

TASK FORCE MEMBERS' PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FINAL REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE TO IDENTIFY SPECIAL EDUCATION COST DRIVERS AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES (December 19, 2017 Meeting)

Broad Category A	Broad Category B	Condensed Summary of Recommendation	Task Force Member Recommendation (Verbatim)	Member
Address Staffing needs		Review and address barriers to retention and recruitment of special education providers; geographic disparities in availability of providers and pay	3. Retention and Recruitment of Special Education Teachers, Related Services Providers and Psychological Service Providers a. New certification requirement of a 6-credit course for teacher with a conditional certificate - Cost to district: tuition, time for staff (during school day and outside of school time, providing a mentor/coach), stress on staff new to the field. b. Inequity in availability of providers across the state. c. Inequality of pay across state - smaller districts have a difficult time retaining staff when larger districts can offer higher pay. d. Schools having to “compete” with medical field for providers.	Leslie Snyder
Address Staffing needs		Address lack of special education providers/specialists	3. Need to address the lack of special education providers/specialists. The lack of providers drives up the cost for all districts. Rather than making it more difficult to attain special education certification/licensure, the State needs to provide a fast track for those interested.	Andrea Disch
Align State & Federal Regulations	Reduce Paperwork	Reduce paperwork; align with federal regulations	6. Reduce the state requirement for special education paperwork and align more with the federal regulations.	Jill Watson
Align State & Federal Regulations	Reduce Paperwork	Review State special education regulations vs. federal guidelines; need to reduce paperwork and reduce redundancy in forms	1. Review Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) to see where Maine exceeds Federal regulations. a. Align Maine’s regulations with Federal regulations. b. Currently, we are asked to complete more paperwork than required federally, which takes valuable time away from students with disabilities. c. There is duplication in the documents/forms - i.e. writing the same thing on a variety of forms or within the same document. d. If our regulation were “paired” down to the federal standard, it would be easier for MDOE to be consistent in their interpretation of the rules.	Leslie Snyder
Align State & Federal Regulations	Reduce Paperwork	Review State special education regulations vs. federal guidelines; need to reduce paperwork and reduce redundancy in forms	2. Review the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations and consider which areas unnecessarily exceed the federal guidelines. * Reduce redundancy within our requirements/paperwork, giving more time to teachers in order to provide specially designed instruction to students. * The parental rights could be less cumbersome. * Potential reduction of litigation.	Kathleen Cox
Align State & Federal Regulations		Align state special education law/rule with federal	6. Bring Maine’s special education law/rule more in line with federal statute.	Rick Colpitts & Jerry Nault

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Enhance RTI / MTSS	Dyslexia law	Improve RTI process; start with dyslexia law and supporting it financially and with TA as a start to providing solid reading foundation to all students	3. Reading is the gateway to all other learning. Without strong fundamental reading skills students who get behind are unable to get caught up and more likely to be identified later in their educational career. When they are identified more often than not the obstacles are greater and more difficult to overcome, have led to behaviors, and ultimately the interventions are longer and more costly. Maine law requires SAU's to screen for dyslexia for all K-2 students. I do not believe this is being done at all Maine schools, nor is it being enforced, and the technical assistance for schools to carry out this law has not been substantial. There was a lot of discussion on providing more financial support for a proper RTI process in order to lower the percentage of students who are being identified. I believe starting with the Dyslexia law and properly supporting it both financially as well as with solid technical assistance would be the place to start in providing Maine students with a solid reading foundation and lower referrals to Special Education in the future.	Carrie Woodcock
Enhance RTI / MTSS	Address Staffing needs	Provided additional funding for RTI / MTSS; address staffing needs for targeted interventions	2. Need for Additional Funding through General Education for MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) or RTI. a. Interventions should be data driven - regular education staff need training in various intervention approaches/strategies and data collection. b. Need personnel to provide targeted interventions. c. Interventions to target: i. Academic, ii. Behavior, iii. Mental Health.	Leslie Snyer
Enhance RTI / MTSS	Promote Integration vs. Silos	Strengthen RTI and regular classroom instruction; increase classroom teacher investment in special education students	2. The need to strengthen RTI and regular classroom instruction. Regular instruction teachers need to be invested in these students. Require regular instruction teachers to be the teacher of record /teacher responsible for issuing grades. The exception would only be those students who spend 100% of their instructional time in special education classroom.	Andrea Disch
Enhance RTI / MTSS	Revise EPS formula	Provided additional funding for RTI / MTSS; change EPS treatment of math and literacy coaches and behavior strategists	1. Provide additional funding through general education for Multi-Tiered System of Support (RTI). * Training provided to all regular education staff in the areas of; differentiating instruction, providing targeted interventions that are data-based, and using interventions and instructional strategies that are research based. * A system for oversight to assure that MTSS has been implemented in all districts. * Trained teachers to provide the instruction and track progress. * Math and Literacy coaches that are not considered classroom teachers in our EPS count. Currently their costs are counted under direct instruction when they should be listed under support. * Behavior strategists to provide behavior plans and consultation to classroom teachers. These providers should also be counted under support.	Kathleen Cox
Enhance RTI / MTSS	Revise EPS Formula	Take RTI out of special education law and move to general education law; include student interventions as line in EPS formula	4. Redefine RTI and take the RTI statute out of special education law and put it in general education law to give it more visibility and apply it to all students. Have a line in the EPS funding formula specifically for student interventions so that these are noticed and funded.	Rick Colpitts & Jerry Nault
Facilitate MaineCare billing		Simplify the MaineCare billing process and reduce administrative burden	1. MaineCare-True process that facilitates schools billing. Make it simpler, not admin heavy (needing more staff, billing people, etc.), have DHHS/Kepro clearly state their review meets medical necessity to start, and that parts align with IEPs and not two systems of IEP and ITPs. People are weary of the audit risk, the two competing timelines and systems and the billing process.	Jill Watson

