



Delaware's Special Education Strategic Plan

April 2017



Vision:

Our vision is for all children with disabilities to reach their full potential through a student centered, individualized education system using a collaborative and supportive model.

Value Statement:

We believe in Stakeholders leading collaboration between schools, families, and communities to create inclusive education to ensure student success and growth, and equity of special education and related services across Delaware.

Initiative Goal:

To develop a statewide plan that addresses the delivery of special education within Delaware through a review of existing evidence and within the context of a representative stakeholder process.

Introduction

Through a unique partnership between the 147th Delaware General Assembly and the Secretary of Education, the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) was authorized to perform a review of special education services within the state's public schools. In addition, DOE was authorized to create a position to conduct this review and subsequently create a strategic plan. This partnership was formalized in the Delaware FY 2015 Budget, Section 307 Epilogue.

The Department of Education is authorized to perform a comprehensive, annual review of the delivery of special education services within the public school system. The department is authorized to establish 1.0 FTE within its existing complement of positions for the purposes of coordinating, among various stakeholders, said review and managing the implementation of recommended initiatives. Said review shall include, but not be limited to, the provision and funding of assistive technology in the classroom; the coordination and distribution of information on services available for children with disabilities that cross multiple state agencies; and creating a strategic plan for special education services. The Department of Education shall convene an oversight group on a semi-annual basis to provide status updates on said review as well as to share initiatives for implementation that may have a fiscal impact. The oversight committee shall consist of the members of the Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC), a representative from the Governor's Office and the Co-Chairs of the Joint Finance Committee.

Background: What catalyzed this work?

The history behind the request to study Delaware's special education system as well the creation of this strategic plan stems from increased public interest in special education across the state, coming from the local and federal levels of government as well as advocates, stakeholder groups, and legislative taskforces.

Special Education Strategic Plan Methodology

Due to the complexity and number of stakeholders involved in the delivery and as consumers of special education services, a fully collaborative methodology was used not only to develop the strategic plan, but also will be used to implement recommendations. This planning began in October 2016, as a core team of stakeholders formed, including district special education directors, statewide program directors, educators, parents of children with disabilities, and family special education advocates, from across the state.

In preliminary meetings, theories of action and principles were identified. These included acknowledging:

- the plan as a living document intended to be improved and expanded through a collaborative process;
- successful implementation through broad stakeholder buy in along with direct involvement and support through a collaborative process;
- stakeholders shift from an adversarial to a collaborative special education model;
- the inclusion model is essential for the best outcomes; and
- using the standards and criteria used in creating an individualized education program for a child.

This group fundamentally agreed that the strategic plan aims to create a system to meet the educational needs of the children of Delaware with disabilities. The plan is designed to provide the supports and environment to allow every child the opportunity to meet his or her potential.

STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT/COMMITTEE WORK/EDITING

The full group of stakeholders assembled for a 2 day retreat in December 2016. The retreat was facilitated by Mark Graham Brown, a national expert in strategic plan development. The preliminary work done by Special Education Directors, Low-incidence stakeholders and others was affirmed, and the scope and structure of the plan were agreed upon. Given the compressed development timeframe and the flexibility and opportunities that a living strategic plan provided, the group agreed to limit the initial plan to goals, strategies (objectives) and metrics (measures of progress and success), and implementation support structure, leaving the more detailed activities and implementation elements to be further developed upon initial adoption.

The 7 overarching needs include: Students, Staff/Partners, Delivery Structures, Parents/Families, Resources, Policy/Regulations and Community. Goals, strategies, and metrics for each area of need were developed.

To facilitate more rapid progress, subcommittees were formed to further develop each goal area and suggest preliminary strategies to achieve said goal and metrics to measure progress towards the goal. Each member of the group joined 1 or 2 committees with effort made to have diverse representation of ideas and perspectives on each committee. The information from the 2 day retreat was compiled by the facilitator and each committee met over the next month to develop their work areas.

The full group reconvened on January 5th to review the committees' work and make further recommendations for the plan. The information gathered at that meeting was compiled as a draft goal section of the strategic plan and distributed to the entire group for additional comment. The group appointed a representative group of editors to ensure the plan format and contents were consistent with the groups' decisions, direction and intent.

