



Special Education: A Service, Not a Place

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION
TASK FORCE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

FINAL REPORT
MARCH 2014

General & Special Education

The vision...

- A **holistic system**
... integrated and coherent
- A **continuum** of...
 - Instruction, Programs
 - Interventions, Services*... under the umbrella of general education*
- Responds to **individual student needs**

Requires a new way of thinking...and major shifts in organizational and instructional delivery

The NJSBA Special Education Task Force

Charge:

- Review funding and delivery nationwide
- Identify best practices
- Explore alternative funding
- Recommend changes in state and federal statute/regulation and NJSBA policy

SCHOOL BOARD NOTES • JANUARY 15, 2013

Reflections: A Special Commitment to Education

They're taking on a complex issue, one without any easy solutions. But I feel confident that we can bring about meaningful change that will improve special-education funding, without diminishing services. If we do it right, this will benefit all students.

– Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod
NJSBA Executive Director

GOAL:

Reduce costs without diminishing quality

NJSBA Special Education Task Force

Membership

Dr. Gerald Vernotica, Chairman, Associate Professor, Montclair State

Lynne E. Crawford, South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education

Sheli Dansky, River Edge BOE

Carol Grossi, Superintendent, Hanover Park Regional School District

Dr. Leon B. Kaplan, Lawrence Township BOE (Mercer)

Michael Lee, Tabernacle BOE

Irene LeFebvre, Boonton Town BOE

Charles T. Miller, East Amwell BOE

Valerie Wilson, School Business Administrator, Newark School District

John Bulina, President, New Jersey School Boards Association



NJSBA Special Education Task Force



Staff Support

John Burns, Counsel

Barbara Deveney, Executive Assistant to General Counsel

Frank Belluscio, Deputy Executive Director/Director of Communications



A Service, Not a Place:

Final Report of the NJSBA Special Education Task Force

Work of the Task Force

(January 2013-March 2014)

- **Exhaustive study** of trends in special education programming, funding, and effective practices
- **Consultation** with 30+ experts, advocates and state and federal officials
- **Focus group meetings** with county supervisors of child study and directors of special services
- **Two surveys:**
 - Nationwide survey | alternative methods of funding
 - Statewide survey | trends, expenditures and staffing



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FOCUS I: Proactive and Preventive Programs, Deliberative Practice, Early Intervention

What we looked at...

- *Support for all students in all environments that **averts over-classification***
- *Methods that advance **academic achievement** and address needs **at an early stage***
- *Themes and practices associated with **effective, inclusive schools***



Special Education: A Conceptual Map to a More Integrated Approach

Major Themes

(Huberman, Navo & Parrish, 2011, p.13)

- Inclusion and access to the core curriculum
- Greater collaboration between special education and general education teachers
- Continuous assessment and use of Response to Intervention (RTI)¹
- Use of Explicit Direct Instruction²

Effective Practices

Effective leadership: instructional and transformational
(Huberman, Navo & Parrish, 2012, p.61)

1. Curriculum aligned with the current N.J. Curriculum Framework
2. Effective systems to support curriculum alignment
3. Emphasis on inclusion and access to the curriculum
4. Culture and practices that support high standards and student achievement
5. A well-disciplined academic and social environment
6. Use of student assessment data to inform decision-making
7. Unified practice supported by targeted professional development
8. Access to resources to support key initiatives
9. Effective staff recruitment, retention, and deployment
10. Flexible leaders and staff who work effectively in a dynamic environment



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FOCUS I: Proactive and Preventive Programs, Deliberative Practice, Early Intervention

Recommendation

- ***Multi-tiered frameworks of support***
... For example, RTI, I&RS, PBS
-

Results:

- *Improves student outcomes*
- *Addresses disproportionate classification of minority students*
- *Reduces overall classification rate, costs*



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FOCUS I: Proactive and Preventive Programs, Deliberative Practice, Early Intervention

Recommendation

- *Use of federal special education funding for **supplemental literacy and math** in inclusive settings*
-

Results:

- *Nathan Levenson: “Relentless focus on reading”*
- *When reading improves, classification rates drop*



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FOCUS I: Proactive and Preventive Programs, Deliberative Practice, Early Intervention

High-quality special education =
Inclusive practices +
Cohesive system of supports +
Integration with general education



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FOCUS II: Financing

What we looked at...

