



# New Jersey School Boards Association

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** John Bulina, President  
Lawrence S. Feinsod, Ed.D., Executive Director

**FROM:** Gerald J. Vernotica, Ed.D., Chairman, Special Education Task Force

**SUBJECT:** Special Education: A Service, Not a Place – Final Report of the  
NJSBA Special Education Task Force

**DATE:** March 14, 2014

I am pleased to submit to you *Special Education: A Service, Not a Place*, the final report of the New Jersey School Boards Association Special Education Task Force. The title reflects the belief of leading researchers and advocates that public education should not be thought of as two separate systems—general education and special education—but rather as a continuum of interventions, programs and services that respond to the individual needs of our students.

The Task Force, a dedicated group of school board members and administrators, spent over a year researching, collecting data, and consulting with experts. The group deliberated, often stridently, over strategies that would enable our schools to control costs while still meeting their obligation to provide a free and appropriate public education to all students.

The NJSBA Special Education Task Force began its work in January 2013 and met 13 times, concluding the project with the issuance of this report. During its deliberations, the Task Force consulted with more than 25 experts in special education, including representatives of higher education, key personnel in the U.S. and New Jersey Departments of Education, and special education advocates and practitioners. The Task Force surveyed the literature on the delivery and financing of special education services, and explored options that focus on academic achievement.

The 20 recommendations listed in the Executive Summary address early intervention, a focus on literacy, shared services, improved district- and state-level data collection, and changes in state and federal funding. In addition, the Task Force has recommended additions and/or changes to the *NJSBA Manual of Policies and Position on Education* in the following areas: County and Intermediate Units (FC 1420); State Funds (FC 3220); Intervention and Referral Services for General Education Pupils (FC 6164.1); Remedial Instruction (FC 6171.1); Special Education: Teacher Certification and Professional Development (FC 6171.4); Early Childhood Education/Preschool (FC 6178), and the Orientation and Training of Board Members (FC 9200).

Over the past 14 months, I have been privileged to work with the Task Force, a group of individuals who are sincere in their belief in excellent education for all children, while understanding the importance of services for our disabled students. The support and expertise of numerous NJSBA staff members were also instrumental in this project. I am confident that, with the completion of its final report, the Task Force has met its charge to identify cost-effective methods of delivering special education without diminishing the quality of services.