

Meeting Notes

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations
<https://portal.ct.gov/acir>

Special Education, Education Governance & Workforce Development Subcommittee

Thursday, June 13, 2024

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/25851>

A recording is available at: https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2024-06-13_ACIR_Educ_WG_Video.mp4

ACIR Members present: John Filchak, Bridget Fox, Francis Pickering, Troy Raccuia, Lon Seidman (Co-chair)

Other participants: David Abbey, Jennifer Benevento, Kathy Demsey, Sheila McKay (by phone), Matt Pafford, Jan Perruccio (Co-chair), Eric Protulis, Ashley Robles, Louis Rosado Burch, Lindsay Seti

OPM staff: Christine Goupil, Greg Lowrey, Bruce Wittchen

Call to order, overview of meeting procedures, agenda review/additions

Jan Perruccio called the meeting to order at 9:03 and everyone introduced themselves, with the recording started at 9:05. Jan noted that she is trying to recruit an urban special ed administrator for the group.

1. Charge of the sub-committee

The [2024-25 Work Program](#) was shared on everyone's screen and Jan Perruccio said this group is addressing a long-standing problem, but we are at a moment when all people see the need for change. The goal of this group is to put something in front of the governor and legislature. She noted that there had been some success regarding special education excess costs in this year's legislative session. Lon Seidman said the three topics listed in this group's name are intertwined issues, but noted that workforce development is a newer focus for the ACIR.

Eric Protulis said it is a unique time: many districts have a declining number of students but with an increased number requiring special education and with increased needs. He pointed out that the trend began prior to COVID and noted the potential benefits of partnering regionally. Lou Rosado Burch concurred about the timing and said people are prepared for uncomfortable discussions, noting recent cuts in school budgets, the teacher shortage, and growing class sizes.

Jennifer Benevento expressed her disagreement with the wording of this group's charge in the work program, which refers to the "burden" of special education. Special ed students do not receive anything extra; they receive exactly what they need. She also said there are huge disparities between the support different districts can afford. Jennifer also mentioned the impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) on education and future jobs and noted that paraeducators are an untapped resource and need to be paid for professional development.

Jan Perruccio said one of the first steps is to consider the current assets and concerns but added that we should look at logistics for this group. Tentative meeting dates are : 7/9; 8/6; 10/8; 11/12; and 12/10. She added that members are still being recruited and noted that some people will participate as members and others as experts who pop in and out.

Lon Seidman noted the limited staffing available to the ACIR and said it is good that so many organizations have already worked in this area. He mentioned the 2020 [Report of the Task Force to Promote Municipal Shared Services](#), largely prepared by the ACIR's John Filchak, and recommended crafting recommendations based on work like that and what others, such as the [Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies](#) (MORE Commission), have done, without reinventing the wheel. There was a discussion of what the MORE Commission had been.

The group discussed how to share documents to get feedback regarding ideas and that the intent is to allow for dissenting opinions in the group's work. There will be areas of disagreement and the group should show those differing views. Lon Seidman said the group can describe where there is a consensus and where there is disagreement, which is where legislators can seek compromise. There was a discussion of the group's [ground rules](#) and of the advantages of in-person meetings when addressing points of disagreement. People should submit any further ideas to Bruce Wittchen and Christine Goupil at OPM.

David Abbey recommended looking at what other states do, agreeing that the three topic areas of this group are interrelated but pointing out that each is massive. What are other states looking at and how do they research it. We need organized research. Lon Seidman recommended tapping national organizations where some of today's participants have connections. John Filchak described panels convened by the MORE Commission and suggested inviting some of those people.

Lou Rosado Burch mentioned that the [Task Force to Study Special Education Services and Funding](#) is finalizing its recommendations and said continuity is important. Jan Perruccio said this group needs representation from that group. She asked everyone to read the MORE Commission and task force reports discussed today, which will be circulated following this meeting, and requested people share any information about how approaches work or do not work in other states. The next meeting will also be online at 9:00.

The meeting adjourned at 9:54.

Notes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM