The quarterly meeting of the Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children was held on the 9th day of December, 2020, via Webex, commencing at 9:30 a.m.
APPEARANCES

COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cynthia Daniels-Hall, Chairperson
Christy Hutchinson, Vice Chairperson

Anthony Baker
Sara Bigley
Joanne Caratelli
Diane Coffey
Jennifer Degen
Leanna George
Christy Grant
Jennifer Grady
Kristen Hodges
Terri Leyton
Virginia Moorefield
Lisa Phillips
Kenya Pope
Matthew Potter
Representative Larry Strickland
Marge Terhaar

STAFF:

Lauren Holahan
Matt Hoskins
Nancy Johnson
Leigh Mobley
Danyelle Sanders
Alexis Utz

COURT REPORTER:

Rebecca P. Scott
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Thereupon, the following proceeding was held:

THE CHAIRPERSON: So welcome, everybody. This is the Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children. This is our December meeting, and I'd like to welcome everyone to the meeting. Thank you so much for the time that you take to be involved in this and to work to be effective for our children.

So we're going to do roll call, and when Alexis calls your name, you can introduce yourself. Thank you.

MS. UTZ: All right. I have -- I kind of tried to fill this out ahead of time to save some time. So I have the members here. So, Cynthia, you're first.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. I'm Cynthia Daniels-Hall. I'm a parent out of Wake County, so I'm in Area 3 of the State Board kind of districts, and I'm a parent of children with autism. Thank you.

MS. UTZ: All right. I do not see Shanna at this time, but maybe she'll -- in a few minutes, she'll log on. I do not see Joanne either. Diane, I believe you're still on?

MS. COFFEY: Yes, I'm still here.
This is Diane Coffey, and I am out of Watauga County, and I have two children with special needs.

MS. UTZ: All right. Leanna?

MS. GEORGE: Can you hear me? I hadn't tested my mic yet. Let me see.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes.

MS. GEORGE: You can hear me. Good.

I'm Leanna George from Johnston County. I have two children with exceptionalities.

MS. UTZ: All right. [Inaudible] see, but there's a couple of call-in numbers.

Leslie, are you here?

(No audible response.)

MS. UTZ: Abby did let me know that she would not be able to make it today. She's having to deal with some stuff with her daughter. Jennifer F.?

(No audible response.)

MS. UTZ: All right. Kristen?

Kristen, you're unmuted.

MS. HODGES: Can you hear me?

MS. UTZ: Yes.

MS. HODGES: Hi. Good morning. This is Kristen Hodges. I am a parent of three
children. Two have -- sorry -- one has a 504 plan
and two have IEPs. I look forward to meeting in
person someday.

MS. UTZ: I thought that was going to
be this meeting, but I guess not. Lisa B.?

(No audible response.)

MS. UTZ: Lisa Black, okay, I don't
see. Sherita? Sherita?

(No audible response.)

MS. UTZ: I don't see her on as well.

Jennifer D., you should be able to speak.

MS. DEGEN: Hey. This is Jennifer
Degen from East -- from Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Schools. I'm a facilitator in the district for
high schools.

MS. UTZ: All right. Christy Grant?

MS. GRANT: This is Christy Grant. I
am the traditional PSU representative for
exceptional children directors, and I'm with Nash
County Public Schools.

MS. UTZ: All right. Anthony?

MR. BAKER: Good morning. I'm
Anthony Baker. I'm an assistant principal at
Western Middle School in the Alamance-Burlington
School System.
MS. UTZ: All right. Marge?

MS. TERHAAR: I'm Marge Terhaar, and I'm the Program Coordinator for Graduate Programs in Special Education and professor at Meredith College as well as a parent of two adults -- adult sons with [inaudible].

MS. UTZ: Okay. Christy Hutchinson?

DR. HUTCHINSON: Hey, everyone.

Christy Hutchinson. I am the representative for charter PSUs and currently at Lincoln Charter Schools and Special Ed Director there.

MS. UTZ: All right. Terri?

MS. LEYTON: Hey. I'm Terri Leyton, and I'm a Technical Assistance Coordinator with the Exceptional Children's Assistance Center, and we are the State's Parent Training and Information center funded by the Department of Education. And I live in Cabarrus County, and I have a daughter in high school, she has Down syndrome, and I have a son in elementary school, and he is on the other side of exceptional children in the AIG Program.

MS. UTZ: Okay. Welcome and welcome to your first meeting.

MS. LEYTON: Thank you. Thank you. Excited to be here.
MS. UTZ: All right. Jennifer G.?

MS. GRADY: Hi. I'm Jennifer Grady. I am the parent of two high schoolers in public school here in Wake County. One has autism. And I think I also technically fill a business rep slot in the Council. I work for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

MS. UTZ: All right. Welcome. Matthew, welcome to your first meeting as well.

MR. POTTER: Thank you. Matthew Potter, Forsyth County. Graduate of Wake Forest University class of 2009. [Inaudible] with a disability. One of the things I'm sure I'll get into, but really, I am an advocate for not only myself but all other individuals with disabilities pretty much everywhere.

So the Governor asked me to be on this committee, and I jumped at the chance, and it's good to meet everybody, admittedly with air quotes, but I'm still very happy to be here and happy to be a part of it. Thanks.

MS. UTZ: Thank you. All right. Selene, I don't see your name, but maybe you're a call-in?

(No audible response.)
MS. UTZ: All right. Representative Strickland?

REPRESENTATIVE STRICKLAND: Can you hear me?

MS. UTZ: Yes, we can.

REPRESENTATIVE STRICKLAND: I'm Representative Larry Strickland from Johnston County. Appointee of Speaker Moore in the North Carolina House. Before coming to Raleigh to serve as a legislator, I was on the Johnston County Board of Education for 18 years. And I appreciate the opportunity to be part of the Council.

MS. UTZ: Welcome. Ginny?

MS. MOOREFIELD: Can you guys hear me?

MS. UTZ: Yes.

MS. MOOREFIELD: Okay. I'm Ginny Moorefield. I have a child in middle school with traumatic brain injury here in Wake County, and also an interpreter for the deaf and also a regular ed teacher.

MS. UTZ: All right. I don't believe Sherry was being able to make it today. I know Matt will be on later today, so I think he's going to be taking her spot. Carla?
(No audible response.)

MS. UTZ: All right. Kimaree? I'm sorry I don't remember how to say your name, but I don't see her on.

  All right. Kenya, you are unmuted. You should be able to introduce yourself. I'm sorry about that.

  MS. POPE: Can you hear me?
  MS. UTZ: Yes.
  MS. POPE: Hi. I'm Kenya Pope. I'm the EC Instructional and Compliance Specialist with Juvenile Justice. Glad to be here this morning.

MS. UTZ: All right. And Sara?

MS. BIGLEY: Good morning, folks. This is Sara Bigley. I'm the State Coordinator for Foster Care Education at DPI and UNCG SERVE Center. It's great to be here with all of you virtually.

MS. UTZ: All right. And Lisa?

MS. PHILLIPS: Good morning. This is Lisa Phillips, the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, a part of Federal Program Monitoring and Support at DPI. I work with Sara over at UNCG.
MS. UTZ: Welcome. And I just saw Joanne log in. So, Joanne, if you would like to say hello. And welcome to your first meeting. She literally just logged in so she might not be set up for audio yet.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. Alexis, you and Danyelle, if you could introduce yourselves.

MS. UTZ: Hold on. Joanne, did you want to say anything?

MS. CARATELLI: I did. I'm so sorry. I couldn't unmute for a minute there. Hi. So I'm Joanne Caratelli. I am a regular ed teacher. I'm the parent to a high school sophomore with Down syndrome. I serve on the board of directors for the Down Syndrome Network of Onslow and Carteret Counties, the Down Syndrome Advocacy Foundation, and -- yeah, that's it. There was something else, but I forgot it. So, yeah, I'm happy to be here. Thank you so much.

MS. UTZ: And I am Alexis. I am the Parent Liaison with the EC Division. I am trying to run behind the scenes, so if you need anything, you can message me privately, and hopefully, we can fix it. Danyelle, you're next?

MS. SANDERS: My name is Danyelle
Sanders. I'm the Administrative Specialist for the EC Division, PMA Section, Policy, Monitoring and Audit.

MS. UTZ: All right. Becky, I don't know if you want to say anything or not or stay quiet behind the scenes.

COURT REPORTER: Good morning. This is Becky Scott. I'm the court reporter here to make a record of your meeting today. Glad to be here.

MS. UTZ: All right. And I also see that Nancy is on. She will be presenting, but you can introduce yourself or you can wait. That's up to you.

DR. JOHNSON: Good morning, everyone. I'm Nancy Johnson. I'm the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Review Coordinator, and I'm looking forward to speaking to you in just a little bit.

MS. UTZ: All right.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. Now we have a quorum, is that correct, Alexis?

MS. UTZ: Yeah, we do.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. So we're going to review the agenda. Any additions to the
agenda or changes to the agenda?

    DR. HUTCHINSON: Alexis, did you say that Matt was replacing Sherry for the updates? Do we need to move that around in the agenda just to accommodate his schedule?

    MS. UTZ: As far as I know, no. He was given the time, so I believe that he'll be on a little later before his time. So he doesn't -- he's not on until 11:30.

    THE CHAIRPERSON: Do we have a motion to approve the agenda?

    MS. GRANT: [Inaudible] approve the agenda.

    DR. HUTCHINSON: And this is Christy Hutchinson, and I'll second that motion that Christy Grant made.

    THE CHAIRPERSON: So we have the minutes from our September meeting.

    MS. UTZ: I'll display and you guys should be able to click on the link and open it yourself if you want to view it.

    (Pause for Review of Summary of Actions.)

    THE CHAIRPERSON: So if everybody's had an opportunity to review the minutes from the
September meeting, could we get a motion to approve the minutes?

MR. BAKER: [Inaudible] to approve the minutes.

MS. UTZ: Second?

MS. GRANT: Christy Grant.

MS. UTZ: Thank you.

DR. HUTCHINSON: Do we need to do an individual roll call to approve the minutes?

MS. UTZ: We did last time.

THE CHAIRPERSON: So an individual roll call or just a call for the attendees to actually just vote?

MS. UTZ: Well, I think it might be easier if we do opposed, abstained, and then I will assume everyone else is all in favor.

THE CHAIRPERSON: So anyone opposed?

(No audible response.)

THE CHAIRPERSON: Anyone abstaining?

(No audible response.)

THE CHAIRPERSON: Those in favor, just record by saying "aye."

(Multiple council members responded aye.)

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. So are we
ready, even though it's a little bit early, to move to ECAC?

MS. LEYTON: I'm ready.

THE CHAIRPERSON: All righty. Okay.

MS. UTZ: All right. Give me one second and I'll have it pulled up here for you.

All right. Take it away, Terri.

MS. LEYTON: Thank you. I'm so excited and happy to be here, and I appreciate your time today. And Alexis said that you-all were really interested in what ECAC is and who we are. So this is just our title slide.

If we can go to the next slide.

There we go. As you can see, our mission statement here is that ECAC has always been committed to families of children with disabilities. We are a parent organization. All of our parent educators and most staff are parents of children or young adults with disabilities. So we get it.

We make a special connection with parents that allows us to guide them in unique ways. We know that all children benefit when kids with the most needs are fully included and all children are supported. You know, "A rising tide
lifts all boats." So, as I said, we are a parent organization. We can make that special connection, and all children benefit when those that have special needs are fully included.

Next slide. Like many great organizations, ECAC started an idea a couple of people shared over coffee at the kitchen table or maybe it was over drinks in a bar. Who knows. There are different versions of this story.

Connie Hawkins on the left and Frank Graziadei on the right, both parents of kids with disabilities, saw a need, and they decided they would meet that challenge. They realized that although special education law had been passed in 1975, by the 1980s, parents, including themselves, were struggling to make their voices heard and to advocate for their children.

Connie led ECAC as Executive Director for 34 years. She had just retired when I started there in 2017. So I have met her and interacted with her because it was hard to keep her out of there for a while, but she is a legend in her own right, and I am very happy to have at least worked with her for a small portion of time. ECAC is considered a leader in the parent center movement
because we did have one of those founding mommas
with Connie, and we are very proud of its history.

Next. So as a part of IDEA, the
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, every
state is required to have at least one Parent
Training and Information Center. We have been
North Carolina's federally-funded PTI since the
mid '80s. We serve the entire state of North
Carolina, and we are now one of the oldest PTIs in
the nation.

Under federal statutes, we are
required to serve the entire state and all
families with disabilities birth to 26 years of
age. So all of our parent educators serve all 100
counties in North Carolina, but we do not have
parent educators -- I'm sorry -- we have parent
educators who focus on outreach in specific areas
of the state.

So, you know, we've got an office in
Raleigh so that office kind of focuses on those
few counties, and the Asheville office focuses on
the Western Carolinas. Then Wilmington, Currituck
County, et cetera. But we all serve all of the
counties, but we focus -- some of our staff focus
in those special areas.
Next slide. So as a PTI, we -- as I mentioned earlier, we are a parent-run organization. Through that federal funding, our board of education -- our board of directors is required to be at least 51 percent parents of children with disabilities from birth to 26. We also have self-advocates and professionals in related fields on our board.

Next. The Parent Training and Information Center Grant is our biggest program. IDEA is our national special education law, as you all know, and Part D says that every state must fund a Parent Training and Information Center. So we bring this up so that everyone can understand where we fit into the world of special education in North Carolina.

It is our honor to be our state's PTI, and we take the responsibility very seriously. All of our PTI work is related in some way to the key purposes of IDEA. The federal grants -- as you probably know, [inaudible] where they would like us to spend our time, and we work to maintain positive and collaborative relationships that are independent of state and local school districts.
Next slide. So we here show a wide range of services that our staff provide, and anything that we provide directly to parents is done so at no cost. There may be small costs for services to educators or other professionals, but we try to make them minimal. And it's been interesting. Since we've to virtual since March, we have seen a really big uptick in service providers and professionals and educators participating in our online virtual programs.