Editing meetings were held on January 5th and February 13th to complete the goal editing. The plan's language surrounding the goals was completed concurrent to this timeframe. The plan was then returned to the full group for their approval and approval by the Oversight Group, to be then sent for public comment.

Plan Implementation

As described in the plan development methodology, this plan represents an initial plan for improvement and collaboration. It is intended to be viewed as a living document which, in order to meet the identified goals, must have ongoing review, modifications and support through a deliberate and collaborative process. Below are primary structures and identified charges, which will work collaboratively with additional stakeholders to provide details and to prioritize activities to meet the goals and make the vision a reality.

SPED Strategic Plan Advisory Council

This plan is intended to be a living document, both in its content and implementation. A SPED Strategic Plan Advisory Council shall be established to ensure continued collaboration in the further development of the plan, and to advise and support its implementation.

Prior to the finalization of new concepts or major activities, stakeholder input from outside the council will be gathered and considered.

The Council shall be self-governing with the initial membership including the SPED Strategic Plan workgroup members. The Council will manage its membership with the intent of ensuring that the majority of members are SPED directors/Statewide Program directors and family/student advocates (including GACEC representatives) in as equal a measure as is practical. Membership shall additionally include a variety of other stakeholders and State decision makers.

The Council will set its policies and procedures, and where not specifically called out shall follow Roberts Rules of Order. It is envisioned that the Council will have standing committees for each of the major needs areas (Students, Staff/Partners, Delivery Structures, , Parents/Families, Resources,) Policy/Regulations and Community), and shall have ad hoc committees for specific items of work. The ad hoc committees may include members which are not members of the council that have special interest or expertise in the area.

The council will advise and collaborate with those responsible for the direct implementation of plan elements.

SPED Strategic Plan Responsibilities

Primary responsibility for coordination of the plan shall reside with the Department of Education Exceptional Children's Workgroup, Statewide Program Directors and the LEAs though their Special Education Directors with each responsible for their level of support, delivery and oversight. The Exceptional Children's Workgroup, the Statewide Program Directors and the LEAs shall be responsible for implementing the educational components of the plan. The appropriate governmental and non-governmental entities will be responsible for implementing elements outside the educational structure.

Implementing entities shall provide updates on plan implementation to the Council, and the Council will collaborate with the implementing entities when those entities request support or clarification. The entities shall also supply recommendations for improvement to the plan or its implementation process, when they deem that it is appropriate.

Effective plan implementation will require support and collaboration from a broad array of decisions makers and stakeholders.

Special Education Strategic Plan Goals

Students	To increase the success of students with disabilities by improving their ability to become active, valued, and participating members of their community, today and in the future
Staff/ Partners	To have a highly engaged and effective workforce with appropriate values, skills, and knowledge for today's and tomorrow's work.
Delivery Structure/ Systems	1) Make available the same array of evidence based practices and models of service deliveries regardless of a student's placement. 2) Modify delivery system to facilitate the achievement of other goals.
Parents/ Families	Increase the engagement with parents and families as partners in collaboration to support their children at home and at school with access and knowledge of the resources they need.
Resources	Acquire more resources as needed and maximize the efficiency in use of our existing resources
Policy/ Regulations	Add, delete, and modify policies and regulations to support our current and future goals and objectives.
Community	Increase the levels of support and collaboration through engagement and education.

Regular ongoing assessment and evaluation linked to the strategic plan

1. Identify needed data elements using current metrics
2. Incorporate qualitative data from all stakeholders through councils, surveys, and meetings

Special Education Strategic Planning Group

Dr. Michele Marinucci, Woodbridge School District

Dafne Carnright, Autism Delaware

Jon Cooper, Colonial School District

Edward Emmett, Positive Outcomes Charter School

Katheryn Herel, Parent Information Center of Delaware

Kendall Massett, Delaware Charter School Rep.

