

State Advisory Committee (SAC) for Children with Disabilities
Advising the New Hampshire Department Education per RSA 186-C:3-b

November 4, 2020
4:30pm – 7:00pm

Via Zoom

In Attendance:

Lisa Beaudoin (chair), Bonnie Dunham (Co-Chair), Jill Hartmann, Kevin Cushing, Kari Grimes, Dale Boyle, Tina Greco, Karen Rosenberg, Gregory Magoon, Alicia Ferguson, Maureen Shields, Kerri-Lynn Kimner, Christopher O'Reilly, Janet Reed, Moira Ryan, Esther Kennedy, Thomas Ryan, Jason Henry, Melissa McKeon, Sandi Raeuchle, Leah Lucier-Pike

Absent:

Violetta Lortie, Susan Rasicot, Mike Pinard, Elizabeth (BeBe) Casey, Meghan Cullinane, Anna Barrows, Senator Jean Dietsch, Representative Tamara Le, Representative Glen Cordelli, Senator Jay Kahn

Guests:

Rebecca Fredette, Administrator, Bureau of Student Support
Gordon Muench, parent, children on the spectrum
Tracy Walbridge, Parent
Jennifer Blagriff, Parent, two children, dyslexia, interested in SAC in parent role
Lewis, student with disabilities

Welcome:

Lisa Beaudoin (chair) began the meeting at 4:32pm. Welcome to the meeting.
SAC members introduced themselves and their role on the Committee.

Approval of October 7, 2020 SAC Meeting Minutes

Discussion around a few corrections.

Motion made by Jill Hartmann to approve the Minutes as amended; seconded by Greg Magoon.
16 approved, 4 abstentions, 0 opposed.

Public Comment:

No public comment

Question of Annual Report – transition component. Do we know how the data is collected?
Mailed to students and returned to DOE, previously, now moving to electronic submittal.

Bureau update from Rebecca Fredette, questions:

- The Bureau is continuing the monitor process out in the field and desk audits.
- GEER (Governor's Emergency Education Relief) funds have gone out.
- Private Providers are applying for funds to cover for extra expenses incurred with COVID.
- Hiring of additional Bureau staff.
- Continuing with Thursday call with Special Education Directors.
- Restarted coffee and discussion calls with Directors.

Becky attended the South Central regional meeting with Special Education Directors and shared success stories with SAC. The Bureau has a Facebook page and will begin posting positive stories out in the field.

Becky shared two links on remote learning experiences:

<https://nhpsea.org/nashua-childrens-home-and-the-rsec-academy-build-on-remote-learning-experience/>

<https://nhpsea.org/seacoast-region-schools-build-on-remote-learning-experience/>

Question:

Does the NH DOE ever sponsor a coffee style event with parents?

Becky

Not at this time, something we can look. Provide resources for parents.

Question:

When school districts were not providing services over the summer. How was monies tracked for related services? Where is the money that was not spent and how is the DOE tracking these funds.

Becky

Unless the districts put the money through their IDEA grant, the DOE does not have access to or to track.

Discussion:

Schools were given permission from OSEP to pay providers, even when services weren't provided. Not every district chose to do that.

Wide spread issue from a financial standpoint.

This is where PIC and DRC come in. They can assist with due process, mediation, and a complaint to the State.

Districts that are doing well shouldn't be penalized for districts that are not doing well.

Parents need to be educated on their students' rights, if didn't get FAPE may be able to get compensatory education.

Not sure how many parents use the DOE website; maybe the Facebook page will be better. Getting the word out, about procedures that are in place.

There are multi-language families. Would the DOE put together a letter that they understand and are entitled to a compensatory meeting and there is a mechanism that all families were reached with this information?

Love the idea to reach out to parents. Compensatory education is different in each district, when have a meeting, did not know what it was all about until talked about. There are challenges as to what compensatory education is.

Parents are saying they have reached out, is there data collection on how many parents are reaching out to PIC | DRC? Is it a systemic issue across the State or pockets of problems that may ask for a specific solution?

PIC does collect data on the calls they receive. Sometimes is a parent group. Is the department hearing from different areas? SAC could focus on these areas.

The Department has many parents call from specific schools and the Department has worked with them. Specific disabilities and districts are struggling to meet their needs. Currently, the Department has two (2) complaints in process.

