State Advisory Panel

January 15, 2020

Minutes

Present: Carrie Woodcock

Libby Stone-Sterling

Roy Fowler

Ann Belanger

Valerie Mattes

Jodie Hall

Erin Frazier

Artulean McKenna

Cheryl Neiverth

Christine Sullivan

Gwen Sartoris

Nancy Lander

Phone: Dulcey Laberge

Sherreccia Jackson

**1. Open comment:**

1. *Gwen Sartoris* – Morrison Center will be merging with Bangor. The two centers will be referred to as Morrison Center at Bangor and Morrison Center at Scarborough. One of the first initiatives in Bangor will be an adult day program. This will not negatively impact the CDS children in the southern part of the state but has the potential to increase Southern Maine pre-school partnerships.

2. *Carrie Woodcock* – Maine Parent Federation has released their Special Education booklet that covers their yearly workshop.

**2. Update from Special Services – Erin Frazier, State Director, DOE Special Services**

*Year in Review –*

1.The Department met requirements through OSEP. Maine was 1 of only 21 states that received this determination.

2. The Department met the federal mandate for 1%, meaning that students are appropriately designated to take alternate assessments.

3. The Department is working on a mentoring program for the certifications process to increase the educational workforce and support new teachers as they come into education.

4. Think-tank events were held throughout the State. Several of them addressed MUSER and effective practices.

5. The Department has been Heavily involved with the Department of Health and Human Services to address federal funding via MaineCare.

6. There has been an increase in monitoring and professional development, to aid in assurance of being able to equip staff for helping students.

7. There has been a high level of involvement in numerous boards and panels, including Deaf and Hard of Hearing Panel.

8. There has been positive support from the Office of Student Supports and the Commissioners Office.

9. The Legislative season is upon us – the Department will be visiting the high cost of education and trying to get legislation to focus on the overall cost of education, as opposed to special education specifically.

10. Children’s Cabinet – Most of the students that were brought in for this panel were selected by District guidance counselors. Several students will be aging out of the Cabinet as they graduate from high school and the Commissioner supports diversifying the panel.

**3. Update from CDS – Roy Fowler, State Director, CDS**

* 1. Child Development Services is in great shape, with high collaboration with the Department of Education.
  2. The last 10 years have been highly underfunded with low compensation.

*Financial Status:*

* 1. There has been a reduction in commercial transportation via collaboration with local transportation and reimbursement to parents.
  2. CDS has been able to rein in expenses and increase revenue.
  3. There has been an increase in State funding for CDS.

*Recruitment and Retention:*

1. CDS has moved to State insurance from a more costly insurance.
2. Increase in funds for Continued Education by 150%.
3. CDS added more positions, which increased hiring and rehiring. Even in doing this, the amount of vacancies in CDS still makes up 14.5% of all positions.

*System capacity:*

* 1. There have been 25 additional contractors added this past fiscal year.
  2. There has been great partnership with Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative.
  3. The “*tipping point*” has been pushed later in the year for most regions – *the time in which the needs met exceed the ability to meet them*

*Legislation:*

1. LD 1635 – *Resolve, to Improve Access to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Services for Children from Birth to 8 Years of Age*
2. LD 512 – *Resolve, to Authorize the Legislature to Contract for an Independent Review to Evaluate and Plan for the Implementation of Maine’s Early Childhood Special Education Services* – A contract was signed with Professional Consultant Group (PCG). There will be 2 phases. The first phase will be a general survey investigating what other states do, impacts this may have, etc. The second phase will be developing a detailed plan for what the transition would look like.
3. LD 1715 – Carry-over Bill – *An Act to Reorganize the Provision of Services for Children with Disabilities from Birth to 5 Years of Age* – This likely will not be acted on due to LD 512 not being finished.

*Unmet needs:*

1.Two Rivers Region, which is the most widespread area, has the highest unmet needs and struggles most with speech therapy. CDS will be collaborating with Lewiston Public Schools and have spoken with Auburn Public Schools for professional assistance.