So I don't know -- we don't know exactly why that is. It may be because they're looking for more professional development. It may be because they have a little bit more flexibility, given the times that we're now offering, but we have noticed that this has been a shift. And these are some of the topics you can see here that we focus on when we give presentations.

And next slide. So these are a wide range of--- I'm sorry. Are we on slide 7 -- I lost my place -- or is this 8?

MS. UTZ: According to mine, it says slide 9.

MS. LEYTON: Oh, okay.
MS. UTZ: Parent Education Workshops.

MS. LEYTON: Um-hum. Okay. So if you -- I think you may receive a copy of this slide show later, and if you were to click on that "And more" at the bottom, it will take you to our website, which is nice because you will see descriptions of all of these workshops that we offer and what they cover. And then we can also tailor them to -- to the needs of the audience.

So if you'll go to the next slide, please. All right. So there are two workshops coming up. I think we skipped ahead to one. The other one is in partnership with NC START, and it's being offered -- there we go -- this afternoon, identifying supports -- basically how to support teens and their parents during virtual learning. So I imagine this is going to be a very popular workshop that families get involved in today and possibly even professionals because, obviously, they want to support our families as well.

And then the next slide is next week, this workshop, Identifying Specific Learning Disabilities. So these just give us an idea of how we can make our presentations relevant to what
is going on in our society, in our lives. The
others that I showed a couple of slides ago that
we have a list of on our website, they -- you
know, they're standard. They are, for lack of a
better term, canned. We have scripts that go with
those.

And these are a little bit more
tailored to what's going on right now and what is
really relevant to our parents, not that the
others aren't relevant, but this is just like,
hey, this is coming across right now. This
happened in July, and we're now seeing the changes
and the effects of that. So that's how -- what
we're doing for this particular workshop.

Okay. Next slide. Okay. So this is
our website, and we would love for you to go to
the website and check it out, see what we have
available. There are a number of really cool
forms and things that you can see.

So if you were to go to the next
slide, these are resources that you would find on
our website. We have a number of YouTube videos,
and they have all been captioned. So if you had
somebody that needed access to them in terms of
language, it would be there.
And then we also have an IEP Checklist, so that is very helpful for families when they're going into an IEP for the first time or maybe the last IEP was not so successful and they really want to have that to help them be effective advocates when they get into that meeting.

And then the third one that you see here is a Return to School Planning Guide. So that is just like a back-to-school every year, and you would fill it out for your teachers and your therapists.

So, again, more useful tools here. Yeah, you can stay on that other side. That's great. These are all downloadable handouts and resources. They can be -- some of them can be filled out.

If you go to the next slide, this something as part of our, I believe, Painting the Big Picture document, and they're all downloadable PDFs that have been made so that you can just fill them out as long as you have a PDF reader. And so they're very useful for going into a meeting and saying this is an overview of my child and this is where they have strengths, this is where they have
weaknesses, this is how they learn best, and gives your teacher a really great example of a whole student and not the deficit model that sometimes we get into when we say this student needs support here, needs support here, needs support here, and gives the family a way to say this is where my child really shines.

Okay. So next slide. These are all of our other contracts and work. So we've been talking about the PTI and that federal funding. We also are part of the North Carolina Deaf Blind Project, which provides special services for families with children with hearing and vision loss; North Carolina Early Intervention, working with the Infant Toddler Program, supporting families from birth to three; North Carolina DPI Exceptional Children, you-all, collaboration and information and support families; NC SIP, which is family engagement and new teacher training.

We work with several institutions of higher education with special education majors and work with a cohort of families to present information on their experiences raising a child with a disability. That has been a really profound experience for a lot of the colleges.
We've had the professors tell us how much their students have learned from our parents coming into those programs and giving their -- telling their story.

The LENS-North Carolina Program is focused on the intersection of race, educational equality or equity, and learning differences. LENS-NC seeks to improve the lives of the one in five children who struggle with learning and attention issues and the less than favorable outcomes for the ones who are low income students and students of color who face even greater challenges in our educational system.

And last but not least, Family Engagement and Leadership is helping families become more engaged in their children's education and develop leadership skills to participate on boards and committees at the local and state level.

Next slide. So this -- you can just check us out, and we have the contact information. This is how you can reach us. Our main office is in Davidson, North Carolina, and we have a 1-800 number. We also have a local number, our website, a general email, and then my contact information,
should you want to reach out to me personally. And you can look for us online in all, you know, different ways, of course.

There you go. And my final slide is if you have any questions. I think we're right 10:00, so we would need to be brief.

MS. TERHAAR: I'd like to make a comment. I have found your organization [inaudible] so much for those of us who teach and prepare students to become special educators---

And I apologize. My Yorkipoo is in the background crying. Don't worry. He's fine. He's just being a Yorkipoo.

---and that in particular all of the materials you have for parents being more active in the IEP process has been invaluable. In one of the classes I teach, the students actually roleplay an IEP conference and the preconference plan and use your materials extensively. So I cannot thank you enough for the good work that you've been doing in our state.

MS. LEYTON: That is wonderful to hear. Thank you, Marjorie. I really appreciate that. And I know that one of the reasons that Alexis asked me to present today was that some of
the folks on the Council -- maybe it was the
Executive Committee -- really wanted to know more
about our workshops and specifically the ones that
we've been doing during the pandemic.

So if you have any specific questions
about those, I will do my best to answer them. I
am not a parent educator, but I'm familiar with a
lot of what they are presenting, and if I didn't
know the answer, I would certainly find it and
follow up with you.

THE CHAIRPERSON: So, Terri, can we
take a minute here? Nancy Johnson, are you still
on the call? So we're going to take about five
minutes to about 10:05 for participants to ask
questions. Is that okay with you?

DR. JOHNSON: Yes, that's fine with
me.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Okay.

Okay. Any questions?

(No audible response.)

THE CHAIRPERSON: Well, thank you,
Terri. I think you answered some of the questions
that we had in the Executive Committee about what
ECAC was doing in particular to what's going on in
terms of COVID, in terms of children in and out of
school, hybrid and remote learning. And I think
you sharing your information so that anyone who
has questions can contact you is very helpful.

Thank you.

MS. LEYTON: Yeah, you're welcome.

Parents -- I mean our phone lines have been quiet,
but they have been reaching out through other
online means, which has been helpful. We are all
working from home right now, so that is really the
best way to get ahold of us, is online. We --
like I said, we have been doing these virtual
workshops.

And I know, you know, the Department
of Ed has come out with a number of guidance and
policy issues and things to help families navigate
and to help the schools navigate the virtual
learning, and we've tried to distill some of that
down and provide that, when we can, in a virtual
format as well.

So those are the kinds of things that
you'll see. We do have a calendar. So if you
were to look at that "Training and Events" tab,
there's a calendar there that shows you some of
our upcoming stuff. So, yeah, you scroll down and
you'll see. We are doing a lot with youth right
now, trying to interact with them individually and in group settings, and then you'll see this afternoon's webinar, and I think -- actually, I don't see the one for next week there, but it is -- it is, to my knowledge, still on the calendar. So, you know, each month you can go back and check it.

MS. UTZ: The learning disabilities one was just canceled last night and postponed until, I think, January.

MS. LEYTON: Oh, okay. Great. See, you knew more than I did.

MS. UTZ: I only got the email because I was registered for it.


THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. Thank you so much.

MS. LEYTON: You're welcome.

THE CHAIRPERSON: So Nancy -- Nancy Johnson, you're up.

DR. JOHNSON: Good morning again. Very exciting to hear from ECAC. I was around when they first started and know Connie Hawkins very well. So it's exciting to see that legacy
and work continue.

I'm here to speak to you about our State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report. For those of you who are new, I do this every year at our December meeting because the Council has been our main stakeholder group to give us input on things.

So, Alexis, if you'll go to the next slide. Briefly, what I'm going to do this morning is a little bit different than what we've done in the past. For those of you who are new, it won't seem different since you haven't heard my presentation, but for those who've been with the advisory council in past years and heard me present, you will see some changes.

I'm going to do a brief overview of the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report for everybody, and then I will then focus on the things this year we need to focus on, any indicators with changing baseline data, indicators with impact from COVID-19.

And then, briefly, at the end, I am going to just discuss future items that we're going to need to address for the new package that OSEP just released, and this new package is for Scott Court Reporting, Inc.
130 Angle Place
Stokesdale, North Carolina 27357
336/548-4371
years 2020 through 2025. It's our new next six-year package that will due February 21st of 2022, and I just want to share a few things because it's going to be a little bit different next year for us, a little more work.

Next slide. So I'm going to start with the overview of the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report. And get to the next slide, Alexis. You can see at the very top our overall general supervision responsibilities, and at the very top of this slide, it says, "The SPP/APR." It is one part of many parts of North Carolina's and all states' general supervision responsibilities under IDEA.

Okay. Next slide. Just so you know submission dates, we submit this to the US Office of Special Education Programs like all other states. Our first 16 indicators are due February 1st of 2021, and it will be the fifteenth time we have submitted an Annual Performance Report. Our Indicator 17, our State Systemic Improvement Plan, is due this year April 1st, 2021, and it will be our sixth submission.

Next slide. Here is kind of an indicator card. It shows all 16 indicators, and I
won't go through all of these, but those listed in
green are outcome indicators or results indicators
based on student data, an example being graduation
rate. We're looking at the results of students --
how many students are graduating with a standard
high school diploma.

The ones in the darker blue are
compliance indicators, and things like our
timelines for -- our 90-day timeline for Child
Find from referral to placement. The reason these
are important that we know difference between
these, states set their targets for the outcome
indicators. OSEP has preset targets for us at,
for example, a hundred percent or zero percent,
depending on the indicator for our compliance
indicators.

Next slide. This morning I'm going
to spend a few minutes talking about a couple of
indicators where we're going to have some changing
baseline data, and the reason I'm going to be
sharing these with you for this year because this
is the last and it's an extended year of our APR.
Those of you who were at our advisory council
meeting last December may remember that we did a
lot of -- I sought a lot of feedback from you
about targets for FFY, federal fiscal year, '19, which this year is considered because we're reporting our 2018-19 -- or our 2019-20 data.

Excuse me. And you helped us set those targets, and that all requires stakeholder involvement.

This year states were told it's the last year are targets were all set, so unless we had any changes related to baseline data or maybe some things related to COVID, we didn't need to get stakeholder input this year, but of course, we wanted to share with you what we have. And then we do have a couple of indicators that will have some changing baseline data, so I'm going to explain those to you now.

Indicator 1, which is our graduation rate, and Indicator 8, which is our parent involvement indicator, we are anticipating changing baseline data to these, and so I'm going to explain each one of these and why.

Indicator 1, our graduation rate.

States have been authorized to use different adjusted cohort rates. In the past for Indicator 1, states had to submit their four-year adjusted cohort rate. Due to ESSA, states have submitted different cohort rates, extended cohort rates, if
you will, like five years. Some states submit six
years, some states submit seven years. Through
our ESSA plan, we were authorized to use our
five-year adjusted cohort rate. So that was
offered to us through our APR as well for this
year.

So if we're changing that, we will
need to change the baseline to our five-year rate,
and our five-year rate for that 2019 -- for kids
who entered ninth grade in 2015-16 and graduated
in 2019-2020 or earlier, our rate 73.1 percent,
which is, of course, higher than our four-year
rate. Our target is currently 80 percent. So you
can see that our rate hasn't even reached our
target yet.

So with saying all of this, we have
had, over the years, not only from this group, the
ECAC, but others stakeholder groups and districts
and parents wanting us -- asking us why do we have
to have our kids graduate in four years. They are
allowed to stay in school longer under IDEA if
they need more time. If they need more time and
still get a standard high school diploma, they're
not reflected in that four-year rate.

So we're recommending that we go
ahead for this year and use our five-year rate, based on the input we've gotten previously from all of our stakeholders, to include those students and show this higher rate. But that is something that we're going to need some feedback from you as well if you agree with this change, and if so, should we leave our target at 80 percent or should that be increased.

We do not have to increase it this year, and I will share with you that we have to make some changes to this indicator next year because of some changes the federal government is requiring, so we may not -- we may want to leave our target as it is and see what our data for next year is going to look like since it's at an acceptable percentage rate.

I will be available to answer questions too, but I am going to ask you, if you have questions, if you could just write them down for now, and then near the end, I will be providing enough time for me to respond to questions as well. So with that, those are our changes related to graduation rate that we are proposing.

Indicator 8, our parent involvement
one, we are changing our baseline. We have worked
very closely with stakeholders for the last couple
of years in changing our survey. For those of you
who have responded to our survey in past years may
have realized that our survey was 25 questions,
and it was a lot for parents to respond to. With
Alexis's help, we got a lot of feedback from what
other states were doing, but also feedback from
parents and school districts out in our
communities about what questions on this survey
they thought were the most important, and we were
able this year to narrow our survey to 17 out of
those 25 questions.

And with that, we changed the survey,
and we also changed the rate calculation. The
rate calculation from our vendor, which was a
national TA center from years ago, which is no
longer in existence, had a fairly complicated
formula to understand, and we looked at what other
rates -- or what other states were doing, and
they're doing a much simpler rate calculation just
based on where the majority of parents who are
responding agree to the majority of questions. So
we are recommending that rate calculation as well.

Our previous years' rates, just so you
know, have been falling anywhere between 42 percent--- Oh, I need to let you know where these rates come from. We do a sampling for parent involvement. So we sample -- and our sampling plan is approved by OSEP, and we only sample in so many districts each year. So all except our largest five districts are only in the sample once every five years. Our largest districts are in the sample every year as required by the federal regulation for this.

In our previous years, our rates have fluctuated between 42 percent and 46 percent. The fluctuation doesn't surprise us because it's a sample. So we're not -- we don't have the same districts in the sample every year, but based on the way the sample is done, it is a random sample so it is representative of the state. And our target has been 50 percent. We have not quite reached that. Again, our highest year was that 46 percent.