Rep. Kim Williams, Legislator

Kristin Dwyer, Delaware State Education Association

Kristin Pidgeon, Down Syndrome Association

Dr. Lisa Lawson, Brandywine School District

Mary Ann Mieczkowski, Department of Education

Bill Doolittle, Parent Advocate

Dr. Sarah Celestin, Red Clay Consolidated School District

Dr. Vincent Winterling, Delaware Autism Program

Wendy Strauss, Governor's Advisory for Exceptional Citizens

Annalisa Ekbladh, University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies

Dr. John Marinucci, Delaware School Boards Association

Sonya Lawrence, Parent Advocate

Teresa Avery, Autism Delaware

Laurie Kettle-Rivera, Delaware School for the Deaf

Mark Campano, Delaware Statewide Programs

Dr. Josette McCullough, Appoquinimink School District

Mondaria Batchelor, Woodbridge School District

Elisha Jenkins, Division for the Visually Impaired

- 1 Students: To increase the success of students with disabilities by improving their ability to become active, valued, and participating members of their community, today and in the future.
 - 1.1 Support students with disabilities to have the opportunity to achieve a high school diploma and stay in-school at the same rate as their peers without disabilities.
 - 1.1.1 Review specific criterion for students with disabilities, changing the Certificate of Performance option to a diploma.
 - 1.1.2 Establish a data source to track students receiving diplomas after years 5, 6, or 7 (in alignment with the ESSA final plan)
 - 1.1.3 Evaluate practices in modified curriculum, standards, and grading.
 - 1.2 Support students with disabilities to acquire and demonstrate age-appropriate skills in self-advocacy, transition, self-determination, and systems navigation.
 - 1.2.1 Develop and implement a curriculum to be used by LEAs for the purpose of training students with disabilities in skills necessary to advocate for themselves such as leading their IEP Process.
 - 1.2.2 Establish structure for credit earning potential of self-advocacy and self-determination programs
 - 1.2.3 Develop or identify a pre and post measurement to assess program effectiveness annually and longitudinally
 - 1.2.4 Identify evidence-based instructional practices, curriculum, and instructional resources for use by LEAs.
 - 1.2.5 Collaborate with families and ensure they have an overview of the training in advance of it occurring.

- 1.3 Support regular ongoing assessment and evaluation linked to the strategic plan
 - 1.3.1 Identify needed data elements using current metrics.
 - 1.3.2 Develop metrics for communication, social emotional skills, and independent living.
 - 1.3.3 Incorporate qualitative data from all stakeholders through councils, surveys, and meetings.
- 1.4 Establish a statewide framework of inclusive practices and education.
- 1.5 Establish statewide consistency in child find and for improving IEPs.
 - 1.5.1 Establish consistent practices among LEAs as it relates to locating, evaluating, and identifying according to Child Find regulations.
 - 1.5.2 Improve Individualized Education Program plans and implementation—collaboratively review and develop consensus of best practices for supporting IEP teams in providing comprehensive planning and support to students' needs.

2 Staff/Partners: To create a highly engaged and effective workforce with appropriate 21st Century values, skills, and knowledge.

- 2.1 Update all teacher preparation programs to provide students a consistent, robust foundation of courses in the area of special education and support of students with disabilities.
 - 2.1.1 Require all Delaware teacher preparation programs to provide a base of instruction on special education to all future educators. Note: Coursework must support the implementation of inclusive education for all students with disabilities.
 - 2.1.2 Require all Delaware school leader preparation programs to provide a base of instruction on special education to all future principals.
 - 2.1.3 Collaborate and encourage alignment of current Teacher of the Deaf Programs (national) and ensure they are congruent with the DE Standards for Certification.
 - 2.1.4 Collaborate and encourage alignment of current Teacher of the Blind/Visually Impaired Programs (national) and ensure that they are congruent with the DE Standards for Certification.
 - 2.1.5 Develop High Quality Continuing Education Coursework in Evidence-Based Instructional practices for all learners.
 - 2.1.6 Create/Augment Special Education Leadership Training and Coaching and provide support from experienced leadership to include training/mentoring new administrators, knowledge of special education law and solid instructional practices, and programs to support staff to move into administration
- 2.2 Increase retention rate and improve overall satisfaction rates among special educators, related service providers, and others directly involved in the education of students with disabilities.
 - 2.2.1 Develop and conduct an annual special education professional satisfaction survey.
 - 2.2.2 Assess special education caseloads for specialists for the goal of adjusting to the national standards.
 - 2.2.3 Support staff to develop effective management solutions to address demands.
 - 2.2.4 Strengthen retention rates and sense of belonging to school community by increasing opportunities toward employee satisfaction.
 - 2.2.5 Encourage professional growth by adjusting and ensuring the current evaluation system aligns to job duties (content/focus/structure).
- 2.3 Develop a statewide service delivery system, improve/augment professional development. (Provide all educators with technical assistance and coaching while serving students with disabilities.

