
Special Education Advisory Council

May 17, 2007

Minutes of Meeting

Members Present:

Emmett Keenan, Heather Nichols, Brianna Inkster, Rebecca Schlough, Cindy Owen, Michelle Hilden, Elisabeth Lodge Rogers, Randy Arnold

The agenda was reviewed and approved.

Communication About Resources for Students and Families

A concern was expressed by the committee members that information regarding resources such as support groups, activities for students, family training opportunities, and the brochure of the Special Education Advisory Committee aren't being provided to families of student with special needs. There was a discussion about the different venues that may be available to be more efficient with communications. Elisabeth and Randy are the "clearing house" for information to assure that it is endorsed by District special education practices. It is then shared with special education supervisors and due process specialists. She would like to see the IEP managers take the lead in providing information to parents and families of their student. The idea of a news link on the special education website was mentioned as well as a newsletter from the director. The group felt the best way to share information is by putting it in student's backpacks.

Elisabeth mentioned that each building receives teacher instructional supply dollars funded by special education for the purpose of making copies and postage to aid in getting information out. Also, the SEAC brochure has been given to the District Due Process Specialists to share with IEP managers in their buildings.

Elisabeth will follow up with how we can improve communications about community activities, parent trainings, special education news updates, and 3rd Party Billing. Randy will add the SEAC brochure to the May 24th agenda for the Due Process Specialist meeting to request it be provided to the buildings for Fall open houses, as well as a request made that it be put in the schools waiting areas information centers.

Teachers and Paraprofessional Reductions Related to Budget Adjustments

Members asked about getting information sooner about which licensed teachers will not renewed for the next school year during the budget adjustment process. Elisabeth said that we can give the number of tentative reductions, but the District has timelines and school board actions that need to be strictly adhered to assure data privacy. She reiterated that the total amount of reductions for special education for year 2007-08 is \$625,000. During the Spring staffing process, Elisabeth and Randy offer to meet with the school administrators and staff to discuss pending staff changes due to budget adjustments. The MDE workload formula to determine the number of licensed teacher FTE's needed was discussed. It was decided to reduce one school social worker and one school psychologist in order to continue with the crisis mental health program.

Randy discussed the early intervention process and the department reviewing the re-evaluation

process. Under the reauthorization of IDEIA, we can focus more on what is meaningful to students versus, being “gate-keepers” for students due process. Part of the focus will be specialized instruction to benefits students rather than focusing on testing, which will save time and ultimately allow for students to be engaged in more meaningful direct service.

There won't be any reductions in paraprofessionals for next year. Elisabeth stated that it's typical to receive several resignations by paraprofessionals throughout the summer, but every effort will be made to fill necessary positions by the start of the school year. She also mentioned that for administrators and schools who feel the impact of licensed staff reductions is too great, they may choose to hire a licensed teacher instead of four paraprofessionals. An effort is currently in progress to have elementary paraprofessional daily hours more consistent with secondary, which would mean increasing day to 6.25 hours.

State Funding Allocations if Education Bills Pass

Brianna Inkster opened a discussion about the current legislative education bills for increased funding and how it would impact District Special Education if approved or not approved. Elisabeth explained that the District budget for 2007-08 is approved and cross-subsidy relief won't change the budget. She also stated that she must meet the Minnesota State Maintenance of Effort requirements, but cannot exceed more than is budgeted. There was also a discussion about the levy process for funding and the impact of impending of teacher contract negotiations and how that may increase funding needs.

Integrated Service Delivery Model

Randy Arnold explained that the concept of the integrated service delivery model aligns with the Board goals for student achievement and creating a positive climate. For the past two years the District has been discussing integrated service delivery, which requires that we look at and develop strategies to integrate all services so students get service in the best way possible in the least restrictive environment. This is a change of thinking in that instead of compartmentalizing students, we think of how we are all responsible for educating students. The focus is on integrating instruction and having specialized instruction for students as needed. This effort doesn't impact the budget, it's an instructional change. In order to better provide English Language Learners (ELL) with better service, clustering will occur, which is part of integrated service.

Future Meetings

After a brief discussion, it was decided that the Thursday morning time would be preferable to most for meetings for next year.

Announcement

Elisabeth announced that Reggie Engebritson, Special Education Supervisor for secondary schools and programs, accepted a position at Northland Special Education Cooperative as Director of Special Education.

Submitted by: Sharie Narlock

These minutes are not official until reviewed and approved by the Special Education Advisory Council.