This year, just so you know, our survey, because we were making changes to hit and COVID hit -- typically, we would send the survey letters out to districts. They would mail them out or send them home in kids' backpacks sometime
during the month of March. As you all know, in March schools closed. Things were a little confusing and chaotic. We could not get things out at that time.

And from various stakeholder groups -- parents, in particular, kept asking us if we could do the survey electronically, if we send it to them via email or text or somehow. So this year, we did send it out in the fall instead of in the spring to our sample of LEAs, and they sent it to parents. It is an electronic survey, and they sent it to parents via email.

Our evaluators, who are analyzing our data and making sure everything's all in line, at UNC Charlotte are working with that data now. But because we did it in the fall, I don't have the data back yet to know what our rate is, but I do know that we got twice as many responses this year than we have had in the past two to three to four years, and we attribute that to the fact that we did send it electronically via email, as parents have requested, and we shortened the survey a little bit so it wasn't as long for them to answer, and they were able to focus on those questions.
Once we get that data back, we will know whether our target is -- or whether our rate is at 50 percent or higher. If it is at 50 percent or higher, we will need to increase our target for this year only, and then if it's less than 50 percent, we will not need to increase that target.

And, again, I wish I had the data to share with you now, but our evaluators need time to analyze the data, and the survey was open until November 18th. Some of you may have had the opportunity to respond to the survey if you were in an LEA where they were sampling, and we appreciate all of that input.

So those are the two indicators where we're anticipating baseline data changes that we need to discuss and get input from you, and I will talk about in a little bit how we're going to get that input.

Next slide, Alexis. Then we had some indicators with impact from COVID-19. This year in the APR with COVID-19, we have to address in our introduction just general -- the overall impact on the SPP/APR, which is our first bullet, and then we have to address the specific impact on
specific indicators and their data and any
strategies that we used in the state, including
LEA strategies, to mitigate the impact. And I'm
going to talk about those things in just a minute
indicator by indicator.

But in general and overall, I wanted
to just mention our COVID-19 focus groups. Right
now we're conducting -- and we've conducted a
couple of them already -- COVID-19 focus impact
groups and -- or COVID-19 impact focus groups, and
we have groups -- focus groups that we're
conducting virtually. We're talking with people
from rural and small districts, people from urban
and large districts, charter schools.

We have two parent groups that we're
going to be conducting -- I believe there are two
parent groups we're conducting. I know we are
conducting parent groups, but I believe there are
two of them and there might even be three. And
then we are gathering information from students
via survey.

So we're getting a lot of information
from these focus groups. They're responding to
some specific questions, and then, again, our UNC
Charlotte evaluators will be evaluating and
pulling together our data for us, comparing the responses from each of these focus groups to give us some information to include in our report.

But I will tell you I have been on at least two of the three focus groups that we have done so far, and we are receiving extremely valuable information. People are being very candid about what's going on. Sometimes it's brought us to tears listening to some of the painful stories we've heard about people's stress levels from -- parents' stress over whether they're going to be able to use their phone minutes for their kids' education versus other types of things, to teachers being stressed trying to manage their virtual online learning that they're teaching as well as their three kids at home and their own [inaudible].

But we've had some really positive kinds of things as well where things started out back from March to June, and it was chaotic and confusing and things kept changing, and people kept trying to figure out how to set up all the virtual kind of things they needed to do when schools closed to [inaudible] change, where some students are gaining more because they're thriving
in the virtual environment and, of course, concerns about students who are not logging in like they need to and that they are getting behind and having to look at what that's going to mean when students are truly back in school in person full-time.

But we are getting valuable information from that -- those focus groups, and it's information that we'll not only use this year in the APR related to Indicators 1 through 17, but it's also information that's going to help guide us into the future because it's just information that folks are sharing with us about, as they look at their data -- as districts look at their and student learning that districts are starting to put in place plans that are going to take them a year to two to three years to make changes in order to deal with all the changes as a result of COVID-19 and being out of school back in March.

All right. Alexis, the next slide, please. So examples of COVID-19 impact on some indicators, and I just picked a few that I know for sure we have impact on. We may end up with some impact after we get all of our focus groups completed that I'm not aware of, but these four,
I'm sure we will have -- or that we know we have impact. Indicators 3b and c, which are our participation and proficiency rate on state assessments; Indicator 11, which is our Child Find or our 90-day timeline for placement; Indicator 12, which is our effective transition for IEPs being developed for children transitioning from Part C to Part B by age three; and Indicator 13, which is our effective transition at the secondary level.

So I am going to go into each of these indicators separately. This Indicator 3b and c, which is participation and proficiency rate on state assessments, the impact is, we're not reporting any data because all states received waivers back in the spring when COVID hit and no states did any statewide testing for their students -- all students, children without disabilities and children with disabilities. So states -- we are not required to report any data for these indicators this year, which we know, then, because we didn't have that data, it will have an impact in the next few years as well.

We do have to report next year. States did not receive a waiver for this year. So
states are having to conduct assessments for this year, and some states or some districts, I have already heard, are anticipating maybe a drop in their rates because children -- they're concerned about children losing some of their skills when they're just doing virtual learning and not in-person learning.

Next slide, Alexis. This one is Indicators 11 and 12. We added to -- we collect these data through our new ECATS system, and we added into -- we have delay reasons the federal government has us use for Indicators 11 and 12 when, for example, referrals are delayed and aren't done in the 90-day timeline or when a child's IEP isn't developed by their third birthday when they in transition to Part C. And we did add a COVID-19 delay reason to our data collection in order to capture how many of the delays were due to COVID so that we could report this in our APR.

I will share with you that our slippage for both of these is -- for both indicators is significant, and I want to share with you something that's a little bit different for our state than maybe other states. For
example, in Indicator 11, we -- our 90-day timeline -- the indicator federally is about 60 days to get your evaluation conducted or a state's own timeline, and OSEP has accepted our 90-day timeline from referral to placement because it includes that 60 days allowed for evaluations to be completed.

States have a choice in their own regulations of whether they use calendar days, business days, which would exclude weekends and holidays, or school days, which would exclude weekends, holidays, when schools are closed for school spring break, when schools are closed in the summer, and all those kinds of things.

Several states use business days or school days. North Carolina in our state regulations uses calendar days, and that has really impacted this data because when schools closed in March and children were not allowed to be in school buildings, staff were not allowed to be in school buildings, and districts were used to conducting evaluations and meetings in person, they were unable to do that. However, the calendar continued to click on, so our timeline continued to click on.
And in talking with other states, one state was telling me, when they closed school in March, they didn't reopen for in-person schooling until September 2nd, and that -- they're based on school days -- that stop their timeline until they restarted school September 2nd. So they're not having -- they're not showing the significant slippage we're showing.

And I'm saying it's significant because if you look at Indicator 11 and 12 here, 70 percent of our reported delays were due to COVID-19. First of all, we did have about 5000 fewer referrals, but we had thousands of referrals that came in, in the spring and were delayed due to COVID because they couldn't get kids in school in person. Schools had not been able to set up yet how to do virtual evaluations and make sure that all their privacy permissions were in place in order to do virtual evaluations, if they could, in that time frame.

So 70 percent of our Indicator 11 delays were due to COVID-19, and 80 percent -- approximately 80 percent -- we're still analyzing this data and we want to make sure that we get the actual numbers right, but approximately 80 percent
of our delays in Indicator 12 were also due to COVID-19, which we know then impacts this coming year's data because districts are having to catch up on these number of referrals that were delayed as well as keep up with new referrals coming in.

And we have also heard that through virtual learning, in some instances, some districts are reporting to us that they're receiving more parent referrals than ever because parents are seeing their children in a different light when they're actually working with them at home and seeing that they're getting behind now because of all of this, and so there has been an increase this year. Where last spring there was a decrease in the number of referrals districts were receiving because of COVID-19, they're starting this fall to see an increase in referrals.

One other thing related to these two indicators specifically is that we -- our data folks, our data manager, and our Policy, Monitoring folks, and myself have been doing joint weekly office hour calls on Wednesdays. I am missing the one this morning because I'm here for this meeting, but we're conducted them weekly, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, to assist
with reporting on Indicators 11, 12, and a couple of other indicators, Indicator 7, which is also collected through ECATS, our accountability system -- our new accountability system, and our Child Count, which is due this month as well, our federal Child Count.

So those weekly office hours, as we have been assisting districts with our new data management system and answering questions, we have also gleaned a lot of information about the delays related to COVID. And I'll just give you one example. We knew that districts weren't able to get kids in Indicator 11 to come in for evaluations because schools were closed, but because of our process from referral to placement, they also have to get parent signatures on -- before conducting the evaluations and parent signatures for placement of students once services are -- once the IEP is written and services are determined -- when the child is eligible.

Normally, for the most part, not always, but for the most part, districts do that in in-person meetings, and parents often sign while they're in person at those meetings. What districts were finding, even once they started
doing the meetings virtually, they had to start
using the mail to send home the forms for parents
to sign, and then parents had to send them back in
the mail, and sometimes that took a week to two
weeks extra, and that was all adding to the
timeline that districts hadn't built in.

So that was something -- we didn't
think about that very reason related to having to
send things out by mail versus other things, but
that was something that came up in our weekly
office hours from several districts mentioning
that. So that's an example of some of the
information related to what we're gaining from our
weekly office hours that are specific to
indicators.

Alexis, if you'll move to the next
one. This one's Indicator 13, and I have to
apologize. It has been a busy couple of weeks,
and when I put in my information into the slides
for Indicator 13, I must not have saved it
correctly because this is the information from the
previous slide. So I'm going to talk about
Indicator 13 and why we're seeing an impact there,
and then I will correct this slide before this
gets sent back out to you. In fact, I'll -- as
soon as I'm finished today with this meeting, I will correct the slide and get it to Alexis.

Indicator 13 is our secondary transition, and it is all -- it is a compliance indicator, and it is all based on whether or not the transition components in the IEP are compliant, and we do our data collection through monitoring. Our monitoring visits are every year. They do an extra pull related to Indicator 13 and review those records. We have had a delay in some of our data collection because when COVID hit, that stopped our monitoring visits.

Our monitoring -- monitoring consultants and teams could not go back out to the LEAs and do monitoring from March to June, and we had a number of those scheduled. And so our data for this indicator was quite low in comparison -- when I say "quite low," the number of IEPs reviewed was quite low because a number of our monitoring visits had not been conducted.

So it is delaying our data collection, and the new schedule for monitoring is intended to catch up with those that were missed last spring, to start sometime after the first of the year. Our Policy, Monitoring and Audit unit
is setting those up. In the meantime, to see if
we can glean enough information for Indicator 13
to report, those districts that were due to be
monitored, our monitoring consultants are
reviewing IEPs virtually in our new ECATS system
for the transition component.

And they are doing that currently,
but I won't -- I will not get the additional
information to make a decision about whether we'll
have enough information to report in this one or
if we will have to report that our data collection
wasn't a big enough group to be -- to meet the
requirement. And they won't have that to me till
the end of this month. So those are the kinds of
bullet points I'll be including in this slide
which are not showing up right now, and I
apologize for that.

With that, you can go to the next
slide. I want to just focus for just a couple of
minutes on future items to address the new federal
requirements. The new federal package just came
out last month or two months ago for our next
six-year go-round, and this work will occur in
2021 because we have to be ready to submit the new
requirements in our February 1st, 2022 SPP/APR.
So that's -- while that is more than a year away, there is a lot of work that we will have to do over the next year to get ready for that submission, and that's why I want to share it with you now.

Normally, I'm able to come and present in December and get feedback from you in December and January before we submit in February, but for next year, there are new requirements, and it is going to take our state, as well as other states opportunities, with our main stakeholder groups as well as other stakeholders to get input and to address the items that I've noted here, some of the changes.

So I just want to briefly mention them. And when I say "next year," this work will likely not begin until after we do our February 1, 2021 submission. It might not even start till March, but we will be starting sometime in late winter, early spring with this work over the course of the rest of the year for our 2022 submission.

There are -- the first item on there is additional stakeholder involvement. There are new requirements related to stakeholder
involvement, and it will not be enough for our
state to only use our advisory council members as
our stakeholder group. With those new
requirements, we have to talk more intensively
about -- intentionally about strategies of
involvement and broader ranges of stakeholder
groups. So we will be working on that, and of
course, still including our advisory council as a
major stakeholder group, but we will be adding
other groups as well to seek input.

We will be setting targets which
requires stakeholder input, and those of you who
were on the advisory council last year, you saw
how we did input for just one year's worth of
targets. We will be doing -- feedback on targets
for six years. We will have to set targets for
each of the next six years, and again, our
compliance indicators are already set by OSEP, but
on all of our results indicators, we will have to
set new targets for the next six years.

The data is changing and our data
sources are changing for Indicators 1 and 2.
Indicators 1 and 2 are our graduation rates, and
Indicator 2 are our dropout rates. And OSEP is
trying to make that data more comparable so they
can look at it across states. So they will be using our exit data, and what that means, it's changing from our cohort rate which looks at -- our cohort rate looks at when students enter ninth grade and when they graduate in five years, now is what we're looking at -- within five years.

Our exit data is more like an event rate. It looks at all the students who exited by receiving a diploma. So it includes kids who exited whether they did it in three years, four years, five years, six years, seven years. If for this year of exit data they received a standard high school diploma, they will be included in the numerator. So any kids -- so that concern, again, that we have kids who are able to stay in school longer under IDEA but weren't included in our four-year cohort rate, if they graduated in the year that we're looking at for our exit, they would be counted in the numerator.

And we're using that same source of data for dropout. In the past, our dropout rate -- we were allowed to use the same dropout rate that the State used for all kids, the dropout formula, which looked at kids who exited, yes, by dropping out, but if they came back to school by
the 20th day of the next year, they were in a
formula that did not count as a dropout.

And in this instance, our dropout
rate -- we'll be using our -- and I kind of
hesitate to even refer to it as a rate. It is a
rate, but it's -- it's taking our exit data and
the number of students who dropped out and then
looking at it in comparison to some of the other
students who have exited for the school year. But
what's different in these two indicators compared
to the cohort rate and the dropout rate is the
denominator.

