

APPROVED MINUTES

Meeting: Microsoft Teams platform (Virtual)

Physical Location: National Life - 1 National Life Drive, Davis Building - Room N523, Montpelier, VT 05602.

Date: Monday, December 6, 2021 – 10:00am to 4:00pm

December Agenda (Daytime Meeting) Theme: Parent and Family Engagement and Inclusion

10:00-10:05	Come to Order, Review Meeting Expectations, Approve Minutes
10:05-10:15	Story Share (Carrie L.)
10:15-10:40	Parent Survey Results Report (Betty Roy)
10:40-10:45	BREAK
10:45-12:00	Discussion: Review of Content, Implementation of Family Engagement Toolkit (Tracy Watterson/Nancy Hellen)
12:00-12:30	BREAK
12:30-1:45	Report back on: Ensuring Parents as Equal Team Members (Jacqui)
1:45-1:50	BREAK
1:50-2:00	Joint AOE/Panel Item: Closing the Achievement Gap
2:00-2:30	Discussion/Decision: Recommended Action Steps on Restraint/Seclusion and Exclusionary Discipline from November Meeting
2:30-2:45	BREAK
2:45-3:30	Discussion of Unmet Needs: Special Education Parent Advisory Councils in Vermont schools and districts
3:30-3:50	Other Business
3:50-4:00	Public Comment
4:00	Adjourn

Present: Rachel Seelig, Molly McFaun, Sandra Chittenden, Joy Wilcox, Tara Howe, Katie Ballard, Susan Comerford, Jamie Crenshaw, Karen Price, Kristen Bigelow. Guests: Betty Roy, Tracy Watterson, Nancy Hellen, Kate Anderson, Sue Aranoff.

Come to Order, Review Meeting Expectations, Approve Minutes:

The meeting come to order at 10:05am. Lacking a quorum, the minutes of the November meeting were tabled.

Story Share (Carrie L.):

The Story Share was tabled due to Carrie Lutz not being present.

Parent Survey Results Report (Betty Roy):

Betty Roy reported on the Parent Survey results from school year 2020-21 (last school year). She began with a review of why the AOE does a Parent Involvement Survey, and what is required by OSEP for Indicator 8. She reviewed the work of the Evaluations & Reporting Subcommittee, and the input from the Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators (VCSEA) last year. This resulted in a wholesale change to the survey. This went to the AOE's third-party vendor (SUNY-Potsdam). Betty explained that because there

were new questions and a new methodology, the AOE cannot compare apples to apples with past survey results. However, this survey gives us a new baseline.

Participants were provided the option to complete the survey on paper or online. Most completed the paper survey. There was also translation availability on request. Betty received some calls because people had questions about how to respond in COVID times.

Betty reported that we mailed 14,751 surveys in May, 13,549 reminders in June. The AOE received 1,596 surveys returned – a response rate of 10.8%. The is about average across the country. 7 responses were ineligible because they were returned blank, so in total there were 1,589 eligible responses. 1,268 of the surveys came back positive – a rate of 79.8%!

In terms of representativeness, Betty explained that non-with children were slightly under-represented (by -.68%) but this is small enough it is not reported as under-representation, because it is less than 3%. There were three areas where the representativeness did exceed the 3% threshold: Parents of students in the emotional disturbance category and students age 12-17 were under-represented. Parents of students ages 2-5 years old were overrepresented.

Betty then described some highlights and lowlights in terms of which questions received the most positive and least positive responses. Betty will share this information to be circulated after the meeting. Betty will be working on the data for reporting out to the LEAs. They will share ideas for parent involvement, share with the monitoring team, and with the TA team for targeted follow up.

Discussion ensued on what more can be done to get the word out, ways to help LEAs facilitate involvement, and other people involved with families who may be able to help encourage survey response. Joy shared how important it is that we celebrate that the overall positivity rate is so. This is a really big positive that suggests a lot of families are getting what they need from special education. Tara asked that the results, especially around information sharing on transition, be shared with VR too. Joy also noted that there may be a breakdown in getting the information to special educators directly.

Nancy and Tracy from the VTmtss team also shared ideas – connecting with the family engagement liaisons in the schools, and someone in the supervisory union or in the schools who is their communication person, not relying solely on the special education directors to get the communication. They will follow up with Betty directly on some other logistics ideas

Break

Discussion: Review of Content, Implementation of Family Engagement Toolkit (Tracy Watterson/Nancy Hellen:

Rachel welcomed Tracy and Nancy to share on the Family Engagement Toolkit. Tracy started by giving an overview of VTmtss Framework, the five components, and the culture of continuous. She talked about the legislative requirement to have an MTSS system for both academic and behavioral (including SEL). She described the Field Guide that was revised a few years ago describing what MTSS should entail. The goal is to have most students have most of their needs met within core instruction.

She then focused in on the area of Effective Collaboration. It is not the only place that family engagement is part of the toolkit, but it is one of our principals of an MTSS system (Principal #8)]. There are decades of research on the impact of outcomes with good collaboration.

Next, Nancy described the content of the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Webpage. She also explained it is updated 4 times per year, and she is happy to take suggestions about additional suggestions for what can be included on that.

Katie asked whether there are resources for Special Education Parent Advisory Councils, such as the materials from New Jersey on those family/parent council. Nancy explained it is not currently on the website, but it is something we could suggest for the future. Rachel advised this is also an agenda item for later today.

Nancy then explained what is in toolkit and the self-assessment. She walked us through the different parts of the self-assessment and how it fits into the model of continuous improvement. The toolkit does explain the legal requirements of IDEA, ESSA and Title I. Then it goes into the core principles of family engagement: (1) Creating a welcoming environment; (2) Building effective two-way communication, supporting the success of students; (4) sharing power & responsibility; (5) partnering with the community; (6) providing equity and access; and (7) Ensuring sustainability.

