

**Summary of Buchanan County Schools Visit
Conducted by Sharon Siler, Jeff Phenicie, and Brad Bizell**

Date of Visit: October 29, 2009

Activities:

- Review of 2008-2009 IEPs for students participating in the VGLA
- Met with Superintendent (Tommy Justice), Division Director of Testing (Linda Duty) and Elementary Supervisor (Sherrie Fletcher) to discuss VGLA data summary and IEP review findings
- Provide In-service presentation for special education teachers, and administrators
- Met with Superintendent, Special Education Director, Special Education Coordinator, Elementary Supervisor, and Division Director of Testing to discuss finding of IEP review and recommendations.

Summary of Discussion

IEP Review

- Approximately 40 IEPs were reviewed and the following information was shared:
 - IEPs included the VGLA participation criteria; however, documentation and rationales for the team's decision were not included.
 - VGLA was frequently assigned to all content areas rather than on a case by case basis. This was frequently noted at Riverview Elementary/Middle School.
 - Accommodations were used extensively – often appearing to be same across many students. Accommodations included: small groups, reading of directions, breaks, calculator, read-aloud, mark in test booklet, dictation to a scribe.
 - IEP goals appeared to be the same across many students.
 - IEPs from Bevins Elementary included completed participation criteria forms for VGLA, VAAP and VSEP.
 - WRAT-was used to as the diagnostic tool to determine eligibility for the read-aloud accommodation; however this test may not provide a true assessment of decoding deficits.

VGLA Participation and Pass Rates

- VDOE provided a one page preliminary data summary for the division (See attachment). Buchanan response to high VGLA participation rates:
 - The division has hired a division IEP coordinator to attend all IEP meetings. The coordinator has the responsibility to ensure the appropriate use of the participation criteria along with supporting documentation.
 - The division has also hired an IEP coordinator specifically for Riverview Elementary/ Middle School for the same purpose.
 - DDOT delivered manuals to each school and reviewed VGLA rules and participation criteria with each staff after school. Attendance was mandatory.

- Although each school had a monitoring team in 2008-2009 composed of administrators and key teachers, use of the monitoring team has been stressed for 2009-2010.
- Division-wide workshops have been conducted on the VGLA. Three workshops were conducted by Annie Harmon (VDOE School Improvement). Special Education teachers, general education teachers, and guidance counselors were required to attend.
- As a result of the local investigation conducted in the summer, many staff members are fearful of participating in the VGLA. Currently the participation rate has sharply decreased from 2008-2009 rates. The current rate is 13.8%.
- The Superintendent stated the he had encouraged the use of VGLA as a mechanism to assist schools in obtaining accreditation and in meeting AYP targets.

Technical Assistance Provided

- The following technical assistance and recommendations were provided:
 - Change VGLA participation form so that a justification and/or summary of supporting documentation can be included.
 - Follow training with school-based monitoring to ensure that information presented in training is incorporated into practice. It was noted that the monitoring system used in 2008-2009 was extremely weak.
 - Incorporate feedback loops in the monitoring system so that the building principal and the central office is aware of issues that need to be addressed.
 - Consider a division VGLA website, email address or designating one person to respond to teacher questions to ensure that information is consistent and teachers do not get mixed or confusing messages.
 - Use of optional forms, checklists and tracking forms.
 - Brad Bizell (VT TTAC) included in the discussion to provide follow-up technical assistance and support for the division.
 - Provided central office staff with a list of other diagnostic tools that may be used for identifying decoding issues.

In addition to sharing this information, an in service was provided by Jeff Phenicie to special education teachers, building level and central office level administrators. Over 50 persons attended.