- 2.3.1 Deliver Technical Assistance (training and ongoing coaching) across LEAs (areas to include curriculum, peers, accommodations, modifications, best/evidenced practices, technology across state, and level and areas of student needs). The Statewide Team(s) should consist of technical assistance providers similar to instruction coaches. (Refer to team creation within infrastructure goal).
- 2.3.2 Statewide teams shall train LEA-based teams to increase their local capacity, i.e. greater support to LEAs to meet all current needs and flexibility of possible future needs.
- 2.3.3 Provide training and coaching to in-service staff by including clusters of courses around topics: trauma-informed approaches, Autism, Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Deaf-Blind, Blind/Low Vision, Low Incidence and High Needs, mental health or emotional disability, and others as needed (See Resources)
- 2.3.4 Explore/Identify new opportunities within current model for flexibility in regards to planning and support for teachers of children who have complex or unfamiliar needs.
- 2.3.5 Create DOE staff position(s) dedicated to Special Education Professional Development—Identify and disseminate existing supports (funding or free) for training programs/intensive PD; look at existing programs to incorporate categories/topics; create a statewide course catalog.
- 2.3.6 Establish a means to ensure staff receive training in Compliance (mandates, business, and policy), strategies to support students they are serving, and results-driven practices.
- 2.3.7 Provide 3 statewide professional development days (mandatory) for all staff (not just special educators); 1 summer and 2 during the school year; provide a catalog of sessions offered based on needs assessments where participants choose their own sessions; PD provided through various formats; PD shared across LEAs inclusive of all partners; incentivize continued PD past minimal requirements.
- 2.3.8 Create/Augment Leadership Training and Coaching—provide support from experienced leadership, training/mentoring to new administrators, training on new and evidenced-based leadership strategies, and programs to support staff to move into administration.

2.4 Improve recruiting and staffing

- 2.4.1 Assess values by creating a committee to research and identify assessments that would be appropriate to measure employee values, agency values, and how they align; evaluate values of all applicants to assess alignment with agency values
- 2.4.2 Improve hiring process by reviewing existing reference checking-strategy and assess if they are being followed or if new strategies are needed; look at agencies with history of long-term employment to identify reasons for success

- 2.4.3 Locally analyze reasons for employment separation including reviewing exit interview and data; and researching and identifying assessments/surveys that would gain accurate insights needed to measure reasons for employment separation (release or moved on) in an attempt to identify systems issues.
- 2.4.4 Evaluate compensation system for educators (i.e. Speech-Language Pathologists paid as teachers, specialized training, and pay increase in the realm of special education).
- 2.4.5 Assess job requirements by hiring a systems analyst to review and make suggestions for updating current delivery model to create a more effective system
- 2.4.6 Provide employee value proposition by creating a short flyer identifying what the job offers and what it does not offer including expectations, values, and culture (school or LEA-based)
- 2.4.7 Improve mentoring program by integrating special education topics into the mentoring program (assessing what LEAs need to implement a mentoring program, what LEAs need to augment or change within their existing mentoring program; look at current practices within effective LEAs in recruitment and identify their highly effective approaches/system components and emulate into the state mentoring program (eg some LEAs place experienced teachers in a novice teachers class one day a week); provide strong support for novice teachers; and defined time period (longer than current amount offered)
- 2.4.8 Support preservice industry with expertise of experienced staff/professionals by partnering with higher education institutes to create certificate programs for specialist areas; guest speakers (experienced providers in higher education classes); supporting project based learning focused on students' needs; and creating internships offered by LEAs

2.5 Improve engagement

- 2.5.1 Measure efficiency by reviewing caseloads of specialists to assess logistical ability to effectively manage current caseload; establish caseloads that match national standards with considerations of level of need of students specialists are serving; explore/identify new opportunities within current model for flexibility in regards to planning and support for children with complex needs or needs that they are not familiar with
- 2.5.2 Identify a way for teacher to spend less time with paperwork and more time teaching (in classroom and planning) by looking at how IEP process and impact, look for possible changes, see if way to create a more effective process that is family and teacher friendly
- 2.5.3 Incentivize increasing skill sets through recognition, benefits and perks (not necessarily monetary)

2.5.4 Strengthen community by assessing amount and quality of social activities, per data increase opportunities toward employee satisfaction and community

2.5.5 Encourage growth by creating and using an evaluation system that supports growth and development where the evaluation focus matches the jobs content/focus/structure

3 Delivery Structure/Systems: To make available the same full array of current evidence-based practices and models of service delivery regardless of a student's placement within the state, district, specialized programs, charter schools, etc.; and to improve our special education system to facilitate achievement of our other goals.

3.1 Implement a statewide network of specialists to support students with more intensive and complex needs by providing professional development, direct service, and oversight of fidelity of implementation.

- *Inclusive school support – Teacher, Building Administration, LEA Leadership*
- *Training & Coaching – Specialists related to low incidence disability areas to provide support to teachers and administrators*
- *Instructional services/delivery (direct service to student) – Deaf/HOH/DB, Blind/VI, Mental Health*
- *Oversight – quality standards/evaluation & audit/compliance*
- *Community Outreach & Family Education*

3.1.1 Develop collaborative structure between existing agencies to begin network development

3.1.2 Conduct feasibility study of restructure under state agency or LEA; Establish plan for network organizational and funding structure

3.1.3 Conduct statewide needs assessment related to professional development and technical assistance needs

3.1.4 Develop quality indicators for programming in low incidence areas

3.1.5 Establish collaborative relationship with UD technical assistance projects (DE-PBS, ACCESS) & other IHEs related to evidence-based practices

3.1.6 Establish collaborative relationship with LEAs and stakeholders through on-going meetings to discuss programmatic needs

3.1.7 Staff network to include resource reallocation of existing statewide positions (through code changes) and addition of resources for specialist positions; Restructure statewide programs under LEA or state agency (Deaf/HOH/DB, Blind/VI, Autism/ID) and Recruitment of administration, specialists, etc. of network

3.1.8 Develop administrative support/guidance for appraisal of LEA-based specialists; network staff provide consultation to LEA/school staff on appraisal

- 3.2 Development of administrative support/guidance for appraisal of LEA-based specialists; network staff provide consultation to LEA/school staff on appraisal; Identify array of evidence-based service delivery models to support students in inclusive settings.
 - 3.2.1 Conduct needs assessment related to service delivery models for students in inclusive settings (including further review of evidence and research-based practices).
 - 3.2.2 Establish guidance document regarding service delivery models that support inclusive practices including pros/cons of different models.
 - 3.2.3 Collaborate with Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) on pre-service education related to service delivery models and strategies to support students in inclusive environments
- 3.3 Develop structure for delivery of services for students with mental health needs in collaboration with DHSS/PBH.
 - 3.3.1 Conduct needs assessment to identify national best practices/models for school-based service delivery and options for day treatment and transition programs
 - 3.3.2 Increase number of specialized staff to provide school-based therapeutic services through collaboration with DHSS/PBS and IHEs
 - 3.3.3 Expand service options for the highest need students including full or partial day programming and transition services

4 Parents and Families: To increase engagement with families as partners in collaboration to support their children at home and at school with access and knowledge to the resources they need.

