REPORT

of the

PUBLIC REVIEW COMMITTEE

on the

SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

of

ST. LOUIS COUNTY

July 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mike Aitken	Larry Felton	Anne Mitchell
Rob Castle	Dr. Craig Larson	Shelley Shray (Co-Chair)
Dr. Randy Charles (Co-Chair)	Bruce Major	Dr. Jack Williams

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1996 the Missouri Legislature mandated that a Public Review Committee (PRC) be appointed for a one-year period to review the Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD), and that such a committee be appointed every four years thereafter. Accordingly, this Public Review Committee, the fifth one, was constituted in 2013, pursuant to Section 162.858, Revised Statutes of Missouri (RSMo).

The Statute establishing the PRC sets forth the duties of the PRC, which are: (1) to conduct a thorough review of how effectively SSD is delivering services to students needing special education in cooperation with component districts, (2) to investigate any "allegations" concerning problems with how SSD is governed, administered or delivering services, and (3) to issue a report to the SSD Board of Education, the SSD Governing Council and the Missouri General Assembly with its findings and recommendations.

During the course of its work, the Fifth PRC found no issues rising to the level of allegations. Therefore, we used our findings to develop the following recommendations to support the on-going improvement of the delivery of special education services to children in St. Louis County:

Recommendation 1

Establish a joint training opportunity for cadres of special and general education leaders, including but not limited to principals, assistant principals, area coordinators and special and general education teacher leaders. The training would be similar to a "Leadership Academy" and should be annually reviewed to determine its effectiveness and how it might be improved from year to year.

Recommendation 2

The PRC endorses the SSD superintendent's effort to develop a standard template for new partnership agreement documents to supplement the current one-page Assurance Statement with each component district.

Recommendation 3

Elevate the awareness and advocacy skills of parents by enlisting the help of special and general education teachers in providing parents with information regarding services and training available to the parents with children receiving special education services.

Recommendation 4

Establish a standing committee to jointly discuss procedures that will result in improved two-way communication among SSD parents, administrators, the Governing Council, and the Board of Education. The committee would also work closely with the component districts to identify parent leaders to serve on the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) from each district.

Recommendation 5:

To expand and improve the region's focus on Career and Technical Education, SSD should serve as the convener of a regional planning group to design ways (1) to encourage students and families to enroll in appropriate Career and Technical Education Programs and (2) to expand the Career and Technical Education options available to students throughout the region.

Recommendation 6

SSD and component districts must establish an agreement and procedure (either within or in addition to the partnership agreement mentioned in Recommendation 2 above) that permit the systematic and timely sharing of necessary data kept in the respective student information systems.

Recommendation 7

Continue to use the Baldrige Performance Excellence approach for continuous improvement within SSD and with the component districts when collaborating on service improvement efforts.

In conclusion, we are convinced that SSD is governed and administered effectively by the current Governing Council, SSD Board of Education, superintendent and administrative staff.   A dedicated and highly trained SSD staff continues to provide a complete continuum of invaluable special services to tens of thousands of students who represent approximately 15 percent of the school age population in St. Louis County.

A summary of the PRC's goals, findings and our recommendations follows. To examine the full report and its supporting documentation, you can visit http://www.ssdmo.org/prc.html, or obtain a copy from the Office of the Superintendent of Special School District at 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63131, phone 314-989-8281.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Section 162.858, Revised Statutes of Missouri, the following members of the fifth Public Review Committee (PRC) for the Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD) were appointed by the indicated entities in 2013:

PRC Membership

Parental Advisory Committee	Governing Council	Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Rob Castle	Mike Aitken	Dr. Randy Charles (Co-chair)
Anne Mitchell	Larry Felton	Dr. Craig Larson
Shelley Shray (Co-chair)	Bruce Major	Dr. Jack Williams

The Statute specifically sets forth and mandates the duties of the PRC, which are "to conduct a thorough review. . . of the…

- structure,
- governance,
- administration,
- financial management,
- delivery of services,
- cooperation with component school districts,
- district's role as an advocate for special needs and severely special needs children, and
- compliance with sections 162.850 to 162.859, regarding conflicts and responsiveness to the needs and concerns of the citizens of the special school district."

Note: In recognition of evolving linguistic norms, when quoting or referring to Section 168.858, the term "special needs" will be substituted for the statutory term "handicapped" throughout this report.

This report summarizes the work and findings of the Fifth PRC.

The previous two PRC reports have included concise and thoughtful summaries of the trials and tribulations of SSD leading to the 1996 legislation cited above. This Committee has familiarized itself with and acknowledges the importance of the historical record of SSD's operation, but in the interest of brevity will not retell it here.

As stated in the 2010 PRC Report, "If the Missouri legislature were examining SSD today, it is hard to imagine that the concept of and the need for a PRC would even occur to legislators. Because of the vastly different circumstances today, some of the responsibilities given the PRC now seem irrelevant. Consequently, in some cases, there is little if anything to report." (p.7 of the 2010 PRC Report) The current PRC (2014) asked many of the constituencies we consulted if they agreed with the conclusion of the 2010 PRC that "Indeed, the longer SSD does well the job it was created to do, the less the need for a PRC…." and met with almost universal disagreement and replies that focused on the ongoing value of the PRC review process in reporting on the continuous improvement of SSD's functioning.

Note: For consistency and clarity, school districts within St. Louis County will be referred to as "component" and not "partner" districts in this report, primarily to underscore the report's finding that "partnership" remains a goal and not a current reality for SSD.

2. PURPOSE/GOALS

We proceeded on the assumption that the law requires the PRC to determine whether SSD is generally fulfilling its duties with respect to the eight articulated areas as well as its separate Career and Technical Education (CTE) mandate at a level comparable to that maintained by other public school districts perceived to be successful, rather than expecting SSD to be a flawless institution held to a higher set of standards. More specifically, do any of the major problems and dysfunctions that once characterized SSD and that led the legislature almost two decades ago to require the convening of a PRC every four years continue to be significant concerns?

Based on those assumptions, the 2014 PRC decided to focus our review and investigations on the following goals:

- Meet the legal responsibilities as set out by the legislation.
- Review, evaluate and comment on the operation of SSD and its relationships with the component districts.
- Provide an external audit with the aim of helping SSD improve its processes and services.
- Provide specific recommendations reflecting our understanding of the current circumstances in which SSD finds itself and include updates on the 2010 recommendations as appropriate.
- Communicate our observations and recommendations to the Governing Council and the SSD BOE.
- Publish our final report for all interested parties to add to the historical record concerning SSD performance and progress on its improvement.

3. 2014 PRC RECOMMENDATIONS

The following seven recommendations are offered as a summary of the 2014 PRC's study and reflect our suggestions about how SSD and the component districts can work together for continuous improvement, as they jointly serve students within St. Louis County.