For example, in Indicator 2's dropout
rate, when we did the state dropout rate, the
denominator included all students with IEPs ages
16 and above who could have dropped out of school
and either dropped out or didn't dropout, but it
included all 16-year-olds and above with IEPs. In
this calculation, it will not include all
16-year-olds because in the regulations OSEP has
directed in our directions which of those students
with IEPs -- well, OSEP says 14 and above. North
Carolina doesn't allow students to drop out before
age 16. So students with -- 16 and above will be
included in that denominator.
So we will see an increase in our dropout rate because it is not including all 16-year-olds with IEPs in the denominator. So there will be a difference there for Indicator 2. Our Indicator 1, as I look at the data, it is more similar to our five-year cohort rate.

We will be seeing new -- the fourth thing -- new components for Indicators 3 and 6. As you recall, Indicators 3 are about our statewide assessment. We still will be collecting data on participation rates, as we have in the past. We will still be collecting data on proficiency rates, but we have, in the past, had to report on all grade levels, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight, and high school, whether it's grade 10 or 11, whatever grade your state uses, high school grades.

In coming years, we will only be reporting our data, even though all this data gets reported to the federal government, in this report, we'll be reporting -- continuing to report on reading and math for grades 4, 8, and high school. So we're not reporting as many grades, but when we report those grades, we will be -- instead of including them all together, as we've...
done in the past, we will be differentiating between kids who are on regular assessments with and without accommodations and on alternate assessments. So it will be very clear in the report how many of those kids are on alternate assessments versus regular assessments and how they are doing proficiency-wise.

And then there is a new component added that we now will need to report in future years on the gap between our students with disabilities and their proficiency rates and their counterparts, all other students in the state, so that we will be able to see what that gap is. And, again, all of these things that I'm talking about, we will be setting targets and seeking input from folks in the field, all of you, our stakeholders, as we share data with you and look at where we are, what our baseline is, and what our targets should be.

The fifth thing is that there will be a change in the due date for Indicator 17, our State Systemic Improvement Plan. It will, in the future, required to be submitted February 1st with the other 16 indicators. For those of you who are familiar with that report, it is more of a
results-based report, and it is around -- right
now it is around our five-year cohort graduation
rate, but we also look at a lot of other data that
relates to getting to graduation including
academic data, behavioral data, transition data,
and all kinds of things in that report. And
instead of April 1st, it will be due in February
1st. So that will be a change that we have to get
that ready at the same time, which is quite a
substantial [inaudible].

There are some other minor changes
and clarifications that -- and any other changes
that a state might make if they choose to change
something in an indicator that's not really
changed, if they decide to change a calculation.
I'm not anticipating any of those. Other minor
changes would be technical -- some technical
language that states have to -- based on how
states have to report.

But, anyway, I wanted to share that
part with you to let you know it will be a very
busy year from seeking input from our
stakeholders, including our advisory council, for
all of these things. So with that, I have one
other thing to share, and then I will be answering
questions, and it looks like I still have ten, 12 minutes to answer questions.

After this I know that, typically, in the afternoon, you have -- your subcommittees and I think your Data Subcommittee usually works on input for this, and I'm not sure that you have people assigned to that committee or not. If you need me to, I can be on during that time, or one other thing, I will be doing, following this meeting, I will be, through Alexis and Danyelle, getting an email out to all of you and will resend the PowerPoint with the corrected slide, and asking you for input, particularly on the two indicators where we're looking at baseline changes, Indicator 1, graduation rate, and Indicator 8, parent involvement, and asking you some specific questions about targets for those where we need some specific input from you. So that will be -- and then you will have my email and can email any responses you have to that requested information between now and mid January.

With that, I'm going to stop -- I've talked for a long time -- and see if we have any questions.

MS. DEGEN: This is Jennifer from
CMS. How are you doing?

DR. JOHNSON: Hi, Jennifer. I'm good. Thank you. How are you?

MS. DEGEN: Good. I -- I actually had to step away for a quick second and talk to my principal, and so you might have covered this. I actually have two questions. One is based on Indicator 1 as far as the graduation rate. You know, we are affected with our self-contained extensions program where we take a hits.

Has that been -- so this is my first question -- has that been addressed as far as how that's going to, you know, not take a hit on those kids because they are allowed to stay till they're 22 or 21?

DR. JOHNSON: Not for this year other than--- And are you saying kids who received a standard diploma later or don't receive a diploma at all?

MS. DEGEN: As far as the EP students, the kids on the extensions programs and the self-contained because they hit our graduation cohort for that first year, so it looks like your graduation -- like last year I had nine that were -- that were seniors that should have
graduated as a self-contained student, but because they can stay till they're 21 in a self-contained setting, you know, we took a hit on those nine. And granted that doesn't seem like a lot, but nine is a large amount, especially because it's extra for a student with a disability. So those factors in -- those kids that stay for the 12 plus years.

MS. JOHNSON: For this year, the only difference will be, we're looking at a five-year cohort rate rather than a four-year cohort rate because that's what OSEP is allowing us to change. So if -- that's extending it so we do have more students because some kids do graduate within five years as opposed to four years.

The change that you're referring to would only be impacted in the new requirements in the new package moving ahead from February 1, 2022, and on, where we're looking at our exit data, so kids who exit special education in a given year with a standard high school diploma will be included in the numerator as compared to some of the other kids in that exit data who will be in the denominator.

So if they exit with a standard high school diploma in a given year, even if it's when
they're 20 as opposed to 18 years of age, they would be included in that numerator. If that exit with a certificate and they've aged out, they would be in the denominator, but not in the numerator because the numerator is about graduating with a standard high school diploma.

MS. DEGEN: Okay. Thank you for that clarity. I appreciate it. And my second question was, with the COVID-19 and the 90-day timelines as well my Child Count that just happened, is the State looking -- you know, how is it looking with staffing? Because numbers for Child Count affect -- you know, sometimes you look at as the number on a piece of paper that we hit 96 days, but knowing that if we didn't hit that 90 days, that gets reported.

So what is the State looking at as far as allotments and staffing based on headcount or Child Count or Child Find? Just because if numbers have decreased because we couldn't get them on for headcount, is the State going to do anything, you know, or are LEAs going to be looking at losing staff?

DR. JOHNSON: I am aware that Sherry Thomas, our Director, and Matt Hoskins, our
Assistant Director, are aware of concerns of the possibility of lower Child Counts this year and are looking at any ways that they might be able to mitigate that, but I'm not exactly sure what they're doing. I don't know if Matt's on the call yet. He will be on the call later today, if he's not on yet, but if he is, he might want to respond to this question.

MS. DEGEN: Thank you.

DR. JOHNSON: I do see Matt.

MR. HOSKINS: Are you-all able to hear me?

THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes.

MR. HOSKINS: Good morning, everyone.

So we have been -- we're acutely aware of that concern related to Child Count, and one of the -- where we see that we have a little bit of leeway -- and this information has gone out -- is around ensuring that there is an active IEP, so not necessarily that there's a reevaluation that's still in process, but if there's an active IEP, that those can be counted. And we're doing that work with PPG and ECATS right now to make sure that will come out in the headcount.

Other than that, we haven't gotten
any additional leniency in terms of what we can do
with headcount for initial evaluations from OSEP,
and so we've done everything that we can to
address those concerns and realize that they
exist.

MS. DEGEN: Thank you.

DR. HUTCHINSON: Hey, Nancy. This is
Christy Hutchinson. How are you doing?

DR. JOHNSON: Hello, Dr. Hutchinson,
I should say.

DR. HUTCHINSON: Thank you.

DR. JOHNSON: For those of you who
don't know, Christy just successfully defended her
dissertation on Friday. So congratulations.

DR. HUTCHINSON: Thank you. I have
three quick things that I wanted to -- the first
is supporting what Jennifer just mentioned, and I
just want to be super clear that my comments are
not necessarily in advocating for special ed
programs or public school programs. Where I'm
coming -- the lense I'm using is what's right for
students with disabilities. So it's as much an
advocate for parents, but number one, mostly
importantly, for students.

I have a grave concern with the
four-year graduation rate as opposed to the five-year graduation rate because I think there's a claim to be made that we are in some way restricting FAPE from students by encouraging them to graduate within four years. So it's like our assessment does not match our instruction in some ways because if we look at the instruction piece and we look at what IDEA provides to students up to the age of 21, but yet we're assessing them on a four-year graduation rate, we're not matching there.

So I would completely support the move to a five-year graduation rate in our new -- in our opportunity to provide you feedback. Those students are entitled to that, and I feel like as professionals we have to support that opportunity. The research says that students that get that full access are more successful in postsecondary, more successful in employment opportunities, especially our kids that are on OCS, and those kinds of things that Jennifer spoke about. So just to support what Jennifer said about considering that five-year graduation rate for the future.

The second thing I wanted to talk about is changing that 80 percent when you spoke
about changing the targets. I just don't think the 80 percent -- that it is the time right now to change that target. Because of what has happened with COVID, our graduation rate is going to inherently fall. We've lost students to employment, we've lost students to failing grades, and all school systems in the state are working feverishly to access students, to give them FAPE, but we can't discredit the fact that there are barriers beyond our control that are preventing students from accessing their special ed services, and so changing the target this year of that 80 percent, I think, is the wrong time to do it for our graduation rates.

And then the last point, I just wanted to support what Jennifer said about our lower Child Count, and I know Matt is going to address this. But it's not just about the Child Find stuff we were not able to complete within 90 days; it's also about our DD kids that are transitioning from the age of eight over. So some of those were not adequately able to be completed before their eighth birthday, and so that will affect those Child Counts as well. And then I'm done. Thank you.
DR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Christy, for your input. We will certainly consider that as we're making changes to the APR. The Child Count, of course, is a different issue, but we will -- we are accepting any information that we can to support districts in any way we can.

DR. HUTCHINSON: I think that speaks to the calendar in that 90-day timeline because we have to support our folks at the coast and our folks at the mountains that continuously -- regardless of COVID, continuously fight the battle of not being in session because of weather and some times hurricanes really impact.

And so I think it levels the playing field if we consider the 90-day timeline of days we're actually in session, and those are built into our Power School. So I conceivably could see that it could be calculated fairly easily, but then we have the same level playing field. It's not appropriate for someone who lives in the Piedmont and might not have the effects of being out for a month because of a horrible hurricane. So just a consideration.

DR. JOHNSON: Okay. And as that consideration, I just will share with you that
that would require a policy change because our
state policy -- because it doesn't indicate how
many days, it implies that it is calendar days,
that's how OSEP has told us we have to handle
that. And so I will take that information to our
Policy, Monitoring and Audit unit as far as a
consideration possibly for the future when changes
are made to our state policy.

MS. DEGEN: This is Jennifer again.
Just to support what was just said, I think that
the calendar would be -- as far as like I just had
two weeks ago a parent request for testing. I was
out for Thanksgiving, we're out for exams, and
then we have Christmas holidays, and those all
count in, and it's running concurrent with the
MTSS. In looking at SLD now with interventions,
running a 45-day -- you know, 45 days of, you
know, valid, you know, interventions is difficult
when we're in this time frame.

So that support of calendar days
versus in-school days, I think that that's a
support for that when you're looking at no longer
having the discrepancy model in the SLD because
you have to have, you know, those interventions,
and that's important to have those run and run
them with fidelity.

So, you know, looking at that, but you know, sometimes we are crunched in that 90 days, so with exams, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, that right there at 20 of those days. I might not have run those interventions with fidelity, and I'm just trying to get a kid in or out with that 90 days. So I think that that could be something to support, you know, looking at in-school days versus the calendar.

DR. JOHNSON: And I am making notes of all of this so that I can share with our Policy, Monitoring and Audit unit about that. I know we are aware of that because this was something we were looking at that other states were doing, wondering how they were doing so much better on rates sometimes, and it's often because they've either chosen business days or school days as opposed to calendar days.

So I will, again, share this information and we'll go from there as far as -- because it would require a policy change, not just a change to Indicator 11. Thank you very much for that input and support for that.

MS. GEORGE: Okay. This is Leanna
here in Johnston County, and I had a couple of questions I had for you. First of all, do we have any data about the total number of kids [inaudible] to graduate with a diploma [inaudible] graduate in six or seven years because of maturity or they just -- you know, because of a disability? [Inaudible] a much lower rate. I think that they should be recognized for work [inaudible] achieve their goals.

DR. JOHNSON: I am sorry. I was hearing a lot of static or something. You were asking your question, and I could not hear that question.

MS. GEORGE: Okay. Let me try again. Can you hear me better now? I'm on an ear bud mic thing so I don't know how well it works.

DR. JOHNSON: Yes, I can hear you better now.

MS. GEORGE: Okay. [Inaudible] had that problem in school myself. Okay. Do we have any data about the total number of students who [inaudible] graduate with a diploma outside of the usual four- and five-year cohorts?

DR. JOHNSON: Yes. Through our exiting data per year, but it is not that graduate
with a standard high school diploma, we could get that data for you. It is not based on when they entered, but it's not -- it's not the same group of kids so you can't compare the two, but it is our exit data, which will be used for future APRs, not for this one. We could see year by year how many kids actually graduated with a standard high school diploma.

MS. GEORGE: And that would be great, I think, if we can see that. And I also wanted to verify based on Christy's questions. Students who have pulled out to homeschool or transfer, they're not including in that dropout rate, correct?

DR. JOHNSON: It depends. Kids who are -- it depends on when they transfer in and out or drop out.

MS. GEORGE: So if I took my son out today [inaudible] and started homeschooling, he'd be counted as a dropout possibly? [Inaudible] see how our numbers [inaudible] has skyrocketing this year in response to COVID [inaudible]. I'm homeschooling, so---

DR. JOHNSON: And, again, I couldn't hear all of your comments because of the static I was hearing.
MS. GEORGE: Okay. And do we even have a percentage of how many IEP deadlines are not being met and what is the average over [inaudible] how many days overdue are they? I mean if most of them are done within ten to 15 days after -- you know, at 105 days, I think that's reasonable considering what's going on. But we don't have any that [inaudible], do we?