We reviewed the practices to ensure meaningful participation in IEP teams. Rachel shared a few we have discussed before, and then Nancy shared the full document. The full document will be circulated to the full panel for discussion about additional best practices that could be included in the future.

Break

The panel adjourned for 30 minutes at 12:00. Prior to this break, it was agreed Rachel would email the full panel about the changed afternoon schedule because Jacqui is sick and unable to participate.

The panel came back to order at 12:30, several additional panel members arrived, and a quorum was achieved

Report back on: Ensuring Parents as Equal Team Members (Jacqui)

This item was tabled.

Joint AOE/Panel Item: Closing the Achievement Gap

This item was tabled.

Discussion/Decision: Recommended Action Steps on Restraint/Seclusion and Exclusionary Discipline from November Meeting:

Rachel shared the draft letter she put together based on our conversation on these issues at the November meeting. Everyone took time to review the draft again. Panel members asked that (1) the letter be amended to include another story of restraint/seclusion/exclusionary discipline, (2) that a sentence be added about the resulting trauma of restraint/seclusion; (3) that the data collection section emphasize the need to share information about when restraint/seclusion/exclusionary discipline is used with all IEP team members, and that parents should receive an end of year report that shows all the restraint, seclusion, suspension, and other PBIS information in one place; (4) that the changes in practice section include a recommendation to

require cameras in seclusion rooms; (5) that a parent assessment be created with SEAP input to get better baseline information on the scope of these practices.

Katie Ballard moved to approve letter as amended with Rachel completing drafting, Susan Comerford seconded. Eight panel members voted in favor of the motion, none opposed the motion, one abstained.

Rachel will send the letter to Jacqui, Chris Case, Tracy Watterson, and Kate Anderson with an invitation to participate in a future meeting on this topic. The panel will decide at a future meeting whether to send a copy of the letter to the House and Senate Education committees

Discussion of Unmet Needs: Special Education Parent Advisory Councils in Vermont schools and districts:

Rachel invited Katie Ballard to share about Special Education Parent Advisory Councils. Katie shared that she, Sandra, and another parent who is also a graduate of the Leadership Institute have been working on developing a SEPAC in their school district. This is supported by the School Board and the District's LEAs. They have gotten input and resources from Massachusetts and New Jersey where every district must have a SEPAC. Katie shared about the application process, the number of interested applicants (parents, students, and educators), the support the district has provided, and the plan for their first year of operation. She also shared that other LEAs have reached out to her district's LEAs for more information.

Katie explained that the benefit to having SEPACS is that they create an avenue of communication for intentional, positive, and systematic feedback and collaboration. They are intended to make sure parents have direct input into Unmet Needs, provide input on policy being developed or in place, discuss changes or feedback on current policy and procedures, be involved in training with the SD while working on disability-related trainings in professional development opportunities. In other states, they also hold monthly parent training sessions, or invite agencies or other groups who support parents.

Katie offered to share materials on SEPACs. Susan and Molly both requested those materials. Katie will share them. If other panel members are interested in receiving information on SEPACs, they should contact Katie.

Jamie requested we get updates about the progress in EWSD. Rachel will put this on future agendas every other month. Rachel will also invite Erin Maguire from EWSD to come to a panel meeting and share her perspective on the SEPAC. There was also discussion about supporting or sponsoring a webinar in the fall to share lessons learned from the EWSD SEPAC, and to invite the New Jersey Parent Center to participate, as they have been supporting SEPACs there for many years.

Katie shared that there is likely to be a bill introduced regarding SEPACs, similar to what there is in Massachusetts and New Jersey. Rachel shared that per our legislative policy, the Executive Committee will monitor this legislation. Karen shared that having a statute is part of what makes SEPACs or SEPAGs successful in other states.

Suzy suggested an annual parent summit to facilitate dialogue among parents, not just presentations to parents, to develop peer relationships across the state.

The consensus was that this should be an area of ongoing discussion, and we should return to the question of whether this is an area of unmet need where we have recommendations in the Fall.

Other Business:

Karen shared that she attended the Act 173 advisory group meeting this morning and that in that setting the AOE said it is considering extending putting the SPED rules in effect in the areas of Adverse Effect and SLD. Rachel will add this to a future agenda.

Katie asked about the plan for subcommittees, and Suzy shared that she does not feel daytime meetings are a good idea. Rachel advised that we are folding all subcommittee work back into the full panel except Membership & By-Laws which is with the Executive Committee. She and the Executive Committee will continue working on a better solution for meetings while we are still required to have an in-person meeting location.

Suzy expressed gratitude and thanks for work that is being done.

Karen asked where are we with membership? Rachel ran through vacancies. Katie shared the roles of people who have expressed interest in joining the panel. Suzy asked where are we in recruiting African American parents? She and Katie will follow up as she has some suggestions. Jamie asked, among parents, what disability categories are missing. This will be discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting. Suzy shared that she now sits on the Burlington police commission, they are working on re-writing policies and at some point, she will be asking for input from the group.

Public Comment:

Susan Aranoff provided public comment that it was great to see us, and the DD Council will also put out the word on membership.

Adjourn:

Rachel adjourned the meeting at 1:45.

Meeting Schedule (Hold the Dates):

January 18, 2022 4:30pm-7:30pm (Tuesday)

February 25, 2022 10:00am-4:00pm (Friday)

March 15, 2022 4:30pm-7:30pm (Tuesday)

April 18, 2022 10:00am-4:00pm (Monday)

May 17, 2022 4:30pm-7:30pm (Tuesday)

June 9, 2022 10:00am-4:00pm (Thursday)