



**DOVER SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

DOVER SCHOOL BOARD – MINUTES

Meeting Type:	Workshop Meeting
Meeting Location:	City Council Chambers
Meeting Date:	Monday, March 28, 2011
Meeting Time:	6:30 pm

A workshop session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Chairperson Carolyn Mebert on Monday, March 28, 2011 at 6:35 p.m. in City Council Chambers

A. ROLL CALL: Present were Carolyn Mebert, Audra Lurvey, Beth Setear, Robert McCrory, Doris Grady, Ken Appel and Matt Mayberry.

Also present were Superintendent Jean Briggs Badger; Principals Christine Boston, Kim Lyndes and Patrick Boodey; Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Sandra Crosson; Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Gary Tirone; Elementary School Special Education Coordinator, Abby Pinkham and Fosters.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Robert McCrory led the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. CITIZENS' FORUM: No one addressed the Board.

D. AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS (SPED REPORT):

Jerry Brodsky and his team from American Educational Consultants, a company that provides educational and legal consultation services to school districts, school personnel, attorneys needing specific educational expertise, parents and students, presented their report to the School Board.

The document discussed can be found on the Dover School District Website, on the Superintendent's Office page or by clicking [Special Education Report](#).

The items that were highlighted during the presentation included the Executive Summary:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dover Schools and Jean Briggs Badger, Superintendent, should be highly commended for requesting this study of an important piece of its service to the community and its children. We all know that students in need of special instructional attention are required by law to receive appropriate interventions. Identifying program strengths and opportunities for improvements, the opportunities to control costs, and opportunities to increase student achievement, are all highly professional objectives for any school district.

With respect to special needs students, given the data and anecdotal evidence we gathered the findings we developed, and the recommendations we make in this report, Dover Schools should be proud of the quality of its teaching, administrative and support staff as they relate to special education instruction.

Among the strengths we identify in this report, the most significant are:



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- 1.The Dover community should be very proud that its school district is led by highly qualified administrators and its students taught by very professional educators, supported by an excellent team of caring related service professionals and a cadre of paraprofessional aides.
- 2.Dover Schools provides professional support to its special education staff in order to provide proper instruction of special education students in compliance with best practices, federal and state regulations, and in the best interests of students.
- 3.Data indicates that many facets of special education placements, instruction and costs are within proper parameters based on best practice standards and state and national norms.
- 4.The district is commended for managing special education costs and seeking available reimbursements as allowed by law..
- 5.The district’s alternative high school is a significant intervention for at risk students in Dover and appears to be succeeding in providing alternate instruction that encourages and allows students to graduate from high school who might not otherwise do so.
6. Dover is commended for successfully educating students with more significant disabilities.
- 7.There is a strong and collaborative working relationship between the Title 1 coordinator and the special education staff.
- 8.We are confident that with the proper leadership and communication processes that ensure common purpose and direction, Dover Schools has the personnel to implement the improvements recommended in this report.

Among the opportunities for improvement, opportunities to control costs, and opportunities to increase student achievement that we identify in this report, we believe the most significant are:

1. Student achievement for students with disabilities needs to be focused on for improvement in several areas.
2. Staff and student scheduling are a significant concern that should be given priority.
3. Scheduling of staff should be revised to allow delivery of instruction throughout the district on all five days a week.



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4. IEP's should be developed forwards, meaning that achievement and other data gathered should be the basis for IEP goals, which then should be the basis for identifying the necessary service plan, designed to provide a reasonable opportunity for the student to succeed in the least restrictive learning environment.
5. While Dover is commended for having a lower total number of students with disabilities than comparison districts, this fact presents its challenges.
6. Response to Intervention should be targeted for full implementation.
7. The district should eliminate the role of special education coordinators as currently employed.
8. The current practice and role of Special Education Director is less than fully effective for a variety of reasons.
9. The behavior specialists appear to be a necessary support for many student teams.
10. Building administrators are needed more in the IEP process and, for this purpose, need to identify the necessary time, knowledge, and oversight required such that IEP teams and the services necessary for students with disabilities are identified and implemented properly.
11. Evaluate professional development for special education personnel as to its effectiveness.
12. Staff should be expected to monitor student progress and evaluate student and program needs in a manner that results in quality data that can be used to inform decisions at the IEP, building and district levels.
13. Adjust special education and related services programming and staffing to levels indicated in this report.
14. Review billing practices and reimbursements for Nottingham and Barrington students to ensure that Dover taxpayers are not subsidizing the costs of instruction for them.
15. Pre-School programming should include continued integration with typically developing peers.
16. The determination of need, performance expectations, and accountability surrounding paraprofessional aides should be analyzed by the district immediately.



