

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

February 15, 2018

Committee Members Present:

Anne Sung, Committee Chair	Hannah Mose-Harvey
Holly Maria Flynn Vilaseca, Board Member	Shana Halvorsen
Elizabeth Santos, Board Member	Lashondra Jackson
Jackie Anderson	Joshua Rotenberg
Courtney Bensch	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 4:05 p.m.
2. **Introductions.** Committee members introduced themselves to new members.
3. **Comments from the Chair.** Trustee Sung reviewed the charge and purpose of the Committee. Trustee Sung also reviewed the ground rules the Committee developed last fall. Committee members concluded that no revisions need to be made to the grounds rules at this time.
4. **Special Education Services Update.** Dr. Anderson provided a Department update. Dr. Anderson reviewed the new on-line Easy IEP system. The Request and Referral Evaluation and Parent Connect portal are ready for use now, and the progress monitoring component of the system will be ready in April. Campus-based personnel are currently being trained on the new system.

Dr. Anderson walked the Committee through the on-line Request and Referral Evaluation process and explained how the new system captures data. She explained that parents can access draft ARD documents and make comments directly to the draft documents by accessing Easy IEP.

Committee members asked questions of Dr. Anderson as she walked through the demonstration, including questions concerning how the District will communicate the launch of the new on-line systems, and its capabilities, to parents. Dr. Anderson explained that the launch is being announced on the District's website and to the District's special education department chairs, who are tasked with providing information to parents.

Dr. Anderson also discussed upcoming District special education training opportunities for parents. The first one is March 28, 2018 and the second one is April 28, 2018. Each will offer concurrent sessions on specific topics designed for parents.

The Committee again raised concerns regarding the dates for the Special Education Conference for school personnel: July 17-18, 2018. Many school leaders take vacation during July, and will not be able to attend. Dr. Anderson explained that the target audience for the conference is teachers; school leaders have professional learning sessions on special education topics earlier in June. Dr. Anderson further explained that the Department chose the July dates in order not to conflict with other trainings already scheduled for teachers and school leaders.

The Committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of having professional development in the summer. Some campus-based members of the Committee stated that they did not attend summer sessions, but attended all sessions offered during the school year. Other members expressed that the timing of professional development is not as important as the priority the District places on professional development. Professional development that is mandatory is attended. Special education professional development should be mandatory.

Dr. Anderson explained that for the 2017-18 school year, the District had mandatory summer sessions for principals and mandatory fall refresher courses for principals new to the District. Given the turnover in principals each year at HISD, Committee members agreed that HISD should continue with mandatory main sessions followed by mandatory refresher sessions for principals who come to the District after the mandatory main sessions are completed.

The Committee expressed that it is important for attendees (teachers and school leaders) to be fully present at training sessions – whether offered on-line or in person.

Dr. Anderson announced HISD's partnership with the University of St. Thomas School of Education to host "The Ethics of Special Education Leadership: Doing What is Right for the Student" presented by Professor Susan C. Bon, Ph.D. and JD (College of Education,

University of South Carolina) on March 22, 2018. Dr. Anderson invited the entire Committee to the lecture.

Dr. Anderson updated the Committee on the District's creation of a Special Education Advisory Committee. Dr. Anderson has finalized drafts of the application for membership and proposed bylaws. Dr. Anderson's intent is that the Committee functions as a permanent advisory group to the District's Office of Special Education.

5. **TEA Corrective Action Plan for Special Education.** TEA has issued an initial draft plan and response to the US Department of Education's Monitoring Letter. Dr. Anderson participated in a Region 4 meeting with other special education directors to address each of the 4 corrective actions included in TEA's draft response. The Committee then discussed each corrective action.

As to corrective action one, the Committee expressed concern that more money appeared to be earmarked for monitoring than for appropriate staffing for special education. The Committee also expressed concern that one site visit to school districts every six years (as envisioned by TEA's proposed response) does not seem sufficient.

As to corrective action two, the Committee agreed that for any of the proposed actions to work, they have to be appropriately funded. Schools need funding for the personnel required to complete the evaluations anticipated by corrective action two.

As to corrective action three, the Committee expressed concern that TEA's proposed corrective action is missing a much needed training component for parents and teachers.

As to corrective action four, the Committee again expressed concern that there did not appear to be adequate discussion concerning the funds required to implement this corrective action. The Committee also expressed concern that TEA's proposal to have 3 to 5 investigators for the entire state seemed wholly inadequate. Finally, the Committee requested additional information concerning how this corrective action would look locally at HISD, as opposed to at the state level.

6. **AIR Update and Overview of Federal Standards for Evaluating Special Education Programs.** Tessie Bailey reviewed the 17 federal indicators required for annual reporting to the federal government by states under the IDEA. This context was necessary for the Committee to understand because many of the principles and standards AIR measured HISD's special education program against for purposes of its

program review come from these federal indicators and standards, as do many of the recommendations made by AIR's program review.

The Board will formally receive AIR's program review and recommendations at its March 8, 2018 meeting. Thereafter, the Committee will prepare a response, including recommendations for on-going monitoring and recommendations for further review.

7. **Adjournment.** The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.