

To: Dover City Council

From: Dorothea Hooper

Re: School Board

The Dover School Board met in Workshop Session on March 28, 2011. This was a consultant report on the state of Special Education in the district. The consultant team was made up of retired Special Education Directors, teachers, and a retired Superintendent of Schools. This group had been hired to look for ways to control costs and increase efficiency within the department.

The group came up with an Executive Summary containing 20 recommendations and a complete report of 50 recommendations more detailed and explanatory. The full report included charts comparing Dover to similar districts (size, number of students, social and economic status).

12% of the students in the Dover district are considered students with disabilities which may mean that they do not identify as many or we may not have as many. The district tends to put such students in regular classes with a support system in place (additional instruction, aides). We use few outside private placements, tending to keep students in-district which cuts down on costs.

The basic points made in this study are:

1. A compliant Superintendent and team gathered information which indicated there needs to be good administrators and teachers providing a good support system for Special Education
2. There needs to be professional support for staff
3. Special Education runs a tight ship spending less in Special Education than other districts
4. Costs are being managed and the district is getting reimbursement where possible
5. The Alternate School is doing a good job with their students
6. Personnel in the department is good as is the work of the Title I Director and Special Director
7. The district may need to catch disabilities in students earlier (Garrison School does the best job with this)
8. Woodman Park stands out as a school servicing Special Education students the best

The consultant team recommended that there is a need to focus on student achievement using the data we already have. Staff scheduling was a concern. Building principals need to be involved with IEP's to be sure they are accurate and there is follow up. There was also concern that the regular classroom teachers were sometimes pitted against the Special Education teachers and there is a need for them to work together. It was suggested that Special Education coordinators be eliminated and returned to the classroom, that the Special Education Director focus more on the implementation of better practices, that the billing practice for out-of-district students be reviewed, and that the money within the department (\$384,000) be better allocated.

School Board members were getting all this information this evening and did not feel prepared to ask many questions. There were questions about process in doing this study and about how many Special Education Coordinators were now in the department. Mr. Brodsky (leader of the consultant team) offered to be available for follow up questions after the School Board had a chance to read the entire report. Questions will be routed through the Superintendent.