

M.O.R.E.

Special Education Select Working Group

Discussion Topic and Speaker Recommendations

Thursday, December 19, 2013

George Rafael:

- Special education funding volatility for towns/ school districts (even one special education child entering a school system can have a large impact on that school system's budget)
- Burden of proof in special education cases

Deborah Wheeler, Ed.D.:

- Burden of proof
- Regionalization of special education programs through inter-district collaboration (her district is currently working with District 6 to regionalize some programs)
 - Possible speaker:
 - Education Connection

Deborah Richards:

- Possible speakers:
 - CT Family Support Council
 - State Advisory Council on Special Education
 - CT Parent Advocacy Center
 - State Department of Education
 - Department of Developmental Disabilities
 - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
 - Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities
 - CT Association of Private Special Education Facilities
 - Education Connection
 - RESCs
 - A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Research, Education, and Service at UConn

Patrice McCarthy:

- Regionalism of special education programs through RESCs
- Burden of proof
- Attempt to improve hearing process
 - Possible speakers:
 - School attorneys
 - Special education advocates
- Mental health services for youth

Betsy Gara:

- Unpredictability of special education costs to towns/ school districts (budgets are adopted in May or June but school districts have no idea at that point how many special education students they will have enrolled)
- Reimbursement thresholds (for towns to be reimbursed by the state for special education costs)
- Burden of proof
- Voluntary services models

John Filchak:

- Transportation (how it is provided and how barriers to improvement)
 - Possible speakers:
 - Department of Transportation

Kimberly Planas:

- Mental health services (maximizing current resources and providing additional services through regional collaboration)
- Transportation regionalization (Hamden started a transportation consortium last year)
- Unpredictability of special education costs to towns/ school districts (budgets are adopted in May or June but school districts have no idea at that point how many special education students they will have enrolled)

Mike Regan:

- Burden of proof (it can take up to 21 days to resolve a case in current system)
- Nexus determination (where a town continues to carry the cost for a child's special education when that child will never return to live in that town)
- IEP records management (school districts currently contract with outside providers for extra cost to do this, but state creation and control of IEP databases could save the average district \$25,000 - \$35,000 per year)

Shelly Davis:

- Maximizing special education funding allocated towards frontline interaction between educators and students rather than outside consultants and administration (amount of money spent on administration versus classroom resources)

Jody Harkins:

- Burden of proof

Rep. Case:

- Transportation regionalization

- Educate more special education students locally rather than relying on out-of-district programs
- Too few paraprofessionals in classrooms
- Ensure students receive the special education services to which they are entitled, but insert some cost controls into the system as well

Rep. Wood (Co-Chair):

- Burden of proof
- Simplify special education forms
- Mental and behavioral health as a preventative service
- Ensure special education curriculum is academically challenging and appropriate to address each child's disabilities
- Address special education to prison pipeline (50% of boys who start classes in Bridgeport schools do not graduate, 50% of those boys end up in jail, and 65% or 70% of those boys have learning disabilities)
- Address programs for students with executive function issues (affects boys more than girls)
 - Possible speakers:
 - Sally Reis, Susan Balm, Joe Renzulli all from the Neag School of Education at UConn
 - Educational psychologist Chris Bogart

Rep. Abercrombie:

- Transportation
- Federal and state funding gaps (neither entity is meeting its current special education funding obligations)
- Regionalization of special education services
- Educating special education students locally (her district contains an autism center that may be used as a model for keeping more students in local educational settings)

Rep. Steinberg:

- Voluntary regionalization of special education services (he does not want to force shared services)
- Define what special education means, how special education is taught, and what the teacher/ paraprofessional dynamic should be like in the classroom
- Explore how school health centers can be effectively integrated into the special education system (Connecticut is already dedicated to the creation of health centers in schools)

Rep. Becker (Co-Chair):

- Private special education providers (understand the difference between approved and non-approved private providers, understand how the approval process works and how rates that are paid to these providers are

determined, determine what types of private provider audits the state undertakes to ensure that money is well spent)

Rep. Cook (Co-Chair):

- Explore posting IEPs online (find a way to incentivize districts to use the same IEP computer system so uniform information can be collected)
- Parent education (explore how parents are educated about the special education system, whether they are educated at all, and what kind of materials, if any, they receive)
- Charter schools and magnet schools (are these schools providing effective special education services and are they enrolling special education children at all)