

GEA/SPED COMMITTEE – 03/14/2023

Members: Brooke Peckham (chair), Jessica Dunn, Michele Jones, Bryce Day, Kenzee Besler, Shannon Garner, Jessica Wassink, Kelly Collett

2022-23 Meeting Dates: all meetings will begin at 4:15 and be held at the GEC, exact location TBD. Next / Last meeting for 2022-23 May 9th.

Agenda:

PBL Grading for Severe Students with Essential Elements

- What is the district protocol about teachers grading students differently because they use accommodations?
 - Concerns all around, no one on the same page. Inclusion is a big concern. Gen Ed concerned about having to grade. Do we create inclusion standards? Very wide spectrum for severe population which makes it more complicated.
 - FOCUS coming next year is opening a lot of opportunities. For now, SPED and Gen Ed teachers collaborate for inclusion students.
 - State just released a portrait of meaningful inclusion that we can reference.
 - **Action:** Make PBL a standing item for our committee.
 - Accommodations do not mean students are graded differently in PBL. Accommodations are there to level the playing field for special ed students to access grade level curriculum. IEP accommodations must be provided during instruction, not only on the test.
 - All teachers (Gen Ed and SPED) need to understand the purpose of accommodations used in core curriculum classes.
 - Teacher lens/perspective needs to be student focused rather than curriculum/content focused.

3-Year Training Cohort (like in the old days)

- It was mentioned that many moons ago, special education was clumped into 3-year cohort groups. They attended trainings together as a cohort. This helped create bonds with other Special education teachers. No matter the years of experience, someone had something to offer, and it gave you a "friend" to ask questions and lean on for help. It may be a way to help boost morale.
 - Could it come back as a PLC for the various groups (i.e. Resource, specific special classes)? **Action Idea:** Perhaps it needs to be a negotiation item.

Morale in the Schools – SpEd teachers feeling overworked

- Sufficient time to complete compliance paperwork.
 - Could training for all SPED teachers about how SPED FTE is figured out help? How do we balance caseloads?
 - Caseloads ebb and flow through the year. Gen Ed Average Daily Membership (ADM) gives us the WPU (severe special class students not counted in this, in a different calculation) so it is supposed to generate a seat in gen ed for those with A, B, C service codes. Counts done 3x/year: Oct. 1 Dec. 1, May 1. SCRAM (Self-Contained & Resource Average Minutes) records are provided for those days documenting SPED services being received. Gives us an average daily SCRAM minutes.

- State Funding: Legislative SPED add-on = WPU x SCRAM x A% x B% x C%. Then we have the self-contained count = SEL + 1% --- this is the extra budget line, a little bit more than a WPU. About 17% of budget (about \$15 mil last year).
- Federal Funding 17% of budget (about \$13 mil last year). Budget is based on two years ago ADM.
- Use May 1 count as prevalence rate, then look at past 5 years for trends (i.e. linear regression) helps anticipate for next year. Then create a range for SPED FTE. For example for Resource: 0-15 students = 0.5 FTE, 16-33 = 1 FTE, 33-66 = 2 FTE. These numbers are based on the pie of funding available.
 - **Action idea:** Can the district Communications Dept help animate this somehow? (like the Ken Robinson "Changing Education Paradigms" animation: <https://youtu.be/zDZFcDGpL4U>) Then we can share with teachers and families about how SPED is funded
 - Training cohorts could help, especially with new teachers
 - Transparency of the "why" for changes
 - Many factors go into morale, i.e. fail-to-fill policy effecting SPED teachers. Mourning the past and what supports used to be there, feeling of isolation still there, even after Covid years.

Communication between District and Teachers

- What kind of communication is needed? How can major policy changes be communicated beyond monthly Compliance Tips in email form. How can teachers ask questions about policies and changes?
 - Compliance Tips are mainly reminders of procedural issues.
 - Still working on communication style. As a department communication is a struggle due to the wide range of service providers. Communicate lowest common denominator of the basics of SPED law.
 - **Action Idea:** For example – Padlet – post questions and district staff have opportunity to respond. When Compliance Tips are sent out, include a Padlet to ask questions about them.

Standing Agenda items for next meeting:

- PBL and the transition to FOCUS
- Morale