

**CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

RESC Special Education Funding Working Group
Wednesday, March 30, 2016

I. Call to Order

Deborah Richards called the meeting to order at 9:05.

II. Introductions

Members Present:

Paula Colen, Executive Director, EASTCONN
Kathy Demsey, Co-chair, Commissioner of Education Designee
Mary Glassman, Manager of Office for Regional Efficiencies, CREC
Leah Grenier, OPM Designee
Eileen Howley, Executive Director, LEARN (via speakerphone)
Marcia Leclerc, Mayor, Town of East Hartford
Rob Parenti, Director of Special Services, Education Connection
Michael Regan, Director of Special Education, CES
Deborah Richards, Director of Student Services, CREC
Margaret Walsh, Director of Pupil Personnel, Southington Public Schools

Non-Members Present:

Erika Forte*, ACES Assistant Executive Director for Schools and Programs
Dorian Lockett, Assistant to Mayor Leclerc
Patrice McCarthy, CABE Deputy Director and General Counsel

** (To Be Appointed)*

III. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the February 17, 2016, meeting were approved. Minutes and agenda are posted on the SDE website at: <http://www.ct.gov/sde/RESCSpEdFundingWG>.

IV. Discussion and Review of RESC Fiscal Data

- Kathy shared districts' special education cost data collected by the State Department of Education. Approximately 19-22% of ECS funds are attributed to special education costs. The Governor's proposed mid-term budget reduces the Excess Cost Grant from \$139 million to \$130 million. Typically, the state funds approximately 78-82% of Excess Cost grant requests. Federal (IDEA) and federal Medicaid reimbursement was approximately 6.65% of district special education funding, and approximately 62% of special education costs come from local tax dollars. Members asked Kathy for a report showing the Medicaid reimbursement broken out. Members questioned how much Medicaid funds are brought into the state vs. how much gets applied to the districts.
- Members discussed the costs of private special education schools/programs vs. RESC programs, and of past guidance to districts to use RESC programs as a first option. Deborah will try to find past guidance.
- Members discussed regional calendars and transportation cost sharing – LEARN and EASTCONN have had volunteer regional calendars for a while. This helps with transportation, particularly with the technical high schools. There are still differences between districts given the flex days and number of snow days, etc. The RESC Special Education Survey is gathering information on barriers regarding the use of regionalized transportation for out-of-district students. A request was made by Mayor Leclerc for a copy of the PDF survey.
- Kathy shared that there is an RFP to study regional transportation for the Sheff Region. The report is due back sometime this summer.
- EASTCONN shared analysis of their special education cost data. The biggest area of growth has been for students with behavioral challenges and students on the autism spectrum.
- Meg requested that each RESC provide a list of schools/programs they run and the population they serve. This does not need to include classrooms in other public schools.
- ACES shared analysis of their special education cost data. ACES noted that, as a result of closing some statewide facilities and bringing students back from out of state placements, the students they are serving are more significantly challenged than in the past. They see an increase in mental health issues in young children. Mayor Leclerc requested that we look at the increase in growth for students with behavioral challenges and autism and do a cost projection of what this increase will cost the state in the future if students are not treated while they are young.
- A suggestion was made that future agenda items include a discussion of mental health services provided by RESCs and a more in-depth conversation regarding transportation models.
- CES shared analysis of their special education funding. The pie chart is a breakdown of all CES funding, not just special education. CES has stopped being a Birth to Three provider due to the significant program deficit.
- Meg suggested that districts could use assistance with regular education alternative programs and community programs for students with disabilities ages 18-21 years old.

V. Update on Legislated Survey

Deborah reported that 77 districts have completed the survey, which is due by April 4.

VI. Next Steps

- RESCs are to provide Molly Aunger (Maunger@crec.org) with a list of special education programs they run.
- Kathy will see if she can get Medicaid reimbursement pulled out from IDEA funds by district.
- Future topics to include transportation, models for regional programs, mental health services provided by district, analysis of growth of students with behavioral challenges and autism and the impact on districts, and discussion of the cost of private vs RESC programs.

VII. Schedule of meetings

Please note that the location has been changed to the State Office Building for the next meeting:

April 20, 2016
9:00 – 10:30 AM
State Office Building
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06016
Room 307A

May 11, 2016
12:00 – 1:30 PM
Location TBD

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:37 a.m.