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17. The district should consider further developing an in-district program within a single elementary building to support students with low incidence disabilities.

18. The district should coordinate with each school principal to development of an individualized building improvement plan to insure special students are receiving proper instruction in a least restrictive environment.

19. It is recommended that the district develop a strategic, multi-year plan for full implementation of planned improvements.

DRAFT



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With respect to costs, the following recommendations will annually allow Dover Schools to reallocate funds more effectively to focus on improving student achievement in the amount of up to \$384,000 of local, state and federal taxpayer and grant funds and provide more effective instructional and support services to its special and regular education community.

1. Adjust staffing to appropriate levels in pre-school through high school to standard case load management and support assignments insuring services included in IEPs are provided within generally accepted student/staff workload ratios **reallocate \$184,000 annually** by:
 - i. maintaining or adding support to current levels of administrative/ supervisory staff, including school psychologists, psychologists, behavior specialists, family services facilitator, court liaison, central office and building administrators assigned special education supervisory roles as deemed necessary by the district to fulfill obligations of special students and RTI implementation for all students
 - ii. reducing two Speech/Language therapists (**value \$159,000**) and 1.4 Speech therapy assistant (**value \$25,000**)*
 - iii. eliminating coordinators for preschool/elementary, middle and high school and returning all staff to instructional positions increasing time available for student instruction
2. Returning up to four students from out-of-district placements who district staff believe can be appropriately served in the Dover Schools (**value up to \$200,000**)

* With respect to staffing recommendations for speech therapists, currently the caseload assigned to speech therapists is approximately one-half of the ASHA caseload recommendations. In addition, current speech therapists have identified that 41% of their work time is self-assigned for “non-instructional purposes,” that is, time used to do paperwork, bus duty, etc. We recommend the number of students in their caseloads be increased significantly, yet still less than ASHA recommended limits, and that their percentage of non-instructional assignment be reduced to half of the current weekly time allotted, giving them still what would amount to one additional daily “planning period,” to use regular education teachers’ vernacular. Again, as recommended above, critical administrative supervision of the IEP team recommendations regarding related services should occur such that special students receive neither under nor over the amount of service required for them to access proper instruction. And the workload of special staff more closely matching the workload of regular education teachers and support staff also seems proper in the interest of fairness and equity to all employees. Considering that fact that a professional staff member costs the district approximately \$79,400 to employ, we believe we should be able to fully justify every member of the special student professional teaching and support staff currently employed.

Mr. McCrory asked how many special education coordinators there are in the school district.
Ms. Briggs Badger responded that there are three in the district, one at DHS, one at DMS, and one for the elementary schools.

Mr. McCrory asked what the job of the RTI (Response to Intervention) Coordinator is. A representative of the consulting firm responded that this person looks at programming and how to catch issues with students early in their education. It is a proactive plan that is put into place when issues are determined.



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He also asked how it is implemented over a period of a few years. The consultant responded that they RTI Coordinator looks at curriculum and determines what systems can be put into place.

Mrs. Grady asked if the \$384,000 in savings is just for the elementary schools. Mr. Brodsky responded that there is a total amount that can be reallocated of \$384,000 for the entire district. He stated that the district is very lean in special education funding already and the money that is saved from certain areas should be added to other areas.

Mrs. Grady commented that she was initially a bit skeptical about this study, but is now enlightened and sees that it sometimes takes an outside company to see what should be done. She has a better idea now about how we can better use the district's resources. She continued to say that she is pleased with what she has heard from this company.

Mr. McCrory asked which school would be the best school for an in-district program for students with a low incidence of disabilities. Mr. Brodsky responded that he did not and that the district should see if that is something they would like to do. If not, they can ignore the recommendation.

Ms. Lurvey asked if Mr. Brodsky could explain the process that was used in this study. He explained the process stating that they met with teachers, the Director, paraprofessionals, and other staff members involved. The group also used email extensively for gathering information. They received a great deal of input for the study.

Mrs. Grady asked if regular classrooms were visited for this study. Mr. Brodsky responded that they did some walk-throughs, but for the most part, they were located in a central area and the teachers visited them.

Mrs. Grady asked if they were able to witness the phonic ear program. They responded that they had not, but the school district will be able to judge the success of the program and it should be discontinued if the expected results are not achieved.

Dr. Mebert commented that it would have been helpful to have the study earlier so that questions could have been prepared.

Mr. Brodsky stated that the team will be happy to respond to any questions that the District has.

F. OTHER: There was no other business discussed

G. ADJOURNMENT: At 7:45 p.m., Matt Mayberry moved, Audra Lurvey seconded, to adjourn. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0.**

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Setear, Secretary