

DRAFT

**CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

RESC Special Education Funding Working Group
Wednesday, April 20, 2016

I. Call to Order

Kathy Demsey called the meeting to order at 9:10.

II. Introductions

Members Present:

Paula Colen, Executive Director, EASTCONN
Rep. Jeff Currey, Appropriations Committee
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
Marcia Leclerc, Mayor, Town of East Hartford
Jeffrey Kitching, Executive Director, Education Connection
Rob Parenti, Director of Special Services, Education Connection
Michael Regan, Director of Special Education, CES
Deborah Richards, Director of Student Services, CREC

Non-Members Present:

Sharon Bremner, Director of Pupil Personnel, East Hartford
Dorian Lockett, Assistant to Mayor Leclerc
Martha Deeds, Senior Policy Analyst, the Connecticut School Finance Project

III. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 30, 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

- LEARN shared analysis of their special education cost data. They are in the process of rebuilding their special education program and services to meet the needs articulated by local districts. They are working on developing options as close to each district as possible given the large geographic range of their region.
- CREC shared analysis of their special education cost data. CREC has a 50-year history of providing services to students with disabilities in their special education programs. Many students are served in their local districts.
- Education Connection shared analysis of their special education cost data. Education Connection made a business decision prior to the current administration to eliminate many of

their special education programs. They are currently working on determining needs for programming in the region.

- Other issues discussed while reviewing RESC fiscal data:
 - RESC programs do not recruit students/families. They can only accept referrals from districts.
 - Districts may choose private special education schools vs. RESC programs to prevent a legal battle. The Burden of Proof issue needs to be addressed.
 - RESC priority is to return student to district whenever possible. At times, students may return with RESC support.
 - RESCs may assist districts with establishing a program and then remove their services once the district has built capacity.
 - Districts need to maintain a continuum in district and keep students as close to home as possible.
 - At times, it may be more costly to serve a child in district.
 - There is no public information regarding tuition rates for private approved/non-approved special education programs.
 - The major expense of all the out-of-district programs is the staffing. High staffing is needed due to the intense needs of the student population.
 - Choice program schools may request staffing for students at district expense that the district does not agree with.
 - The bottom line for all out-of-district placements should have outcome measures for student progress.
 - There needs to be a focus on parent information regarding the benefits of educating students in the least restrictive environment and the district's legal responsibility.
 - There has been an increase in the number of advocates that attend PPTs. Some advocates are well informed and some are not.
 - One of the primary challenges for districts is the unpredictability of cost due to students with intensive needs moving into the district.

V. Review of RESC Summary of Special Education Programs

A summary of the programs that RESCs provide was disseminated. Some RESCs included programs that are housed in local districts, some did not. It was suggested that we review a list of private special education programs at the next meeting for comparison.

VI. Use of RESCs (Sec. 10-66o)

This item was tabled until next meeting.

VII. Breakout of Medicaid Funding

An analysis of district Medicaid funding was disseminated. Discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

VIII. Update on Legislated Survey

This item was tabled until the next meeting.

IX. Next Meetings:

Kathy shared that she has been in discussion with Representative Currey regarding the due date of the report. The legislation reads that “the working group shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or July 1, 2016, whichever is later.” They interpret this to mean that the report may be submitted after July 1. There was discussion regarding reporting of the district special education survey. The results of survey are due on July 1, with recommendations due on October 1.

There was a request that the committee review the recent publication *Improving How Connecticut Funds Special Education* put out by the Connecticut School Finance Project. A link to the report will be sent to members, and Katie Roy will be contacted to provide an overview of the report at the next meeting.

X. Future Meetings Dates

May 11, 2016

12:00 – 2:00 PM

Location: CREC Central, 111 Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford, CT
EDO Conference Room (3rd FL)

June 1, 2016

9:00 – 11:00 AM

Location: CREC Central, 111 Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford, CT
Council Room (1st FL)

June 23, 2016

9:00 – 11:00 AM

Location: CREC Central, 111 Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford, CT
EDO Conference Room (3rd FL)

X. Adjournment

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