

CURRENT NEWS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

WINTER /SPRING 2021

Special Education Board

The Special Education Board has been meeting this school year with a focus on the multitude of considerations for students with disabilities and transition needs during the pandemic. Planning and preparation for the SEB Special Education Conference is underway. The conference will be held virtually this year on March 5/6, 2021. The conference is free to PSEA members this year. The registration link is: www.psea.org/seconf2021

Professional Learning Exchange

The Education Services Department has expanded content offerings in a variety of ways to meet the professional learning needs of our members moving forward. On-line trainings have continued with a focus on high quality distance learning tools and strategies to support instruction. Webinars are live every Tuesday evening through the spring. Additionally, book discussions and webinars as well as documentaries and RCPE events will occur. Last, Mindful Mondays continue two days per month to support self-care with our members. Please take a look at our current course selections for members: <https://www.psea.org/for-members/professional-practice/center-for-professional-learning/>

IDEA Implementation

There was no relief provided to waive any regulations related to the provision of FAPE in Special Education for the 2020-2021 school year. Therefore, all districts must make their best faith effort to plan and deliver appropriate instruction. As we know, IDEA was not built for a pandemic. Therefore, communication and on-going monitoring are more essential than ever! Make every effort to understand your district's plan for progress monitoring as well as COVID Compensatory Services so that you can best meet the needs of all students with whom you work.

Special Education Advisory Panel and PDE Bureau of Special Education

The Special Education Advisory Panel has been active this year. The annual Special Education Conference that is provided by PDE and provides a forum for SEAP will be held virtually this year. The following information was provided by Carole Clancy, Bureau of Special Education Director at PDE to share with PSEA members:

*Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education's Annual Conference, **Making a Difference: Educational Practices that Work!** will be held virtually March 3 and 4, 2021. This conference is free and open to teachers, administrators, psychologists, paraprofessionals, related service*

providers, parents, and higher education faculty. Register by going to <https://www.pattan.net/Training/Conferences/Pennsylvania-Department-of-Education-Conference>

Additionally, the following information was provided as resources for our members when we struggle to reach consensus during IEP meetings with our students and families:

*The Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) provides a variety of resources for parents and educational agencies to resolve educational disputes. Mediation, a free, voluntary, and confidential alternative to formal due process hearing is one option to support early resolution efforts. Parents or educational agencies can contact ODR by going to <https://odr-pa.org/> or calling the **ConsultLine** at 1-800-879-2301.*

Last, Ms. Clancy shared links that educators can use to access information about PDE as well as PaTTAN to support classroom instruction.

PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education continues to provide resources and guidance to educators and families at:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Special%20Education/Pages/default.aspx>

Additional resources are available through Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network at <https://www.pattan.net/>.

Moving forward, our goal is to provide information to our members from the Bureau as new initiatives are established, changes occur, or new resources become available to support educators throughout the Commonwealth.

State Board of Education

The State Board of Education is currently in the regulatory review process for Chapter 49 (Certification). Additionally, the State Board is working on the plan for Higher Education as it looks to boost attainment and equity for post-secondary students throughout Pennsylvania.

Region Trainings

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, all winter and spring trainings continue in a virtual format. Many RCPE events are being scheduled. Please check with your region to see what leadership events are taking place for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.

Looking Forward

As we continue to navigate these unparalleled times, PSEA wishes you good health under these unique circumstances. Take good care of yourselves and your family. Practice self-care and find alternate ways to stay connected to your family and friends. Be well!