

MINUTES OF HISD BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, December 21, 2017

Committee Members Present:

Anne Sung, Committee Chair

Jack Fletcher

Holly Maria Flynn Vilaseca, Board Member

Hannah Mose-Harvey

Jackie Anderson

James Troutman

Jackie Cross-Ecford

Jamie Wilkes

Administrative Resources Present: Dr. Joan Anderson, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education (HISD)
Dr. Tessie Bailey (American Institutes for Research)
Lisa McBride, Board Counsel, Thompson & Horton LLP

AGENDA

OPEN SESSION

1. **Call to Order.** Trustee Sung called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.
2. **Special Education Services Update.** Dr. Anderson provided a Department update. The Department recently completed another round of foundations of special education training for campus leaders. Dr. Anderson feels confident that all current campus leaders have been trained on this material. The Department will complete another round of this training during the spring of 2018 for new administrators to the District.

The Department also is planning another parent forum, date to be determined. The objective is to have several concurrent sessions for parents to choose from at the forum, with the materials from all sessions, including audio, available on the District's website following the forum.

Dr. Anderson reviewed the special education indicators from the District Improvement Plan. Dr. Anderson explained that the Texas Education Agency sets the District's starting point in each area, and the District creates corresponding goals. The Committee discussed strategies for meeting each of the District's goals.

- As to the percentage of student's in the general education environment 40 percent of the time or less, the District's goal is to decrease by five percent the number of students spending 40 percent of the time or less in general education.

To meet this goal, the Committee discussed increased customized professional development for regular education and special education teachers, regular classroom observations, exit tickets concerning professional development, and desktop and in-person reviews of IEP documents.

- As to increasing student performance in grades 3-8, the Committee discussed use of the Universal Screener; IEP reports and updates; and beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year data to monitor progress towards the District's goals. Relatedly, the Committee discussed the fact that the Renaissance system is not currently linked to the STAAR, but work is being done to make this linkage possible, which should improve the District's ability to monitor progress.
 - As to the District's global graduate goals, Dr. Anderson explained that classroom walkthroughs are currently happening on all campuses with a cross section of representatives from all departments, including special education and IAT.
 - As to the District's goal of conducting initial evaluations for special education services within a prescribed time, the District is currently at 98%, but is striving for 100%. The special education department has put a process in place at the campus level to better systematize review of initial evaluation requests, which should help the District reach this goal.
 - As to the alternative state assessment, the District is monitoring the number of students who take the alternate assessment. Currently 1.24% of the District's students take this assessment. This is slightly above the State's 1% cap. One of the ways the District plans to meet the State goal is by conducting additional training at the campus level concerning the eligibility requirements for the alternate assessment.
 - The Committee discussed the District's contracted and residual placements. The District is currently working on a system to improve its monthly monitoring of these placements, including increased IEP desktop audits and observations.
3. **American Institute for Research ("AIR") Update.** Tessie Bailey provided an update concerning AIR's special education department program review. Dr. Bailey confirmed that AIR is on track to present its final recommendations to the Board in March 2008. All surveys have closed, and AIR is currently analyzing all survey data. AIR has completed all other data collection necessary for its program review, including its review of a representative sample of HISD IEPs. AIR also has completed all site visits.

Additionally, AIR has completed its initial analysis, including its ten initial findings. Dr. Bailey confirmed that these initial findings are generally consistent with the concerns raised by the Committee. The next step for AIR is determining the root cause for each finding, which will drive AIR's recommendations.

AIR's final report will include staffing recommendations, indicators for continued Board monitoring, appropriate targets, and suggested timelines for the implementation of each recommendation.

Committee member Jack Fletcher led the Committee in a discussion concerning appropriate proposed Board monitoring metrics regarding special education. The Committee discussed the following possible monitoring metrics: (1) the number of students taking the alternative assessment; (2) graduation rates; (3) suspension/expulsions; (4) absence/tardies (for students and teachers); (5) attrition of special education teachers; and (6) drop-out rates.

Jack suggested that the Committee look at the 17 federal special education metrics (from GRADS 360 - <https://osep.grads360.org/#report/apr/2015B/publicView?state=TX&ispublic=true>), used for federal monitoring of state programs, and that the Committee consider tailoring these to HISD for purposes of proposing metrics to the Board. Dr. Bailey offered to give a workshop for the Committee on the federal monitoring system.

The meeting concluded with member reflections. Members were generally positive concerning the changes the Special Education Department is making and the processes the department is putting in place. However, some members expressed that the District cannot meet state or federal targets if the District's primary resource for doing so is special education. General education teachers must participate and take ownership. The fundamental of special education training, and other recent District-created professional development opportunities are designed to serve this purpose, but more hands-on opportunities are necessary. Other Committee members expressed that while campuses are experiencing a renewed focus on special education, conversations are surface-level only. Members want more root-cause analysis done at the campus level. Some members expressed that the current focus at campuses appears to be meeting deadlines and compliance, with no strategic thinking concerning why certain requirements have been placed on campuses or how to strategically meet those requirements. The Committee also discussed the difficulty of determining the appropriate (1) focus on systems and processes versus student outcomes; (2) amount of progress monitoring for all student types; and (3) balance between progress monitoring

and teaching. These deeper discussions need to continue at the Committee and campus levels.

4. **Adjournment.** The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.