

CSSEAC	September 24, 2008
Attendees	Rob Miller (Vanguard Classical School), Karen Rutledge (PEAK), Marrietta Sears (Centennial BOCES), Stephanie Lynch (CDE), Peg McMillen (Parent/Charter School Developer), Sharon Kahn-Miller (Parent/DCSD School Psychologist), Cindy Rue (CSI), Lynnae Flora (Parent), Denise Mund (CDE), Judy Ham (CPCO-guest)

Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 19, 2008 at the Colorado Talking Book Library

Topic	Discussion Points	Action Items
Vanguard Classical School Tour and Overview	The meeting was held at Vanguard Classical School and attendees were given a tour and an overview of the school. Vanguard is in its second year of operation. The school works in partnership and shares facilities with a non-profit, Cerebral Palsy of Colorado (CPCO). The facility houses CPCO offices, Creative Options which is a preschool that serves children birth to 5 years, and Vanguard which serves grades K-8. Each organization occupies a specific location in the facility which has safeguards to ensure the organization space remains secure. The school is located adjacent to a wetlands area which provides a great opportunity for teaching art and science classes. Vanguard has over 400 students with approximately 70 special education students (19%). Students attending the school are from a variety of backgrounds and socio-economic status. Students attend the school from as far away as Thornton and Bennett. The school uses a co-teaching model and has 7 teachers endorsed in special education. The school uses the contracted model of special education service delivery and hires all of its special education service providers. The school also receives funding through many grants which has enabled it to integrate technology such as electronic whiteboards into all of their classrooms. Many thanks to Rob Miller for allowing us to meet at the facility and providing a tour of the school.	
Introductions	There were several new faces at the meeting. Marietta Sears is the Special Education Director of the Centennial BOCES and has two grandchildren attending a charter school in a different administrative unit. Sharon Kahn-Miller is a parent of	

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Introductions	<p>two children who attend Vanguard Classical School and is a school psychologist in the Douglas County school district. Cindy Rue is with the CSI and works with charter schools in the Colorado Springs area. Lynnae Flora is a parent of two children who attend Compass Montessori in Jeffco Schools and also works for Jeffco Human Services. Judy Ham of CPCO also attended the meeting as a guest. After introductions, Karen Rutledge passed out handouts from Colorado Parent to Parent which is housed in the CPCO offices. Handouts were <i>Resources for Parents and Children with Disabilities or Special Health Care Needs</i> and <i>Disability Specific Resources</i> which list organizations that can be contacted for information and support. Another hand out was a <i>Fast Facts: Yes on 51</i> which had information on the upcoming ballot measure.</p>	
Background of the CSSEAC	<p>Based on the discussion from the last meeting, Denise Mund shared the background of the committee and its activities. The committee was convened at a time when people thought that charter schools were not for children with disabilities. As more children with IEPs began enrolling in charter schools, the issue of the quality of special education services emerged. Laura Freppel and Lorrie Harkness, former director of the ESLU, and Denise worked together to develop special education resources for charter schools including the <i>Sample Compliance Plan, Negotiating Guidelines, and the Charter School Special Education Guidebook</i> which were presented at the 2nd Nationwide conference on Charter Schools and Special Education.</p> <p>Seminars are held regularly to increase the capacity of charter schools to provide special education and an upcoming session for authorizers is scheduled for November. As a result of these resources and seminars, the number of charter school applications that contemplate special education has increased. The committee also addresses issues as they emerge such as online charter schools and the provision of special education services.</p> <p>The committee's activities are also based on studies on charter schools and special education in Colorado. A study was initially conducted on Colorado</p>	

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Background of the CSSEAC	<p>Charter Schools and Special Education in 2001 to identify issues in charter schools and special education. A follow up study was conducted in 2006. The 2006 study is on the CDE charter school website http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/sped/index.htm. The committee developed an action plan based on the recommendations of this 2006 study. A copy of the recommendations and action plan items was distributed to the committee (for members not in attendance, an electronic version is attached).</p>	
CSSEAC Member Discussion	<p>The background on the CSSEAC prompted discussion on current special education issues occurring in charter schools as well as issues between charter schools and their administrative units with regard to the provision of special education services.</p> <p>Charter schools. Several members commented that there are still charter schools who counsel out students with IEPs. Additionally, some charter schools are still reticent about serving students with IEPs and try to get enrolled students with disabilities to transfer out of the school. One attendee commented that a teacher in a charter school told the special education service provider that “this child with a disability doesn’t belong here, so you’d better go and tell the parents.” It was also noted that other charter schools were referring children with disabilities to Vanguard or other charter schools that are more accepting of children with disabilities. One suggestion was to provide materials to charter school teachers and administrators on best practices for special education in charter schools. It was noted that CDE has a DVD on charter schools and special education and there are resources on the charter school website at http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/sped/index.htm. One suggestion was to change the attitudes around charter schools and special education would need to be approached from a financial perspective. Efforts should be made to look at other financial models and incentives such as better use of grants to get meaningful resources in charter schools. It was noted that Vanguard’s financial model allowed them to have 7 special education teachers for 70 students</p>	

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<p>CSSEAC Member Discussion</p>	<p>compared to a possible 1.5 teachers if special education services were provided through an administrative unit.</p> <p>Administrative Units. It was noted that while some charter schools “counsel out” students, in other instances the administrative unit tries to discourage the parents from enrolling children with disabilities in charter schools with the belief that such children should not be in charter schools. A few members reported that the neighborhood schools will not take back special education students who withdraw from charter schools and that there are districts that say a student who drops out of a charter school cannot return to a different school within the district. It was also noted that there are still misperceptions by administrative units that charter schools are treated like private schools which raised multiple issues around the delivery of special education services.</p> <p>For charter schools that receive special education services from the administrative unit it was reported that if the administrative unit lacks special education resources they take the special education services from the charter schools first. It was noted that several charter schools in one district were suddenly notified that the special education service provider from the district would no longer come to their school, or have had their services substantially curtailed in September. Further, one district is giving charter schools “left-over” itinerant services; where the charter receives itinerant services from the service provider that has time available that week which leads to inconsistency in who provides services to students in the school week to week. It was noted that some administrative units are charging charter schools thousands of dollars — into the hundreds of thousands — for special education services and are not providing the services or are providing a minimal level of services. It was also noted that in some charter contracts it reads the “minimal level” of special education services. Further, some administrative units are telling charter schools that if a service isn’t in the contract, it won’t be provided. For example, one district will not allow the charter schools access to required district forms. One question was who monitors the administrative unit’s use of special education funds for charter schools.</p>	

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<p>CSSEAC Member Discussion</p>	<p>Another issue is the recourse a charter school has if a district does not provide the services in the charter contract. One option for the charter school is to take the district to court for breach of contract which can be very costly. It was noted that the Colorado Charter Schools Act clearly states that charter school is a public school of its authorizing district and that under the IDEA the LEA (administrative units) is ultimately responsible for ensuring the children in the LEA receive a FAPE. IDEA also requires LEAs to provide services to its charter schools in the same manner that they are provided to its other public schools. It was noted that anyone can file a state complaint under the IDEA regarding the provision of special education with the ESLU.</p> <p>One comment was improved collaboration between administrative units and charter schools is needed and that they should not have an adversarial relationship. However, much of the friction between charter schools and administrative units is a result of district concerns about the financial impact of charter schools on district budgets. One comment was to view funding differently in that funding does not belong to the district or the charter school, but the child and should follow the child. One suggestion was to look at this bigger issue and to start a campaign to think differently about charter schools in a larger context. However, it was noted that this committee is focused on special education in charter schools.</p> <p>The discussion identified two areas of focus for the committee's activities. One was building charter school capacity for negotiating and financing special education and the other was providing firm guidance to administrative units regarding their responsibilities to charter schools.</p>	
<p>Action Plan Items</p>	<p>The committee discussed the action plan items and was asked if there were items that could be deleted or modified in light of the discussion.</p> <p>Action Item: Charm Paulmeno to present on special education finance at CDE's Annual Charter Schools Finance Seminar.</p>	