- 4.1 Increase levels of engagement and collaboration as well as sharing of information among families, supporting organizations, and related stakeholders.
 - 4.1.1 Create and implement a system of technical assistance to the LEA-level Special Education parent councils for the purposes of increasing engagement with related stakeholders in the delivery of special education.
 - 4.1.2 Provide critical training and resources to students and IEP members regarding the participation of community members / organizations necessary to further enhance the process of transitioning to adulthood.
 - 4.1.3 To develop and maintain a comprehensive searchable webpage on DOE's website that links to other established sites (i.e. Family Shade, PIC, DeldHub, and others) that parents/families can utilize for the purposes of accessing information and services.
- 4.2 Provide parents / families with access to resources that will assist in their efforts to advocate for their children regarding special education.
 - 4.2.1 Create a statewide Ombudsman system/program to support parents, students and educators with information related to navigating special education and related services.
 - 4.2.2 Create a funded statewide multidisciplinary coalition that includes family support organizations and LEAs that would include but not be limited to:
 - 4.2.2.1 Develop statewide agenda/training program for families and student advocates that is supported and co-presented with LEAs and advocacy organizations (possible certificate programs)
 - 4.2.2.2 Conduct a statewide family and LEA needs assessment
 - 4.2.2.3 Provide a parent mentoring framework
 - 4.2.3 Create state or county-wide family and student resource/services fairs.
 - 4.2.4 Create/revise a parent-(and child-) friendly version of a parent's rights and responsibilities in education that would be disseminated through LEAs and advocacy organizations offered in a variety of accessible formats including web-based, video, accessible print, language and reading level.
 - 4.2.5 Develop and disseminate a resource of "best practices" regarding strategies to enhance parent/family involvement within LEAs.
- 4.3 Increase access for parents/families to training in the areas of special education processes, practices, and other relevant areas.
 - 4.3.1 Develop and implement an annual statewide "Parent Academy" with resources that reflect current issues and practices in special education (including the use of assistive technology).

4.3.2 Develop and implement a curriculum or model for supporting parent training in the approaches to promote education and development, both at home and in the classroom. (Ensure families know and understand the various programs and options available). Examples include a course catalog of centralized learning opportunities provided by stakeholders; opportunities for stakeholders to collaborate more around providing resources, trainings, resources together around targeted areas of need (e.g. B/VI introduction weekend to blindness, social skills); develop training to assist parents in supporting the development of life and employment skills at home

5 RESOURCES: To acquire more resources as needed and optimize the efficiencies/effectiveness of existing resources.

- 5.1 Provide all resources needed to deliver special education and related services to students with disabilities.
 - 5.1.1 LEAs will coordinate efforts in researching, writing, and submitting targeted grant proposals to obtain new funding.
 - 5.1.2 Develop a statewide database of student-specific resources, trainings, and professional development materials for educators that is maintained with annual updates.
- 5.2 Optimize existing resources for the efficient and effective delivery of special education services.
 - 5.2.1 Conduct a needs assessment using a uniformed tool to benchmark the gap between current levels of resources and needed levels of resources to achieve the stated goals. Resources to be included in the assessment are technology, staff amount, staff types, financial resources, and building resources by geographical location in the state.
 - 5.2.2 Create a plan to encourage resource sharing and eliminate or diminish the barriers for sharing resources, including staff, across LEAs.
 - 5.2.3 Create a system in which equipment (assistive technology) and other individually prescribed materials can follow the student across LEAs. (See Ed Technology Task Force).
 - 5.2.4 Realign resources—analyze the ability to house all statewide program staff under one entity (determined by a feasibility study—see infrastructure).
 - 5.2.4.1 Review the statewide program and technical assistance staff and ratios of teachers to students compared with national best practices/recommended ratios.
 - 5.2.4.2 Create additional state code provided units or a statewide fee for service model to support statewide needs, including 12 month services for students and coaching for staff to increase local capacity.
 - 5.2.5 Increase collaboration by holding regular meetings with related state agencies, non-profits, and interested community employers to elicit partnerships where possible and promote existing opportunities to better leverage community-wide resources.
- 5.3 Access to assistive technology will be strengthened
 - 5.3.1 Increase training opportunities to increase the number of qualified assistive technology professionals.
 - 5.3.2 Provide a cost-sharing system for LEAs and an assistive technology fund to assure that students have access to educationally appropriate assistive technology.

