

SPECIAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE



**INTERIM REPORT
MICHELLE FECTEAU & EILEEN WEISER
JANUARY 9, 2016**

**“New special education
rules to bring Michigan
in line with federal law
unlikely to take effect
this year”**

Dec. 11, 2014, mlive.com headline

Summer 2015

Lt. Governor Calley's Listening Tour



LISTEN

LEARN

LEAD

**REFORMING SPECIAL EDUCATION
THE RIGHT WAY**

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**Sept. 8, 2015 listening tour
preliminary report
presentation by Lt.
Governor Calley to State
Board of Education**

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/CalleyPresentationToStateBoardofEducation_Sept82015_499324_7.pdf

KEY FINDINGS FROM SUMMER LISTENING TOUR AND SURVEY



- 1) Develop a more inclusive and transparent rulemaking process**
- 2) Improve access to, and the scope and quality of, services**
- 3) Change the use of restraint and seclusion**
- 4) Create a better problem-solving process (initially referred to as “dispute resolution”)**
- 5) Support parents, guardians and educators more with resources and options**

1. DEVELOP A MORE INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT RULEMAKING PROCESS



- **Develop a better system for informing and engaging special education service consumers before and during the process.**
- **Share information better, and in plain language, including proposed changes and desired outcomes.**
- **Use technology to reach the public.**
- **Expand the use of existing resources to share and collect feedback.**

2. IMPROVE SERVICES: ACCESS TO, SCOPE AND QUALITY



- Schools should provide what students need, rather than just fit students into their structure.**
- Focus services & IEPs on specific student needs.**
- Train staff to provide differentiated IEP services.**
- Observe & implement IDEA requirements for "least restrictive environment" while respecting differences between children.**
- Design IEPs with high expectations & goals.**

- IEPs should coordinate or integrate outside clinical treatment and practices. Eliminate communication silos.**
- For better IDEA compliance, MDE should provide assistance to local schools on their responsibilities & requirements.**
- Make CTE programs available to students with IEPs - break down institutional and practical barriers.**
- All focus should be on early transition services for a student's independent, productive and self-determined adult life - start by middle school.**

3. Restraint and seclusion



- **SBE's 2006 voluntary policy limited seclusion and restraint, but both are still far too common in Michigan schools**
- **They are used inappropriately as a control tool or for behavior modification**
- **Both should be banned except in specified emergency situations & their use should be monitored**
- **Their use can be prevented if teachers & staff know how to shape & manage student behavior.**

4. Create a better dispute resolution process



- **Too many IEP disputes result in lawsuits that waste money & time.**
- **Need better options for conflicts when parents don't feel their child is receiving the public education to which they're entitled.**
- **Michigan needs a free, expedient third-party review & mediation process.**
- **Most cases involve noncompliance with IDEA's "least restrictive environment" requirement.**
- **Addressing the hearing concerns could reduce disputes.**

5. Support parents more with resources and options



- Families often don't understand their rights or how the IEP process works.
- General education teachers don't always participate fully.
- Parents should never feel bullied; educators should be able to speak openly without penalty.
- Develop a system to ensure that parents receive the information they need on IEP rights and responsibilities.
- Michigan must ensure that teachers are protected from repercussions for speaking up on a child's behalf.

Special Education Task Force

created by Gov. Snyder Oct. 17, 2015

Lt. Gov. Brian Calley, Chair

- **Melody Arabo** (elementary teacher, Walled Lake Schools / Michigan Teacher of the Year 2014-15)
- **Mary Bouwense**, president, Grand Rapids Education Association, veteran special education teacher
- **Elmer Cerano**, executive director, Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service
- **Teri Chapman**, director, Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education
- **Michelle Fecteau**, State Board of Education member
- **Diane Heinzelman** – Director of Special Education, Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District, Chair of the Michigan Autism Council

- **State Sen. Hoon-Yung Hopgood**, member, Senate Education Committee
- **Laura Jones**, founder, Special Education Advocacy & Development
- **Scott Koenigs knecht**, superintendent, Ingham Intermediate School District
- **State Rep. Frank Liberati**, member, House Committee on Families, Children and Seniors
- **Marcie Lipsitt**, founder, Michigan Alliance for Special Education
- **Karen McPhee**, Gov. Snyder's Education adviser
- **State Sen. Phil Pavlov**, chair, Senate Education Committee
- **State Rep. Jim Tedder**, member, House Committee on Education
- **Eileen Weiser**, State Board of Education member

- **NINE TASK FORCE MEETINGS AS A WHOLE 10/27-12/22/15**
- **NUMEROUS SUBGROUP MEETINGS ON SPECIFIC TOPICS**
- **DEDICATED, PASSIONATE TASK FORCE MEMBERS**
- **CONSISTENT FOCUS ON IMPROVING SPECIAL EDUCATION**
- **PRESENTATIONS ON SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH-BASED INITIATIVES IN USE HERE OR IN OTHER STATES**
- **CONTINUOUS EXCHANGES OF INFORMATION AND THOUGHT**
- **FRANK DEBATES; THOUGHTFUL, PROBING CONVERSATIONS**
- **REWARDING TO PARTICIPATE**

WHAT NEXT?



- **Today's report was not on the Task Force's efforts now underway. It summarizes information developed during the 2015 Special Education Listening Tour and Survey that was used by the Task Force for its discussions and work.**
- **The Task Force final report draft is in circulation for editing by members before being submitted for approval to the Governor's office.**
- **The report's release is anticipated in early February 2016.**