DR. JOHNSON: When we finalize our data for the APR -- and I will be sending that to you as soon as we get our data finalized -- we will have that, but we were delayed this year even getting our data. Normally, we get our Indicator 11 data in October, and we didn't get it till late November, and we're still working with that. And we will be able to show how many student referrals were delayed and by the number of days because that has to be reported in the APR.

So once we get all that together -- all of our data -- we didn't share data for our indicators this year like we normally do because of the delays in getting all of our data in. Until we're final -- or close enough to being final that this is our data and this is our rates, we didn't want to share that, but I will be
sending that information to you before our APR report goes out.

MS. GEORGE: Thank you very much and thank you for your presentation today.

DR. JOHNSON: You're welcome.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Nancy, and thank you for your willingness to stay around for our Data and Reports Committee.

Do we have Lauren?

DR. JOHNSON: Do you need me to do that, Cynthia?

THE CHAIRPERSON: Alexis, we don't have a chair for that committee?

MS. UTZ: Data and Reports, correct, we do not have a chair.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Anyone from the Data and Reports Committee think that Nancy would be valuable in her staying around for the committee work?

MS. UTZ: Right now the only -- right now Lisa Phillips is the only one on the call that is in that subcommittee.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Lisa?

MS. PHILLIPS: Can you hear me?

THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes.
MS. PHILLIPS: Yeah, I think we're fine for now. Thank you.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. Nancy---

DR. JOHNSON: Just look for follow-ups from me in the next couple of weeks. Thank you.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you so much. So, Alexis, if we can move on to Lauren.

MS. UTZ: Yep, she's here.

MS. HOLAHAN: Good morning.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Hi.

MS. HOLAHAN: Thanks for having me and greetings to all of the council members. I am aware of the time, and so I'm just going to jump right in. The request, as far as I understand it, is to give you an overview of our State Systemic Improvement Plan, which is Indicator 17, as part of our Annual Performance Report, which you just heard an amazing update from Nancy on.

So I'm just going to give you a very like quick overview of the history and then really get into the data that we have that we're compiling for this year's report and what we're hearing from LEAs.

So next slide. Our State Systemic
Improvement Plan works from the theory that local
districts will look at the root cause or root
causes of why students with disabilities are
graduating disproportionately -- the rate of
graduation -- five-year graduation cohort rate
for students with disabilities is
disproportionately lower than that for nondisabled
students. We really want to investigate locally
what are the root causes for that graduation rate
gap.

And then based on whatever those root
causes are, the local district or charter school
would select evidence-based practices to address
that root cause or causes and then provide
professional development and also request help
from DPI for any professional development or
technical assistance and just also to engage in a
continuous improvement cycle, continuing to look
at data for students with disabilities over time
to ensure that we really are making progress on
closing that gap.

So we can move to the next slide. In
response to that, DPI will allocate resources
through our regional support structure to make
sure that districts and charter schools have the
support they need to implement those evidence-based practices, things like the Reading Research to Classroom Practice and the Foundations of Math, which are made available through our NC SIP project, PBIS and the MTSS behavior and social/emotional learning supports as well as the SEFEL supports, which are the preschool level evidence-based practices for supporting social/emotional learning and behavior as well as transition.

And so we have organized the staff in the Exceptional Children Division to be able to provide that professional development and technical assistance kind of across the continuum, right, from everywhere from universal levels of support that we make available to all LEAs out to very customized support that an LEA or charter school may ask us to design based on their very unique needs.

And so, Alexis, are you driving? And so you can just click on -- I'll go through this one pretty quickly. I want to get to the next slide which is really about kind of our work in the last year.

But just to give you an overview of
the first six years of the project, we started
with our baseline data for the five-year
graduation cohort rate that we took a baseline in
2013, and along the way, have -- you can see
really -- this is a history of the reporting that
we've done to OSEP, the Office of Special
Education Programs, where we're required to
provide an annual report on both our
implementation and the impact on outcomes for
students with disabilities, and again,
specifically, are we closing the gap and meeting
our targets for that five-year graduation cohort
rate.

And this is different than our
Indicator 1, which is the four-year rate right
now. We were able to use the five-year rate for
the SSIP, and since that was an option when we
began really in 2014 with our data analysis, we
chose to use the five-year rate.

So let's move on to the next slide,
and I just want to give you a sense of -- I came
into this role as the coordinator for the SSIP,
the State Systemic Improvement Plan, in the summer
of 2019. And so about a year ago, we were able to
bring together two groups of stakeholders and an
internal and an external group, and we analyzed
last fall our LEA self-assessment data and
recognized we had some dissonance between our data
showing that students with disabilities were
meeting their IEP goals.

By and large, that was a strength for
districts, but students were not reading
proficiency standards, right, so their academic
achievement wasn't matching what we were seeing in
terms of their IEP goal attainment, and that
troubled us. And I'm not saying us as at DPI, but
really us as the community of practice that is
special education in North Carolina top to bottom.

And so we embarked on a statewide
effort to really improve our capacity to design
standards-aligned IEPs and deliver specially
designed instruction and related services that
were connected to the standards. And then in
March, actually, we were considering some
flexibility in how LEAs were going to complete
their LEA self-assessment, even before COVID
started, allowing them to use their improvement
plan -- their overall district improvement plan
instead of an EC program-specific improvement
plan, and then COVID hit.
We submitted our report on time to OSEP, and we later had -- it's not included here, but I think it was in November we had our follow-up call with OSEP, and they were -- didn't really have anything but just -- it was a fairly supportive response to our 2020 submission. They did encourage us to think about potentially a smaller metric.

Graduation rate is a very large, kind of many -- many -- multifaceted data point to move, and so they just -- we will have an opportunity to consider what our sort of focus is, our state-indicated measurable result, as we move into the next -- kind of the next segment of the SSIP. We're closing out the sixth year with the 2021 report.

So when COVID happened, we looked at the LEA self-assessment and really tried to make sure that what we were asking LEAs to evaluate about their own program made sense in light of their context, dealing with remote instruction, and just really making sure it was streamlined and it was going to be a valuable process for them.

We also -- our data teams -- we have a regional team for -- a data team for each region
that really supports special education directors in each region, and they had an opportunity to look at a variety of different data this year before they did the reviews. So we conducted those through the summer and fall, and then we began the -- the reviews started in October.

And we can keep clicking. We provided quite a few resources for -- you can go back -- quite a few resources to submit the LEA self-assessment. We conducted our reviews in November and December, and now we have some preliminary data we're starting to kind of look at, and that's what I'm going to show you right now.

So we can move on. Just to give you a sense of our five-year graduation cohort rate, so what we reported at the -- we are a year behind in that reporting. So for the 2020 submission, we reported the '18-'19 school year, which was 72.5, and that was a drop from the previous year. And we hypothesized that that had some to do with some change in business rules and how that five-year graduation cohort rate is calculated, and that's really not anything that the EC Division has control over.
The good news is, if you click, Alexis, we'll see that we -- if you'd go back -- what we will be able to report to OSEP for the '19-20 school year -- yes, the '18-19 school year is we had a pretty significant jump in our five-year graduation rate. So that will be what we report in the 2021 report, and I will say that that increase for 72.5 to 73.1, of all the subgroups we look at, at DPI, students with disabilities made the -- made the second largest increase only behind students -- Native American students, American Indians. They had the largest increase, and then students with disabilities was the next largest subgroup increase. So we're very excited about the recovery on that.

You can go to the next slide. So we have received -- and this can already be updated. We've had submissions -- even this morning, I was uploading some of them. So I think we're much closer to 310 or twelve have been submitted. There are just less than ten, I think, that are still outlying at this point, and we have almost all of the 650 reviews done by now. This was -- this was put together last week, and these data are changing as -- daily really as it comes in.
I will say that our staff spent about -- almost an hour with each review, and each LEA and charter school has two reviewers. So it's an extremely thorough process. We take our time looking at what the LEAs are telling us. We have a systematic way that we conduct the reviews, and you'll see some of that data in just a minute.

So we can move to the next slide. So this is kind of how it unfolds across the regions. You can see, of course, the North Central and Southwest Regions are our biggest regions.

Next slide. So before I get into the actual data on each of these kind of items on the LEA self-assessment, I do just want to pause here to see if there are any questions or reflections before we get into some of the more specific data.

MS. LEYTON: This is Terri. I just have a question about the graduation rates. In 2017, it was 74.1 percent and then there was a pretty significant drop off in 2018. So definitely glad to see about the recovery in 2019, but I'm wondering if there was a difference in the way that data were calculated or what the reason was for that drop.

MS. HOLAHAN: Yeah, we have a couple
of different hypotheses, and certainly at the local level, it would be hard for us to, you know, guess. But we do know that there was a change in the way the five-year graduation cohort rate was calculated, a difference between the 2017-18 school year and the 2018-19 school year. And that was that students -- if they started in the cohort in ninth grade and then were exited from special education during that time---

And, Nancy, you can make sure that I am saying this right.

---historically they were -- they continued to be included in our count. From 2017 to 2018, they were no longer included in the count, and our hypothesis is that once those special education supports were withdrawn because the student was exited, we are thinking that those students may have -- that they either didn't graduate or maybe dropped out at a higher rate once they exited special ed.

But I will -- Nancy, if you want to clean up what I just said, please.

DR. JOHNSON: I think you may have said it backwards. The students when they exited were not counted in our count, but then students
who exited and returned to regular ed and had been
identified as being disabled at any time during
the count were now included in our count, if that
makes sense.

MS. HOLAHAN: Yes. Yes.

MS. LEYTON: [Inaudible] the change,
and that was really the thing that I was hoping to
hear---

MS. HOLAHAN: Yes.

MS. LEYTON: ---and not that there
was some sort of systemic issue otherwise. Okay.
So thank you.

MS. HOLAHAN: Yeah. And to that
point -- actually, I'm glad you came back to it --
when we had our call with OSEP about our 2020 SSIP
report, they told us that we could have reset our
baseline based on that business rule change, and
given how far we are into it -- we just one more
year of reporting, which you see we will report
the 73.1 for the 2021 report -- we opted not to
change the baseline.

And, you know, when we think about a
new State Identified Measurable Result and setting
new targets, then we will set the new baselines.
So that will be part of our 2021 work.
So let's jump into -- this is going to give you a sense both of what kind of things we ask school districts to consider about their program and then sort of how -- these are statewide data. We have also disaggregated these for each region, and our data teams actually looked at them yesterday, but I'm just going to walk you through the state data.

So LEAs rate themselves a zero, one, or two, two being the best on each item. So as you're looking at these means for each of these different items, the closer that mean is to two, it means statewide we can say that this area of activity was a relative strength. The closer you get to zero on the mean, that means we've identified -- we are kind of statewide saying that this is an area that we really need to focus on for improvement. And so this first one is really how well are we doing as a program locally to look at data and problem solve improvement for any student who's not meeting IEP goals.

We can move on to 4.2. So 4.2 is, as a program, does the LEA collect and analyze disaggregate data, and that's, you know, are they looking at their data for students with disability
based on categories of eligibility, grade level, placement, race, gender. And you can see that disaggregation -- that was a relative strength. I will say I do wonder -- and we have yet to look back at our -- comparing these data with last year's, but there's a pretty significant effort by SSIP team to provide data to LEAs ahead of time before they did their LEA self-assessments.

We provided them a really comprehensive data profile both in March, and then we packaged the APR, the Annual Performance Report, data as a three-year display rather than just one year so that they could look at some of those trends. So I'm just wondering if some of the supports that they received from DPI in terms of actually like having data profiles kind of they were able to do a little bit more with them.

So we can move to 4.3. This is aggregated data, and then 4.4 is -- not only are they looking at data, but they're using it to identify priorities for improvement for decision-making. Core Element 4 is really about problem solving for improvement.

Core Element 5, then, is about, once we've identified our areas for improvements, how
are we making decisions about what research-based instruction and practices we're going to choose. This really is our implementation section. So does the LEA have a clear way that they're choosing evidence-based initiatives.

You can move forward. Once we choose a research-based intervention, do we have a plan for how we're going to implement it; do we have that plan written down; and does it have all the required parts like the selection criteria for who -- what staff will deliver it, selection criteria for what students will receive it; how we're going to do fidelity checks; how we're going to see if it's actually working and it's having an impact on student outcomes.

5.3 is that we're carrying out those implementation plans and we're really monitoring our progress, that we have record of doing those fidelity checks, that we're checking in with stakeholders, that we're making adjustments to our plan based on data.

You can move forward. And then 6 -- Core Element -- oh, 5.4, yes. Then we really look at -- we are looking at the impact of the implementation plan, is it working, is it
sustainable, how do we make sure that we have staff that continue to be equipped to implement the research-based interventions that the LEA has selected.

And Core Element 6 is really the stakeholder engagement, communication and collaboration, and so this is -- and you'll see, of the three that we're looking at today, this area has historically been an area that LEAs have identified as a relative strength compared to the other core elements. And so do we have vertical and horizontal communication processes in place, so rated very high. You can see we're getting those means up close to two. The LEA facilitates meaningful parent involvement.

6.3 is that the LEA works with community partners like community mental health providers or preschool providers to enhance service delivery. And, finally, 6.4 is, does the LEA collaborate with DPI on getting support and information in order to engage in continuous improvement.

So I'll pause there before we move onto what we saw in some of the improvement plans that were submitted. Any thoughts or questions
about any of those data? And so just as a reminder, everything you just saw was our 326, 25 charter schools, traditional LEAs, lab schools, and other state-run programs that have special education as part of their program. It was them reporting on their own work. So I'll just pause for any questions.

Okay. So let me---

MR. HOSKINS: Lauren, let me jump in. I just wanted to let folks know that I did check in on the policy related to the business rule for the change in the graduation---

MS. HOLAHAN: Thank you, Matt.

MR. HOSKINS: ---and it was that if a student had been classified as a student with a disability at any time while they were in that cohort and then exited, they were -- they were included as a student with a disability.

