

## **Remarks – T. Elitharp – Director – Regl SPED Program**

Thank you for the opportunity to share the highlights of our program – The Piedmont Regional Educational Program (PREP)

We are an educational program with oversight by a Joint Board consisting of one Board member from each participating school division. We have By-Laws and Governance guidelines, a very detailed Finance-Budget Manual, a comprehensive strategic plan and operational agreements with participating divisions. Our Board meets 5-6 times per year with Superintendents from the divisions in attendance as well as Directors of Special Education.

Our program's purpose is to provide exemplary services to students with intensive support needs in our participating school divisions.

We have an amazing staff of experts committed to these students, their schools and their families.

We provide a variety of services for most of our 900 students being served, in their home schools within their own divisions, providing services for students with emotional disabilities, multiple disabilities, autism and hearing impairments. Of the 900 students being served, only 69 of those students receive services outside of their home school environment.

We are a "hub" of services that are offered to the participating divisions. Itinerant teachers and specialists travel to the divisions to provide the following services (shared services.):

Vision Services (3700 hours of vision services across the divisions)

Adapted Physical Education

Occupational Therapy (6938 hours of occupational therapy services across the divisions)

Physical Therapy

Professional Development

Behavior Specialists

Autism Specialists

Assistive Technology Specialists and a lending library of equipment

Clinical Psychologists

Social Workers

A public day school called Ivy Creek

Parent Resource Center offering training for parents, transition fairs and lending library

The participating school divisions in our Regional program are:

Albemarle, Charlottesville City, Culpeper, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson and Orange.

The services we provide are ever-changing, designed to be unique to meet the unique needs of each individual child.

**Closing:**

I have been in the field of special education for 40 years and fortunate to have been a part of the foundation of special education since 1975.

The intent of special education is to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities and to ensure they receive services that allow them to be educated in the least restrictive environment.

The intent of the Regional Programs remains the same, but it may look a little different than its inception in 1978 as it should. As students' needs change, we should always be designing programs around the students, not attempting to "fit" students to their existing programs.

Special education legislation has changed over my 40 years, but has maintained the original intent.

We (Regional Programs) have progressed over the years providing for students' unique needs.

This is what keeps the "Special" in Special Education.

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