Lewis (guest)

Last year when we had to go home for remote learning, I couldn't get the therapy I needed. Do other students have issues with getting their physical therapy?

Yes, some students were unable to receive their services.

Was it a funding issue?

Wasn't a funding issue, was a lack of staff in order to bring students in to the school buildings.

Question in the chat – CARES funds. Have they been distributed?

Becky

Yes, these funds went out to the districts through Title I, most used for general education, some used more broadly for all students, some set aside for special education students

Legislative Update from Bonnie Dunham, legislators

- State Board meeting last month, remote instruction
- Hearing the previous month on the remote learning rules.
- Going to make some revisions to the remote learning rules and possibly another public meeting
- Posted to the DOE website to get the word out to give public input or/and suggestions on the remote learning experience
- Agenda is posted on the DOE website
- There are bills currently in legislation; however if a sponsor did not get re-elected, the bills may disappear or a new sponsor will issue bills. Will update for next meeting.

Discussion the overarching priority- COVID. SAC is exploring how COVID is impacting students with disabilities How has COVID amplified challenges which existed prior to the pandemic? How is COVID affecting the education of students with disabilities? What have we learned about the status of education for students with disabilities in NH because of COVID? SAC's responsibility is to address the unmet needs of student with disabilities even if it isn't universal across NH.

Compensatory services, DRC, PIC and others held collaborative chats; people enjoy hearing the perspective from different people.

Hearing from everyone, case managers, directors when are we going to start up again. Maybe after the holidays start back up.

Good place to highlight best practice and gems that could be adopted by other school districts. Some of this did happen. Found the term compensatory services confusing.

In addition, to help set the topics that people would want to talk about:

- Difficulty learning from home
- Kids that can't learn from home are allowed to go to school
- What happens when the schools are closed down again

Question:

What are we discussing?

School openings and school closings.

How are decisions being made and the impact on everyone?

School closures, New Hampshire rates are still low.

Concerned that we are quick to close schools.

What is the science we are relying on and what is the State considering when infections rates are really low.

Not just COVID per se for these closures, staff calling out sick, paras, and the school could not provide services without proper staff. There is not enough workforce out there.

As a student, in remote classrooms unable to talk with the teachers. Communication and class time is frustrating. Other students feel this way as well.

Lack of staff is coming up, 24 people out and 1 substitute to cover. The staffing issue is huge right now and there is shutting schools down due to lack of staff.

Should SAC send a letter to the Commissioner regarding the workforce?

Ask the Commissioner what the Department's plan on the workforce shortage?

Question:

Becky, what is the Department doing?

Becky:

Has shared with the Commissioner. Steve Appleby has reached out to districts, conversations are happening, however is not privy to them. When hear of personnel shortage, advises the Commissioner immediately. Unaware of solutions at this point of time.

Question:

Are there any conversations going on with your peers (NASDSE) and have you found something going well that we can use?

Becky:

During meetings, it sounds like all States are encountering the workforce deficient. Is wide spread. OSEP provided a training on recruiting and training staff.

As a parent, school K-3 went full remote as two staff who had COVID, then 14 other teachers had to quarantine. Less service time and no live instruction, ½ hours to an hour every other day.

When doing remote, there should be guidance on how many hours a student should be receiving.

If go remote, continue with the schedule, offer 4 hours of school instruction.

If only getting ½ hours of instruction a day shouldn't be happening and start calling the State and make a complaint.

As for hours of the day, would go to Stephen Berwick as not related to special education.

Districts are desperate for substitute teachers.

Esther went to her graduate class to hire; they all had jobs as districts are all in the same position. People are not going into the field.

Should SAC issue a letter or questions, what is our takeaway from today's conversation?

- Minimum standard for live time
- Instructional hours on a weekly basis
- Reach out to vulnerable parents
- Aware of the personnel shortages, significant impact the workforce shortage is having on districts.

Students who cannot access remote instruction and the schools are closed, teachers are not allowed in the schools. Where are these students getting FAPE?

Had a similar situation, they contracted for the student to get the services, as the obligations do not go away.

DOE could investigate that complaint, Is probable not just one student, is a systemic issue at a school district. Anyone can file a complaint.