5.3.3 Review the recommendations of the 148th G.A. “[Task Force on State Educational Technology](#)” . The task force’s recommendations included:

- 5.3.3.1 Review current need of expansion of State-provided bandwidth;
- 5.3.3.2 Determine the current use of educational technology in classrooms or education settings of the State;
- 5.3.3.3 Determine the current use of educational technology, assistive technology and instructional materials for students with special needs and incorporate, as appropriate, the work from the Department of Education’s comprehensive review of the delivery of special education services, including assistive technology, authorized by Section 307 of the FY 2015 budget epilogue;
- 5.3.3.4 Determine the current readiness of staff to teach using educational technology in the State’s public education classrooms and education settings and determine the need for improved ongoing professional development in the integration of technology and assistive technology in teaching and utilization of the State educational technology standards;
- 5.3.3.5 Recommend strategies and goals for improving and equalizing access to and use of educational technology and assistive technology in all public school systems across the State, including State-run schools;
- 5.3.3.6 Coordinate strategies for pre-kindergarten to grade 12 educational technology with national standards;
- 5.3.3.7 Recommend a phased plan for the implementation of the State educational technology plan;
- 5.3.3.8 Recommend a funding plan for the implementation of the State educational technology plan;
- 5.3.3.9 Recommend a plan to track and assess progress in the implementation of goals set forth in the State Educational Technology Plan.

5.4 Create additional supports for the efficient and effective delivery of special education services.

- 5.4.1 Increase needs-based related service units for speech only students, assistive technology support, and increase mental health supports at the state, LEA, and school levels.
- 5.4.2 Include K-3 in the basic unit funding provision for students with IEPs.
- 5.4.3 Create additional unit funding provision for hiring trained professionals in this field of expertise (licensed clinical social workers, psychiatrists, educational diagnosticians/case managers, and mental health providers)
- 5.4.4 Create a handbook for assistive technology specialists, teachers, and school leaders on the provision and implementation of assistive technology in schools.

5.5 Create professional development opportunities and certification programs.

- 5.5.1 Develop training/certification program for special education supervisors/directors
- 5.5.2 Develop training/certification program for board certified behavioral analyst certification

- 5.5.3 Develop training/certification program for exceptionalities coordinator certificate (Coordinators/ Educational Diagnosticians)
- 5.5.4 Collaborate with professional standards board (PSB) regarding certification requirements
- 5.5.5 Provide training, coaching, and technical assistance to all educators from administrators to paraprofessionals

6 Statute, Regulations, and Policy: To add, delete, and/or modify statute, regulations, and policies to support our current and future goals and objectives.

6.1 The current funding structure of special education will be reviewed and revised.

- 6.1.1 Study other states' practices—Review other states for practices which may improve the efficiency and effectiveness to improve opportunities to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- 6.1.2 Conduct a survey of other states' system for special education funding and illustrate the results in a white paper.
- 6.1.3 Conduct a survey of special education directors and advocates regarding the current funding mechanism for special education.
- 6.1.4 Provide additional needs-based related service units for assistive technology support and increased mental health needs, and adjust regulation so that speech only students count in the special education unit count, at the LEAs and school levels.
- 6.1.5 Change the regulation for K-3 Basic Units to reflect the same as 4-12+ grades (and ensure that speech only students are included in the basic units).
- 6.1.6 Review system of PreK staffing and funding to include ensuring that PreK students are in the related service unit earnings and the impact of the once yearly student count/unit funding.

6.2 The special education regulations will be reviewed and revised as needed— Develop a regular review process including key stakeholders and amend Statute, Regulation, and Policy for areas significantly impacting students with disabilities.

- 6.2.1 Develop a regular review process including key stakeholders by establishing an ad hoc subcommittee to develop a process for comprehensive review of statute, regulation and policy, including items which are specifically for SWDs, items which directly impact SWDs, and items which indirectly impact SWDs. The ad hoc subcommittee may include stakeholders and experts who have interest in specific items or areas being considered.
- 6.2.2 Amend Statute, Regulation, and Policy when an issue is identified and a recommendation is made for the creation, update, or removal of a statute: Identify a sponsor, write legislation, develop consensus, get approved, and address budgetary requirements while collaborating with the other committees to identify and develop stakeholder consensus on issues

- 6.2.3 Remove barriers for resource sharing including the creation of and access to a lending library for equipment (or improve DATI lending library) and amend regulations to permit student-specific resources to follow the student.
- 6.2.4 Employ best practices by comparing practices vs. statute, regulations, and policies, and identify areas which need modification to ensure best practices occur regarding outcomes for SWDs.
- 6.2.5 Increase communication by meeting regularly with stakeholders (including agencies and legislators) and presenting current priorities including cost, benefits, and anticipated outcomes for each recommendation.
- 6.2.6 Reconvene the Special Education Plan Advisory Council to review, continue, and expand upon the IEP Task Force.