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Facilitate MaineCare billing		Change MaineCare billing rules for school-based reimbursement	1. Change MaineCare Billing rules to include a provision for School-Based reimbursement (with a different but appropriate set of school based rules). It is difficult /risky for schools to seek reimbursement under rules established for a medical provider.	Andrea Disch
Facilitate MaineCare billing		State should assist districts with MaineCare billing and cover the seed	8. The state should assist districts in billing Medicaid funding and cover the seed, as they used to do.	Rick Colpitts & Jerry Nault
Miscellaneous		Encourage student independence; write one-on-one need into IEP	3. The specified need for one-on-one paraprofessionals/Ed. Techs. should be written into a student's IEP so we can continue to monitor and pull that requirement out when it no longer is needed. We need to encourage and plan for student independence.	Rick Colpitts & Jerry Nault
Promote Integration vs. Silos		Increase integration of general education and special education and reduce silos; allow teachers with subject expertise to teach all students; special education instructors concentrate on adapted instruction	2. I am a strong believer of inclusion and after visiting with Nathan Levenson I believe that not only can inclusion be done in a meaningful and universal way but it can also be done in a cost saving way as well. I would recommend that general education and special education become much more integrated instead of separate silos. Using a universal method of teaching most children's needs can be met while still seeing academic growth (I understand those with very high needs may not be able to be included). This method of teaching would allow teachers with subject expertise to instruct all students, ensuring all our children are learning from the instructors that know the material the best. It would also enable Special Education instructors to concentrate on providing specialized and adapted instruction when necessary. In addition this method of instruction would mean our paraprofessionals would provide classroom support not necessarily one to one support for one individual. This will allow give them the ability to assist all students within a classroom, provide some one to one instruction when necessary, and to be able to initiate social and academic interactions between all students instead of being limited to just one student.	Carrie Woodcock
Promote Integration vs. Silos	Address Staffing needs	Address silos between special education and regular classrooms; review policies, funding formulas and job titles to identify barriers to integrated instruction that is responsive to needs of all students; address shortage of special education teachers	1. The state of Maine is experiencing a dire shortage of special education teachers. Simultaneously, our schools are being inundated with higher numbers of students with extraordinary needs. Classroom teachers are stretched, to the breaking point, attempting to meet the needs of all of their students...from the very low performing students, to students who are gifted learners. Special education teachers are tasked with ensuring their caseload of students are in the least restrictive environment, which creates a scenario of finding a myriad of ways to support each child in the mainstream. As a school principal, I am also frequently in the role of trying to support students who do not have a diagnosis; however, they are unsuccessful in school...dis-regulated, perhaps on the autism spectrum, or maybe a child with a traumatic history. These children are unraveling classrooms. Here is the rub. Without a diagnosis, we cannot have help from the special education teacher. Legislation, well intended legislation, has created silos in our schools. Special education teachers are "hands off" with students who do not have a handicapping condition, and regular education teachers are "leaving the teaching" of students who are in special education, to the special educator. We need to have "all hands on deck" with all of the students in our schools. Rigid laws governing special education practices have created an inability for school administrators to be responsive to all students in a proactive manner. I would like to place our policies under a microscope to identify the barriers (and silos) they are unintentionally creating in our schoolhouses. All educators, regardless of title or certification, should be able to lock arms and, with skill sets as the driver, respond to children who need their help. Currently, funding formulas and job titles are preventing us from being as effective as we could be....and this could in fact, be a cost driver.	Jennifer McGee

