

MINUTES

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON BEST PRACTICES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Meeting

Wednesday, January 6, 2016

The Legislative Task Force on Best Practices for Special Education met on Wednesday, January 6, 2016 at 10:00 a.m., in Room 130 of the State Capitol Building, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Members in Attendance

The following legislators attended: Senator Uvalde Lindsey; Chair. Representatives Tim Lemons, Vice Chair; and Sheilla Lampkin. Non-legislative members: Ms. Carla Brainard, Ms. Lisa Haley, Barbara Hunter-Cox, Ms. Renee Johnson, Ms. Sarah Moore, Dr. Greg Murry, Ms. Bailey Perkins, Ms. Debra Poulin, Ms. Shirley Ann Renix, Dr. Bruce Smith, Ms. Lisa Tisdale-Parker, Ms. Tina Vineyard and Ms. Angela Winfield.

Other legislators attending: Senators Jane English and Jason Rapert. Representatives Charles Armstrong, Mary Bentley, Mary Broadaway, Charlotte Douglas, Kenneth Ferguson, Charlene Fite, Bill Gossage, Fredrick Love, Julie Mayberry, James Sorvillo, Dan Sullivan, and DeAnn Vaught.

Senator Lindsey called the meeting to order.

Consideration to Approve Minutes of December 9, 2015. Without objection, the minutes were approved by the Task Force.

Review of Support and Staffing Ratios for Special Education Services and Programs (Matrix Item E) [EXHIBIT C]

Ms. Paula Smith, State School Nurse Consultant, Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and Ms. Nancy Wells, Founder & Executive Director, AbleTalks, were introduced. Ms. Smith presented a Power Point presentation entitled, "School Nurse Survey Results-School Years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015". She stated that in 2013, ADH mandated and required school nurses to report data on the school nurse survey. Referencing the most common allergy diagnoses, Ms. Smith stated there are a large number of students who require emergency medication, noting there has been an increased incident of life threatening allergies. Ms. Smith noted that some school districts have special education classrooms that resemble a pediatric intensive care unit. Some of the most common procedures done by school nurses include: oral feeding, bowel and bladder programs, toileting, and updrafts. Five-hundred and fifty-nine schools have one nurse to cover only one campus and three-hundred and ninety-two campuses share a nurse with at least one other campus. School nurses work closely with special education to take care of the students' needs. Ms. Smith noted that there are eight students with do not resuscitate orders in Arkansas' school districts.

Ms. Smith reported that the Arkansas Department of Education has made it possible for school nurses to begin collecting data on the school level of acuity of the students. Regarding the collection of students' data, Arkansas is far ahead of other states. Senator Lindsey asked the following questions:

1. Will the task force recommend more nurses in schools?
2. Will ADE revise their statutory requirement for certain hours of professional development to include nurses?

Representative Mayberry stated that if the task force increases the amount of nurses in the matrix recommendations, there is no guarantee that the money will be used for school nurses. Regarding Medicaid reimbursement for school nurses, it was noted that some schools bill for personal care while others do not. School districts are encouraged to utilize this resource.

The task force discussed other relevant issues and the following questions were asked:

- How much time does a school nurse spend in a day in direct services for special education students? Currently, nurses do not have a time study regarding this. Ms. Smith will work on gathering this information to submit to the task force. In addition, Ms. Haley asked that the 504 information in special education be separated because the funding is much different, as it is important to know how much time is spent on students that are eligible for 504 when compared to special education students.
- How many CNA's are on school campuses; how many of them are mandated to have training in special education and where are they located? Ms. Smith will inquire about this information.

Ms. Wells presented a Power Point presentation entitled, "AbleTalks". She said AbleTalks is an independent, tuition free, continuing education program for young adults with autism or other disabilities. Some services include speech therapy, career counseling and mental health therapy. Each student's education and career goals are as unique as they are. Due to, learning differences and capabilities, the path to a fulfilling career will often involve an alternative track for any given student. AbleTalks hourly cost per student is \$16. With two 3-hour sessions, weekly costs per student are \$96. Moving into 2016, the AbleTalks team is looking to establish a student sponsorship option from donors.

Review of the Comprehensive Evaluation of Teacher Preparation [EXHIBITS D, D-1]

Mr. Darrick Williams, Director of Educator Licensure, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and Ms. Joan Luneau, Educator Preparation Coordinator, ADE, were recognized. Ms. Luneau presented a Power Point presentation entitled, "2015 State Teacher Policy Yearbook". She said Arkansas received an overall grade of B- up from the previous grade of C on the 2011 report and it is unchanged from the overall grade in 2013. According to the report, only five states have a higher grade than Arkansas. Moreover, Arkansas was listed as not meeting the requirement that special education teachers know the subject matter they are licensed to teach. In addition, Arkansas was listed as only meeting a small part of the requirement that teachers know the science of reading instruction and understand the instructional shifts associated with college and career readiness standards.

Since the data was reported to the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), Arkansas has added a special education resource endorsement available for K-6 or K-12. This new license will only be eligible to licensed teachers in content areas. Regarding teacher preparation, Ms. Luneau pointed out that ADE is working to attract individuals to the profession by preparing and supporting individuals and retaining and better promoting the profession of teaching.

Ms. Ann Clemmer, Senior Associate Director, Academic Affairs, Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE), was recognized. She stated that school districts need more teachers, but the special education professionals do not want to see their profession and training diminished. At the request of the task force, Ms. Clemmer and Ms. Haley will work together to provide the task force with a recommendation that will meet the goals of ADE and ADHE.

Regarding the NCTQ recommendations, Dr. Smith stated that Arkansas does not answer to NCTQ, noting the organization is a private lobbying group. He noted that the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC) are the standards that they use and recognize to ensure a balance of outcomes, evaluation and quality. Lisa Haley noted that ADE does not report to NCTQ, ADE looks at the recommendations because they have a national presence.

The taskforce recessed for lunch at noon and reconvened at 1:00pm.

Review of the Legislative Task Force for the Best Practices in Special Education Preliminary Report [EXHIBIT E].

Ms. Nell Smith, Research Administrator, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized and discussed the "Legislative Task Force on the Best Practices for Special Education Draft Preliminary Report". Ms. Smith informed the task force that the report is based on the statutory responsibilities. She reminded the task force that the preliminary report is due on February 1, 2016 and the final report is due September 1, 2016. Ms. Smith advised that the task force should consider its overall audience in determining whether to use it as

a persuasive document or as a reference document for future readers. Task force members were advised to record their ideas and submit them to Ms. Smith.

After a lengthy discussion, the task force agreed to include the following information in the report as well as other relevant information:

- mission statement
- data
- appendices
- recommendations
- executive summary
- categories of disabilities used to determine students' eligibility for special education ages 5-21
- Picus Study – 3.3 aides

Staff will work with Ms. Smith to make necessary changes to the report. Ms. Haley stated that ADE's RTI Arkansas training model is incorporated in SSIP, noting that it should be included in the report.

Senator Lindsey noted that Matrix Items K-P have to be completed within the next 5 months.

Representative Lampkin made a motion to submit the preliminary report as amended and with necessary changes by staff on or before February 1, 2016. The motion was seconded by Ms. Perkins. Without objection, the motion was approved by the Task Force.

The next task force meetings will be held on **Wednesday, February 10, at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm in Room 130 of the State Capitol Building.**

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.