7 COMMUNITY: To increase the levels of (reciprocal) support and collaboration through engagement and education with the community.

7.1 Increase the number of public-private partnerships that impact the outcomes for students with disabilities.

7.1.1 Create and replicate partnerships between LEAs that provide opportunities for internships and community-based instruction that reflect a wide variety of employment sectors. (Including best practices such as Project Search, Big Picture Model at Positive Outcomes, etc.)

7.1.2 Identify and prioritize all existing partners (research and leverage existing resources) including an ongoing/updated database of: special education directors, special education advocates, non-profits that work with and for children with special needs, community organizations that work with children, pediatricians, businesses that provide internships, businesses that work specifically with children/adults with special needs, and parent advocates.

7.1.3 Relationship map for all partners—identify overlaps and note which groups to engage more/first

7.1.4 Create partner/employer value propositions (employer incentive program) that can be utilized to encourage employers to hire youth with disabilities.

7.2 Conduct marketing/outreach efforts

7.2.1 Create a dashboard on DOE's website and a 1-2 page document with the Who, What, Why, and How of our special education programs (including how we provide FAPE)

7.2.2 Create a social media plan (FB, Twitter, and Instagram) with professionals as business partners

7.2.3 Create organized opportunities to visit special programs within schools

7.2.4 Conduct a targeted informational outreach based on annual community perception surveys.

7.3 Community partners who indirectly play an important role in supporting the outcomes of students with disabilities will be presented with training opportunities.

7.3.1 Provide training to LEA boards in the issues and practices of special education to include:

7.3.1.1 Surveying boards to determine level of understanding of special education in LEA/School

7.3.1.2 Combined facilitated training on best practices with Delaware School Boards Association and Delaware Charter Schools Network

7.3.1.3 Cultural competency training-collaboration with advocacy partners

7.3.1.4 Repeating the survey to determine effectiveness

7.3.1.5 Working with special education directors to provide ongoing training to boards throughout the year

7.3.2 Provide training opportunities for business community partners in the benefits of engaging and hiring youth with disabilities.

Summary and Acknowledgements

It is widely recognized that 50-70% of strategic planning efforts fail or make only incremental progress when the approach is top down with only limited stakeholder input. It is for this reason that this plan was created through collaborative consensus by a broad group of dedicated stakeholders and is a plan that is supported by the stakeholders, as champions, since day one.

This is critical to the success of the strategic plan and the only way for lasting improvement to special education in Delaware. As a living document, the strategic plan must change and grow under the stewardship of these champions, who can spread the word, engage in the hard work, and enlist others in the effort. A collaborative approach that is created and endorsed by all stakeholders is the only path forward and will ensure its success. The education of our children is predicated on all stakeholders moving forward together in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities as we move forth to make this plan a reality.

It should be noted that while members of the collaborative group of stakeholders have many titles, responsibilities and at times have varying views on issues and on occasion are even adversaries. Yet, around the table to develop and in committing to drive this plan forward, they have a common title and passion, "advocates for children with disabilities".

It is important to acknowledge those who helped make this possible. State Representative Melanie George Smith convinced the General Assembly of the need for a special education strategic plan. Former Secretary of Education Steven Godowsky, who had the courage to say yes to a new way of doing things when at the stakeholders urging. State Representative Kim Williams who dedicated many hours to supporting the collaborative nature of the plan. Michele Mariucci, as the group's chair provided steady, stakeholder centric, and collaborative leadership in the creation of this plan and has committed to take us forward as we make this plan a reality. Secretary of Education Susan Bunting who continued to support a collaborative stakeholder approach. And lastly, all of the stakeholders who gave of their time and willingly joined the group in an effort to create a comprehensive strategic plan to support Delaware's students with disabilities.

If you are reading this, you likely have a role to play in making Delaware the model for the country in allowing for special education that allows all children with disabilities to meet their full potential and live happy and fulfilled lives as members of our Delaware community. Please come join us in our efforts to continuously improve education for students with disabilities!