SPECIAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, October 1, 2024

In Attendance:
1. Adler, Jason (online)
2. Bowman, Alicia
3. Cole, Dawn
4. CT-N (online)
5. Drew, Sally (online)
6. Feinstein, Andrew
7. Filippone, Rosalie (online)
8. Flaherty, Tara
9. Hammersley, Lisa
10. Helene, Karen
11. Klimkiewicz, Bryan
12. Laubin, Michelle
13. Lussier, Jennifer
14. Rabinowitz, Frances
15. Scheinberg Meyer, Kathryn
16. Tartaglia, Heather
17. Torres-Rodriguez, Leslie (online)
18. Turner, Aimee
19. Wanzer, Stephanie
20. Yankee, Susan

AGENDA DETAILS

The meeting began at 9:34 AM

Presentation of Outcomes from Feedback Sessions – Bryan Klimkiewicz

- Discussion on the feedback sessions conducted across various locations took place (EASTCONN, EdAdvance, CES, CREC and ACES, LEARN was not included due to low sign-up)
- Data from feedback session were collected in bulleted format on sticky notes or post it papers (linked above).
- Feedback Sessions Included:
    - 15-minute overview of the findings – reports were handy for folks to review –
    - 15-minute breakouts per sections – groups of 4-5 – Eligibility, Services, Funding –

- Virtual sessions in [English](#) (October 8, 2024) and [Spanish](#) (October 15, 2024) are scheduled.
- There was concern about low attendance at feedback sessions despite high sign-up rates. There was discussion on the typical attrition rates for such events.

Presentation of Eligibility Recommendations – Amy Turner

11 recommendations were discussed:

1. Change the age range for Developmental Delay up to a child's 8th birthday if specialized instruction is required, *only* in the absence of an identifiable disability category (i.e., autism, hearing impairment, speech, and language impairment) after a comprehensive evaluation.
2. The CSDE will update all eligibility guidelines and tools. The CSDE will provide training in all the application and interpretation of all update eligibility guidelines.
3. In collaboration with the CSDE, districts shall provide all special education and administrative staff with cultural competency training in regard to special education identification.
4. In collaboration with the CSDE, districts shall provide all special education and administrative staff with training in language acquisition v. language delay in regard to special education identification.
5. All school staff shall be trained in de-escalation. School crisis teams shall be trained in de-escalation <u>and</u> proper physical management techniques including the definition of "emergency situation".
6. The CSDE shall monitor and audit restraint/seclusion incident reports.
7. The CSDE shall revise the MTSS/SRBI guidelines to include current research. MTSS shall be implemented by certified staff in all developmental areas.
8. The state shall provide a standard eligibility process for gifted and talented to provide opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds (i.e. minorities, low-income, multi-lingual).
9. The CSDE will publish best practices regarding low-cost gifted and talented services students maximizing their potential (including inclusive services)
10. Investigate the development/provision of regional services through RESCs for gifted/talented students.
11. The CSDE will develop standardized gifted and talented forms

- The Eligibility subcommittee presented 11 recommendations, focusing on changing the age range for developmental delay up to the child's eighth birthday if specialized instruction is required. The discussion included ensuring that services are aligned with specific disabilities and rationale behind choosing the eighth birthday.
- There was a discussion about the importance of identifying autism early to ensure appropriate services. Concerns were raised about children not receiving the necessary services if not designated with autism early enough.
- The importance of comprehensive evaluations was emphasized, ensuring that the disability category does not drive services but rather the individual needs of the child.
- The recommendation was made for the CSDE to update all eligibility guidelines and tools and provide training on their application. The discussion

included the current status of guidelines and worksheets for different disability categories and the potential for embedding these tools in CT-SEDS.

- The necessity of legislative action to require the CSDE to update eligibility guidelines and tools was questioned. The discussion included the potential benefits and drawbacks of making these guidelines mandatory.
- There was general consensus on the recommendation to change the age range for developmental delay up to the child's eighth birthday.
- There was a general agreement on the need for updated guidelines and tools, but concerns were raised about making them mandatory.

Professional Development & Training in Special Education

- Discussion took place on the necessity and frequency of mandated training for special education staff, including cultural competency, de-escalation, and language acquisition versus language delay.
- There was a consensus on the importance of these trainings, but concerns about the term "mandated" and the frequency of such trainings were raised.
- Conclusions
- De-escalation training should be mandatory for all school staff, with a suggested frequency of every three years or upon new hire.
- Training should be provided whenever there are changes to the eligibility guidelines, and staff should be train accordingly.
- Pre-service training should be included in the recommendations to ensure new teachers are adequately prepared.
- Training should be conducted at least every three years, with flexibility for districts to decide the exact cycle.
- All school staff, including non-teaching staff, should be included in the training.
- The State Department of Education should mandate the training, and districts should access it as needed.

Uniform Monitoring and Auditing of Restraints and Seclusion

- The discussion focused on the need for a uniform system to monitor and audit restraints and seclusion incidents. There were concerns about discrepancies in reporting and the need for consistent definitions and training.
- The group discussed the importance of training staff to correctly identify and report restraints and seclusion incidents. There was a suggestion to update the training and ensure it is uniformly applied across districts.
- The conversation highlighted the roles of local administrators and the state in approving and auditing restraint incidents. There was a call for more proactive monitoring and random audits by the state.
- Participants noted discrepancies in how different districts report restraints and seclusion, with some underreporting and others overreporting. This inconsistency was attributed to varying interpretations of what constitutes a restraint.
- The impact of restraint and seclusion practices on families and staff was discussed. There was an emphasis on the need for accurate reporting to ensure proper training and support for staff, and to address concerns from families.

- Suggestions included integrating restraint and seclusion audits with existing IEP audits, conducting random audits, and ensuring that training is regularly updated and uniformly applied.
- The group debated the frequency and process of audits, with suggestions to audit a percentage of districts annually and to include recommendations in audit reports.
- The importance of compliance with restraint and seclusion laws was discussed, along with the need to focus on outcomes and the effectiveness of training and reporting systems.

Presentation of Funding Recommendations – Patrice McCarthy

Not Covered

Presentation of Service Recommendations – Alicia Bowman

Not Covered

Consensus on Presented Recommendations/Further Discussion– Tri Chairs

No Covered

Moving Forward – Tri Chairs

    a. The Report

        i. Inclusion of Consensus Only;

        ii. Consensus and All Recommendations with a 2/3 Vote;

        iii. Consensus and Any Recommendation from a Task Force Member

II. Next Meeting -

- October 21, 2024 – 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- November 5th – 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM