

TESTIMONY ON SB 596 - TRANSITION

Good morning, I am Don Schmidt, Asst Supt for Student, Family and Community Services in the Northside ISD, located in the northwest part of San Antonio. I am here on behalf of my Supt. Dr. John Folks and the Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education (TCASE). Some of my responsibilities in Northside are working with our Special Education Department and the Performance Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) indicators.

Good transition planning is important for all students, especially students in special education. Transition planning has been part of special education program for many years with our students.

In working with our students in encouraging successful transition, it is very important that the following directions are implemented:

- 8th grade students are informed in a positive and respectful way why they are in special education
- 8th grade students and parents experience an initial sharing of information about the transition process
- 8th grader students are taught that they are a major part of the decision making process and their voice counts and should be heard
- 8th grade students are taught how to self-advocate and participate in the ARD process similar to 16 yr olds who have had more years of experience and exposure and tend to speak up more during the meeting
- 8th grade students must be taught the number of credits needed to graduate because they have only known the pass/fail system until now
- 8th grade students are able to complete annual Transition Assessments and provide information on what they would like to do post high school similar to 16 year old students
- 8th grade students are able to job shadow or volunteer in areas of interest to explore future career paths similar to that of 16 year old students

We support transitional planning for our special education students 14 years and older. Transition, as part of the Performance Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) indicators would not be beneficial to our students. As students advance through high school, it is important to connect our students with other state agencies

However, I recommend eliminating Sections 29.0111(2), (3) and (4) because each of these sections deals with the actions and responsibilities of health and human service agencies that

will serve certain students with disabilities only after they leave public schools. To collect data in the public education collection system regarding the services of these other agencies is inappropriate. Subsection (4) states that the public school from which a student covered by this section is responsible for following and determining if a student who has already left public school was employed six months of the year following exiting high school. This should not be the responsibility of the public school that no longer has responsibility for nor jurisdiction over the student.

In addition, there are many intervening and different variables affecting the measures contemplated under (2),(3) and (4). For (2) and (3), student participation with outside agencies is a function of: 1), whether the agencies respond appropriately to the requests made by the district; 2),whether the parent has permitted the agency to be contacted; and 3), whether the student cooperates with the agency representatives and actually participates in the meeting.

For number (4), whether the student maintains employment is a variable of factors beyond his preparation by the district. A real life example of this is the number of competently prepared and experienced unemployed individuals, including college graduates.

In conclusion, (2), (3) and (4) are measuring actions of Texas agencies that are projected to undergo significant reductions in funding which will ultimately translate to fewer services. To measure a school district's performance in this area would be both inaccurate and unfair.