Recommendation 1

Establish a joint training opportunity for cadres of special and general education leaders, including but not limited to principals, assistant principals, area coordinators, and special and general education teacher leaders. This leadership development opportunity should serve as a vehicle to strengthen relationships between Special School District (SSD) and component district personnel serving a common group of students, and develop a common understanding of special education issues and how such issues might be addressed by both component district and SSD personnel. Members of the PRC suggest this training opportunity might be similar to a "Leadership Academy," with a cohort of SSD and component district staff meeting once a month over a nine- to 10-month period. The PRC further recommends that SSD conduct an annual survey to determine the effectiveness of this endeavor and how it might be improved year to year.

Rationale:
While SSD and component district senior leadership work well together, there appears to be a need to strengthen relationships and bring about a higher level of common understanding of issues impacting the delivery of services by SSD. The recent SSD Operational Audit Report identified 15 variables that impact the effectiveness and efficiency of SSD services, delivered by SSD staff. Among these are several variables that

are beyond the direct control of SSD: principal management style, principal knowledge of special education, school culture and access to component district information systems. Cadres of SSD staff, component district principals and other leaders working together to study these and other selected issues will bring about a common understanding among those leaders. This has the potential to improve work force satisfaction, decrease the variance of perceptions regarding the delivery of services and strengthen relationships. An annual survey of special and general education staff would provide insight on the effectiveness of the training and work force satisfaction.

Recommendation 2

The PRC endorses the SSD superintendent's effort to develop a standard template for new partnership agreement documents to supplement the current one page Assurance Statement with each component district.

Rationale:
Completion of this partnership agreement, addressing the mutual expectations of the Special School District and the component districts with regard to the specific items listed in the Assurance Statement, is essential to SSD's efforts to improve the quality of services rendered to its students and other customers. As recommended in the recent SSD Operational Audit Report, the superintendent has convened a committee of component district leaders to develop a partnership agreement that will bring clarity of expectations for all parties. Issues regarding personnel, communications and technology surfaced regularly, as the PRC worked to complete its task.

Recommendation 3

Elevate the awareness and advocacy skills of parents by enlisting the help of special and general education teachers in providing parents with information regarding services and training available to the parents with children receiving special education services. This would enable SSD parent educators to assist more parents, and especially to assist them before parents feel they are in a crisis situation regarding their child's education.

Rationale:
Building strong school communities requires active parent involvement. Based on interviews conducted by the PRC with SSD parent educators, representatives from MPACT (Missouri Parents Act, a state-wide organization that provides support, training and education to families of children with special education needs) and the SSD Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), we believe that parental awareness and advocacy could be elevated with improved communications. SSD parent educators are equipped to train and aid parents of students with special needs. Their efforts are hampered by the lack of direct and continuous communication with parents. This communication dilemma could be addressed by enlisting the help of those working directly with students and parents (school-based general ed. and SSD teachers) in making parents aware of the services and training available and by providing parent educators with parent contact information, including e-mail addresses, so that parents can be contacted directly.

Recommendation 4

Establish a standing committee to jointly discuss procedures to improve two-way communication. This advisory committee would be made up of two representatives each from (1) the Governing Council, (2) the Board of Education, (3) the Parent Advisory Committee, and (4) SSD senior administration. The committee would also work closely with the component districts to identify parent leaders to serve on the PAC from each district.

Rationale:

This recommendation is an extension of a recommendation from the 2010 PRC. Missouri Statutes call for the PAC to consult with the Governing Council and Board of Education on issues involving pupils and parents of pupils served by SSD.   Meetings with PAC members suggest that while communication between the PAC and district leadership has improved, through efforts such as the PAC social event, which brings Governing Council and Board of Education members together with PAC members, and the encouragement of Governing Council and Board of Education members to attend regular PAC meetings, communication concerns continue to exist. A group representing the PAC, the Governing Council, the School Board and SSD leadership could develop ways to improve communication with the PAC and its members and to achieve the goal of helping PAC members contribute to the ongoing improvement of SSD and its services to students.

Recommendation 5:

The PRC recognizes that Career and Technical Education needs to expand within the region to help prepare young people for satisfying, well-paying careers and for jobs the region needs. To expand and improve the region's focus on Career and Technical Education, SSD should serve as the convener of a regional planning group to design ways (1) to encourage students and families to enroll in appropriate Career and Technical Education programs and (2) to expand the Career and Technical Education options available to students throughout the region.

Rationale:

For many years, SSD has provided Career and Technical Education opportunities for students within the county and currently has two effective technical schools, additional Career and Technical Education programs housed within component districts (a relatively new development), and a Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee to assist with the design of SSD's Career and Technical programs. In order to expand the quality and scope of Career and Technical Education and to help the region expand its trained work force, SSD should partner with various organizations to create a regional planning group. We suggest that SSD include The RCGA, Civic Progress, trade unions, the community college, and the City/County Economic Development Agency as part of this planning effort. As one of the few public agencies that have tax support to provide Career and Technical Education, it is logical for SSD to serve as the host for regional Career and Technical Education planning. The PRC also recognizes, however, the financial and organizational limitations of SSD and the need for a collaborative approach to expanding and improving the Career and Technical Education within the region.

Recommendation 6

SSD and component districts must establish an agreement and procedures (either within or in addition to the partnership agreement mentioned in Recommendation 2) that permit the systematic and timely sharing of necessary data kept in the respective student information systems.

Rationale:

Each of the 22 component districts and SSD maintain data in various student information systems that remain separate and not easily sharable. SSD annually provides a data extract to the component districts, so that these districts can meet their annual state reporting requirements. Often SSD staff is in need of attendance, discipline and other forms of student data to support the operations of their programs. According to the SSD Operational Audit, while some component districts provide area coordinators with school-level access to its student information systems, district-level access is not provided. Web-based data warehouses and other technology innovations may offer potential solutions for the timely sharing of student data. The starting place should be a written agreement between SSD and the component districts.

Recommendation 7

Continue to use the Baldrige Performance Excellence approach for continuous improvement within SSD and with the component districts, when collaborating on service improvement efforts.

Rationale:

It is clear that SSD has made important improvements during the past few years. Essential to those improvements is an intense focus on management improvement with data-driven, researched-based decision-making. The recent Missouri Quality Awards Feedback Report, the Gibson Operational Audit and the Equity Task Force are examples of applying elements of the national Baldrige Performance Excellence model. The PRC believes that the use of this model within SSD and with component district leaders, when collaboratively working on improvement projects, will facilitate change and have a positive impact on all involved.

4. STATUS of 2010 RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2014 PRC reviewed the recommendations of the 2010 PRC and believes significant progress has been made by SSD in implementation of the majority of recommendations. We also recognize that by the nature of some issues, continued efforts will be required on an ongoing basis. We commend Superintendent John Cary and his team for their diligence in following up on the 2010 PRC recommendations. A more detailed update can be found in the attachment to this report concerning progress on the 2010 PRC recommendations.

5. OBSERVATIONS – Information Expansion Since 2010

The primary purpose of this report is to provide a set of recommendations concerning SSD that are designed to help move the district forward. As a committee, we took our task seriously, because of the number of students SSD serves throughout the county and because SSD's budget reflects the largest taxpayer support for a school district in the state of Missouri. The purpose of this section is to provide a set of observations and comments from the 2014 PRC team, based on our experience in producing this report. (It might be worth noting that the

nine committee members worked together smoothly and came to these shared observations and the later recommendations through genuine consensus, with no dissenting members.)

