



DCASE

District of Columbia
Association for Special Education

A rising tide lifts all boats

Blackman-Jones DCASE Assessment Project

Final Report

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INTRODUCTION

Soon after its inception in June 2007, the District of Columbia Association for Special Education (DCASE) launched an effort to directly address one of the central issues in the Blackman-Jones Consent Decree—the backlog of assessments resulting in or from due process complaints. Many of the students involved in these complaints were placed in DCASE member schools without appropriate and/or updated assessment information, making it a challenge for them to access, and schools to provide, the most appropriate services. By March 2009, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) agreed to contract with DCASE to reduce the backlog and complete new assessments, thereby empowering participating schools to build capacity, and help correct student data long known to be inaccurate. Thus began a first-of-its-kind partnership between DCPS and a group of non-public schools through DCASE. Our mutual goals included:

1. Eliminate the backlog of assessments
2. Build capacity to complete new assessments
3. Correct inconsistencies in student records (added to the contract for the first renewal)

In addition to these mutual goals, DCASE intended to take full advantage of the new partnership to begin improving related concerns that would have longer-term impact for successful DCPS-DCASE and DCPS-Non-public school (NPS) relationships and processes. A history and culture of misinformation and mistrust have long been the basis for the relationship between DCPS and the non-publics, at times to the detriment of the students served. The DCASE mission is to ensure optimal services are provided to our city's most vulnerable children. We believed the Project presented a tremendous opportunity to enhance not only the delivery of assessments to children by improving the quality, timeliness and cost-effectiveness of services provided, but by improving the environment in which they were ordered, made better with better relationships. Our additional goals included:

4. Create a network of screened, qualified providers from among schools and regional vendors
5. Improve the timeliness for conducting assessments
6. Create an electronic means for monitoring student assessment data
7. Improve communication and relationships between and among involved DCPS and school representatives
8. Streamline invoicing and contain assessment costs
9. Ensure SEDS access for all schools

Ultimately, the Assessment Project enabled DCASE and our participating members to offer a better option to meet our students' needs: timely, high quality and cost-effective assessments that contribute to students' overall well-being and success in the school environment.

ACCOMPLISHING OUR GOALS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Overall, we are tremendously proud of what we have accomplished in the past 19 months. The scope of our contract included a period of five years, allowing for up to one million dollars per year, to eliminate the backlog of assessments, and build an infrastructure for schools to complete their own assessments. Though our agreement allowed us five years, we needed only 16 months to accomplish our primary goal: by June 2010, we eliminated the backlog of assessments in DCASE participating schools. This effort was a tremendous accomplishment resulting from the very hard work of DCASE, our participating schools and DCPS, and it could not have been done without our partnership.

1. Eliminate the backlog of assessments

Under the Project, 761 assessments were completed for 470 students in 13 participating schools from June 2009 through October 2010. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of these assessments were completed within 45 days of the date they came under the Project, and 80% of them were completed within 30 days. At least 205 of these assessments were backlogged – some of them for as long as several years, yet the backlog was eliminated by June 2010 – 16 short months after the start of the Project. The chart below shows participating schools, and the total number of students served and assessments completed per school.

School	Number Students Served	Number Assessments Completed
Chelsea School	9	14
Children's Guild	5	6
Episcopal Center for Children	8	9
Florence Bertell Academy	9	10
Foundation Schools	37	45
High Road Schools and Academies – DC	153	243
Ivymount School	27	41
Kennedy Institute	56	177
Kingsbury Day School	55	78
Lab School	21	21
Leary Schools	9	14
Pathways Schools	3	4
Rock Creek Academy	78	99
TOTAL:	470	761

Though the assessment totals reflect an average of 1.6 assessments per student, we found that schools with higher acuity students (Ivymount and Kennedy Institute) conducted on average 2.6 assessments per student, perhaps due to the broad range of services on each student's IEP, and the need to offer specialized assessment in order to determine student

progress. We also found that each school in the Project had a number of students requiring up to three or four assessments each -- again depending on the number and intensity of services required on those students' IEPs.

Perhaps among the most telling discovery in our data is that no student was offered any assessment more than once during the Project period. *Though some schools may utilize annual testing as a means to objectively determine student progress, the cost associated with this practice is NOT referred to DCPS* according to the data collected during the Project period.

