

(Informal Notes)

Comments/Questions from OSFAC Council Members on Special Needs Subcommittee Report

July 28, 2010

General Comments/Questions

Deborah Delisle: Did the subcommittee seek out opposing points of view on the recommendations in an attempt to vet the report? What oppositional lens was used to view the report? Were the recommendations self-serving to the associations involved in the process.

Answer: The recommendations were deeply debated in the subcommittee. The diversity of the subcommittee, the questions from the full council, surveys and comments from the field during the deliberations of the subcommittee, and the opportunity to put the draft report out to the public serve as the vehicles to invite opposing points of view.

Lynn Elfner: Could the subcommittee put together an executive summary of the recommendations together?

Answer: Yes

Michael Dawson: Commended the subcommittee for doing a thorough job and wondered generally how the report recommendations for all subcommittees would be harmonized. He thought perhaps the tracking subcommittee should be used for this purpose. (The question came from a discussion of the gifted salary recommendations.)

Answer: The full council seemed to agree that the tracking committee would need to harmonize various subcommittee conflicting or overlapping recommendations.

Richard Petrick: The ELL portion of the subcommittee report outlined the increase of ELL students over the years. Could the subcommittee also provide similar data for students with disabilities and gifted students?

Answer: Yes

Special Education Questions

Rep. Stephen Dyer: With respect to recommendation 5 regarding operating standards, he wanted to know what the specific recommendation was.

Answer: The operating standards are in place now, but more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that the dollars appropriated for students with disabilities are actually spent on students with disabilities. Robin went on to indicate that this was a general recommendation for ELL and gifted students as well.

Rep. Stephen Dyer: Recommendation 6 regarding pre-school units. Did the subcommittee discuss whether pre-school should be universal.

Answer: The recommendation was with regard to pre-school special education units which is a specific part of students with disabilities, not general pre-school funding.

Rick Lukich: Recommendation 6 regarding pre-school units. Should pre-school education funding be extended to community schools?

Answer: Yes, if they serve that population and comply with operating standards.

John Scheu: Likes the recommendation to fund special education at the 100% rates rather than the current 90% rates.

Neil Gupta: Wanted to know what special education catastrophic aid was.

Answer: Rep. Dyer provided an explanation.

Sue Taylor: Is catastrophic aid only for certain districts? Was the aid taken away?

Answer: No, it is for certain students. Kelly Weir explained that the funding for catastrophic aid was cut in half to \$10 million in this biennium and that only 17% of the required aid is reimbursed by the state.

Deborah Delisle: Should there be a trigger for over-identifying students with disabilities? Confused about slide 9 language and wanted to know if Ohio students with disabilities had different needs than in other states. How many states fund at 100%?

Answer: There is no real financial incentive for over identifying students with disabilities. The report discusses the need for “neutral placement” decisions that are not based on finances. The subcommittee will have to reward slide 9 and determine funding levels of other states.

Rep. Stephen Dyer: Should we be doing weighted special education funding?

Answer: We essentially are, but we need to base weights on the real cost of supporting students with disabilities.

Michael Dawson: Did we used to fund special education at 100?

Answer: No.

Gifted Education Questions

Lynn Elfner: Why does identification need the ECF (Education Challenge Factor) applied to it?

Answer: Students in urban and rural districts are sometimes more difficult to identify and require more expensive assessments and use of school psychologists.

Michael Dawson: Concerned about establishing a different GIS salary than the Core teacher salary. He noted that gifted intervention specialist (GIS) salaries were \$3000 than the average teacher salary. He wondered if there should be a differentiation between gifted salaries and others. He also indicated that the learning environments committee recommendation might mitigate the issue of salaries for GIS.

Answer: Gifted intervention specialists require advanced coursework and thus would cost more to fund. The subcommittee did note in the report that any recommendations regarding the core teacher salary would have an impact on this recommendation.

John Scheu: Concerned about the recommendation to phase-in a service mandate. Wouldn't this be an unfunded mandate?

Answer: Rep. Dyer indicated that if the mandate were phased-in with the funding that the mandate wouldn't be unfunded.

Kathryn Lorenz: Was the salary differential of 1.15 and 1.25 x core teacher salary based on out-of-state data or on Ohio cost data.

Answer: The salary figures were based on Ohio costs provided by ODE.

Michael Dawson: Was the committee suggesting that service be phased-in or funding? This led to a discussion about the State Board of Education recommendations to fully-phase in certain parts of the funding formula and whether the tracking committee should harmonize the recommendations.

Answer: The recommendation is that the service mandate be phased-in with the funding. Deborah Delisle indicated that the reports don't necessarily have to be correlated, but that it could be an issue for the tracking committee to discuss.

Neil Gupta: Would the phase-in include all gifted categories (e.g. visual and performing arts)?

Answer: Yes.

Deborah Delisle: Concerned about the differential in the GIS salary as it might diminish other specialist salaries (e.g. special education salaries). She asked whether the other areas were differentiated as well.

Answer: The other areas are being reviewed at this point. Also, the gifted coordinator requires a Master's degree and is currently a separate salary than the core teacher salary. (Note from Ann: We probably need to expand on this answer as the salaries for special education intervention specialists are built into the weights).

Deborah Delisle: Wondered if the ECF should be used on the ID factor especially on districts that are identifying 70% of the population as gifted. Did the subcommittee consider differentiate Identification costs for those districts.

Answer: State share and ECF serve to equalize these and all figures in the funding formula. (Note from Ann: As the superintendent didn't seem to be satisfied with this response, perhaps we should expand it with data to back up the answer.)

Deborah Delisle: Asked whether the subcommittee had any recommendations for quality control of gifted personnel being employed in the district as there was some abuse of roles in the districts.

Answer: Hopefully, the operating standards being developed could address. (Note from Ann: It may be worthwhile to specifically address this need in the document to back up the superintendent.)

Representative Dyer: Questioned the triggered gifted guarantee as the state is trying to get away from guarantees. Would this guarantee go away with the phase-in?

Answer: Yes, for most districts. Daria Shams provided an explanation of how some districts were required to meet 2009 spending requirements even though they are not receiving 2009 gifted spending amounts. These districts need to be kept whole until the formula funds gifted adequately.

ELL Education Questions

Senator Sawyer: Question about the teacher requirements. Were they spelled out somewhere?

Answer: They are embedded in one of the recommendations.