As a frame of reference, the 2014 PRC often referred to the 2010 PRC's recommendations, which included the following topics:
1. Standard of Equity (Structure)
2. Governing Council orientation process (Governance)
3. Board and Governing Council communicate to component districts (Governance)
4. Publicize BOE openings (Governance)
5. PAC and SSD relationship (Governance)
6. Baldrige (Administration)
7. Expand Parent Resource Center (Delivery of Service)
8. Continuous improvement to meet the needs of children (Delivery of Service)
9. Encourage parents to use SSD services (Advocacy)
10. Differences between north and south Career and Technical Education (CTE)

The 2014 PRC's assessment of the 2010 recommendations can be found in the "Status of 2010 Recommendations" section of this report.

During the 2014 team's research and discussion, we found that there was more information, including specific research and studies concerning the functioning of SSD, available to us than existed for the 2010 PRC to review.

The 2014 PRC determined that the expansion of available information on the performance of SSD is largely a result of the expanded application of the Baldrige Performance Excellence process, which has had a positive impact on the Special School District. Reviews, assessments and investigations as a part of the application of the Baldrige process provided a richer set of data than was present in 2010. Here are some key examples.

➢ Use of the Baldrige process (from 2010 onward) has improved SSD's understanding of it business processes and helped identify areas for improvement. The current Baldrige assessment document quantifies that growth.
➢ Several focus groups were commissioned to gain better insight in SSD. The results from this effort were published in 2011 and used by the 2014 PRC.
➢ An operational audit of SSD was conducted in 2013. The SSD Operational Audit Report documents those findings.
➢ An Equity Task Force is currently working to recommend improvements in the delivery and administration of services between SSD and component districts.
➢ An ongoing effort is in process to improve the contents and details found in the Partner Agreements. The goal is to establish well-defined expectations between SSD and component districts.
➢ The recently passed tax levy not only provided needed revenue, but also provided the 2014 PRC with insight into the current attitudes of voters.

The 2014 PRC believes the following four observations are worth sharing and may be important to the 2018 PRC.

➢ Observation 1: SSD's use of the Baldrige process has made a positive difference in how SSD operates, how it looks at problems and how it arrives at solutions. SSD as an entity is substantially more self-aware of its strengths and weaknesses and more capable of taking affirmative action to improve itself today than at any time in the past.

➢ Observation 2: The discussion and learning within the PRC was a benefit in itself that the team did not anticipate. The exchange of information from three unique perspectives gave us a more complete and diverse understanding of the role of SSD and the services that are provided.

➢ Observation 3: SSD and most component districts have individually developed into organizations that are internally self-sufficient and effective. The interactions and collaborations between these organizations, however, are not as mature. As a result, there are many opportunities for improvement.

➢ Observation 4: The processes that define the interaction between SSD and component districts are growing and evolving. These processes need to mature and need to be documented. Those processes that are proven to be effective should be identified as "best practices" and adopted throughout the component districts to improve the equity of services provided to students.

6. OBSERVATIONS – Process Changes Since 2010

In the 2010 PRC Report, the analysis was based on the eight (8) key areas defined in the PRC-enabling legislation and one area added by the PRC. These areas were:
1. Structure
2. Governance
3. Administration
4. Financial Management
5. Delivery of Services
6. Cooperation with component districts
7. District role as an advocate
8. Compliance
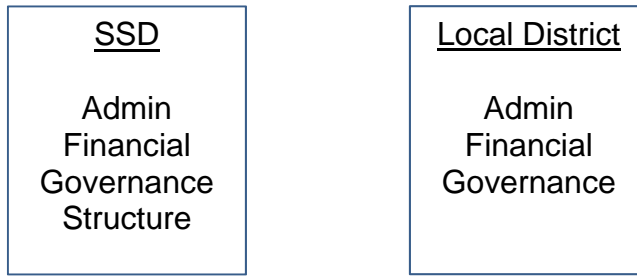9. Career and Technical Education – added by the PRC

Each of these areas was treated as an independent factor.

The 2014 PRC saw these nine areas as NOT being independent factors. Rather, we see them as a set of inter-related factors, leading to a complex set of relationships.

We see SSD and the component districts as organizations set up around three key areas:
1. Administration,
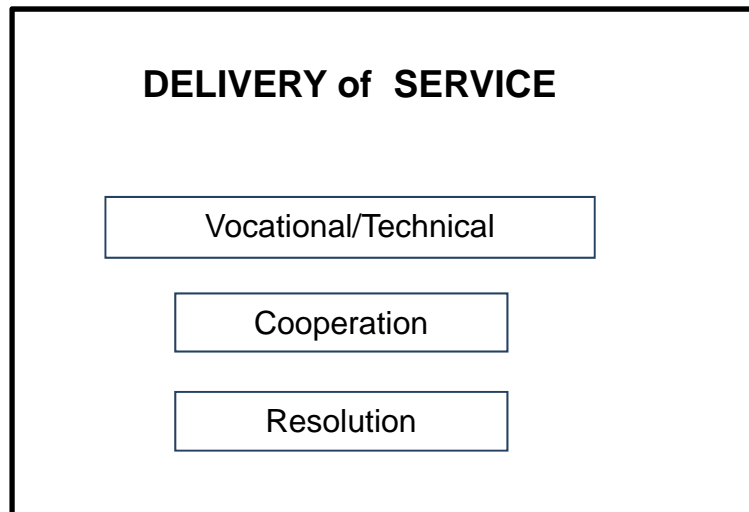2. Financial Management, and
3. Governance.

SSD's organization is also strongly influenced by its structure. Here is a graphic reflecting the factors influencing SSD and its component districts:

```
┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│      SSD        │      │  Local District │
│                 │      │                 │
│     Admin       │      │     Admin       │
│    Financial    │      │    Financial    │
│   Governance    │      │   Governance    │
│    Structure    │      │                 │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
```

We see the interaction between SSD and the component districts as a collection of processes, focused on the Delivery of Service. The three areas within Delivery of Services are:
1. Vocational/Technical education (CTE),
2. Cooperation between organizations, and
3. Resolution as a way to resolve problems between SSD and the various component districts.