2. Build capacity to complete new assessments

Under the Project, 556 initial or routine assessments were completed by participating schools. These assessments were ordered by IEP Team process either due to 1) a newly manifested condition, 2) need for updated information due to significant perceived student progress or decline, and/or 3) need for updated assessment consistent with triennial assessment requirements under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

We recognize that IDEA 2004 (IDEIA) suggests that triennial testing may no longer be the exclusive manner in which schools measure student progress. Indeed, all DCASE schools utilize a number of methods to determine overall student progress, and some schools have stepped away from traditional annual testing in order to incorporate these changes. However, IDEA is clear that use of assessment is under the discretion of the IEP Team, and may continue to be used as an objective and appropriate manner for determining student progress in addition to classroom-based assessment, observation, teacher report, parent report, related service provider progress notes, and other forms of progress monitoring. Consistent with the DCASE mission, Project schools prioritize student need above all else – if the IEP Team determines standardized assessment is the best approach to assessing a student's well-being, the school will ensure that student is tested. The Project supported this approach completely, ensuring that students who needed testing were assessed in order to inform a “best-practices” approach to their success.

Participating schools had the autonomy to assess students who had been identified by the IEP team as needing one or more assessments. If schools had internal capacity, they performed these assessments themselves; if not, they could seek highly qualified, screened providers through the DCASE Qualified Provider Network (QPN) to do the assessments on their behalf. Regardless of approach, the increased capacity provided by and to participating schools under the Project ensured a much more effective means for completing assessments in a timely way.

3. Correct inconsistencies in student records

Approximately three months into the Project, both DCASE and DCPS staff recognized a significant need to devote resources to reconciling student data. The implementation of

the Special Education Data System (SEDS) by OSSE had still not reached student records located in non-public schools, and existing data management systems within DCPS were still in various stages of development. As part of our contribution to the Project, DCASE developed a comprehensive data management system in an effort to better track assessment timelines and other identifying information. However, DCASE discovered the data we were collecting to populate our system was highly inconsistent with DCPS data, or the data did not appear to exist in DCPS systems at all.

Despite heroic efforts, DCPS was also unable to provide DCASE with clear information about outstanding Hearing Officer Decisions (HODs), Settlement Agreements (SAs), or any other sources for outstanding backlogged assessments required for students in non-public schools. In short, neither DCPS nor DCASE really knew where to start with attacking the backlog – there were no clear records of what assessments, exactly, were overdue. By August 2009, DCASE and DCPS unified in the effort to establish data reconciliation as a significant need under the Project. We modified our contract to allow for necessary attention to ensuring student data for non-public schools, regardless of its source, was centralized and clarified. Many schools, for example, were still actively using paper records to manage student performance for lack of an electronic option. Other schools had invested in their own internal student management systems, but those systems were not connected in any way to a centralized data source to inform DCPS. Additionally, inconsistencies and turnover among DCPS representatives placed in the schools for monitoring purposes resulted in a tremendous amount of student information loss. The Project offered both DCASE and DCPS the opportunity to:

- identify student records and information previously thought to be lost;
- determine a significant number of assessments thought to be backlogged were already completed by the schools in the students' best interests;
- consolidate a consistent record of student assessment activity over time;
- identify which assessments were truly backlogged and required completion;
- determine where some previously “lost” students were located or placed (incarcerated, relocated or changed jurisdiction, dropped out, etc.), if not at the school in the DCPS record;

Though there were a tremendous number of student records corrected under this effort, DCASE was able to formally identify 178 cases thought to be outstanding backlogged assessments, and reconcile student records with information including:

- 92 assessments were already completed by the schools;
- 8 students had transferred out of jurisdiction, or returned to public school;
- 34 students had dropped out of school, primarily due to pregnancy, truancy or incarceration; and
- 44 students' records had misrepresented need for assessment due to missing or omitted information (one school reported DCPS had completed an assessment months ago, but there was no record of it until the June 18 due date for all backlogged assessments).

The remaining “informal” reconciliations were managed through direct communication among DCASE and DCPS staff, or directly through the DCPS Quickbase student data system. In an effort towards transparency, cooperation and efficiency, DCPS gave DCASE staff direct access to their Quickbase assessments database in December 2009. Where DCASE had previously used only our data system to manage assessments and reconciliations, we were able to contribute to the DCPS data system by communicating our progress and findings directly into Quickbase, thereby consolidating data more effectively into one system, while using our own system to track Project-specific data for auditing purposes. Though still not completely centralized in a universal system such as SEDS, this effort enabled us to effectively manage student data until non-public schools were granted access to and training for SEDS.