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Promote Integration vs. Silos		Blend lines between special education, Title 1 and regular classroom teachers; allow best teachers to teach all students	1. Blend the lines when it comes to special education teachers, Title I teachers, and regular education teachers to allow the best teachers to be teaching all students. Simply stated stop putting everybody in silos; in order to support proficiency for all our students, everybody has to be supporting each other, with the most qualified teachers instructing those students with greatest need.	Rick Colpitts & Jerry Nault
Promote Integration vs. Silos	Revise EPS Formula	Identify reading/math specialists and allow to teach all students; change EPS formula to allow funding for specialists	2. Identify capable teachers as reading and math specialists and allow them to teach all students. Change the EPS formula to allow funding specifically for those specialists and make specialists their own category, exempting them from the teacher-student ratios currently in EPS.	Rick Colpitts & Jerry Nault
Reduce Costs	High cost in-district	Use formula to document high cost in-district students; support schools who serve those students	2. Actual formula for documenting high cost in-district to reward schools who service those students.	Jill Watson
Reduce Costs	Instructional materials	Address cost of education/curriculum materials; consider State level purchasing	3. Ed Materials are extremely expensive and if any programs for reading, social skills, math, testing protocols, etc. could be negotiated at a State level then perhaps some savings could be found. Even a 10% discount on a 5k program would go a long way statewide across all schools.	Jill Watson
Reduce Costs	Out-of-district tuition	Address the high cost of out-of-district placements	4. Out of district tuition, seed (what the SPPS bills) and transportation can crush a school's budget. Finding a way to not make schools get hit 3 ways for already challenging cases would help many schools.	Jill Watson
Reduce Costs / Litigation		Establish state limit on special education litigation	5. Have the state establish a limit on special education litigation i.e. a limit on claims and liability to discourage frivolous lawsuits.	Rick Colpitts & Jerry Nault
Reduce Costs/ Tuition		Limit tuition for private school placements	7. There needs to be a limit on the tuition private special schools can charge districts for students in their programs and a requirement that billing be timely. There should be a cutoff date for when private/specials are permitted to back-bill.	Rick Colpitts & Jerry Nault
Reduce Paperwork		Reduce/streamline paperwork and meetings; increase time for planning and implementing effective teaching	3. My third recommendation really comes down to one thing: If all you have is time, are you spending it on the right things? I firmly believe there is an inversely proportional relationship between complex paperwork requirements and the time you are able to give to teaching. Special education teachers AND regular education teachers have TOO MUCH paperwork to do when it comes to special education services and RTI plans. The most important priority for our teachers (regular education and special education) is planning and executing effective teaching. The requirements of paperwork and meetings are constant detractors from the mission at hand, which is planning and adjusting best educational practices with children. Meetings and paperwork are consuming too much valuable time, and this reality should be revised for these reasons: (1) to maximize professionals' time in front of children, (2) to keep effective special education teachers in these roles, and (3) to attract teachers into these roles. Meetings and paperwork need to be streamlined.	Jennifer McGee

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Review & Revise MOE Formula		Revisit MOE formula; increase attention on the level of financial need within community; concern that formula benefits affluent communities	1. Based on what I have learned through this task force I believe the Maintenance of Effort has flaws but the number one flaw which I understood was the formula provides more funds to affluent communities who are able and are currently spending more on students identified in Special Education. I realize this is oversimplifying on my part but I believe a recommendation of revisiting the MOE formula in order to better provide for those communities that are not able to currently financially meet needs. They do not have the same amount of funds coming in as some of the affluent communities and I feel as though they are being penalized under the current formula. My recommendation would be to somehow not put as much weight on how much a current community is spending or more on the need within the community. I will admit as to not having the knowledge or background to recommend a how at this time.	Carrie Woodcock
Review & Revise MOE Formula		Revisit MOE formula; increase attention on the level of financial need within community; concern that formula benefits affluent communities	2. I think the Maintenance of Effort funding formula needs close examination. Are communities with greater financial resources being fiscally rewarded and supported, while communities who are less financially able to support the program costs being penalized? If, in fact, that is how this funding practice is playing out, this is counter to its intended purpose, ultimately giving greater resources and supports to those communities more able to support the costs of educating their students with higher cost needs.	Jennifer McGee
Review Funding Formula		Review funding formula (meet local/state needs, accuracy, data)	4. More Review of the Funding Formula. a. Does it meet local and state needs? b. Is it accurate? c. Current data or older data (i.e. High cost in-district is no longer collected, but some districts are still receiving money based upon very old data).	Leslie Snyder
Review MOE formula		Revisit MOE formula; increase attention on the level of financial need within community; concern that formula benefits affluent communities	9. Review the data on maintenance of effort and propose legislation that recalculates the base and supports a funding formula that ensures greater equity in special education allocations. The current funding method gives more money to districts that can afford to spend more.	Rick Colpitts & Jerry Nault
Review/ delay CDS proposal		Pause the proposal to move CDS to the schools; need time for planning, pilot project, documentation of reasons	5. Stop the proposal to move services for 3-5 from a state agency to the schools - we need additional time for planning and piloting and this should not be a rushed change. I'd also ask for people to answer the question "why?" - is this just a cost saving measure by the state?	Jill Watson
Universal Preschool		Providing funding for universal preschool	Provide funding in order to implement universal preschool for all four and five year old children. * All our children would have access to an enriched preschool with approved curriculum, regardless of their parent's financial status. * In some cases districts would be able to provide services that CDS is not providing. * Early intervention is likely to reduce future identification of students requiring special education and related services. * Many preschoolers would have the benefit of teachers having access to math, literacy, and behavior specialists. * Transition for children to kindergarten would be seamless.	Kathleen Cox