Here is a graphic showing the components within the Delivery of Service:

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                             │
│        DELIVERY of  SERVICE                 │
│                                             │
│                                             │
│   ┌─────────────────────────────────┐       │
│   │      Vocational/Technical       │       │
│   └─────────────────────────────────┘       │
│                                             │
│     ┌─────────────────────────────┐         │
│     │        Cooperation          │         │
│     └─────────────────────────────┘         │
│                                             │
│     ┌─────────────────────────────┐         │
│     │        Resolution           │         │
│     └─────────────────────────────┘         │
│                                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

When we put these key processes together, we started to get a better understanding of how they all interact. Here is a graphic presenting our understanding of the major processes influencing the interaction between SSD and its component districts, as they jointly work to provide quality service to the students they jointly serve. Note that the blue arrows show how the Delivery of Service interacts with both the SSD and local district organizations.
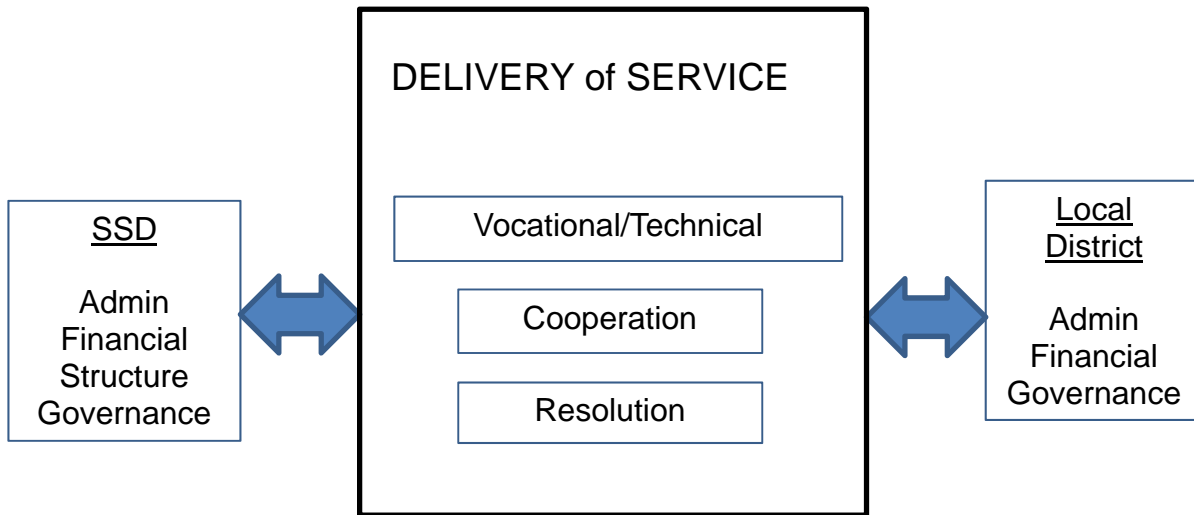
An attempt was made by the committee to design a graphic to show the systems that interact to influence the ability of SSD to deliver quality services. The circle was added to show the scope of this "system." The final two areas added were: Compliance and Advocacy. They were placed within the graphic to show they influence all of the processes and relationships shown in the diagram.
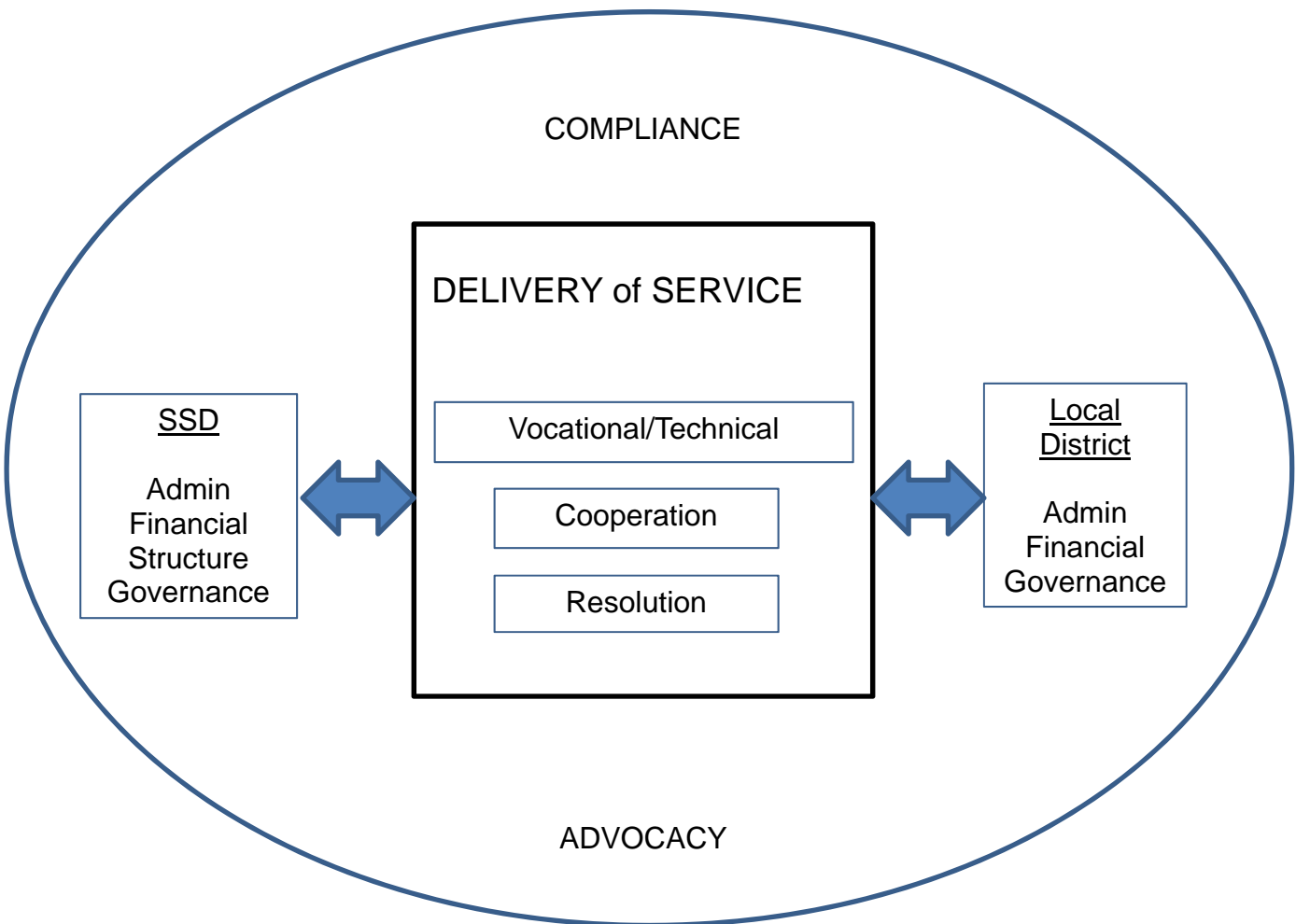
7. 2014 SURVEYS AND FINDINGS

Overview

After reviewing the PRC's processes and work from the 2010 review, it was decided that the 2014 PRC should commission several surveys to gather input from various SSD stakeholders for the 2014 review process to substantiate our recommendations and to enlighten us concerning any new issues needing to be addressed within our 2014 report.

The PRC commissioned Dr. Terry Jones to conduct e-mail surveys to seven groups as part of our 2014 assessment. Those seven groups were:

1. Parents of children receiving services from the Special School District within component districts
2. Central administrators within component districts
3. Building principals within component districts
4. General education teachers within component districts
5. Special School District staff
6. Parents of children attending a school operated by SSD
7. Parents of children attending one of SSD's tech schools

Methodology

This section summarizes the methodology used in the 2014 survey process. Individual e-mail addresses were obtained for the seven survey categories and each participant was sent an initial e-mail invitation to participate in the survey, which included the purpose of the survey and the link to complete the survey online.

Qualtrics research software was used to generate and distribute the survey that also included sending three reminder e-mails. All results were recorded within the Qualtrics program. The following chart presents the number of people surveyed within the various categories as well as the number of responses received.

SSD 2014 Online Survey Participants	# of surveys sent	Date Survey sent	Date Survey closed	# of surveys completed
Parents of Component District Students	12,046	April 16, 2014	May 26, 2014	583
Component District Central Office Administrators	114	April 16, 2014	May 20, 2014	36
Component District Principals	249	April 16, 2014	May 21, 2014	42
Component District General Education Teachers	9,265	April 19, 2014	May 26, 2014	243
SSD Staff	2,973	April 16, 2014	May 13, 2014	798
Parents of Students Attending SSD Schools	427	April 16, 2014	May 26, 2014	92
Parents of SSD Technical School Students	1,125	April 19, 2014	May 26, 2014	156

Observations

Dr. Jones conducted surveys for the PRC in 2006 and 2010 and both years can be used as a baseline for comparison to the 2014 results. We included similar questions to prior surveys but used a more expansive base of questions than in the past when soliciting our stakeholder groups this year.

We got a small but significant response rate from all groups, with a few groups having a higher rate of response. We received a 33% response from Component Districts Central office administrators, a 27% response rate from SSD staff and a 22% response rate from parents of students attending SSD schools.

Some quick notes on the survey results:
- The general perspective of respondents is positive.
- General education teachers disagree that SSD staff provides excellent training on special education.
- A lower percentage of SSD staff agrees that component districts are adequately supporting SSD.
- Component district principals believe they allocate enough space to SSD classrooms, while SSD staff does not.
- Component district principals' responses seem to be out of sync with SSD and general education staff on many questions or issues explored.
- In general, the relationship between the component districts and SSD is good.
- SSD staff overwhelmingly believes that the relationship between districts has improved since 2010, while component district staff does not necessarily share that sentiment.
- Staff and administrator opinions differ on whether there is adequate technology available to SSD instructional staff within component district schools.
- Parents generally have a good feeling about SSD.

See the attachment to review the data from the surveys in more depth.

Based on this year's survey process we have several suggestions for SSD and future PRC's on how to improve the quality of survey data.
- Use data gathered by K-12 Insights (the new vendor working with SSD on surveying) as the way to continue to gather input from the seven specific groups that were surveyed.
- As the Baldrige process grows, the use of internal surveys should grow. This will reduce the need for external surveys.
- Look at all vendor options for survey solicitation and leave time to do so.
- Start the survey process earlier to allow for appropriate response and analysis time.
- Ask up front for more detailed analysis of survey results, including more disaggregated data.
- Come up with a clear and concise direction for surveys.
- Analyze previous survey results, if you are hoping to align yourselves with prior years for sake of continuity

8. 2014 REVIEW PROCESS

APPROACH

The PRC started by reviewing the history of the Special District since the 1990s, remarking on the progress made since then and the positive impact of the Baldrige process. The Committee also extensively reviewed the work done by the 2010 PRC (the 2010 PRC Report and the "Status of the 2010 Recommendations" document).

We also requested and reviewed more than 35 existing documents (listed in the attachments), including surveys done since 2010. The Committee divided these 35 documents into nine areas or topics:

1. The Organizational Audit,
2. The Comprehensive School Improvement Plan,
3. SSD & Statewide Data Comparison,
4. Disaggregated MAP data,
5. 2013-14 Budget,
6. 2012-13 Program Evaluations for students at outside agencies,
7. Career & Technical Education Program Evaluation 2013,
8. Surveys, which included Community Surveys, SSD Schools & Program Surveys, Climate of SSD Schools & Court Program, Annual Principal Surveys 2011-13, and
9. Financial Statement from Auditor's Report.

Individuals from the Committee wrote summaries of those areas and reported back to the whole group.

After this review, the team decided there were five key documents that gave the team a picture of the work SSD has done as well as the challenges it faces. These were:

1. The SSD Operational Audit Report – Final Report (2013)
2. Focus Group Outcomes Report, July 2011 by Excellence in Missouri Foundation
3. SSD MQA 2013 Application
4. SSD MQA (Missouri Quality Award) Feedback Report (2013)
5. The PRC 2010 Report

The team found there was a lot of information on SSD schools available, including surveys of students, parents, and staff, and the results were largely positive. This population (students served within a SSD-run school) represents less than 10 percent of the total number of students served by SSD (22,974 students in 2013-14). We also found considerable data on students served in SSD's Career and Technical Education programs, since a variety of studies and surveys had been done on the Career Technical Education programs and students. Results from these surveys were mostly positive, but also revealed some challenges that are addressed within recommendations elsewhere in this report.

The team found that there is very little information on how well SSD and component school districts were working together. There were some surveys, but no data had been regularly collected over a period of time other than student assessments, and the only place there was information from general education teachers (a key stakeholder and provider of services in the education of students receiving services from SSD) was in the Focus Group Report of 2011. It was decided to concentrate our efforts on the relationship between SSD and the component school districts.

METHODOLOGY
Information from the existing documents was discussed relative to the nine areas listed in statute 162.858 and reviewed in the 2010 PRC Report:

1. Structure
2. Governance
3. Administration

4. Financial Management
5. Delivery of Services
6. Cooperation with Component School Districts
7. Role as an Advocate for Disabled & Severely Disabled Children.
8. Compliance
9. Career Technical Education

The resulting information was discussed and analyzed in terms of positive findings, challenges and additional information needed, which generated actions the committee took to gather further information.

The following 12 action steps were taken:
1. We commissioned seven surveys to be conducted by Dr. Terrence Jones.
2. We had SSD's MSIP data presented by Dr. Paul Bauer.
3. SSD's Missouri Quality Award Feedback Report was interpreted by Dr. Mary Tietjens.
4. PRC met with representatives of the Parent Education and Diversity Awareness (PEDA) Department at SSD.
5. PRC met with Missouri Parents Act (MPACT), a statewide organization that provides support, training and education to families of children with special educational needs.
6. PRC met with the SSD Parent Advisory Committee.
7. PRC met with the Advisory Board of Career and Technical Education (CTE).
8. PRC met with the SSD Board of Education for a work/study session.
9. PRC sent out 93 letters -- soliciting input from DESE, agencies that work with SSD, Purchase of Service (POS), and Special Non-Public Access Program (SNAP) (ATTACHMENT B, C & D) on how well the Special School District carries out its role as an advocate for disabled and significantly disabled children. We received three responses, one from DESE, which did not raise any issues, and two from agencies, which made suggestions of how to improve IEP meetings and improved SSD/component district relationships.
10. PRC spoke with Mr. Cary, SSD superintendent, at several PRC meetings.
11. PRC spoke to Nancy Ide, director of SSD Communications, at PRC Meetings.
12. PRC directed 33 questions to executive leadership in a written document to clarify a variety of issues.

