

Improving Educational Experiences and Outcomes for Students with Disabilities
Steering Committee Meeting Report
March 19,2019

The Improving Educational Experiences and Outcomes for Students with Disabilities Steering Committee met on Tuesday, March 19.

Building on Each Child, Our Future and modeling its partnership-based approach, the Ohio Department of Education is poised to convene stakeholders to craft a plan aimed at improving learning experiences and outcomes for students with disabilities. Beginning in January 2019 and wrapping up in December 2019, stakeholders and staff from the Ohio Department of Education will work together to identify a set of recommendations for improving literacy skills, addressing disproportionality, promoting post-secondary success, fostering inclusive leadership and advancing high-quality instructional practices among educators who serve students with disabilities. The ultimate plan will be anchored to the vision and core principles heralded in Each Child, Our Future.

During the meeting Preliminary data was shared regarding the statewide survey sent to stakeholders who work with students with disabilities. This information was very preliminary at the time of our meeting.

ODE will conduct focus workgroups with school district personnel. The purpose of the focus workgroups is to take a deeper dive into the current state of special education services from those who completed the statewide survey. ODE will identify questions generated by survey responses and ask for more information specifically about and ideas for actionable improvements from school district personnel, both building administrators and teachers; and related-services personnel, who work directly with students with disabilities at every grade level. In March 2019, focus group participants will be identified via statewide survey. Focus groups will occur and data will be analyzed and shared with the Steering Committee in May 2019.

Timeline:

- February 2019: Methodology drafted; Facilitator identified
- March 2019: Statewide survey examined for potential topics; initial participants culled from survey responses and invited; Script finalized; First focus groups begin
- April 2019: Focus Groups completed
- May 2019: Initial Focus Group information shared with Steering Committee

Methodology: Participants self-identify when they respond to the statewide survey, which is open to all Ohio educators, administrators and service providers in public and community schools in March 12 – 29, 2019. Using an outside facilitator, at least six virtual focus groups with up to 12 participants will be conducted.

Four workgroups will be established to drive development of the plan. Each workgroup will be comprised of representatives from schools, disability advocacy organizations, and other key partners who have expertise in the education of students with disabilities. Ohio Department of Education staff will convene and support each workgroup. The four workgroup themes have been identified with leadership from the Steering Committee and input from key stakeholders. They include:

Literacy: Adults sometimes mistakenly hold lower expectations for students with disabilities to read at grade level. This must change for the sake of equity. The *Literacy Workgroup* is charged with:

- Identifying and elevating professional learning that promotes research-based language and literacy development instructional practices for students with disabilities.
- Exploring ways to improve the individualized education program (IEP) process and enhance literacy progress monitoring, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, exemptions from the consequences of state assessments, over identification of students with specific learning disabilities and evaluations.

(Links to Strategy 9 in Each Child, Our Future: Develop literacy skills across all ages, grades and subjects)

Disproportionality, or the overrepresentation of minority students in special education, can harm students who are placed in more restrictive environments and or face increased disciplinary actions. The *Disproportionality Workgroup* will:

- Work to address behavior issues that face students with disabilities, including multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), suspensions and expulsions, restraint and seclusion, and functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plan development.

(Links to Strategy 7 in Each Child, Our Future: Work together with parents, caregivers and community partners to help schools meet the needs of the whole child.)

Post-Secondary Outcomes and Graduation: Students who struggle academically have unique challenges in pursuing postsecondary success. The *Post-Secondary Outcomes and Graduation Workgroup* will:

- Identify ways to ensure that students with disabilities are prepared with the knowledge and skills for high school graduation and beyond.
- Seek to understand what it takes to meet each student’s needs and personalize the high school experience.
- Use post-secondary outcomes data as a means to create a school culture that prioritizes high expectations for students with disabilities.
- Investigate ways to improve the IEP process in the areas post-secondary activities and graduation exemptions.

(Links to Strategy 10 in Each Child, Our Future: Ensure high school inspires students to identify paths to future success, and give students multiple ways to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for high school graduation and beyond.)

Inclusive Leadership and Instructional Practices: Strong school leaders and excellent instructional practices matter, especially when it comes to educating students with disabilities. The *Inclusive Leadership and Instructional Practices Workgroup* is charged with:

- Identifying ways to improve inclusive leadership approaches across the state and instructional practices that positively affect the learning of students with disabilities.
- Making recommendations to enhance pre-service training, educator preparation and professional learning that favors results-driven accountability and moves away from compliance.

(Links to Strategy 2 in Each Child, Our Future: Support every principal to be highly effective—especially those leading schools that serve the neediest children; and Strategy 3: Improve targeted supports and professional learning so teachers can deliver excellent instruction today, tomorrow and throughout their careers.)

Each workgroup will review pertinent literature, analyze data, determine gaps, identify specific practice guidelines and craft a set of recommendations to advance special education services and supports in Ohio.

Workgroup recommendations will be compiled into a summary report that will include a brief introduction, workgroup findings and workgroup recommendations. The summary reports will be

considered collectively by the Steering Committee, which serves in an advisory role. Once considered by the Steering Committee, the summary reports will be merged into an ultimate plan—co-designed by stakeholders—to improve learning experiences and outcomes for students with disabilities.

The Family Town Hall meeting schedule was also shared with the committee. We reviewed the facilitator's guide that will be used during these meetings. Feedback and discussion will help elicit the family and student experiences that will be considered when developing the goals for our plan.

Thanks,

Donna McCance