4. Create a network of screened, qualified providers from among schools and regional vendors

In order to ensure we completed quality assessments most effectively and efficiently, DCASE needed first to identify existing resources within our schools and community for the Project. Seven participating schools indicated capacity for doing their own assessments, as well as helping other schools with assessment needs. We also acknowledged the abundance of vendors in the area who provide all means of assessment types for a wide range of fees. At the inception of the Project, DCASE agreed to the rates established by the Chancellor for reimbursement of any party conducting assessments on behalf of DCPS. These rates, along with a baseline set of quality standards, became the basis for our arrangement with any provider – school or vendor – who wished to participate in the Quality Provider Network (QPN).

Each school or vendor who enrolled in the QPN signed a contract with DCASE guaranteeing specific standards for each assessment: 1) All necessary assurances with regard to safety, screening and security for working with children MUST be in place; 2) All providers MUST be appropriately credentialed in their field of practice; 3) All providers MUST abide by the rates set forth in the Chancellor’s fee schedule; 4) All providers must agree to a specific baseline standard for quality of content pertaining to the referral question from the IEP Team; and 5) All providers MUST submit sample assessment reports to be anonymously screened by a rotating panel of school and clinical professionals. Providers agreed to participate in the full assessment process, including: review of existing student records; observation of the student in class and school environment (where applicable); consultation with and interview of teachers, parents and other collateral supports; testing with updated assessment tools; comprehensive review of testing results; a well-written and understandable report; and representation of the report at the student’s review meeting. All providers agreed to adhere to all prescribed DCPS testing protocols, where available, all clinical standards guiding their practice as professionals under licensure in the District of Columbia, and all requirements for adherence to Medicaid regulations.

In all, the QPN expanded capacity for completing assessments using 18 vetted providers in the DC metropolitan area. The QPN successfully offered Project schools assurance

that they, and more importantly, their students and families, would have a quality assessment experience. DCASE was pleased to offer assistance in finding an appropriate vendor for schools and students with particular needs; as well as close monitoring of timeliness, quality and cost for any school accessing the QPN.

5. Improve the timeliness for conducting assessments

DCASE was able to deliver completed assessments with a timeliness rate of almost 90% for the 45-day completion timeline, and over 80% for a 30-day completion timeline. Nearly 100% of assessments were completed within the 60-day timeline allowed by federal IDEA laws. In short, once an assessment came to DCASE's attention, we prioritized getting it done as quickly as possible within the 30 day timeline.

Though not perfect, we are very pleased with our performance under the Project with regard to timeliness, given the original scope of our contract with DCPS. DCASE was able to support schools that encountered timeline challenges, either by providing alternative providers to assist in assessment completion, close timeline monitoring, including reminders of when assessments were coming due, or by facilitating communication with DCPS Placement Specialists (now called Progress Monitors) regarding specific issues barring successful testing. One school, for example, serves a child with Sickle Cell Anemia -- a condition that requires frequent hospitalization and student loss of time at school. DCASE was able to facilitate an arrangement with school representatives, the provider and DCPS Placement Specialist to determine the best course of action for the student, resulting in a completed assessment in time for the student's review meeting.

In addition to pushing for timely assessments, DCASE also captured reasons for why assessments were late, and informed DCPS of those challenges in order to provide a more unified approach to compliance. DCASE participated in the development of a methodology for use of due diligence for occasions where barriers to student assessment arose. Under the Project, we determined late assessments most often resulted from student refusal as a manifestation of his/her disability (Emotional Disability), truancy, or parental neglect of the process (such as parent non-participation on the IEP Team, or challenges with reaching a parent due to a disconnected phone number and lack of forwarding information). DCASE was pleased to be able to help both schools and DCPS explain the reason for late assessment in this way.

6. Create an electronic means for monitoring student assessment data

In preparation for the impending Project, and in the interest of managing data in the best possible way, DCASE created a database specifically designed to organize student data by case type: HOD, SA, Unknown, or General; assessment category: Backlog, Initial or Other; and then assessment type. We created fields to identify dates when cases were opened (HOD or SA Issue Date), assessments were ordered, DCASE was notified, school was notified, assessments were due and dates of completion. Our intent was to capture as much information as possible to help explain the history of the backlog, and how we

addressed the backlog moving forward. We then outlined the policies and procedures for use of the system – electronic and manual – to be implemented for the Project in a Handbook that became the basis for our contractual language, and the foundation for how we planned to execute the work.