The way we discussed and organized the information received influenced the direction our report took, as we determined the nine areas mentioned in the statute were in fact connected, overlapping and highly interdependent.

We found that many of the concerns mentioned in the 2006 and 2010 PRC reports remained challenges, even though progress had been made. The following concerns continue to be a focus of SSD's attention as it works to improve services to students:
1. Inequity of services
2. Difficulties with IEP meetings
3. Implementation of the IEP
4. SSD and general education staff doing professional development together
5. Getting parents to be better informed to make them better advocates for their children

6. The challenge of SSD being such a large school district, encompassing a huge geographical area and having to coordinate with 22 different school districts

Overarching themes from our study began to emerge. Discussions often came back to compliance, delivery of services, cooperation with component school districts, and SSD's role as an advocate, which are, of course, related to Administration & Governance. The PRC decided that a major theme for SSD moving forward is strengthening the relationship between SSD and component school districts. To accomplish this, strong Partnership Agreements are key. PRC strongly supports the work of SSD Superintendent John Cary in his current work with component superintendents toward creating a document to supplement the current Assurance Documents. The key to improving services to students is working toward making the relationship between SSD and component school districts a true partnership.

These theme-based discussions explain why the 2014 PRC team departed from the format of the 2010 PRC Report, which evaluated the nine areas independently, and created a report that focused on grouping recommendations that would strengthen the relationships between SSD and component school districts.

The 2014 PRC Committee met 24 times, and all meetings were open to the public. For a complete list see ATTACHMENT E. As stated above, we also met separately with the SSD BOE, SSD PAC, CTE Advisory Committee, MPACT, and PEDA. We also gave a presentation of our methodology and our recommendations to the Governing Council on June 10, 2014.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the past nine months the PRC met with dozens of individuals to gather information about SSD and its relationships with various partner organizations and with the component school districts it serves. We appreciate the time all of these individuals have given to help us understand various aspects of SSD. It is also only appropriate to extend sincere thanks to Rita Boughan, who has served as our secretary and assistant throughout the PRC process. She is always a professional, and we could not have completed our task without her constant assistance.

10. ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1: PRC Documents Reviewed 2013-2014

ATTACHMENT 2: Status of 2010 PRC Recommendations

ATTACHMENT 3: Letter to DESE

ATTACHMENT 4: Email to POS

ATTACHMENT 5: Email to SNAP

ATTACHMENT 6: Email to Agencies

ATTACHMENT 7: List of PRC Meetings 2013-2014

ATTACHMENT 8: Positive/Negative Ratio for selected Question Topics of 2014 Surveys Conducted by Dr. Jones

Adoption of Report

This Report adopted this 8th day of July, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS
of
The Public Review Committee of Special School District

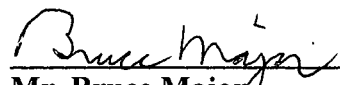|		
Mr. Mike Aitken	Mr. Larry Felton	Ms. Anne Mitchell
Mr. Rob Castle	Dr. Craig Larson	Ms. Shelley Shray (Co-Chair)
Dr. Randy Charles (Co-Chair)	Mr. Bruce Major	Dr. Jack Williams

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED by PRC 2013-2014
All documents are available for inspection at the office of the SSD Board of Education upon request.

MO Revised Statutes, Chapter 162.858

2009-2010 Public Review Committee Report**

2010 PRC Status of Recommendations

Organizational chart 9-9-13

SSD Citizen Survey-April 2012

St. Louis County Survey, American Viewpoint 2012

SSD Operational Audit, Gibson Consulting Group, 2013**

2012-2017 CSIP for BOE (Update 2-12-13)

FY14 Budget

Special School District –FS-Auditors Report FINAL Copy, June 2013

DESE Special Education District Profile (SPP 2013)

Assessment –SPP3c CA MA FY14-DESE Profile Report

Special Education Services Program Evaluation, March 2009

Special Education Services Program Evaluation, April 2012

MSIP Final Report 06-07

District Summary for Annual Performance Report, 2013

District supporting Data for Annual Performance Report, 2013

Disaggregated Data Program Eval Plan Report Binder 2012-13

ECC Eval Plan & Report BOE approved 11-15-2011

POS Program Evaluation FINAL Yr-End-Update BOE Approved 6-11-2013

Career & Technical Education 2012-13 Program Evaluation Plan

SSD School Climate Program Evaluation, 2010

Climate of SSD Schools and Court Program Evaluation Report, 2012

Community/ Adult Ed. Program Evaluation Plan, 2012-13

Career & Technical Education At-Risk Program Evaluation Plan 2012-13

DESE AQ Survey2005

MSIP Advanced Questionnaire, 2005

At Risk Special Education & Courts Program Evaluation Plan, 2012-13

Title 1 Federal Programs Program Evaluation Plan, 2013-14

SSD MQA 2013 Application

Focus Group Outcomes Report, July 2011 by Excellence in Missouri Foundation**

SSD- 2013 MQA Feedback Report**

2013 MQA Assessment Summary**
2010 PRC Status of Recommendations
The Partnership Plan 2000-2001
Assurance Statement July 2014

ADDITIONAL SURVEYS
Surveys from 2010 PRC Report (3)
Partner District Principal Surveys 2011, 2012, & 2013
Surveys by Dr. Terrence Jones 2014

PRC GENERATED DOCUMENTS
Questions to Executive Leadership w/Response
Follow-Up Questions to Executive Leadership w/Response

**Key Documents

SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ST. LOUIS COUNTY

2010 Public Review Committee (PRC)
Status of Recommendations
November 2013

I. Structure

Recommendation 1
We commend SSD for pursuing the difficult challenge of defining a standard of equity in order to ensure greater consistency among partner districts and disability groups, and recommend that the effort be vigorously continued in conjunction with partner districts.

Status
An objective to promote access, equity and rigor across all services and programs provided by SSD has been added to the District's strategic plan. The Board of Education has established a task force to analyze critical issues facing the district with regard to equity, accessibility and promoting high achievement standards for all students served. A Board of Education Steering Committee will provide direction and monitor the work of the broader Education Equity Task Force consisting of key district stakeholders. The Steering Committee has identified Task Force participants, agreed upon a working definition of educational equity, developed a purpose statement and identified timelines for completion.

II. Governance

Recommendation 1
That the Governing Council continue an intensive orientation process for its new members and alternates, including but not limited to review of the legislated responsibilities of Council members, familiarization with SSD special and vocational services, the General Assurance Document, delivery of services, IDEA requirements, and the importance of keeping one's own Board well informed.

Status
For the last several years, either Dr. Max Wolfrum, a former SSD administrator who now works at Ritenour School District, or Mr. John Cary, SSD Superintendent, have presented an overview of SSD at the first Governing Council meeting of the new school year. The presentation thoroughly reviews how the Governing Council came about, the

Recommendation 2
That the SSD Board and Governing Council jointly and annually convey to partner boards the crucial importance of each district being actively and regularly represented on the Governing Council and insist that districts appoint alternate representatives so that they can be represented at virtually all meetings.