MS. HOLAHAN: Okay. And so I mentioned we allowed some flexibility in what kind of improvement plan the district or charter school submitted with their LEA self-assessment. Most chose -- an overwhelming majority chose to use the template that we provided, which was special education program-specific.
You can see academics -- and this has been historical -- that academics is the main area of focus for improvement and that most LEAs said what we really need is universal support, not many saying that they needed tailored or customized support. Most of the submissions had just one goal, and then you can see there were a few that had multiple goals.

You can move on. And so as we began our reviews, we could look a little bit more specific. Rather than just those three kind of big areas of academics, behavior, and transition, our reviewers were looking for like what was the improvement plan about even inside of those three big areas.

And so you can see reading and math performance were way out front in terms of what districts are focusing on for students with disabilities, problem solving and data analysis, this green one, and then this gray one that's kind out here in front is the implementation of research-based practices. So those were really very popular in terms of what was contained in the improvement plans.

You can move forward. And we were
really excited to see this, which was did we see
alignment between the improvement plan and the
precise problem statement that the district
identified, sort of their root cause, and we saw
good alignment in the annual goal, in the
strategies they were going to use to meet that
goal, the timeline for completion, who's
responsible, what kind of fidelity measures. So I
think what we're seeing is overtime an improvement
in the ability to design good improvement plans,
which is exciting.

Next slide. And this, again, is just
to show some correlation between the data analyses
that our consultants did prior to doing the
reviews and then what they saw in the improvement
plans, and we do see some good correlation. And
then you can see here how the goals that the LEAs
developed which -- where they were connecting most
in terms of the core elements, and so problem
solving for improvement and those research-based
instructional practices were, again, way out in
front of the other areas.

And I think that brings us to, I
think, the last slide. It's really just -- I'm
not going to talk about the COVID impact groups
because Nancy did a terrific job of giving you an overview of those. We have four parent groups, one that is a Spanish-speaking and then three others. We're starting those today actually, and then the Youth with Disabilities surveys, we have almost 200 responses on that. So we've had really, really strong interest and engagement in those opportunities to tell us what has special education been like in the context of this pandemic, and I think we're going to have some -- as Nancy said, some really powerful things to share with OSEP and all of our stakeholders.

And so that brings us to any questions.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Any comments for Lauren?

MS. HOLAHAN: Comments or reflections?

MS. LEYTON: So this is Terri again. Sorry. I'm the newbie and I have lots of questions. When LEAs create their improvement plans, are they also submitting data that align with -- that they have outcomes that are aligning with those improvement plans?

MS. HOLAHAN: That was -- that's
certainly the request. Our encouragement is that
as they write their goals, those goals have data
kind of based targets, that they're -- that they
know where they're starting, they know what their
baseline data is for whatever area of improvement
they've selected, and that they know where they're
going. Whether that be in one year's time or it's
a three-year plan, that is certainly the way we
do coach and encourage them to design those plans.

MS. LEYTON: Okay. Thank you.

MS. HOLAHAN: Uh-huh. I should have
said at the beginning, for those of you who are
being oriented to the LEA self-assessment process
for the first time today, it is not an evaluative
process in terms of like DPI's role in it. We
really are facilitating local improvement and
making ourselves available to support in any way
we can and reflecting with them through the review
process on possible next steps or -- you know, we
are also then responding to how can we help based
on that data we see in the LEA self-assessment.

And I'll just -- Matt or Nancy, if
you have any additional, you know, comments you
want to make about our State Systemic Improvement
Plan, please.
THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Lauren.

Thank you very much for your presentation and all
the information you shared with the Council.

Matt Hoskins is up next to give us
the Division Updates. Matt?

MR. HOSKINS: I'm just confirming
you-all are able to hear me now.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes.

MR. HOSKINS: Great. And you're also
able to see my screen?

THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes, we can.

MR. HOSKINS: First, I just want to
say thanks to all of you for being here today. We
know that this is an incredibly hectic time, a lot
of things going on, and so your willingness to
take the time out of your schedules and provide
incredibly valuable feedback to us is -- we're
very grateful for that. And also, I just want to
thank Nancy and Lauren and everybody else
presenting today and sharing information.

There are some major -- I kind of
wanted to provide a broad view of updates that
have happened, major activities that have happened
since the last council meeting. And so the main
topics that I want to [inaudible] is, we are
currently working on, for the EC Division, a new strategic plan. The development of the strategic plan and the timing of this is aligned to the State Board of Education, who had also recently adopted a new strategic plan. And so we want to ensure that we have alignment of our work with what's happening through the agency, and with that, ensure that we can continue to get the resources and provide the capacity to meet the goals and objectives of those plans.

I also wanted to share some of the ways that we have had to be nimble and adaptive for professional learning, not only the way that we provide that professional learning, which prior to now has -- a lot of it has been face-to-face, but then also the content of that professional learning, where the needs of LEAs or Public School Units right now are very different than they have been previously, particularly as we think about what does it mean to -- for the provision of special education services when we're in remote learning situations.

I want to give an update on the school mental health policy that has been literally years in the making and that we're very,
very excited about, and particularly with the
timing that's associated with it and what we know
will meet mental health needs of all students
including students with disabilities and ways we
can support our schools in supporting those needs
as kids -- right now and as kids start coming back
into schools.

I want talk just a little bit about
some of the funding that we've been able to
advocate for and allot over the course of the last
few months specifically in terms of how some of
the federal CARES Act, which then came out in
North Carolina through the COVID-19 Relief Funding
Act, how we've been able to support districts with
that.

And then I also wanted to provide a
brief update -- I know that this was of interest
to the Council -- on some of the state complaints
that we've been receiving. I believe Leigh, after
me, is also going to be providing just an overview
of these, but I want to talk specifically to some
of the state complaints around literacy.

So where I'm going to start is with
our strategic plan, and I'm hopeful that you-all
have all received a copy of this as well as a link
to a survey that allows you to provide feedback to this. I want to give you just a little bit of context in terms of how this plan was developed and what each of these columns is intended to represent and how we would just appreciate your responses and effective feedback. That would be most beneficial for us as we continue to work on this draft copy and make edits to it and continue to evolve it over time.

The first thing that we started with were the goals, and you can see in the strategic plan that there are -- the first goal is related to eliminating opportunity gaps by 2026. So I do just want to share that this is a five-year -- this plan is the strategic plan for five years beginning in 2021 and culminating in 2026.

The second is improving school and district performance by that period of time. The third is related to ensuring that educators are prepared to meet the needs of students, which is clearly aligned with the first two. And then Goal 4 is related to continuing to optimize collaboration and engagement with stakeholders, which would include this Council.

Those goals are derived directly from Scott Court Reporting, Inc.
130 Angle Place
Stokesdale, North Carolina 27357
336/548-4371
the State Board of Education goals. So where we have differences from the State Board of Education goals are within the objectives, the actions, and then the indicators of success. And so the way that these are conceptualized is an objective is a large-scale goal of the Exceptional Children Division that is related to the State Board of Education goal.

So you can see the first objective for the first goal relating to eliminating opportunity gaps is decreasing the proportion of low performing Public School Units that are identified because of an EC Program subpopulation. So we have different formulas that are determined by ESSA that determine whether schools are low performing or not, looking across different subgroups of students, one of those being students with disabilities, and this specific objective is to decrease the proportion of that.

The actions then describes what our agency is intending to do the meet that objective over the course of the next five years, and then the indicators and evidence of success are -- we don't want to wait till 2026 to see if we're making progress towards that objective. These are
what we would see as short-term or mid-term indicators that we're beginning to make progress towards that particular objective.

So that is the way that the strategic plan is laid out and the intent of each of these particular columns, and so I want to give everybody an opportunity to be able to read through this on their own and make their interpretations of it, but I do want to talk briefly around the survey that we have also provided for you-all to give feedback on the strategic plan.

And you all should have access to this link, and we can make sure -- we can send it out if you don't have access to it right now. This has gone out to -- and it should have come directly to the Council. It's also gone out to all parent Listservs to make sure we have representation. I just checked today, and we have -- I think we've had about 20 responses so far, two of which were from parents, so knowing that it is starting to get into parent hands.

And so, basically, what this just asks you is what stakeholder role best describes you, and you can see that the EC Council is
included here, and then what goal is your comment
or question related to. And so all you need to do
is just click on the particular goal that you
would like to comment on, and then we're asking
whether what you're making is a comment or a
question. This will just help us in our analysis
of the data to see if we are trying to respond to
something or if we're trying to make an edit to
the particular document. And then once you put
that, it allows you to make your comment there.

The one thing that I want to make
really clear is that this is intended to be
completed like multiple times, and so the
questions that are in this are really for an --
making sure that we're able to organize the
results that we get. So once you submit that, you
can actually do the survey as many times as you
would like to, to respond to as many of the goals,
as many of the objectives, actions, or indicators
of success that you would like to. So I just
wanted to make sure that you-all were aware that
that can be completed multiple times.

With that, I think I'm going to pause
for a moment and just see if there are specific
questions about the strategic plan as well as
[inaudible] that you-all have to respond to that or if there are questions as well. And I just want to confirm that you-all have received that link and the document.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Alexis? Alexis?

MS. UTZ: Yes.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Was that link included in our agenda?

MS. UTZ: It was not included in the agenda. This was something sent out separately through the [inaudible].

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay.

MR. HOSKINS: Do we have an interactive agenda? If so, I'm happy to add it to that, Alexis.

MS. UTZ: It's in a Google folder that the council members can access, but it's not a Google doc.

MR. HOSKINS: Okay. Well, how about I send you that link and you can add it to the agenda as well just so they have -- just so it's available in a couple of places.

MS. UTZ: Okay. That's fine.

MR. HOSKINS: Great. Okay. Well, once again, on the feedback, we'd ask that just
because of the timelines that we're on -- we are wanting to present this to the State Board early in the new year, so our timeline for completion of that is December 15th. And, again, if you-all have an opportunity, we would be very grateful for looking through that, your reflection all that, from your perspective of any of those objective activities as well as ensuring that we are looking at the right outcomes to focus on.

Some of the way that this plan was developed was really having some in-depth discussion of well, what is it -- what are the outcomes that we're seeing right now that we would like to change and then working backwards from that of well, what are the things that we need to do to change those outcomes and how can that feed into a larger objective.

So just would be very appreciative of your close review and feedback related to that, and just know that it will all be reviewed and that this current document is very much a draft document that will go through multiple iterations of change over the course of the next month or two months.

I wanted to share a couple of pieces
of information on the professional learning that
we're providing as a division right now.

Previously, as I said before, a lot of our PD has
been provided face-to-face, which this is a
challenging time to be able to do that now.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel
our -- our annual conference that happens
typically in November in Greensboro, and a lot
of -- we typically have very high attendance for
that. A lot of folks depend upon that conference
for professional learning and CEUS towards
licensure.

So we polled our EC directors to get
some idea of what we could do in place of that and
have developed what we're calling, basically, a
virtual conference where we're going to be
providing sessions in December, January, February,
and then doing an analysis to see if more sessions
are still wanted by directors. We're doing those
in the afternoons.

We did a poll to see when people
would be most able -- when staff members and
family members would be most willing or able to
access those, and so we're holding those at 4:00
in the afternoon on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, the
second week of those months. And we have right now about 30 sessions that we're working on.

All of those are to be done virtually through a variety of different platforms, but we're also going to be recording those and putting those on our web page so that they are publicly accessible, so everybody will have access to those.

Some of the professional learning that we've provided previously in just face-to-face formats, we are working really hard to get that converted over to virtual environments so that, again, staff can access those. We're fortunate at DPI where we have access to CANVAS, which is a learning management platform that a lot of us in the Division have been trained upon and are able to convert some of that content over to that. So we're working to move a lot of our PD into that virtual environment that can be accessed remotely.

Lauren talked previously. We always did have our SDI course available, our Specially Designed Instruction course available on CANVAS, but we've recently even opened that up more widely so that everybody across the state will have
access to that, and that will be one of the courses that we're working to support in those learning environments. And with that as well, also starting to think about what content do we need to add at the current time that really supplements the content that's currently there, to think about provision of services within remote learning environments.

And with that in mind, the agency put together a website specifically around remote learning, and we piggybacked off that a little bit and developed our own site, from the larger website, that's specifically around students with disabilities. So it has been available since, I think, about April, but it is continuously being updated. It's accessible to anybody across the state. It specifically talks about remote learning resources for students with disabilities.

In getting feedback from the field, we asked -- really kind of sought what are the biggest areas of support that you-all need, which is what brought us to these particular areas around considerations for instructional supports. So, you know, what are the things that we need to do to collaborate with general education as we're
providing remote learning, how do we ensure that parents are informed, how do we build a remote instruction plan, and then how do we deliver and document the instruction that we are providing.

And then we’re also taking vetted resources that give them tools that they can potentially use related to any of these particular areas. So a tip sheet around developing virtual learning plans, an example of a service log template to document services that students are receiving, tip sheets for virtual IEPs, and just various other resources.

Also, I'm really excited about some work that we are doing right now that is based on the work of CEC and their work around and high leverage practices. And high leverage practices are evidence-based instructional practices that cross over academic domains and yield positive outcomes for students. So there are some of those things that in terms of professional learning, you get the most return on investment when you provide some intense efforts of professional development on those things.

And what we have started to evolve from this is what do these high leverage practices
look like in remote learning environments, and so we've begun focusing on some of these high leverage practices. We're attempting to take them one piece at a time to get that information out, share that with directors. So far we've gotten some good feedback from that, and we're continuing to get more granular in how we do that so that these can be resources that really provide some good instruction on how to implement a particular high leverage practice within a virtual learning environment.

Any questions around what the agency's been doing around supporting districts during school closures and COVID? I specifically talked about professional learning. There's also been a lot of different communication pathways that we've been using. We've been holding much more frequent webinars with staff. We've been having a regular Wednesday communication that goes out, and that's the way -- we have multiple things that need to be communicated at least on a weekly basis, and we've found that sending those things out in one document on a weekly basis is just easier than bombarding everybody's email, which is probably already overflowing.
We've put together a Padlet that has all the resources that we have archived since the beginning of COVID, and then also, even with the communication in the different FAQ documents that we have had from webinars, we've sorted those by different topic areas so that those can be searched and information can be found, hopefully, as quickly as humanly possible.