At the Project inception, DCASE relied on an assurance from DCPS that HOD and SA information would be forthcoming in the interest of prioritizing which schools needed assessments done expeditiously. Unfortunately, this data was not available at that time, and DCPS was working hard to streamline their own systems in order to organize the data themselves. We moved forward anyway, using information we could gather from schools, DCPS Expeditors, DCPS Placement Specialists, and parents to inform our priorities, and kept open communication with DCPS as we progressed. By June, when DCPS and DCASE decided to modify the contract to include data reconciliation, DCPS also generously approved covering the expense to DCASE of modifying our data system to accommodate the backlog data they were unable to provide.

Ultimately, DCPS systems improved, but not in time for our system to be populated with the critical HOD and SA-related data. Though our system tells us we completed 205 backlogged assessments, it is highly likely that number is greater, and we completed older assessments without the knowledge that they were HOD, SA, or Consent Decree-involved.

7. Improve communication and relationships between and among DCPS and school representatives

Previous sections of this report have already illustrated the multi-faceted ways in which DCASE helped facilitate better communication among Project stakeholders. Historically strained relationships between DCPS and non-public school representatives were relieved at critical times as we collectively moved towards eliminating the assessment backlog and built capacity in schools. Even when there were times of disagreement, the Project offered a specific forum for working through those differences in a professional and direct manner.

The Project brought many miscommunications to light either directly or indirectly, forcing much-needed communication in order for all stakeholders to move forward with some sense of resolve. Routine turnover of Placement Specialists, for example, left many schools feeling out of touch and uninformed with regard to critical information needed to serve their students. DCASE was able to help facilitate some of the necessary communication about the impact of these deficits to help improve overall functioning of both the school and DCPS.

The resulting misunderstanding at higher levels – the perception by DCPS, for example, that assessments were left undone when schools had completed them long ago, or assessments were left incomplete because schools thought they had no alternative for completing them in the absence of an Independent Evaluation authorization from DCPS (IEE) – contributed to the dynamic of mistrust. Miscommunication seemed pervasive in

some areas: multi-disciplinary teams not connecting with DCPS providers for review meetings; schools not knowing who their Local Education Agency (LEA) representative was; schools not knowing students referred to their programs were HOD or SA involved; DCPS not being informed of scheduled Team meetings; untimely ordering of assessments by LEA representatives who did attend Team meetings; and the misperception of schools' apparent lack of accountability. Though this history and culture existed, and still is not fully dispelled, DCASE and DCPS staff working within the Project worked diligently together to improve the breakdown. Collaboration among DCASE and DCPS staff regarding outreach to DCPS monitoring and due process staff; training of LEA representatives on the nature and intent of the Project; communicating and troubleshooting on specific student issues; identifying need for improvements in school accountability; and training of schools on new IDEA rules with regard to frequency of assessment are all examples of the tremendous effort put forth by all parties in our contract to improve the DCPS – non-public school relationship.

DCASE was pleased to offer a centralized point of communication for DCPS to reach our members, and for our members to collectively communicate with DCPS. We hope to continue to do so, even in the absence of the Project.

8. Streamline invoicing and contain assessment costs

As a service to our participating schools, and as a necessity for ensuring proper processes, DCASE centralized all billing of assessments completed under the Project. Abiding by the terms of our contract, DCASE submitted comprehensive invoices and supporting documentation in the form of Assessment Completion Tracking (ACT) forms for all participating schools to DCPS according to the timeline within the Petties Payment Order. This centralization enabled DCPS to direct any question with regard to invoicing for Project assessments to one place, as opposed to contacting each school involved. Use of the ACT form also protected student confidentiality by providing DCPS with the information necessary to confirm assessment completion, without receiving a full paper copy of the assessment reports.

Mid-way through the Project, DCPS determined implementation of the Petties Payment Order needed to be done in entirety, and, though DCASE continued to follow the word of our contract, DCPS disputed an invoice submitted by DCASE for the Project in March 2010. At the dispute mediation, the Petties Special Master and DCPS General Counsel agreed the dispute was unfounded since DCASE was adhering to our contractual obligation. DCPS paid the invoice in full. In response, and in good faith, DCASE moved forward with the intent of following Petties rules, and divided our invoices so that assessment fees were delineated for the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and administrative and contractual fees were invoiced separately for DCPS. Unfortunately, the dispute caused damage to the relationship among Project stakeholders -- where DCPS staff might have avoided the dispute altogether with simple communication with DCASE staff, they chose instead to proceed with a formalized and costly legal process. The decision was also costly to the collaborative foundation both DCASE and DCPS had worked to build from the beginning of the Project, and trust

naturally eroded as a result.