Lisa proposed a subcommittee:

- What are the minimum standards when in remote instruction?
- Priority, workforce shortage.
- Investigate more broadly, when complaints are systemic.

Anyone wish to volunteer?

Melissa

Tracey

Bonnie

Issue a letter to parents with awareness of what to do with all the challenges and move information about the complaint processes.

What can the DOE issue across the State for vulnerable parents to help understand their child's FAPE.

Question:

Becky, will you look into have a letter sent to the parents in the State, is this even possible?

Becky will look into.

Comment:

This is an unfunded mandate; think may be a huge issue.

Have districts put on social media, parents are already overwhelmed.

Update on the draft 2020 SAC Report

Tabled

Mask subcommittee update, Karen Rosenberg

- Minutes were sent out
- Groups of kids cannot wear masks
- Sensory integration

Would like to be able to make some recommendations, would be helpful to have a public health representative to attend and discuss the science.

Comment:

Curious as to how many districts are not providing reasonable accommodations, is it systemic statewide?

Hearing from various districts. Hearing from parents, "my kid won't wear a mask." Parents do not know there is an option for accommodation and are keeping their kids home.

Discussion

- A meeting with Dr. Chan and the Commissioner to weigh in on specific guidance.
- SAC has already asked Becky to invite Dr. Chan or a representative from his office to the next meeting.

There are groups of people who cannot wear masks due to sensory issues. Mask waivers are available, what is being done State/town specific. What we are looking for is more firm guidance from Dr. Chan. Need to address the issue and firm something up. Would like something sent out to school districts informing them that they do need to provide accommodations.

Nominations, Old Business, New Business – Announcements, Comments

Nominations

Maureen made a motion nominating Jennifer Blagriff as a parent representative to SAC, seconded by Karen.

Jennifer lives in Hopkinton, has three children, has worked part-time in schools since 2006. Would like to join the Committee to improve special education and dyslexia around New Hampshire. All in favor raise your hand. Motion is carried.

Bonnie made a motion nominating Gordon Muench as a parent representative to SAC, seconded by Melissa.

Gordon lives in Fremont, and has four children, 19, 27, 14 and 12. All in favor raise your hand. Motion is carried.

Announcements

Where are we with needing more people on SAC, what are the vacancies in membership?

Two representatives from DHHS

- One(1) Representative of the Department of Health and Human Services involved in the financing or delivery of special education or related services to children with disabilities, recommended by the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services.
- A representative from the Department of Health and Human services responsible for foster care, recommended by the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services

One (1) Representative of a Vocational, Community, or Business Organization concerned with the provision of transition services to students with disabilities.

A State and a local educational official who are responsible for performing activities under subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. section 11431, et seq, appointed by the Governor. State Official position vacant.

Parent of a child with a disability, few openings.

Lisa will provide an updated membership for review.

Janet made a motion to adjourn, Karen seconded.
Meeting was adjourned at 7:01pm

Next meeting

Wednesday, December 2, 2020 | 4:30pm-7:00pm

Via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89667796275>

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89667796275>

Meeting ID: 896 6779 6275 +1 646 558 8656

Appendix | Conversations within the Chat

From Gordon Muench to Everyone:

sorry I was in a bad area and couldn't hear everything. I am here in a better area.

From M Ryan to Everyone:

approve

From Tracy Walbridge to Everyone:

approve

From iPhone to Everyone: 04:42 PM

abstain

From Kari Grimes to Everyone:

I approve

From M Ryan to Everyone:

I have a question

From M Ryan to Everyone:

Does the NH DOE ever sponsor a coffee style event with parents?

Yes, I think that would be beneficial

From Tracy Walbridge to Everyone:

Are there meeting notes from the Thursday Calls with directors? If so, can we access them?

From Janet Reed to Everyone:

They are posted on the DOE website

From Tracy Walbridge to Everyone:

Thanks Janet!

From Rebecca Fredette to Everyone:

<https://nhpsea.org/nashua-childrens-home-and-the-rsec-academy-build-on-remote-learning-experience/>

<https://nhpsea.org/seacoast-region-schools-build-on-remote-learning-experience/>

From Karen Rosenberg to Everyone:

Will you email the links to all of us after the meeting?

How about the CARES Act funds? I realize these are not dedicated to special education, but can be used for any COVID-related public education purpose. Have those funds been distributed to school districts?