There's just been -- from March until now, the amount of information that has had to go out through our division and the amount that that information has changed over time based on new things that are occurring, we've really worked hard to make sure that those are being communicated.

But at this point, I just want to pause briefly to see if there's any questions around any professional learning or communication from the agency.

Okay. I just want to confirm that people can still hear me?

MS. UTZ: Yes, we can still hear you.

MS. GRANT: We still hear you.

MR. HOSKINS: Okay. Great. I do want to talk briefly -- I don't want to go over my
time too much, but I do want to talk briefly, though, around our school mental health policy. In -- I believe it was November -- we were able to -- the school mental health policy passed.

This policy was actually required based on a senate bill that happened, Senate Bill 476, and ended up being ratified as Session Law 2020-7.

This has been something that has been in the works since around 2014-15 where we at DPI gathered together a group that is now referred to as the North Carolina School Mental Health Initiative -- of stakeholders around mental health, not only in schools but across state agencies, across private providers, insurance -- folks who represent insurance, advocacy folks, lawyers, parents. And that group has been meeting regularly since that time and is really the group that put together this policy that ended up happening in November.

We have been able to bring together a lot of different divisions at DPI to support the implementation of this policy. We'll continue to have a lot more information coming out in the near future related to how DPI can support LEAs in the requirements or Public School Units in the
requirements that are contained within this policy.

But some of the things that are included with it and then why I think the timing for this is just so important, we're starting to get some early data in right now. I've read a couple of articles already. One, the Journal of the American Medical Association that's looking at rates of mental health issues, specifically depression and anxiety, as a result of the trauma folks are experiencing due to COVID-19. And we are seeing up to threefold increases in mental health issues, and this is going to have to be something that we are prepared for right now to be able to respond to, but also, as we get kids coming back into schools and can provide them direct services.

We know that schools are a primary place to meet mental health needs quite simply because it's where kids are, and some of the data that we've collected previously, and particularly that we've gotten from parents, it was close to 25 percent of parents indicated that one of the major challenges or barriers to receiving mental health services was transportation.
We know that when there is a school -- when there is a school health facility that kids are 21 more times more likely to reach out for mental health support, so we do know that the school needs to play a major role in supporting mental health.

And so this particular policy has several major components to it, the first of which is really looking at a full continuum of supports that ensures that the provision of social/emotional learning is provided and that that's happening in core instruction; that when there are students who are demonstrating need that can be met by folks at the school, that that is being met with evidence-based practices, and that there are ways to identify who those students are, document the fidelity of interventions, and document the effectiveness of those interventions.

But then also we know that there are going to be times when the needs of a student exceeds what the school can provide, and so what are the referral, treatment, and reentry procedures that the school district has with local providers, LMEs, MCOs. So that requires things like developing memorandums of understanding. The
policy also requires that there is a suicide risk referral protocol that's developed. It addresses some other things that are little bit more deeper into the weeds around where liability is and how we're going to report and the timelines associated with that.

But then, again, it also describes the target audience in terms of who in the district is going to require training which is, for the most part, anybody that's going to come into contact with students, and then just the different ways that that training can be provided and supports that DPI is going to do with that.

We are fortunate that we've had support from the State Board of Education. When they were looking at their expansion, they asked us to provide them some information in terms of what funding would be required to implement this policy well, and so we extrapolated this data from what we have from a grant that we have right now through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services agency that looked at -- basically, what we did was looked at the amount of money that we've been able to spend up to this point to do some initial infrastructure type of development,
and then based on the funding that we're providing these grant sites who we've learned so much from in the last couple of years, what would that additional per student cost be, what would be the reasonable ways to break that down and provide those funds in terms of line items and purchases for that. And so this is what was included in the State Board's expansion budget request.

So just to be clear, though, that in no way means that this is what will be funded or that this will be funded at all. But I did want to say that this is something that we've had the opportunity to advocate for, along with this policy, and we've been very clear that this policy is going to need -- would benefit from having some funding behind it.

Any questions related to that?

(No audible response.)

MR. HOSKINS: I will move on to the COVID-19 relief funding. To date, we've been able to allot close to $37 million for what is described in the COVID-19 Relief Funding Act as extraordinary costs associated with serving students with disabilities during the pandemic, and the three major service areas that are...
included with that are related to any potential extended school year services, compensatory education services as well as what was very broadly described as future services.

The way that those funds can be spent -- the primary kind of threshold for being able to spend those funds is that whatever is being -- whatever those funds are being incurred for, that it's a direct result of COVID-19. And with that, the chart of accounts or the things that are allowable expenses have essentially been the same as those that state funds have typically been able to be spent on.

We have been able to advocate for a little bit of flexibility on a couple of those areas and add a couple of additional items related to those line items on the charter accounts and have been putting out that information this week. The thing that we're dealing with right now with those funds is that the period of availability for those ends on December 30th. So we're working very closely with Public School Units right now to make sure that we can draw down those funds in allowable ways and get those expenses incurred by the end of the year.
I also wanted to talk briefly -- I know that it's a topic of interest -- related to state complaints, and I'm going to talk specifically to those that are related to literacy and more specifically identification of students with specific learning disabilities in the area of reading.

We have received, as I think many of you are familiar with, an ongoing number of complaints that are specific to this topic and have focused on issues both at the LEA level as well as systemic SEA issues, and right now we are in the investigation process, investigating these within the timelines that we have to do so, and we're working very hard and very diligently right now in developing findings and, if necessary, any corrective actions associated with those.

The theme that we are seeing most frequently within these have to do with Child Find issues. So we're thoroughly investigating right now to ensure that our work with the Multi-Tiered System of Support across the state -- that we're -- what we're see in terms of any guidance, technical assistance, documents that are being created, ways that folks are being supported, and
then the actual practices that are happening in
schools, that there's not anything occurring that
is within MTSS being used to specifically delay or
deny an evaluation when there is a suspicion of a
disability, ensuring that parents have the
information they need throughout the instructional
process to know that that's the threshold for --
once a disability is suspected, that a
comprehensive evaluation needs to be completed.

So I can say right now that what
we're doing as part of that, we're really doing a
deep dive into our policy into guidance and
training materials, technical assistance materials
that are available at the state level, but not
only that, but also things that are being created
at the local level as part of our general
supervision ensuring that those -- none of those
would delay an evaluation based on local processes
developed for their Multi-Tiered System of
Support.

I can say that in the near future,
we'll be able to provide additional information in
terms of what findings are and what any actions
are, but given that that's currently under
investigation, I just wanted to make sure that I
just shared the themes and what our current actions were related to that.

And with that, I think I've hit all of the big topics that I wanted to touch on over the course of today, but more than happy to welcome any questions related to this or anything else.

Christy, sorry. It just dawned on me that I didn't answer your other question that you asked earlier. You are correct in terms of---

Sorry. This is going back to the Child Count and allotments as a result of that. We have done a lot of digging in trying to find anything that we could to support ensuring that allotments are made as fairly as possible with the December 1 headcount.

Given the circumstances that we're in right now where there are clearly delays for evaluations, that is one of those big things that is likely preventing or reducing potential child counts or headcounts at the PSU level that was accurate around developmentally delayed classification, and that is the one area where there's -- if there's a pending reevaluation and that student has not been found eligible in
another disability category, that they would not
be included in the headcount.

But we've work closely with the
National Association of State Directors of Special
Education to advocate for everything that we can
related to ensuring that you-all are held as
harmless as possible with the headcounts, and
we're working within everything that we're able
to -- in the guidelines that we are -- to make
sure that the headcount numbers match what OSEP is
requiring them to match.

Unfortunately -- we have a little
more flexibility with our April headcount, which
is what influences the state allotments. Last
year even, we were able to -- instead of actually
using the actual headcount, we were able to do
some extrapolation based on prior year trend data
as well as holding districts harmless to ensure
that their numbers didn't go down because we knew
of the issue associated with that. Unfortunately,
we just don't have that same flexibility with our
federal December 1 headcount.

DR. HUTCHINSON: So I was just going
to say I appreciate you responding to that, and I
know you're working on our behalf, and I know it's
not always possible to adjust that because of the federal guidelines, but just appreciate you guys trying.

MR. HOSKINS: Absolutely. And just to say again, too, that when those things come up, let us know what your barriers are so that we can continue to advocate for them because sometimes they're not as apparent -- readily or immediately as apparent to us as they are to you-all. So sends those along.

DR. HUTCHINSON: I think one of the unique things about those eight-year-olds flipping over is that we're always looking at a different area of exceptionality, and so that reevaluation process is sometimes a tad bit more comprehensive than a reevaluation when the team is considering the same area of exceptionality, which forces our teams to think very broad and includes more evaluations that would require on-site, person-to-person contact.

MR. HOSKINS:

DR. HUTCHINSON: And we just always want to be sure we're doing it the right way because when a student is moving from DD to a different area of exceptionality, that's a big
decision. That's real, and you want to make sure that you've got it right.

MR. HOSKINS: Right. I completely understand that.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Matt, when Nancy Johnson spoke today, she talked about the fact that some districts are not using electronic signatures for those documents -- for those IEP documents in terms of parents signing for the reevaluation process or parents signing for their children to actually be -- receive services in the special education. I'm wondering why not.

MR. HOSKINS: You know, that's a good question. There are funds available through some of the allotments that we've put out. That could be an allowable expense to have that. That has been a local decision about whether they want to use some sort of electronic signature for that.

DR. HUTCHINSON: I can speak to two parts of that from a parent perspectives. Some of our parents don't have the full electronic access that they might to use a DocuSign or the technological skills, and we don't want that to be a barrier.

The second thing, sometimes signing
onto those systems require staff training, and so
that turnaround time just might not be within the
window that we've been able to accomplish it just
yet, and also vetting out the systems that are
going to work for your -- for your districts can
just sometimes take a little bit longer.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

MR. HOSKINS: I really appreciate the
opportunity to provide these updates. Don't ever
hesitate to reach out if I can help with
anything -- with me or anybody else here at DPI.
Again, we really appreciate your feedback and the
role of this Council. So thanks so much for your
dedication and being here today.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Leigh Mobley?

MS. MOBLEY: Can you guys hear me?

THE CHAIRPERSON: Hi. Yes.

MS. MOBLEY: I hope everybody's doing
well. My name is Leigh Mobley, even though I show
up as speaking as Michelle. That is my first
name. I've never used it.

So I am a Dispute Resolution
Consultant with the Policy, Monitoring, and Audit
section. Part of my role is to investigate formal
state complaints. I've been with the Division
almost seven years now so I have a little history, and I tried to include some information just to give you guys a perspective of where we are in our state complaint process.

So up on the screen, you can see that currently we have -- actually, now we have 78 complaints. Out of those 78, 11 were determined insufficient. Some of -- I believe there's been a few that have been withdrawn by parents. I don't have that number, but -- so we're kind of on target to probably have close to 160 complaints, if we're going at this rate, by the end of the fiscal year. As you can see at the bottom, in 2019-2020, we only had 119 and 87 reports were issued. So we're -- we definitely have more this year than we have in the past.

The top five issues we've seen -- and these are not necessarily in order -- COVID-related issues is implementation of the IEP and development, review, and revisions of the IEP. Another one is Child Find. I think Matt talked about that a little bit with the systemic ones. We've seen some placement decision issues and prior written notice. There is a lot more issues that are investigated, but those are repeated
through the past 78 that we have.

That's kind of an overview of everything. Does anybody have specific questions about the formal state complaints that have been filed so far? Nothing?

THE CHAIRPERSON: So are most of the Child Find complaints with children in terms of the dyslexia or the reading issues?

MS. MOBLEY: Well, some are, some are not. You know, there are some that have to do with the reading issues, but there are others that are related to, you know, other disability areas such as other health impairment.

Anybody else have questions?

(No audible response.)

MS. MOBLEY: Well, you guys are an easy group. I appreciate you allowing me to share that information. At the end of the year, we do end-of-the-year reports on our facilitation, mediation, state complaints, and due processes, and they are posted on our website once we get through.

We have to submit that information to the federal government as well. They're on our website. We also have past reports on our
website, if you interested in looking at those.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

MS. MOBLEY: All right. Thanks for your time, and you guys have a great rest of your day.

DR. HUTCHINSON: Cynthia, this is---

THE CHAIRPERSON: So we're doing lunch, is that right?

DR. HUTCHINSON: I just wanted to---

This is Christy, Cynthia.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Yeah.

DR. HUTCHINSON: One comment. I noticed that in our procedures, we have to have folks signed in by 12:30 to make a public comment. I think we're pretty close to that right now.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes. But we did receive---

DR. HUTCHINSON: Go ahead.

THE CHAIRPERSON: We did receive one mail-in -- one written comment.

DR. HUTCHINSON: Yes, that was going to be my comment. Because we're taking a brief for lunch break, if there's anybody listening in and just to be cognizant about other folks' time, I would just propose that we move that up right
now, and I'd be happy to share it because when we look at that comment, it really reflects Nancy and Matt's comments very well.

The parent really conceptualizes the idea of us being closed down for COVID and providing FAPE to students and timely response, all things and trends that have come up all morning long. So I just wondered if it would be appropriate to summarize that right now.

THE CHAIRPERSON: I absolutely am okay with that. Anyone not okay with the idea that we go ahead and summarize that now?

(No audible response.)

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. I think you can go for it, Christy.

DR. HUTCHINSON: So this is -- Diane forwarded it. She received it from -- since it's a public comment, I believe that we're required to state the name. It was a K.W. She is a parent of a student with a disability in Union County Public Schools, and the topic is "Failure to provide FAPE to eligible students by dragging out the identification process."