Recommendation 3
That the process for filing for SSD Board membership be aggressively publicized annually for the purposes of informing the electorate of the process, making the process public, and enlisting candidates for the Board of Education.

Recommendation 4
That the PAC and SSD Superintendent/designee, with the approval of the Governing Council, jointly explore a revision of procedures by which the PAC could pursue its concerns through an established administrative channel(s) in order to get more satisfactory responses, with the Governing Council and SSD Board being informed periodically of the results.

of Education business meetings. In addition, PAC members attend Governing Council meetings. During the 2012-13 school year, the PAC hosted an event to bring together the members of the SSD PAC, SSD Governing Council, SSD Board of Education and the SSD Executive Leadership Team. The result was increased interaction among the members of the groups and attention to the mission and vision of SSD.

III. Administration

Recommendation 1
We commend SSD for working with the Baldrige model which concentrates on a process of continuous improvement and making data-driven and research-based decisions, and we recommend that it be continued and fully implemented. As a part of the improvement process, we further recommend that SSD use this report as a data source. Similarly, we recommend that SSD continue to involve partner districts in the development of the SSD Comprehensive School Improvement Plan.

Status
The District has continued and expanded action plans to implement the Baldrige criteria for performance excellence as its management model. District administration is currently documenting the approaches for each of the Baldrige categories and will be receiving external feedback on its progress. Data from the PRC report has been used to form this documentation as well as considered in the design of the strategic plan. As part of the data collection stage of the 2012-17 Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), SSD included the following focus groups of partner district representatives: Governing Council members, superintendents, principals and teachers. From the focus groups, key themes were identified and used to validate the core competencies of the district and generate strategic advantages and strategic challenges.

IV. Financial Management

None.

V. Delivery of Services

Recommendation 1
Since there still are some serious disagreements between parents and SSD, we are retaining a previous recommendation that SSD consider expanding the role of the Parent Resource Center to include resources to informally mediate differences between parents and district staff in the education of their child with a disability. Such a service would be optional for parents and would not serve to delay their access to formal mediation or due process required under IDEA. Rather, such mediation would serve to

strengthen the relationship between parties and to concentrate on child focused solutions.

Status

The District has developed a draft process and is currently working to communicate and implement a system for parents to access support from the Parent and Education Diversity Awareness Department when they request assistance with a special education issue.

Recommendation 2

While we do not profess to have definitive solutions to the above dilemmas, we encourage SSD to continue to pursue the concept of continuous improvement and never to relent in its commitment to meet the needs of all children.

Status

SSD has developed a framework for beginning-of-the-year orientation to be used by directors, area coordinators, and SSD principals in partner districts and in SSD schools. This framework addresses IEP and special education process updates, policy changes, legal/compliance issues, and SSD procedures.

SSD continues to pursue continuous improvement at all levels including the classroom. A deployment plan is in place to build classroom learning systems of continuous improvement. More than 1,900 teachers in partner districts, SSD schools and CTE have received training and coaching. Formative and summative measures are in place for cycles of improvement to guide needed supports to build and sustain teachers' skills.

VI. Cooperation with Component School Districts

None.

VII. Role as an Advocate for Handicapped Children

Recommendation 1

Continue to encourage parents to make use of SSD's excellent support resources for parents, both material and personnel.

Status

The following is a list of materials, personnel and supports that are provided to parents:
- Three administrators and two support staff are assigned either part time or full time to the Parent Education and Diversity Awareness (PEDA) Department.
- SSD cosponsors a Parent Leadership Institute annually with the Special Education Foundation to teach parents of children with disabilities how to effectively

- Mr. Cary meets with community groups monthly to raise awareness of SSD and the services it offers.
- SSD administrators regularly attend Chamber of Commerce meetings to raise awareness of SSD services.
- The Communications Department works with media to develop news stories that highlight student success and staff expertise.
- The District website offers a "comment corner" for parents and community members to ask questions and receive follow-up support.
- District staff and students are highlighted in stories on the District's website.
- The district provides a parent newsletter.
- The PEDA Department sends out updates to SSD staff and parents regarding workshops and summer recreational opportunities.
- The Family and Community Resource Center has a large collection of materials for parents that is available on line or at the IRC.
- Parent mentors are made available to parents.
- A variety of workshops are offered for parents relating to special education and related services.

VIII. Compliance

None.

IX. Vocational Education

Recommendation 1
That SSD examine the differences between the responses to the South and North County schools, attempt to identify the reasons for the differences, determine whether the differences are significant and, if so, initiate steps to address the differences.

Status
Past practice has been for the North and South Technical high schools to operate autonomously, with buildings operating under a secondary high school model rather than a typical Career and Technical Education Center with multiple campus sites. As a result, Student Services and Instructional Services have not been delivered consistently; instructors have interpreted the curriculum mostly independently. And in many cases, different equipment and textbooks had been purchased and used at each campus.

Career Technical Education is viewed as a Regional Workforce Development tool in many states. The Governor's Integrated Workforce Plan endorses a standard aligned

career technical education system and "WorkReady" counties that promote and track the number of portable, stackable, industry recognized credentials earned by residents of a county.

An instructional program that has common curriculum, based on industry standards, that is common at not only each SSD campus but common regionally, both at secondary and post-secondary level, can promote regional economic development while allowing students/workers to access opportunities existing in the marketplace. Career and Technical Education is moving forward with the implementation of the standards aligned career technical education model.

March 24, 2014

Chris Nicastro, Commissioner
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
PO Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Dr. Nicastro,

As you know, the Public Review Committee for the Special School District of St. Louis County has been convened to conduct the review of the Special School District required in Section 162.858 RSMo.   In addition to the DESE appointees, members have been duly appointed by the Governing Council of the SSD and the Parent Advisory Committee of the SSD.

The Public Review Committee would appreciate your input regarding the review we have undertaken. We specifically want to make the following inquiries:

1.   Are there any issues such as child complaints and due process which occur more frequently in St. Louis County than they generally do in comparable urban/suburban areas?

2.   Do you have any reservations about SSD's unique governance provisions as they relate to the provision of special education or career and technical education—the Governing Council, election of Board members by the Governing Council, working relationships between SSD and the partner districts? Do they pose any significant issues for DESE in carrying out its supervisory and regulatory responsibilities?

3.   Are there special education or career/technical education issues that the PRC should examine?

Of course, the PRC will appreciate any additional perspectives or information you may offer that will inform our work.

You may address your reply by either email prc@ssdmo.org or by US Mail to 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63131.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely:

Randy Charles, Co-Chair   Shelly Shray, Co-Chair

PRC Email to POS

The Public Review Committee (PRC) is working on reviewing the programs and services of Special School District (SSD) as is required by statute. Here is a link to our webpage where you can review our agendas, the statute and/or the 2010 PRC report. http://www.ssdmo.org/prc.html

We are seeking input on how well Special School District carries out its role as advocate for disabled and significantly disabled children. Your organization has a working relationship with SSD and we would like to invite you as a valued partner of SSD to provide input/feedback for its consideration. Some other areas you may want to consider:

- How is the partnership with SSD working? What's working well? What can be improved?

