

New Jersey Task Force on Improving Special Education for Public School Students

**National Conference Center at the Holiday Inn
399 Monmouth Street
East Windsor, NJ 08520**

Members in attendance: Kevin Ahearn, Marie Blistan, Barbara Frascella, Kristin Hennessy, Princess Hogue, Donna Kaye, Peg Kinsell Catherine Lindenbaum, Peggy McDonald, Jean Pasternak, Chris Sarandulias, Deborah Spitalnik, Corrine Steinmetz, Lynne Strickland, Kevin Sturges

Members not in attendance:

Members excused: John Driscoll, Kerri Walsifer

The meeting was called to order at 9:13 a.m.

I. FACILITATORS UPDATE

Dr. McDonald gave a brief overview of the August 26, 2014 meeting and reviewed the proposed agenda for this meeting.

There was a review of the minutes from the August 26, 2014 meeting, which were accepted by a vote of 8-0, with three abstentions.

There was a motion made to include the category of “excused members” on the minutes for those members who had provided advance notice of their unavailability to attend a meeting. The motion passed by a vote of 11-0.

There was a discussion about the most recent version of the Special Education Task Force Data Summary (“the matrix”). Task Force members should advise Paul Fogarty if any data questions submitted to him are missing from the matrix. The members in attendance noted that they would like the most recent version of the matrix emailed to them in PDF format with a date.

Corrine Steinmetz distributed the document “Funding and Accountability – Improving the Funding, Delivery and Effectiveness of Special Education Programs and Services – Comments and Recommendations (Revised).”

The following changes to the matrix were recommended:

1) Category #1 (Funding and Accountability)

- Priority Area #2 will be changed to “tuition costs”
- Addition of data question “what is the average cost of tuition?”
- Addition of data question “how is categorical aid calculated?”
- Addition of data question “number of districts that receive equalized aid and the percentage?”
- Addition of data question “analysis of categorical aid under CEIFA and presently”

2) Category #2 (Classifying and Educating)

- As part of data question “Breakdown by district of classification percentages,” the members requested breakdown by disability category from 2008-2013, preferably in a bar graph
- Addition of data question “What has been the trend analysis of newly classified students in several representative districts?”
- Priority Area #9 will be changed to:
“Service Delivery”
 - Timeliness
 - Mechanisms
 - Location of Service Delivery
 - System

3) Category #3 (Best practices for education professionals)

- Item #7 will be changed to:
“Improve teacher training”
 - Special education
 - General education – reading difficulties
 - Students with severe disabilities

4) Category #5 (Development of standards and appropriate oversight)

- Addition of priority area “State Assessment”
- Addition of priority area “Usage of data as a management tool.”

II. PRESENTATION

Pat Holcomb-Gray, IDEA – B Coordinator in the Office of Special Education presented on the topics of “Special Education Funding – Federal” and “Special Education Funding in New Jersey.” Members had numerous questions.

Members requested the following information:

- federal award amounts for all states;
- trend in district data (2008-2013) for students being sent out-of-district;
- statewide assessment data by placement by year (2008-2013);
- postschool outcome data by placement by year (2008-2013);
- proficiency rate for grades 3-8 (2008-2013) in Math and Language Arts with asterisk to mark years when the state assessment changed

The task force took a break from 11:13 a.m. to 11:25 a.m.

III. WORK SESSION

There was a discussion about what the task force would like to cover at the next meeting.

The members decided that the task force should break into small groups. The groups would look at the data, analyze the data and succinctly present for group discussion and recommendation. It was determined that the following would be the small groups:

Group 1 (Funding and Accountability/Reducing the costs associated with the placement of eligible students in out-of-district public schools or private schools)

1. Lynne Strickland
2. Corrine Steinmetz
3. Barbara Frascella
4. Chris Sarandulias

Group 2 (Classifying and Educating/Best practices for education professionals)

1. Princess Hogue
2. Kristin Hennessy
3. Kevin Ahearn
4. Katherine Lindenbaum
5. Marie Blistan
6. Kevin Sturges

Group 3 (Development of standards and appropriate oversight)

1. Peg Kinsell
2. Donna Kaye

The members in attendance agreed that each small group should identify the data that it will be relying on, identify the source of data, make recommendations and identify points of controversy for larger group discussion. Members agreed to bring information and data to the next meeting for facilitation of the small group agenda. Additionally, the members agreed that each small group would identify one point person and advise Paul Fogarty. Paul will send the word version of the matrix to the point person for each small group.

The group also indicated that they would like to hear from Gerald Vernotica regarding regional districts and Brenda Considine, a parent and the Director of Special Education Funding Coalition, regarding finance.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m. The next meeting of the Task Force is scheduled for Tuesday, September 23, 2014 at the Holiday Inn in East Windsor.