And it's a tad bit lengthy, but I think that I could probably do it justice by
summarizing it. But she is writing today as a devastated and heartbroken mother of wrongdoings of this particular county. And know our objective as a council is not necessarily to do compliance findings but see if there are trends, and I heard a lot of trends in her email that we also heard from the Division today. So I feel it's appropriate to point out some of the details.

She describes the federal law of Public Law 94-142 or IDEA now that we know in requiring triannual reevaluations and also addressing Child Find. She wrote this back in October, and at the time, they were ten and a half months or so out from identifying her son. She feels that he was not provided FAPE because there was a delay in evaluation. Her and her family have been patient. And then added COVID to the mix which delayed their ability to get an adequate evaluation.

She speaks about the child's disability, and considering I stated her name, I feel it's probably not appropriate to mention her son's disability specifically because I believe that probably could be identifiable, just to be cognizant of the child's privacy.
But she states that conducting the meeting set for November 2nd was delayed due to their personal move to a different county. But the trends in her email speak to the things that Nancy and Matt spoke about, and that is, the district's ability to do a timely evaluation and placement, speaking to Child Find, due to school closures, and scheduling meetings and quality parent involvement.

She says that both her and her child have been put through emotional, physical, and financial strain over the last nine years, 11 schools, private tutoring, occupational therapy, speech therapy, mental health services, outpatient treatment, inpatient residential treatment, psychiatric care, all while working full-time jobs, and I'm sure we can all empathize with the plight all those things bring.

Her last paragraph says, "I ask that, receiving this message, please create the awareness in changing how our state ed department, national and state legislatures, and in this particular situation, the Union County Public Schools and Board of Education. Why is it acceptable to perform heinous acts towards our
families who live within the community, pay taxes, and support our schools and drive economic outlook in both the state and the county levels. I do this for my son, the number of other children suffering, and those who are yet to attend their first day of school."

But her point about delaying Child Find is one we've all spoken about this morning, so I thought that was very appropriate. That trend, if COVID continues and school shutdowns continue and our numbers don't look like we're helping out that effort to bring kids all back to school, we just have to come up with some solutions to be able to meet Child Find because we have students with disabilities that are sitting out there and struggling even more than they ever have before.

So that is it. I'll turn it over to you, Cynthia.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. I'm here. I think Matt touched on some of the things [inaudible] already looking at, and I also think if we encourage our families, our stakeholders that we're engaged with to fill out the survey, to make a comment so that the Division gets a clear
picture from parents, from the actual stakeholders, from the actual people who are actually doing this work, who are living through this, that we can make changes in our state, I think so.

DR. HUTCHINSON: The only thing that I would just like to point out is that we have a lot of talented folks on this committee, and we cannot be the only state suffering from the same exact challenges. And so as all of our members engage with their professional organizations and personal organizations, I just hope that we'd stay open-minded about what are other options and what are other states doing to solve this problem because we've never lived through a pandemic before while providing FAPE to students. So I'm super open-minded to what other states are doing and researching that.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. Would that be---

MS. LEYTON: I just wanted to comment to that point about what other states are doing. This is Terri. As part of my job, I support other Parent Training and Information Centers across the Southeast United States, and I mean we're hearing
the same thing in every state. The school
districts are either failing or struggling to
provide FAPE and to offer all of the same things
that we're talking about today with regard to
Child Find and getting the process done in a
timely manner and all of that.

And it's across the board. Everybody
is having difficulty doing the same thing because
for so long, everything has been in-person and now
it's not and students aren't in school, and
there's a backlog of evaluations and assessments
that need to be completed now that some school
districts are providing some in-person.

So I mean I applaud you for wanting
to reach out to other states, and I think that's
absolutely necessary. I think you're going to
find the answer is we're struggling too. So
you're all in the same boat, I guess is what I'm
saying. Don't beat yourself up too much.

THE CHAIRPERSON: So any other
comments or thoughts?

MS. UTZ: No. And I don't see any
parents or guests logged into -- logged in either.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Actually, we've had
no -- we've had no parents or public comments
registered.

MS. UTZ: And it looks like Matt has his hand raised.

MR. HOSKINS: Yeah, I just wanted to respond to the -- we definitely are keeping in close contact with what other states are doing through a variety of the parent centers through -- OSEP has a series of Technical Assistance Centers that we are in direct contact with weekly as well as NASDSE.

So we are keeping a close ear and are always willing to see if we can be innovative and meet the new challenges that we're facing every day. So I appreciate that comment, and we are certainly doing that.

MS. UTZ: So, Cynthia, since you guys read the only comment that we have and there was no guest signed in by 12:30, it doesn't look like we will have a public comment section at 1:00. So I don't know if before lunch you guys want to talk about subcommittees and then take a lunch because we can adjourn the meeting before lunch, and then everyone else can decide exactly what time they want to meet for their subcommittees.

THE CHAIRPERSON: So I think we could
talk about the subcommittees now. Is that okay, Christy?

DR. HUTCHINSON: That's a great idea.

THE CHAIRPERSON: So we have our subcommittees, and to get into those subcommittees and see, Alexis is putting up the list for us. We need a chair for the Reports and Data committee and we need some additional people -- what committee was that?

MS. UTZ: Reports and Data, yeah, they only have two.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Certainly need some more. And I think it was Policies and Procedures [inaudible].

MS. UTZ: Huh-uh. They have one, two, three, four, five, six---

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. Okay. They're good.

MS. UTZ: So Policies and Procedures has a fair amount, Unmet Needs has four or five -- four, and then Reports and Data only has two.

THE CHAIRPERSON: So every council member is encouraged, sort of required to choose a committee.
MS. UTZ: You-all speak up and tell me where to put you.

MS. CARATELLI: Okay. This is Joanne Caratelli, you can put me on Unmet Needs, please. Thank you, ma'am.

Can I ask you another question while I have you?

MS. UTZ: Yes.

MS. CARATELLI: I had a little bit of trouble just downloading the app and getting started this morning. So I might have missed---Did I need to sign in any particular place? Is there a separate form or are we all good when you took attendance and we introduced ourselves?

MS. UTZ: Nope, I take attendance, so you're all good.

MS. CARATELLI: Okay. Perfect.

Thank you.

MR. POTTER: This is Matt Potter. Ideally, I would also end up on Unmet Needs. However, I also don't want to overpopulate that committee and I don't want to leave any committees orphaned either. So I'm kind of -- I feel stuck between a rock and a hard place because I feel like Unmet Needs is really where my skills would
probably best be served.

But, you know, like I said, I want to make sure we have an even spread across committees. So if it wouldn't unbalance things too much, then I think that would probably be the best place for me to be, given the fact that I am actually an individual with a disability who came through a school system, admittedly not a North Carolina one, and so I have a lot of life experience there.

But anyway I just wanted to throw that out there while we were talking about it.

THE CHAIRPERSON: So Matt your voice would be welcome on the Unmet Needs Committee.

MR. POTTER: All right. Them, I will do that. Like I said, I just -- I hesitate to see any committee that only has, you know, two or three people on it while a bunch of others have, you know, more than twice that. I guess I've been on a lot of boards, so it's my instinct to try to balance things, but if you guys are good with that, then so am I. All right. Thanks.

MS. GEORGE: This is Leanna. Welcome, Matt. Glad you're here. I forgot which committee I'm on. Can you—all look real quick and
verify which one I'm on?

MS. UTZ: You said this was Leanna?

MS. GEORGE: This is Leanna, yes.

MS. UTZ: You are on Policies and Procedures.

MS. GEORGE: Okay. Do we have too many on that? Should I switch over to Reports and Data?

MS. UTZ: It you would like to.

MS. GEORGE: Sure. Why not.

MS. UTZ: Okay.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Anyone else not on a committee?

MS. POPE: Yes, hello. This is Kenya Pope. I don't know a lot about the Reports and Data, but I would be willing to learn, and I would like to be on that subcommittee.

MS. UTZ: Thank you.

MS. LEYTON: And I am a little bit of a data geek, so I would really like to be on the Reports and Data as well.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much. Anyone else not serving on a committee that think they'd like to? You know, it's a part of our role as members of this particular council.
MS. UTZ: So I think that covers about everyone that's logged in today. Is there anyone on the Reports and Data that would like to be the chair? And, basically, that just means that you're my point of contact and like I share documents with you to be able to share out, and you record the session information. That's it. Not really too demanding.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Alexis, is this form available in our Google---

MS. UTZ: Yes.


MS. UTZ: Well, it's available to -- to the chairs. Hopefully, if I did it correctly, you should have a subcommittee form. I'm hoping it shared correctly.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay.

MS. CARATELLI: This is Joanne Caratelli again. And I'm sorry. This is my first meeting. So how do I -- after lunch, how do I meet up with---

MS. UTZ: So it's the same link that you are on now, but all I do is, I hit a button that sends you to your subcommittee room, and then
you guys meet, and when you're done, you just hang up and it's over.

    MS. CARATELLI:  Perfect. All right. Thank you.

    MS. UTZ:  Sorry, Lisa. I think I had you muted by mistake. I see your comments. You should be able to speak now.

    MS. PHILLIPS:  Oh, I was going to ask if Leanna would be willing to be the chair of the Data Committee. I think she brings a lot of expertise from her former role on the Council, and I'd like to ask her to consider that.

    MS. UTZ:  She might have lost connection. I think she was on the phone.

    MS. GEORGE:  No, I'm here. I was like great. Honestly, I don't mind stepping up, but I'm like back in school now myself. I'm pursuing a degree in paralegal technology at my community college. So I mean I really don't have the time to be able to invest in being a chair of a subcommittee right now, but [inaudible].

    MS. PHILLIPS:  Fair enough. Thank you.

    MS. UTZ:  So I guess we can kind of leave it at that for now. I know you guys want to
get to lunch. Do you want to go ahead and adjourn
the meeting so that Becky doesn't have to come
back on afterwards?

   THE CHAIRPERSON: We can do that.

   And what time do the subcommittees need to come
back to meet?

   MS. UTZ: That will be up to you to
decide.

   MS. GRANT: I have a question.

   MS. UTZ: Yes.

   MS. GRANT: I'm sorry. Do we have
work -- do we have work in our subcommittees that
we need to be doing?

   THE CHAIRPERSON: Could you put that
document back up again, Alexis? So if you look
there, each subcommittee has kind of its goals or
marching orders. The Unmet Needs Committee -- so
the Unmet Needs Committee, they determine topics
for council action relative to unmet needs of
students with disabilities. So within that
particular group, that's what they do. Diane
Coffey is the chair there.

   MS. UTZ: I have no idea what's going
on there. There we go. Sorry.

   THE CHAIRPERSON: So with the
Policies and Procedures Committee, you comment publicly on rules or regulations proposed by the State Education Agency regarding the education of students with disabilities. You advise the State Education Agency in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for students with disabilities. So that's kind of the marching orders or the goals for that particular committee.

So that committee has worked on things like our policy for public comments and things of that nature, and I think they're working on something to do with our bylaws, is that correct?

MS. GRANT: Abby's not here so---

THE CHAIRPERSON: Oh. We might need to -- Abby is having a lot of medical issues in her family right now, so somebody might need to step into -- think about stepping into the chair of that committee.

MS. UTZ: Well, and I just pulled up the document from last meeting where Policies and Procedures met. So they do have stuff that they started, and I can share this -- I will share this with everyone that is in committee so anyone can
access it.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Yes.

MS. UTZ: But I mean it's there. So I do know that Policies and Procedures did have some things that they were working on with some action steps. Unmet Needs has one in there as well, but I didn't review it, so I don't know if they have next steps done that they're working on.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. If you could send that out to all the committee members in those particular committees, that would be excellent.

MS. GRANT: Thank you. I don't mind co-chairing Policies and Procedures with Abby. I would just hate to take it away from her completely, but I mean, if you-all are okay, we could be co-chairs.

MS. UTZ: Yeah, she might need some help right now. I also put the Drive folder link in there just for easy access. If you want to click on it now so you have it, but I will email it out to everyone and make sure everyone has access to it.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. Thank you.

So we're at -- what time are we at now?
MS. UTZ: 12:46.

THE CHAIRPERSON: 12:46. So do you want to be back in your subcommittees about 1:00, 1:15? Is that good?

DR. HUTCHINSON: Sounds good to me.

MR. POTTER: Just as a -- just as a quick matter of procedure, remind me real quick. So we click the same link that we got here by this morning, is that correct?

MS. UTZ: Yes.

MR. POTTER: Okay. Okay. Good to know.

MS. UTZ: When I see everyone's back, I will start your rooms for your subcommittee.

MR. POTTER: Got it.

MS. UTZ: So when you join, in theory, if it's working correctly, you should automatically be sent to your room to work.

MR. POTTER: Got it. Okay. Just wanted to make sure I knew how to -- you know, how everything operates. All right. Thank you.

MS. UTZ: Yep.

THE CHAIRPERSON: At 1:00, we're back for the subcommittee work. And we're going to need a motion to adjourn this meeting because we
will adjourn this meeting.

DR. HUTCHINSON: Cynthia, did you just say---

THE CHAIRPERSON: Excuse me?

DR. HUTCHINSON: Did you say 1:00 or 1:15?

THE CHAIRPERSON: I thought 1:15 would be good, but then I thought 1:00. So is 1:15 better?

MS. TERHAAR: 1:15, please.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. Excellent. 1:15 back in our subcommittees.

MR. POTTER: 1:15, it is. I will motion to adjourn.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Can we get a second?

MS. GRANT: I can second it.

THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. And would everybody vote by saying aye for those who agree.

(Multiple council members responded aye.)

THE CHAIRPERSON: We're adjourned.

Thank you so much and happy holidays.

(At 12:52 p.m., the quarterly meeting adjourned.)
CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, REBECCA P. SCOTT, State-Certified Verbatim Reporter, do hereby certify:

That said proceeding was reported by me and the foregoing pages, numbered 4 through 141, are a true record of the proceeding to the best of my knowledge and belief;

That I am neither related to nor employed by any of the parties or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor interested directly or indirectly in the matter in controversy, and am not financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

Certified this 6th day of January, 2021.

Rebecca P. Scott