Education Cost Sharing Task Force
MEETING MINUTES
September 12 2012

The meeting was convened by Senator Stillman at approximately 2:00 PM in room 2600.

The chairs started the meeting by discussing a series of dates for meetings in the future. Each meeting would start at 2:00 PM

The list of possible dates discussed was September 27th 2012, October 15th 2012, October 30th 2012 November 13th 2012 and November 27th 2012.

It was decided that the meeting on September 27th be dedicated to the formula committee for their sub-committee report. Co- Chair Senator Stillman announced that Mary L. Levine would be leaving the committee.

The special education sub-committee gave a presentation of their preliminary report. Members of the special education sub-committee are Dr. Elsa Nunez, Mark Benigni, Ted Sergi and Portia Bonner.

The sub-committee report was discussed. The recommendations are

1. The State of Connecticut should continue to support a portion of local special education expenditures to relieve the escalating financial burden on local school districts and to better meet its obligation to fund public education, including special education. This commitment must include a new process for reimbursing school districts for excess costs.

> The state shall pay 100 percent of the full cost of state agency-placed students. The General Assembly should adopt legislation to:
> a. increase and guarantee the excess cost grant;
> b. include a new, fixed amount definition of "excess" for all districts (such as $50,000);
> c. develop state managed and supported individualized education plans for any pupil costing over $150,000 (approximately 300 students statewide), or in the alternative, a state inspected and validated IEP for all such high cost pupils;
> d. create a sliding scale reimbursement based on a town's wealth; and
> e. institute a 3- to 5-year phase in.

Connecticut Special Education Excess Cost Placements: 2011–12

	Eligible Students	Costs in excess of $50,000	Costs in excess of $100,000	Costs in excess of $150,000	Costs in excess of $200,000	Costs in excess of $300,000
State agency placed	1,163	607	113	14	3	0
Local agency placed	3,203	3,188	1,091	265	80	8
Total	4,366	3,795	1,204	279	83	8

2. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) must perform regular examinations each September of "outlier" districts to determine the percentage of special education students; the percent within each special education classification; the percentage of the local budget spent on special education; the percent and cost of outplacements; the number, if any, of out-of-state placements; the achievement of special education students, and the numbers exiting special education; and the participation of special education students in state assessments. In the process, the causes for districts being outliers must be pursued and evaluated. In the process, the CSDE and the districts should develop a joint plan to implement, monitor and report progress made. The appropriateness of identification and placement in special education has a direct bearing on total costs.

3. The CSDE and the six Regional Educational Service Centers should inventory local, regional, statewide and private programs against projected needs over the next 10 years. The inventory should include commentary on the availability of third party insurers, covering medically related expenses. An IEP selecting higher cost private programs over comparable, lower cost public programs should be required to provide a compelling rationale.

4. The State should engage higher education faculty in the study of special education, taking advantage of their input and expertise. Goals should include enhancing the quality of special education programs; improving the identification process; achieving better outcomes for students; controlling costs; and defining reasonable parameters.

5. The State should provide small incentive grants to districts, regions or higher education institutions that demonstrate superior programs and reduced costs.

6. An independent third party should be contracted to study the potential cost, time and indirect saving from a re-balancing of the "burden of proof"; so as to place the burden equally on both parties. The present state law places the burden of proving that a specific placement meets state and federal requirements solely on the school district. Other states place the burden on the party objecting to the placement, or employ a shared burden.

Bill Davenport from the Choice committee gave a brief update stating that they agree with the premise that there needs to be equity among all school districts which is the charge of the committee. That sub-committee needed more data in order to make a full report to the committee.

That report will be expected on October 15th.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.