*CDS locations by region:*

* CDS Aroostook – Aroostook County
* CDS Down East – Washington and Hancock Counties
* CDS First step – Lewiston area
* CDS Midcoast – Rockland and Belfast areas
* CDS Opportunities – Oxford area
* CDS PEDS – Waterville area
* CDS REACH – Portland area
* CDS Two Rivers – Bangor and Brewer areas
* CDS York – York to Fryberg

*Challenges* **–**

* 1. Shortage of staff
  2. Lack of formula for CDS funding
  3. The increased starting payrate of teachers does not apply to CDS staff, which may cause the gap of employment to increase again.
  4. Continued proposal increases stressors and turnover in CDS – staff cited that continued uncertainty as a reason for moving on in employment.
  5. CDS did not receive a preschool development grant this fiscal year.

*Open comment*:

1. Will the EPSD bill help with identification?
   * Maybe. It’s about getting other programs on board, including WIC and hospitals with early intervention. There needs to be an increase in individualized family programing, not just educational programing. – GED for parents, reliable transportation, employment, housing, etc.
2. Are there any Maine post-secondary education programs with Speech Language?
   * As of now, just University of Maine at Orono.
3. Discussion on the need for early intervention – this can decrease the need for future intervention if caught early enough.
4. As a State, we are the oldest State in the country with a huge lack of services for the elderly as well. Some of our senior population is still not being identified at nearly 70 years of age.
5. There is a need to look at the medical model for loan forgiveness to address the shortage and desire – or lack thereof – to stay in education. Early recruitment and preparation are key, looking as early as high school students.
6. Need to discuss certifications issues on the why’s and modifications needed. 90 credit hours to be an Ed. Tech 3?
7. Is there an awareness for tuition reimbursement? Educator talent community is looking at this currently. Just because we can get them, doesn’t mean we are retaining them. Staying in the field is different than staying in the field in Maine. More work with more responsibilities.
8. Increased issue with USDOE denying reimbursement to educators that have already fulfilled their requirements.

**5. MDOE Initiatives – Ann Belanger, Deputy Director, DOE Special Services**

1. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): is an evidence-based three-tiered framework for addressing student behavior through systems change. When it’s implemented well, students achieve improved social and academic outcomes, schools experience reduced exclusionary discipline practices, and school personnel feel more effective.

2. Transition: Transition refers to the process of preparing students with disabilities to achieve their post-secondary goals, including education/training, employment, and independent living. Transition is a required part of an IEP for students who are in 9th grade or above or 16 years old. Transition plans must be updated annually.

3. Math4ME: As a component of Maine’s State Systematic Improvement plan, Math4ME is designed to implement evidence-based professional development to improve math proficiency of students with disabilities in grades 3-8 and to improve instructional practices of teachers of these students.

4. Facilitated IEP Meetings: A proposed program that will train facilitators to assist SAUs and parents in conducting student-focused IEP meetings that result in the development of appropriate IEPs. Facilitated IEPs can also improve relationships and communication between parents and the school.

5. Trauma-Informed schools: In a trauma-informed school, the adults in the school community are prepared to recognize and respond to those who have been impacted by traumatic stress. Those adults include administrators, teachers, staff, and parents. Trauma-Informed Practice is a strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

6. Dyslexia: Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. Maine Revised Statute 20-A M.S.R. § 4701-B requires school administrative units to screen students in kindergarten through second grade who have difficulty in these areas: phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming skills and encoding skills.

***Members were asked to rank these initiatives in the order of importance to the stakeholders they represent on the Panel. Forms were emailed to members to present.***

*Open comment:*

1. Members would like to hear if parents feel meeting facilitators are as neutral as in the mediation process (parents do not always feel that way). DHHS Dulcey Laberge does use this model in meetings with families. There were unanswered questions as to how this would work for Student led IEP meetings, which is something that will be investigated by the Department.

2. Members discussed trauma-informed schools policies. It was established the there is some work going on in the Office of Student Supports but Special Services does not house trauma-informed schools’ policies.

3. Parents are feeling that trauma-informed schools allows districts to place blame on parents for educational issues.

4. The newly appointed DOE Dyslexia Coordinator is Tracy Whitlock. Members would like to hear from Ms. Whitlock on this initiative.

5. Re-accessing the Functional Behavior Assessment process for PBIS has been discussed. Restorative Justice may not work for higher level tiers but can work for lower-level tiers.

**6. Open comment:**

1. There were concerns voiced regarding the dyslexia coordinator and if the Department has one, as discussed above. The new dyslexia website is available at <https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/specialed/initiatives/dyslexia/>

Contact information for Tracy Whitlock is:

[Tracy.Whitlock@maine.gov](mailto:Tracy.Whitlock@maine.gov)

Next meeting: February 26, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in Room 103A