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<p>Action Plan Items</p>	<p>Charm was not able to present at this years seminar. Charm would like specifics topics that would be covered in the presentation. Members of the group felt the focus should be on special education funding streams; federal funds, ECEA funds, excess costs, and any other funding available. One suggestion was to have Charm develop a Fast Facts on charter school special education finance that could be posted on the website.</p> <p>Action Items: Provide a Spring workshop in February or March 2008 on school finance and develop a break-out session at the ESLU Fall Directors meeting on funding and service delivery models, nondiscrimination, resources, etc. to serve as the warm-up for the spring 2008 workshop. The Spring workshop was not discussed at the June 2008 CSSEAC meeting and the Fall Directors Meeting is being devoted to administrative unit special education determinations. At the last meeting, one suggestion was to provide sessions at regional director’s meetings. It was noted that CDE has an upcoming Legal Conference on Special Education and it may be appropriate to do a presentation on charter schools and special education at that conference. The presentation will be discussed at the next committee meeting.</p> <p>Action Item: Develop the Douglas County case study involving authorizer mentoring and charter application review. This was not discussed at this meeting.</p> <p>Action Item: Distribute NASDSE online and special education study by posting it on the CDE website, list-serves and to special education directors. A link to the NASDSE report “Demystifying Special Education in Virtual Charter Schools” was provided at the June 2008 meeting. The report is available on the NASDSE website www.nasdse.org and on the US Charter Schools website www.uscharterschools.org. This may/may not be the study that the action item was referring, as the report notes a lack of research on special education in online charter schools. Follow up on getting the links to the report posted is needed.</p>	

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<p>Action Plan Items</p>	<p>Action Item: Release special education flowchart developed by the Special Education and online task force. It was noted that there was already a special education flow chart on the charter school website as well as another flow chart in the IEP manual. Because the flowchart is specific to online schools, one question was whether it would be better placed on the CDE Online Learning Unit website. This will be put to Pamela Ice, the Online Learning Unit director.</p> <p>Action Item: Connect with new CDE Online Unit staff. Pamela Ice, Director of the Online Learning Unit attended the February 2008 meeting. This action Item is complete.</p> <p>Action Item: Consider budget planning for an online and special education research project. A research project for 2008-2009 was proposed in the budget, but was not funded. This action item should be considered for a joint project with other units such as Online Learning.</p> <p>Action Item: Review and update the Guidebook to align with any changes in the IDEA and ECEA. The Charter School Special Education Guidebook, Negotiating Guidelines, and Sample Compliance plan have all been updated and need to be posted to the website. A few copies of the guidebook were passed around for review by the committee.</p> <p>Action Item: Promote Awareness of the current resources through the charter schools list-serve and the ESLU Link. At the February meeting, several methods of disseminating information was discussed and one idea of developing a Black Board course on charter schools and special education was submitted as a budget item and was funded. This may be a new action item in itself. Based on the discussion in this meeting, the committee agreed that two of the topics should be devoted to special education finance and contract negotiation.</p>	

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Other Comments	One member commented that the CSSEAC is not well known and that we need to get more out on what the CSSEAC is. It was noted that information on the CSSEAC committee and the committee minutes are posted to the charter school website.	
2008-2009 Meeting Dates	<p>Another comment was that the meeting frequency of 3 times per year makes it difficult to progress on action items and to address charter school special education issues. The committee agreed to add another meeting in November.</p> <p>2008 – 2009 CSSEAC Meeting Dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday, November 19, 2008 • Wednesday, February 18, 2009 • Wednesday, June 3, 2009 <p>Locations to be announced, but most likely at the Colorado Talking Book Library, 180 Sheridan Blvd., Denver.</p>	