You can reply by email to prc@ssdmo.org; in writing to 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63131; or you are welcome to attend one of our meetings to discuss, please contact Rita Boughan to be added to an agenda.

Your input is very important to us. Thank you for your time and consideration.

PRC Email to SNAP

The Public Review Committee (PRC) is working on reviewing the programs and services of Special School District (SSD) as is required by statute. Here is a link to our webpage where you can review our agendas, the statute and/or the 2010 PRC report. http://www.ssdmo.org/prc.html

We are seeking input on how well Special School District carries out its role as advocate for disabled and significantly disabled children. Your organization has a working relationship with SSD and we would like to invite you as a valued partner of SSD to provide input/feedback for its consideration. Some other areas you may want to consider:

1. How is the partnership with SSD working? What's working well? What can be improved?

2. What are student outcomes?

3. How is the delivery of services?

You can reply by email to prc@ssdmo.org; in writing to 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63131; or you are welcome to attend one of our meetings to discuss, please contact Rita Boughan to be added to an agenda.

Your input is very important to us. Thank you for your time and consideration.

PRC Email to Agencies

The Public Review Committee (PRC) is working on reviewing the programs and services of Special School District (SSD) as is required by statute. Here is a link to our webpage where you can review our agendas, the statute and/or the 2010 PRC report. http://www.ssdmo.org/prc.html

We are seeking input on how well Special School District carries out its role as advocate for disabled and significantly disabled children. Your organization has a working relationship with SSD and we would like to invite you as a valued partner of SSD to provide input/feedback for its consideration. Some other areas you may want to consider:

1. How is the partnership with SSD working? What's working well? What can be improved?

2. What are student outcomes?

You can reply by email to prc@ssdmo.org; in writing to 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63131; or you are welcome to attend one of our meetings to discuss, please contact Rita Boughan to be added to an agenda.

Your input is very important to us. Thank you for your time and consideration.

PRC MEETINGS' SCHEDULE
November 2013-June 2014
(Meeting minutes stored in and available for inspection at the office of the SSD Board of Education)

November 13, 2013
December 4, 2013 – Presentation by Dr. Paul Bauer on MSIP5 reporting process
January 8, 2014 –Interpretation of Missouri Quality Award (MQA) Feedback Report by Dr. Mary Ann Tietjens
January 8, 2014
February 6, 2014 – Meeting with SSD Parent Advisory Council
February 18, 2014
February 24, 2014 – Met w/Dr. Terrence Jones to discuss surveys
February 25, 2014
March 11, 2014
March 18, 2014
March 25, 2014 – Survey sub-committee met w/Dr. Terrence Jones
March 25, 2014
April 1, 2014 – Survey sub-committee met w/Dr. Terrence Jones
April 1, 2014
April 15, 2014
April 22, 2014
April 29, 2014 – Met w/representatives of Mo. Parents ACT & Parent Education & Diversity Awareness
May 7, 2014
May 9, 2014 – Met w/Career & Technical Education Committee
May 13, 2014 – Met w/SSD Board of Education for work/study session
May 27, 2014
May 20, 2014
June 3, 2014
June 10, 2014 – Dr. Terrence Jones & Cynthia Palazzolo provided survey reports & summary
               - PRC presentation to Governing Council
June 17, 2014
June 24, 2014
July 1, 2014
July 8, 2014

POSITIVE/NEGATIVE RATIO
FOR SELECTED QUESTION TOPICS*

Number of Questions by Positive/Negative Ratio

Topic	>3.00	2.00-2.99	1.00-1.99	<1.00	Total
SSD-District Relationship	53	9	6	0	68
SSD Instruction/ Teaching	32	3	0	0	35
SSD Values	29	1	2	0	32
SSD Communication	12	5	3	4	24
SSD Graduate Preparation	12	4	1	0	17
SSD Training/ Consultation	7	1	2	1	11

*For rating questions, the ratio is the number of excellent plus good responses divided by the number of only fair plus poor responses. For agree-disagree items, the ratio is the number of strongly/somewhat agree responses divided by the number of strongly/somewhat disagree responses. For example, for the 68 questions on the seven surveys addressing the relationship between the Special School District and the partner districts, 53 had three or more positive responses for each negative response, nine questions had between two and three positive responses for each negative response, six had between one and two positive responses for each negative response, and none had more negative than positive responses.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE
OF THE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT?

Group	Excellent	Good	Only Fair	Poor
Partner District Parents	41%	36%	17%	6%
Partner District Central Administrators	22%	47%	28%	3%
Partner District Principals	23%	51%	18%	8%
Partner District General Education Teachers	22%	48%	23%	7%
SSD Staff	36%	52%	10%	1%
SSD School Parents	62%	33%	3%	1%
Career/Technical School Parents	46%	45%	6%	2%

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT AND
THE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT?

Group	Excellent	Good	Only Fair	Poor
Partner District Parents	40%	35%	17%	8%
Partner District Central Administrators	31%	56%	12%	0%
Partner District Principals	31%	51%	15%	3%
Partner District General Education Teachers	34%	41%	20%	5%
SSD Staff	19%	50%	22%	9%
SSD School Parents	Not Applicable			
Career/Technical School Parents	41%	39%	14%	7%

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE QUALITY OF INFORMATION
YOU RECEIVE FROM THE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT?

Group	Excellent	Good	Only Fair	Poor
Partner District Parents	34%	39%	19%	8%
Partner District Central Administrators	28%	44%	19%	9%
Partner District Principals	20%	59%	13%	8%
Partner District General Education Teachers	23%	44%	28%	6%
SSD Staff	Not Applicable			
SSD School Parents	53%	35%	11%	1%
Career/Technical School Parents	32%	40%	17%	11%

DO YOU STRONGLY AGREE, SOMEWHAT AGREE, NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE, SOMEWHAT DISAGREE, OR STRONGLY DISAGREE THAT THE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS A STUDENT-FOCUSED CULTURE?

Group	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Partner District Parents	71%	17%	12%
Partner District Central Administrators	87%	3%	10%
Partner District Principals	74%	3%	23%
Partner District General Education Teachers	75%	10%	14%
SSD Staff	86%	7%	8%
SSD School Parents	93%	6%	1%
Career/Technical School Parents	79%	18%	3%

DO YOU STRONGLY AGREE, SOMEWHAT AGREE, NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE, SOMEWHAT DISAGREE, OR STRONGLY DISAGREE THAT GRADUATES WHO HAVE RECEIVED SERVICES FROM THE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ARE ADEQUATELY PREPARED TO ENTER THE WORK PLACE?

Group	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Partner District Parents	27%	64%	9%
Partner District Central Administrators	57%	32%	11%
Partner District Principals	63%	21%	16%
Partner District General Education Teachers	41%	39%	20%
SSD Staff	53%	29%	18%
SSD School Parents	36%	57%	7%
Career/Technical School Parents	56%	37%	7%