- *Special education funding in New Jersey and nationwide – **how funding relates to outcomes***
- *Reauthorization of IDEA – **opportunities to improve outcomes***
- *Equitable, adequate and **fair funding** mechanisms*
- *Expected outcomes and meeting them in **cost-effective manner***



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FOCUS II: Financing

Recommendations

- *Center state & federal funding on **student outcomes***
 - *Reward schools that meet **learning goals** and decrease achievement gaps*
 - *Give educators opportunity to manage resources*
- *Improve state and district **data collection** on staffing, service levels, and coding of expenditures*
- *Lower threshold for receipt of **extraordinary-cost aid***



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FOCUS II: Financing

Recommendations

- Provide **state assistance** to facilitate cost savings
 - Explore **alternative funding**, e.g., lottery, grants
 - Categorize certain services as “medical,” not educational, so they become eligible for **health insurance reimbursement**
-

Results

Outcome-based funding that promotes best practices and controls costs



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FOCUS III: Shared Services

What we looked at...

1. Current and future role of NJ special services districts, ESCs, jointure commissions, and district consortia

2. Shared services in other states

- New York State BOCES*
- Pennsylvania Intermediate Units*



BUCKS COUNTY INTERMEDIATE UNIT

"Our Children... Their Future... Bucks County IU"



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FOCUS III: Shared Services

Recommendations

- *Explore county and **regional-level related services***
 - *Child Study Team and **diagnostic** functions*
 - *Professional development, pre-school, technology and other **support services***
 - *Support for implementation and evaluation of **inclusive practices** and multi-tiered frameworks*
- *Create consortia to file for federal **Medicaid (SEMI) reimbursement***



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FOCUS III: Shared Services

Recommendations

- Provide ***financial incentives*** to share services
- Eliminate ***regulatory impediments***
- Eliminate obstacles to shared ***transportation***



Results:

Direct available resources to classroom programs;
improve quality of services; ***increase*** federal funding



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FOCUS IV: Training

Who we looked at...

Child Study Teams

*Teachers, Administrators, Paraprofessionals
and Other Staff*

Board Members

Image from
www.springfieldschool.org,
Springfield Twp., Burlington County



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FOCUS IV: Training

Recommendations

- *Provide targeted professional development for child study teams and other educators on IEP development and implementation and IDEA requirements*
- *Require that teacher preparation programs address adapting curriculum, instruction and assessment to the inclusive classroom*



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FOCUS IV: Training

Recommendations

- *Provide board member training on the legal, fiscal and programmatic aspects of special education, with the goal of improving outcomes.*
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RESULTS

- *Reduce IEP-related conflicts, and procedural errors*
- *Develop a culture of trust and cooperation among districts, parents and students*
- *Meet the needs of all students in the inclusive classroom*



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What we should expect from our students...

In best practice districts, the general education teacher is the primary teacher for students with mild to moderate special needs. Instead of decreasing the scope or rigor, classes for struggling students must teach the standard curriculum. The expectations for these students should be the mastery of the same grade level content as their peers.

– Nathan Levenson

A Win-Win Approach to Reducing Special Education Costs





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The NJSBA Special Education Task Force thanks you for your interest!

After a short break, we will return to answer your questions about the report and its recommendations.

The complete report is available online at www.njsba.org/specialeducation2014

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Panel Discussion: Findings and Recommendations

- ***Dr. Gerald Vernotica, chairman***
 - ***Michael Lee***
 - ***Irene LeFebvre***
 - ***Dr. Leon B. Kaplan***
 - ***Charles Miller***
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www.njsba.org/specialeducation2014

