

Meeting Notes

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

Special Education, Education Governance & Workforce Development Subcommittee

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/26216>

A recording is available at: [https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2024-11-12 ACIR Education Video.mp4](https://ctvideo.ct.gov/opm/2024-11-12_ACIR_Education_Video.mp4)

ACIR Members present: John Filchak, Jan Perruccio (Co-chair), Francis Pickering, Eric Protulis, Lon Seidman (Co-chair)

Other participants: David Abbey, Sheila McKay, Brian O'Connor, Ashley Robles, Louis Rosado Burch, Lindsay Seti

OPM staff: Christine Goupil, Bruce Wittchen

1. Welcome and call to order

Jan Perruccio called the meeting to order at 1:02.

2. If desired: review of draft notes of the [10/28/2024](#) meeting and [2024-25 Work Program](#)

There was no review.

3. Plans for report & 2025 legislative session, considering

a. Plan draft report of ACIR subcommittees (Sharepoint link will be distributed soon)

- i. [8/6/2024 governance handout](#)
- ii. [Existing funding sources \(Regional Performance Incentive Program, other\)](#)

b. Work by others:

- [119k Commission](#) and [2024 Young People First Report](#)
- CSDE: [Essential Considerations for Young People First Report](#)
- CSDE: [Educator Recruitment by the Numbers](#)
- HFPG: [K-12 Regionalization in Connecticut: Pros, Cons and Surprises](#) (2018)
- [2024 Report of Findings of the Task Force To Study Special Education Services and Funding](#)
- [2020 Report of the Task Force to Promote Municipal Shared Services](#)
- [MORE Commission BOE Spring Recommendations](#)
- [MORE Commission Regional Entities – Education Policy](#)

Jan Perruccio showed the recently circulated [draft recommendations \(11/11/2024\)](#) and Lon Seidman described the [2020 Report of the Task Force to Promote Municipal Shared Services](#)' Priority Recommendation #4 to redefine school "district." John Filchak said the cited [CGS Sec. 10-158a](#) has not worked. Lon said the reimbursement bonus of 20% proposed in Recommendation A.1.b. is an increase from the earlier 10% and was suggested by Lindsay Seti. He described the reasoning for doing so, highlighting obstacles faced when districts with declining enrollment consider sharing facilities. He

also mentioned draft recommendation 1c and noted the benefits of simplifying the process for towns to leave regional districts.

Jan Perruccio described draft recommendation B, regarding special education, acknowledging the complexity of the first section, and explained that they are trying to capture thoughts expressed by subcommittee members and others. Lon Seidman added that this group should avoid potential conflict with the [Task Force to Study Special Education Services and Funding](#) and [State Advisory Council for Special Education](#), which are finalizing special education recommendations. There should be a consensus for our priority recommendations.

Jan pointed out the reference to equitable opportunity and highlighted Recommendation B.1.'s goal of incentivizing districts to build local special education programs to reduce outplacement. She described how shared programs can succeed and also explained that CT's unique approach in establishing the [burden of proof](#) regarding special education services is an obstacle to that.

David Abbey agreed with the recommendation as written and asked if anyone has studied the burden of proof issue. He mentioned the concept of districts practicing "defensive education" and suggested a study of the impact of CT's burden of proof approach. Jan Perruccio said a challenge for such a study is to decide what to look at. We know the outcomes of special education services, but not inputs, and those would be difficult to assess due to the likely reticence of districts to discuss the circumstances.

David said impacts of CT's approach to the burden of proof must be measured because it is just dueling narratives absent quantitative information. Lon Seidman asked if the if the previously mentioned special education task force is looking at the burden of proof issue and David said they are not. There was a discussion of the lack of attention to the issue and of the lack of systematic comparisons with other states' processes.

David Abbey said CT's approach is not required by state legislation or by the federal government; it was a decision of the CT State Dept. of Education (CSDE) in developing recommendations. Francis Pickering agreed about the difficulty of obtaining data, but pointed out that 44 states do not do the same as CT and no other New England state does. He recommended a comparison of special education outplacements with MA and there was a discussion of comparing outcomes with comparable states. Lon Seidman mentioned that CT's approach, a finding against a school district in just one aspect of an appeal results in the district losing the appeal. Jan Perruccio recommended adding David's and Francis's thoughts to the draft recommendations.