Though not the central focus of the Project, DCASE was also invested in learning more about the true cost of assessments and related service provision in the region. By creating the Qualified Provider Network (QPN), DCASE was successful in containing the cost of conducting assessments for DCASE Project schools and the students they serve. With efforts underway within OSSE to establish a consistent rate structure for non-public schools, we hoped to learn more about the prevailing rates from the QPN and other providers we worked with through the Project, that would then inform the rate setting process with OSSE using real, market-based rates in the DC area. Our hope was to also impact the costs to schools that will likely be required to conduct assessments themselves under new, OSSE-developed DC Municipal Regulations. DCASE has already provided both DCPS and OSSE with an informal rate matrix for assessments and services, and continues to research the additional costs schools may incur as a result of a requirement to do assessments internally, and without the Project.

9. Ensure SEDS access for all schools

Clearly, one of the primary motivations for all stakeholders in the Project was better data management. OSSE, DCPS and DCASE were and continue to be invested in ensuring student records are as accurate and up to date as possible. Unfortunately, unifying those records efficiently and cohesively has taken a significant amount of time, and will continue to require more effort. During a Blackman-Jones status hearing approximately one year ago, the Court Monitor called for the unification of data systems, claiming the disjointed management of student data continued to be a deficit to progress. DCASE agreed completely with this assertion, and increased our advocacy for access to SEDS by non-public schools.

The Project contract called for use of SEDS by all participating non-public schools. Though nearly all schools were willing to use SEDS, only a few had received training and had user access to the system. OSSE reported they had not planned for non-public school SEDS training until a later phase of implementation, and so had not set aside funding to conduct training for non-public schools until after the Project began. After a period of strong advocacy, where DCASE appealed to both OSSE and DCPS for support with training the non-public schools, training began in Spring 2010, and developed in force from July through September 2010. Immediately upon learning that training would be available, DCASE pushed our membership strongly to fully participate in the training under a “train the trainer” model, and continues to offer assistance to schools newly implementing full use of SEDS. To date, all Project participating schools have received training, and are actively training their school staff on use of SEDS.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Much of the narrative throughout this report speaks to our accomplishments and lessons learned throughout the duration of the Assessment Project. Before we conclude, DCASE offers the following list of recommendations and considerations to the remaining

stakeholders in the interest of keeping forward-moving momentum.

- Definitions – Suggest clarifying service and assessment definitions between DCPS, OSSE, schools and providers. Current inconsistency makes it difficult for IEP Team members to know what assessments to order during meetings, and for OSSE to know what schools are invoicing. DCPS produced a guide for psychological assessment in 2009, yet DCASE recently provided a copy to OSSE’s invoicing staff for clarification purposes.
- Guidance – Suggest developing clear guidelines to determine when formal vs. informal assessment is needed. DCPS has said for some time they believe non-public schools are ordering too many and/or unnecessary assessments. DCASE offered several times to assist DCPS to develop training to help schools understand all assessment options – formal and informal – that also comply with IDEA and are centered on student best interests. Unfortunately, DCPS did not follow through with this offer to collaborate, and has not conducted this training independently. DCASE continues to be interested in offering assistance to DCPS in this regard.
- Consistency – Suggest consistency among all schools for adherence to DCPS and OSSE policies, procedures and protocols for assessment and use of SEDS. We learned early into the Project that some non-public schools negotiated individual agreements with DCPS and/or OSSE to do their own assessments. We have also learned that DCPS intends to address school capacity to do their own assessments case-by-case, where a school’s relationship with DCPS will be a factor in the determination. This seems a subjective approach and is perhaps not in the best interests of students placed in schools who may not be in DCPS’ favor for political reasons. Implementation of, and access to SEDS also varies from school to school, where some schools are allowed broader administrative access in the role of case manager, while others have a more limited role. Consistency among access privileges seems critical to standardized implementation and use.
- Administration – Suggest improved coordination and communication between OSSE and DCPS. Alleged jurisdictional questions arose several times through the course of the Project, where DCASE was in the untenable position of navigating between Local and State agencies in order to identify direction and/or guidance for our membership. This is particularly acute for issues regarding SEDS and Medicaid, where an apparent lack of communication between OSSE and DCPS impacted DCASE and non-public school ability to more easily move forward with a sense of clarity. Clearer lines of accountability and ownership of these, and other similar issues will be helpful to non-public schools’ ability to be fully compliant with all policies and procedures.

- Capacity – Must be in place for the whole process: complete assessments AND complete reviews. Though 761 assessments were completed under the Project, not all of those assessments have been reviewed by IEP Teams to inform student intervention and progress. It is critical that capacity includes both timely completion of assessments AND timely reviews, so students may receive the full benefit of proposed interventions. DCASE is aware that DCPS has struggled with capacity to conduct reviews, even at times seeking contractual assistance to complete them. In light of recent layoffs at DCPS OSE, this is even more acute. DCASE has contacted all providers to inform them they are responsible for representing any assessment they completed under the Project at the review meeting, and will continue to work with schools to ensure their participation and cooperation with scheduling review meetings moving forward.
- Accountability – Suggest a broader scope for identified case managers in SEDS. New assessment and IEP processes are built around the Progress Monitor in the role of case manager and the sole party responsible for moving the IEP process forward in SEDS. DCASE remains concerned about the narrowness of this role, and its potential to negatively affect a timely IEP process. Though perhaps due to factors including large caseloads, understaffing and/or system unavailability, Progress Monitors have historically proven non-compliant with timelines and data management, and perhaps contributed to the backlog of assessments recently eliminated under the Project. The unilateral reliance on Progress Monitors in this critical role sets up potential problems for future untimeliness, data loss and possible due process action. Recent news of 24 Progress Monitor layoffs at DCPS makes this concern even more acute.
- Outsourcing – Suggest closer screening of contract Progress Monitors. DCPS is outsourcing the majority of their most sensitive and highly accountable work in the non-public schools. As DCASE has learned more about the staff contracted to work as Progress Monitors for DCPS, we are concerned there is no apparent screening of monitors' credentials and knowledge of special education practices. This has proven challenging in recent experience with staff from the same contract agency: one school was assigned a social worker trained in marital therapy as their Placement Specialist, who was then given a caseload of over 100 students. The Placement Specialist became incapacitated by the workload, his lack of knowledge of special education processes, and lack of understanding of his role, and resigned not long after being placed. Many of our schools report an historical routine turnover of staff in this role, contributing to inconsistency with and neglect of critical tasks.
- Monitoring – Suggest development of clear guidelines for monitoring other than SEDS, and a coordinated effort for monitoring with OSSE.

DCASE agrees that program monitoring is essential to the accountability of all schools in their work with vulnerable children, and we respect the need for distinction between Local and State-level issues and motivations for monitoring. It would be helpful and more efficient, however, if both DCPS and OSSE established some consistency in monitoring in the interest of continuity and reduction of interruption to schools' delivery of services.

CONCLUSION

On September 22, 2010, DCASE received notification from Glorious Bazemore of the DCPS Office of Contracts and Acquisitions that DC Public Schools “decided not to exercise Option Year 2 of the contract for the term 10/1/10-9/30/11, therefore no services will be required of your organization.” Though this message stated DCASE had no further responsibilities with regard to the Assessment Project as of September 30, 2010, we submitted a proposal to address several outstanding issues in order to appropriately terminate the Project. The proposal included the following work to be done as part of a “Completion Plan” during the month of October:

1. Completion of final invoices.
2. Completion of final project report.
3. Technical assistance to schools for transition out of the Project.
4. Technical assistance to schools for adjustment to new LEA role.
5. Support implementation and use of SEDS.

DCASE was able to offer assistance to our schools in all of these key areas, and will continue ongoing support as much as possible as schools work to remain compliant with assessment timeliness and delivery of high-quality services. DCASE also requested and was granted a meeting to review Project progress on October 22, 2010. We remain hopeful that DCPS will continue to offer clear guidance to schools and a fair and unbiased determination of their capacity to conduct assessments internally.

DCASE takes tremendous pride in our successes with the Assessment Project, not the least of which is the elimination of years-worth of backlogged assessments within the relatively short term of the Project. We strongly believe there is more work to be done, and had proposed to do much of it through extension of the Project in order to ensure a high level of capacity and stability for DCPS moving forward. However, with the termination of the Project, we hope DCPS will accept our recommendations and considerations as they move in a different direction. In the interim, we plan to continue to do what we can – ensure as much stability as possible for the students in our member schools through technical assistance, advocacy and ongoing support.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the students of the District of Columbia through the Blackman-Jones DCASE Assessment Project.