From M Ryan to Everyone:

I believe Medicaid to Schools goes to the town/city and then the town/city sends it to the school

There is NO accountability for MTS that I could find in looking at school and ton budgets

TOWN*

Hmmm. I see a problem with that bc the schools had zero data points to make any determination

PIC does not help parents through dispute resolution

From Tracy Walbridge to Everyone:

Would the NHDOE be willing to send out a parent survey on comp ed for feedback and telling families where they can leverage, PIC, DRC the complaint process

From Lisa Beaudoin to Everyone:

ABLE NH is hearing mostly from families of students with significant disabilities.

From M Ryan to Everyone:

Remote services are also less than ideal

It's very difficult to do social skills and speech on zoom

What about the proficiency rates for kids with IEPs??

Shouldn't that be higher?

From Janet Reed to Everyone:

work force challenges

From Karen Rosenberg to Everyone:

Work force is an issue, Janet. How can we address/improve this?

As far as work force, would it make a difference if districts were able to offer higher salaries for staff that do in-person instruction?

From Rebecca Fredette to Everyone:

Thomas has his hand raised

From Jennifer Blagriff to Everyone:

Can I make a comment even though I am not officially a member?

From Janet Reed to Everyone:

At this point I really don't believe there are people out there

From Kari Grimes to Everyone:

Workforce is a problem in my district. We are actually having a paraprofessional job fair in the next week

From Esther Kennedy to Everyone:

We cannot get any substitute teachers or Para-educators our administrators are working in the classroom as substitute staff.

YES!!!!!!

From Janet Reed to Everyone:

There was a deficit prior to covid

Covid has really escalated it

From Lisa Beaudoin to Everyone:

yes Janet

From Karen Rosenberg to Everyone:

That's right, Janet.

Still, it would be nice to come up with some suggestions -- even if it involves coming up with additional funds.

From Janet Reed to Everyone:

If anyone knows someone, we are a great place to work :)

From Thomas to Everyone:

It's true

The focus is on essentials like reading and math and social studies and science were completely eliminated

some services like para were completely eliminated

From Melissa McKeon to Everyone:

I concur!

From Thomas to Everyone:

like*

YES

From Bonnie Dunham to Everyone:

Janet, I admire your initiative in taking advantage of this group to recruit people and make them aware that RSEC is a great place to work.

From Kari Grimes to Everyone:

From a teacher's perspective, teachers are also being stretched out to the maximum. It is not an attractive position at the moment. I know some teachers are getting fed up and looking to leave the field.

From Jill Hartmann to Everyone:

Have a great night. Bye everyone!

From Thomas to Everyone:

Why did they remove complies with privacy?

From Janet Reed to Everyone:

Instructional hours are in a different Ed

From Thomas to Everyone:

Manchester did that too

From Sandi to Everyone:

But the problem still remains for those students with disabilities that cannot work with remote instruction because of the type of their disability. Some of these students need IN PERSON services. How are they accommodated? Parents are left to be the provider.

From Janet Reed to Everyone:

The School Board Assoc. often drafts some model policies

From Tracy Walbridge to Everyone:

Thank you Janet

I'm wondering if we need to address the state constitution to change to give ppl the right to an education instead of just cherish it, it's an underlying issue

From Janet Reed to Everyone:

I agree!

From thomas to Everyone:

approve

From Tracy Walbridge to Everyone:

yes

approve

From Thomas to Everyone:

agree. kids with executive functioning issues...very challenging

From Bonnie Dunham to Everyone:

I suggest that people may want to bring up the issue of children with disabilities who cannot access remote instruction during the public comment segment of the State BOE's meeting (it is at 9:00 am).

From Tracy Walbridge to Everyone:

Rebecca, are you talking with the same districts over and over?

From Rebecca Fredette to Everyone:

Tracy in the beginning of the pandemic we did talk to some schools repeatedly, more recently it has been isolated incidents

From Tracy Walbridge to Everyone:

I'll volunteer

From Tracy Walbridge to Everyone:

Can the DOE offer parents an opt-in communication for one way communication of information

From Thomas to Everyone:

It's because they are using different research studies to support their decisions

Research has shown that younger kids are a lower risk group, but not a guarantee

Virus particles are 5 microns big