

Special Education Task Force Meeting

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Members in Attendance:

- Adler, Jason (Online)
- Bowman, Alicia
- Dias, Kate
- Drew, Sally
- Feinstein, Andrew
- Flaherty, Tara
- Grove, Mike
- Hammersley, Lisa (Online)
- Helene, Karen
- Jackson, Typhanie (Online)
- Klimkiewicz, Bryan (Online)
- Lussier, Jennifer
- McCarthy, Patrice
- McKay, Sheila
- Rabinowitz, Fran
- Scheinberg Meyer, Kathryn (Online)
- Tartaglia, Heather
- Torres-Rodriguez, Leslie (Online)
- Turner, Aimee
- Yankee Dillner, Susan

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Fran Rabinowitz

Fran noted that it was a short meeting 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Fran thanked the eleven (11) members of the Task Force who filled out and submitted the draft findings rating sheet.

It was agreed at the beginning of this process to have the group operate by consensus.

Therefore, anything that was rated a 5 does not move forward,

Fran stated that on the draft finding's sheet priority should be given to the subcommittees which were put together by Fran and Andy. Those subcommittees came forward with what they believed to be their findings for their group.

Fran's vision for today is to go through the findings and eliminate all the fours (4) and fives (5). We can get more information if needed on the threes (3) and move the ones and twos forward. We will send a new draft report with the findings that we wish to move forward. You will all have a chance to weigh in on that draft, getting out the things that the whole committee doesn't agree with so that we can begin to move forward.

It was decided to send items from the original draft findings report back to the three subcommittee chairs so they can look at what to move forward from the subcommittees.

Under the Funding Subcommittee's findings, the following move forward:

1. The lack of a special education weight in the ECS formula causes inequity.
2. Lack of access to preschool for all children exacerbates inequities.

3. A model contract for private providers would facilitate reaching an agreement on services.

Under Services Subcommittee Findings the following move forward:

1. Tier I instruction is not always high quality to include practices such as universal design for learning (UDL), culturally responsive teaching, and multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).
2. Paraprofessionals are in an extreme shortage area
3. AI has a potential role in special education.
4. Research-based best practices for special education must be available and shared widely.
5. Universal PreK is needed

Bryan Klimkiewicz, CSDE: The following link will provide you with the number of school psychologists, social workers, and counselors-to-student ratio in each district.

[Mental Health Staff Ratios \(ct.gov\)](https://www.ct.gov/deep/asp/StaffRatios.aspx)

It was asked and suggested that there be a space where we think there is something important in any of the three categories where we could ask a subcommittee to reconsider as a mechanism to appeal the process.

The Task Force agreed that they would refer selected items scored with 5's back to a subcommittee for further discussion and have the committees bring a revised finding back to the whole Task Force.

Items returning to subcommittees:

Class Size should not exceed 20 and should be reduced to 16 over the next few years
(RETURNING TO SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE)

Connecticut has three separate systems. The special education system is highly regulated by federal law. The 504 system affords students with much the same rights as the special education system, but Connecticut has no procedures guiding this practice. Connecticut requires that students be determined for Gifted and Talented eligibility but places no requirements on districts to provide services. **(RETURNING TO ELIGIBILITY SUBCOMMITTEE)**

Special Education teachers are leaving because of poor working conditions including very large caseloads. **(RETURNING TO SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE)**

There is a disproportionate increase in special education students in high-poverty districts. **(RETURNING TO ELIGIBILITY SUBCOMMITTEE)**

There is a significant rise in the cost of special education services; the private facility contracts do not always indicate the cost for specific services. **(RETURNING TO THE FUNDING SUBCOMMITTEE)**

The subcommittees will review the items sent back to them and will send or insert their comments into Andy's Google document for inclusion in the findings report. The report will then be emailed out to the subcommittee chairs to review one last time before being sent out to the entire Task Force.

Once the findings report is submitted the Task Force will then have to embark on a new piece, which is recommendations.

Bryan Klimkiewicz, CSDE reminded the subcommittee chairs to include him on invites to future subcommittee meetings.

New members to subcommittees:

- Sally Drew– Services
- Katherine Scheinberg Meyer – Services
- Typhanie Jackson – Services

Surveys

The Task Force feels that it is important to survey different groups of stakeholders to get meaningful data. It is important to note that as a part of the Task Forces findings the Task Force will be doing a survey process.

The Survey Subcommittee will consist of Sally, Kate Dias, Alicia Bowman, Andy Feinstein, and Fran Rabinowitz. Sally stated that she may not be the best person to chair the subcommittee because she would be looking at it from the data perspective and construct validity perspective versus what are the voices of everyone. The group will work collaboratively together.

The Task Force Chairs will wait to hear from Jeff Currey and then set meetings going forward for the recommendations and legislative process.

The Task Force meeting ended at 10:30 AM.