC Division has met with each of the programs for a face to face first meeting to establish relationships and to hear from each of the programs where they presently are and what they think they need to do to make the transition successful. The Division has met a second time with the Governor Morehead School. This meeting was a site visit and included Department of Public Instruction staff members from the School and District Transformation Team to look at regular education programming, and EC Division staff in the areas of disability-specific programming (Hearing Impairments, Vision Impairment and Deaf Blind), and program and fiscal compliance. A second visit with the EC Division Support Team is scheduled for the NC School for the Deaf in the first week in December. The Eastern School for the Deaf second visit will occur in December or early January.

After the first two information gathering meetings, the EC Division will start the Strategic Planning process. This initial phase of the Strategic Planning process will take into account information found in the Comprehensive Needs Assessments completed for all three schools, the three School Improvement Plans and information generated from the first two visits by the EC Division Support Team (ECDST). The ECDST will use a specific problem-solving tool developed by the Trego Education Forum to begin the initial strategic planning step. The tool is “Situational Appraisal” and provides a process that: 1) Defines the issues, 2) Clarifies all issues

to ensure a common understanding, 3) Assesses priorities, and 4) Determines next steps – who, what and when.

The ECDST has begun the third phase of the process with the Governor Morehead School (GMS). The GMS has gone through the first two parts of Situational Appraisal – defining and clarifying issues. The next meeting is in the process of being scheduled.

Once the information is gathered through the Situational Appraisal process, the ECDST will help the schools to develop a Strategic Plan with specific goals and objectives. The goals will encompass how the schools will address: 1) development and implementation of common core standards, 2) accountability measures and plans, 3) IEP development, 4) placement and service concerns for each EC student in each program, 5) program sustainability – how to address historic cultures and expectations with present population and physical structure realities, 6) residential programming and 7) fiscal and budgetary expectations – addressing both regular and Special Education funds.

The timeline for completion of the three Strategic Plans is July 1, 2014. At that point each school will have a three-five year Strategic Plan that addresses all of the areas listed in the paragraph above as well as other concerns that may be specific to an individual school.

All 3 Schools have posted School Improvement Plans and are moving forward with both academic and residential programming. Included here is a link to those plans; http://www.esdb.nc.gov/site_res_view_template.aspx?id=7ccfa700-cbd3-4cfd-a422-479729c466a8. Also attached are hard copies of the Comprehensive Needs Assessments for all three schools.

When the Strategic Plans are developed and completed, there may be a need for rule changes and those will be addressed according to HB 868 at the appropriate time: **SECTION 12.(b) Prior to the initial adoption of rules required by Section 2 of this act, the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education shall present a draft of the proposed rules to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on or before January 1, 2014.**

Each of the schools' directors is being directly supervised by Dr. Rebecca B. Garland, Chief Academic Officer, for the Department of Public Instruction. Dr. Bacon, the Director of the GMS, is responsible for day to day programming issues, budgetary and personnel concerns, and works with the appropriate Divisions in the Department of Public Instruction to complete specific tasks in these areas.

Please contact Bill Hussey, EC Division Director, if you have questions. His contact information is bill.hussey@dpi.nc.gov and 919-807-3970 or 919-807-3969.