

MINUTES

Legislative Task Force on the Best Practices for Special Education

Wednesday, March 2, 2016
10:00 A.M.
Room B, MAC
Little Rock, Arkansas

The Legislative Task Force on the Best Practices for Special Education met on Wednesday, March 2, 2016 at 10:00 A.M., in Room B of the MAC Building in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Task Force Members Present: Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Chair and Representative Sheilla Lampkin, Ms. Carla Brainard, Ms. Lisa Haley, Ms. Barbara Hunter Cox, Ms. Renee Johnson, Ms. Bailey Perkins, Ms. Debra Poulin, Ms. Shirley Ann Renix, Dr. Bruce Smith, Ms. Lisa Tisdale-Parker, Ms. Tina Vineyard, Ms. Cindy Marie Weathers, and Ms. Angela Winfield.

Other Legislators Present: Senator Jonathan Dismang; Representatives Joseph Baltz, Nate Bell, Mary Broadway, Charlotte Douglas, Charlene Fite, Bill Gossage, Kelley Linck, Fredrick Love, Betty Overby, James Ratliff, and Jeffrey Wardlaw.

Call to Order

Senator Lindsey called the meeting to order.

Consideration to Approve the Minutes of February 10, 2016

A motion was made by Tina Vineyard and seconded by Barbara Hunter-Cox to approve the minutes, without objection the minutes were approved.

Review Response to Intervention (RTI) practices in Arkansas, including identifying RTI programs in public schools that are successful and can be identified as best practices (Matrix Item G)

Renee Johnson, Arkansas Education Association, Cabot Public Schools

Ms. Dee Dee Cain, UCA, Speech Language Pathologist, Special Education Teacher, General Education Teacher gave an overview of RTI practices in Arkansas. [See Exhibit C-1: Articles 1-7 for the full report]

Dr. Linda Dorn, UALR Professor of Reading Education and Director of the Center for Literacy gave an overview of RTI practices in Arkansas. Dr. Dorn noted that RTI allows for evaluation of change over time and that interventions exists in silos. [See Exhibit C-3 for the full report]

Carla Curtis, Director of Special Programs, Fayetteville Public Schools gave an overview of RTI practices in Arkansas.

Issues Discussed:

- Alignment and congruency is important. Knowledge of RTI design that is deliberately and intentionally designed to bring all of this together is needed. It is important to build a team with the child's best interest being the major goal.
- Several states use the terms developmentally delayed or non-categorical; they treat the children through age 8 so there is no lag in services. All children that were tested and qualified for specific learning disabilities had early childhood services for speech language and/or motor development. They usually received early intervention

services at ages 3, 4, or 5 and were dismissed. Not continuing those services for kindergarten and first grade leads to a red flag at second or third grade.

- Wait to fail models lead to children enrolling in special education in 3rd grade, at this point; they are usually 1-3 grade levels behind. Sixty-eight percent of children are not reading at their grade level when they graduate high school, 20% are dyslexic.
- RTI is a framework. It is available to all schools in the state and it is a priority for all of the co-ops.
- General Education Teachers need to be trained on RTI. Building level principals need training on how to have intervention teams in their district.
- Recommendation to restore professional development hours and investigate methods of funding. Professional development is critical and needs to be in every building. The Arkansas Department of Education to support the University system in developing training and providing it to schools.
- Coordination of services to tear down silos. Structure entities that encourage coordination.
- Quality programs need to be rolled out to ensure that RTI is implemented properly.
- Establish benchmarks, review and discuss which students are meeting those and what to do with the students who do not meet the benchmarks.
- Training on what an “in class” intervention looks like utilizing literacy coaches.

Senator Lindsey asked the presenters to work together to come up with a “white paper” that would outline recommendations to identify silos, what works, what does not work and best practices. Examine impediments and create methodologies to address impediments.

Special Education Pay Differential Survey

Mr. Darrick Williams, Director of Educator Licensure, Arkansas Department of Education, presented the results of the Special Education Pay Differential Survey. [See Exhibit F for full report].

Issues Discussed:

- The survey was sent to all school superintendents in Arkansas. Of the surveys mailed, 143 out of 239 responded, yielding a response rate of 60%.
- Thirty-seven percent of respondents stated that they provide relief days for their special education teachers.
- Senator Lindsey requested that the survey be sent to all the co-ops in Arkansas.

Review the current practice of identifying students for special education services and programs in public schools in Arkansas (Matrix Item A)

Mr. Robert Crouch, Psychological Examiner, Fayetteville Public School District [See Exhibit E for the full report]

Ms. Claire Mitchell, School Psychology Specialist, Fayetteville Public School District

Ms. Jennifer Zuniga Jackson, School Psychology Specialist, Fayetteville Public School District

Ms. Carla Curtis, Director of Special Services, Fayetteville School District

Issues Discussed:

- Process of an evaluation for special education services to come up with the child's profile using patterns of strengths and weaknesses approach.
- A wait to fail model is unacceptable.
- The review committee includes a general education teacher, the parent and a special education representative.
- Addition of psychologist in each district
- Need for additional professional development for general education teachers.
- IDEA entitles each student to an individualized evaluation.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:55 P.M.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday April 5, 2015 at 10:00 A.M. in Room B of the MAC Building.