

Questions for Dr. Jimenez and Dr. Martinez
LACHL Meeting
October 14, 2005

Personnel

1. One D/HOH teacher at the oral program at Arcola Community Center is stretched too thin to be able to support 2 separate classrooms. The teacher has notified parents that an assistant will be hired to help her out. The assistant may not have any prior knowledge of how to work with D/HOH children. This person needs to have appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities and the appropriate educational background. This person should be another certified D/HOH teacher or an SLP trained to work with D/HOH children. Can't you ensure we have the right person in this classroom setting?

The assistant started on October 1, 2005. She is with the students 2 hours/day, 10 hours/week. Even though the assistant does not have previous experience working with D/HOH children, she has been working in early childhood/preschool for 10 years. One of the expectations we have for any of our assistants is that they receive support and training from the teacher with whom they work.

2. Per the Washington Post article, who are the 24 people on the D/HOH team?

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Elizabeth A. Martinez, Supervisor

Tasha Beall, Educational Audiologist (will begin on 1/9/06)

PRESCHOOL

Arcola Community Center

Rebecca Royce, Teacher

Renee Moss, Classroom Assistant

Frances Hazel Reid

Sally Bien, Teacher

ELEMENTARY

Frances Hazel Reid

Kathy Clark, Teacher

Lorraine Stewart, Teacher (1 block at Smarts Mill)

Vacancy, Interpreter

Tina White, Interpreter/Assistant

Dorothy Donvan, Interpreter

Laura Garrett, Interpreter

Shannon Dallin, Assistant

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Smarts Mill

Ariane Bruce, Teacher
Patrick Sullivan, Long-term Substitute for Ariane Bruce
Renee Shanahan, Interpreter
Elizabeth Pirro, Interpreter
Katie Marshall, Interpreter (part-time)

HIGH SCHOOL

Heritage

Colleen Adams, Teacher
Karen Cassidy, Teacher
Sally Hood, Interpreter
Lovenia Stocks, Interpreter

Loudoun Valley High School

Jay Diamant, Cued Speech Transliterator

Freedom High School

Lisa Russell, Interpreter

K-12 RESOURCE/ITINERANT

Nicole Kinney, Teacher
Dianne Kozak, Teacher
Cindy Thomas, Teacher

3. Why hasn't the Educational Audiologist been hired yet? This position is critical for the parents, children, and for the D/HOH teachers. The families were told that the position was approved last spring and would be fulfilled by this fall.

The Educational Audiologist position has been filled. Initially, we did not have enough candidates for the position, and, then, after the position was posted, some of the interested candidates decided not to interview for the position. Tasha Beall, who has been working as a Pediatric Audiologist at Children's National Medical Center, will begin working with LCPS on January 9, 2006. Ms. Beall comes with a lot of experience and will be a valuable addition to our program.

4. Where does Dr. Martinez come from and what is her background?

For almost two years, I was the Senior Director for Professional Advancement at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). I have prior experience as an Assistant Professor and teacher in the special education field. I earned a Ph.D. in Special Education from the University of Virginia. I have authored and co-authored articles, and I co-authored an *Introduction to Learning Disabilities* book.

5. Does Dr. Martinez have background in working with D/HOH teachers and families?

I have not worked directly with D/HOH teachers, students, and families. However, I am committed to my new responsibilities and am willing to learn more about working with D/HOH students and their families. I am very excited about this opportunity.

6. Why are families being put in the position to train their children's teachers on how to work with a D/HOH child? An Educational Audiologist or the D/HOH SLP should be training all of the teachers who come into contact with the child.

I am not aware of families being put in the position to train their children's teachers on how to work with a D/HOH child. LCPS does support staff and families working together in sharing information for the educational benefit of students. As mentioned above, the Educational Audiologist position has been filled.

7. LCPS needs to hire a Parent Educator or Social Worker whose job it would be to inform parents of all of their rights and help them navigate through the legal issues.

At this time, LCPS does not have any plans for such positions. However, we will continue to analyze needs, and we are open to considering such positions for the future. Additionally, the Special Education Parent Resource Center (PRC) provides training, information and resource referrals for families on a variety of topics. The PRC does not provide legal advice; however, they do provide valuable information for parents for outreach, support, and education.

8. Why are sign language interpreters being hired who do not have proper certification? Just because someone knows ASL does not mean they are qualified to be a sign language interpreter.

We are in the process of ensuring that all LCPS interpreters have a Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) Level III. It should be noted, however, that the Virginia Department of Education (VA DOE) provides a program for waiver for interpreters working toward full licensure. In addition, the VA DOE provides a grant to our region that allows for interpreters to participate in training that will assist them in developing the skills needed for level advancement. Further, as you may be aware, there are some positions in the field of special education where there is a shortage of qualified individuals and the State works with localities in finding and training staff.

9. The D/HOH program needs a full-time Supervisor to create a "world class program." The supervisor should not be overseeing any other disability areas because there are such great needs within the D/HOH Program. Is this going to happen in the near future?

At this time, LCPS does not have any plans to have a Supervisor work solely with the D/HOH program. However, we will continue to analyze needs, and we are open to considering such a recommendation in the future. At this time, central leadership that

includes a broad perspective with expert school based team consultation is an effective model for service delivery in administering this program.

D/HOH Program

10. Is there a write up about the D/HOH program on the LCPS web site? If not, why? The D/HOH vision and mission statement should be listed. Also, all of the personnel on the D/HOH team should also be listed along with their contact information and areas of responsibility.

LCPS has transitioned to a new content management system. We are in the process of compiling information and updating the Web site about the D/HOH program.

11. What were last year's accomplishments in the D/HOH Program?

Open House for parents/families of students in the D/HOH at Frances Hazel Reid,
January, 2005

Parent chat sessions at PRC

Enhancements to PRC lending library of materials/books

Presentation for LACHL families

Collaborative presentation for families with Early Intervention on "Early Language Development"

Included presentations from local agencies and providers (NVRC; the CI center at the University of Virginia; a representative from Camelot Elementary in Fairfax County; representatives from Bright Beginnings for Babies in Fairfax County; representatives from Phonak; representatives from LACHL, the Loudoun Deaf Women's group, Blue Ridge Speech and Hearing, the Special Education Parent Resource Center, Loudoun Complete Healthy Hearing, and Loudoun County Early Intervention)

Professional journals, books and article sharing and discussion

Participated in statewide research program examining service delivery models

Teachers and interpreters participated in local, state and national conferences funded by LCPS

Participation in SKI-HI Institute training

12. What are the goals of the D/HOH program for this year?

Development of Educational Audiologist role

Development of information for schools, families and community members via the Web site using the new content management system

Implementation of family support network including parent support groups

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month celebration

13. What is the most significant change you will make this school year?

This year, the most significant change will be the addition of an Educational Audiologist. This will provide a new breadth and depth to our program in terms of services to students, families, and staff. The addition of this position allows us the opportunity to work more closely with students on a day to day basis. We will continue our relationship with Blue Ridge Speech and Hearing for valuable consultation on equipment and assessments. In addition, we have a new Speech-Language pathologist who is experienced in working with students in the D/HOH program. We will have opportunities for greater professional development and networking with other professionals in similar programs.

14. What is your long-term vision for the D/HOH Program?

Presently, my priority for this program is to continue the level of service for students, evaluate opportunities for staff for professional development and continue to work with our schools, community, and families. As I am able to have opportunities to visit classrooms, meet with staff, attend professional meetings and conferences, I will be better positioned to move forward with a longer-term vision.

15. How can the D/HOH families support you to make the program better?

I encourage families to continue to share their insights, experiences, and recommendations with LCPS personnel. The relationship between families and LCPS personnel must be viewed as a partnership. Together, we will work to meet the academic and social needs of student who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

16. Are you going to benchmark best practices from Montgomery and Fairfax counties and us them in Loudoun? They are known to have outstanding programs.

At this time, many practices are in place in Loudoun that mirror those of top performing counties working with D/HOH students. While we always seek to increase our knowledge base, and we welcome collaboration, we do not overlook the many good things that are happening in our own district. Many counties, both locally and nationally, help to inform us about best practices in our field. We plan to capitalize on the proximity of these counties as well as the information available through local colleges and universities and widely available electronically to enhance our knowledge.

17. Last year, Dr. Jimenez mentioned that Loudoun County was looking at Fairfax County as a potential model for the D/HOH program. What is the status of this?

I will continue to investigate FCPS practices in our continuing effort to improve our program.

18. Early Intervention (EI) for D/HOH babies is severely lacking in appropriate services. What can you do to help EI? Why doesn't LCPS take over the home visits for

D/HOH babies and leave the other financial benefits (i.e., MR Family Support Fund) in the hands of EI? Montgomery and Fairfax have outstanding EI services for the D/HOH babies and they are free. They supply qualified D/HOH teachers who know the oral method and total communication and they know how to work with D/HOH babies. Not all of the school-aged D/HOH teachers are able to effectively work with the infants.

The Virginia Department of Education requires that local school divisions provide special education services to children who turn 2 on or before September 30. While this does not preclude a service collaboration, it does not require it. The Office of Special Education has worked closely with the Loudoun County Early Intervention in assisting to identify staff, provide training and collaborate on outreach programs. The provision of service at no cost to parents comes at a cost to the school division. The decision to initiate such a partnership will require further study and decision making. Currently, the Office of Special Education and Loudoun County Early Intervention continue to work collaboratively to meet the needs of the roughly six eligible children who are being served through EI service delivery.

19. Why is there a lack of uniformity in accommodations across the county. In one school, a family was told that the teacher was not going to put tennis balls on the feet of the chairs because the tennis balls would collect dust. This is a ridiculous excuse. A simple solution of using tennis balls would help reduce classroom noise. Other teachers/schools would be fine with this accommodation.

Accommodations are made on an individualized, case by case basis. It will be helpful to us if such situations are brought to our attention so that we can work with schools and staff to address needed accommodations.

20. Acoustical testing – we were told that it can not be written in an IEP. I would think this would have to be done in order to make proper accommodations to the classrooms.

Acoustical testing can be done, but it is not required to be written in an IEP.

21. Would it be possible to administer standardized testing (Stanford, SAT type tests) to D/HOH children starting in grades K/1 to see if they are meeting or not meeting their academic potential?

All children participate in a variety of assessments. Accommodations for testing are provided to individual children based on their IEP's. The only additional testing that would be done for students with disabilities would include assessments to determine if they continue to be a child with a disability, or assessments by the teacher for instructional planning purposes. Testing is not conducted to determine whether or not students are meeting their potential, it is conducted either for the purposes of eligibility, to conform with state mandated requirements for accountability, or for instructional planning.

22. Why haven't the parents received information about the new IDEA reauthorization and what's new with the laws and how they will impact the D/HOH families?

Information regarding the reauthorization of IDEA will be provided by the Special Education Parent Resource Center as it becomes available. We anticipate that there will be a considerable period of public comment on VA proposed regulations prior to their adoption.

23. Many families feel that the needs of D/HOH children and the D/HOH Program, in general, are an afterthought for Loudoun County. What is going to be do to make this a priority?

While some families have shared their individual concerns, many families have expressed satisfaction with our program. As noted in our recent presentation, the cost per pupil expended to serve children in the D/HOH program is nearly triple that of the cost for a general education student. In addition, as noted earlier, a considerable number of staff is employed to provide service, to participate in professional development to strengthen their skills and our program, and to work with families. Creating a climate for success for all learners is a priority in Loudoun County, and we believe our continued efforts are evidence of our adoption of this priority.

24. Can sign language classes be offered to families of D/HOH children?

Sign language classes are already available to families through the Adult Education programs. These programs are offered in the county for a modest fee and typically offered in the evening.

25. Is Francis Hazel Reid Elementary the only school that has D/HOH classes and signing teachers/children within the elementary schools?

D/HOH services at the elementary level are clustered at Francis Hazel Reid. However, LCPS itinerant teachers travel to a variety of elementary schools to provide services.