John Filchak recommended the subcommittee look beyond the usual K-12 focus and pointed out that the incarceration rate of former special education students is high. The state is not getting good results. Jan Perruccio said special education applies from pre-K to age 22 and noted the need for districts to work with adult students. John said the state should create something new for older age students and there was a discussion of this issue, including the costs of incarcerating people who need special education. Jan described programs for students up to age 22 and there was a discussion of a potential role for state and community colleges. Francis Pickering said the state's burden of proof is not established by statute. The CSDE established it by regulation. The legislation is too open-ended and should be more specific.

Jan Perruccio provided an overview of Recommendation B.2. regarding early intervention investments and there were no comments or questions. Jan highlighted that the workforce development focus of Recommendation B.3. is also relevant to areas beyond special education and provided examples of potential pathways for increasing the special education workforce. She pointed out that the objective is not for training to be less rigorous but for it to be easier and less costly.

David Abbey said many people certified for special education take their first opportunity to switch to elementary education. He asked if educators can be incentivized for special education but noted

potential impediments to doing so. Jan Perruccio said it is very intense work and that there should be incentives for teachers and for districts. She also pointed out the paperwork burdens, which should be reduced. Eric Protulis mentioned a recent CSDE presentation on the “Grow Your Own” model and Jan said there is a vague mention of that at the end of Recommendation B.3.

Lon said the broader workforce development recommendations of Recommendation C. are pending completion of an education workforce task force report, but pointed out this group’s interest in including increased autonomy and reduced administrative burdens in Recommendation C.1.’s factors for improving teacher retention. Lon also provided overviews of Recommendation C.2.: *Regional Programs and Training Opportunities*, and recommendation C.3.: *Vocational and Technical Skills for Students*. Regarding the latter, he mentioned schools in his areas responding to the training needs of manufacturers in SE CT and also noted the potential for cross-agency collaboration, such as with the CT Dept. of Labor. Lon also provided an overview of Recommendation C.4.: *Diversity in Education Workforce*.

Jan Perruccio mentioned a potential controversy regarding Recommendation C.3., which acknowledges that post-secondary schooling is not appropriate for all students, but post-secondary schooling is one of the criteria in [CT’s Next Generation Accountability Standards](#). She said it is not a helpful metric. David Abbey said he understands the point of view behind such measures, but school districts, especially poor districts, are not recognized for providing upward mobility, noting the number of students who learn English and move on. Jan mentioned conversations with students who said they wanted to work when leaving high school. The post-secondary schooling measure benefits affluent communities.

John Filchak and Jan Perruccio discussed the availability of comparisons of CT to other states with regards to this group’s recommendation. Jan Perruccio mentioned that the [CT Assoc. of Public School Superintendents](#) (CAPSS), the [CT Assoc. of Boards of Education](#) (CABE), and CSDE might have information. Bruce Wittchen said he will look into it.

David Abbey said the group’s recommendations should also include monitoring of special education outplacements. He mentioned three reasons: the state should monitor the quality of the what outplacement special education programs deliver, whether they are approved or non-approved programs. He added that the state should also consider the cost and the educational environment provided. He mentioned recent concerns regarding outplacements to High Road Schools and said anyone would have to be concerned. He provided further background and said there should be more oversight of approved and non-approved programs.

Louis Rosado Burch agreed with David’s point and said it is a major topic of the previously mentioned special education task force. It should be mentioned in this subcommittee’s report. Jan Perruccio agreed that this subcommittee should support it and Lon Seidman noted its relationship to the burden of proof issue.

4. Meeting recap, additional public comments, and next steps

Jan Perruccio said the next step is to refine the draft report and said the goal is to complete it by the next meeting. Lon Seidman requested any further suggestions be sent prior to that meeting and Jan explained how the draft is being compiled.

5. Upcoming meetings and related events

Jan Perruccio read the dates of upcoming meetings.

- November 21, 2024, 9:00 am Municipal Workforce Development Subcommittee
- December 6, 2024, 9:00 am Full ACIR
- December 10, 2024, 9:00 am Education Subcommittee

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.

Notes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM