

June 2011



In This Issue

- Your Employee Evaluation
- U.S. Secretary of Education's Response
- National Data
- Gettysburg 2011
- Recession Trend
- A Recent Court Case
- SEAP Meeting Dates for 2011-12
- Resources
- Due Process Cases

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Your Employee Evaluation

As mentioned in a previous issue of *Current News*, a magnifying glass is now on educators. One area of scrutiny is the evaluation process for educators. The Pennsylvania State Board of Education ran a small pilot project this school year to find out what should be included in a new evaluation form. The results will be reviewed this summer and a report will be shared with the State Board.

Previously, we asked PSEA members to write to the Committee on evaluations. Sandra Dungee Glenn, chairperson, reported that she received multiple letters on the topic of student growth and staff evaluations and shared the letters with the Committee. Our goal was to show how complicated the evaluation process is, especially for educators not working specifically in reading and math. Educators should not face an evaluation system that is based solely on PSSA scores or PVAAS.

We pose the question: How do you develop a fair evaluation tool for thousands of educators that shows student growth for travel trainers, nurses, social workers, assessment coordinators, guidance counselors, career and technical educators, Life Skills teachers, behavioral specialists, TAC consultants, PaTTAN consultants, librarians, job coordinators, psychologists, etc.?

PSEA's Government Relations Division reports that legislators are looking at proposing bills that would incorporate student test scores in evaluations (discussed at Senate Education Committee on 6/14/11). This is an interesting development because the PA State Board of Education has the development as part of its responsibility to maintain the evaluation process. The State Board received money from the Gates Foundation to work on the evaluation process. Legislation could usurp the work being done by the State Board. A very interesting new development!!! Stay tuned.

It is not too late to write to the State Board to share your thoughts on how student growth should be measured and the role growth would play in a comprehensive employee evaluation process. The committee is still

deliberating on the issue. Letters should be sent to Sandra Dungee Glenn,

c/o PA State Board of Education, 333 Market St., Harrisburg, PA 17126.

PSEA is working on your behalf. PSEA has two members on the PDE teacher evaluation advisory group that gave input on the pilot that was being used this spring. PSEA Education Services Division audits all of the PA State Board of Education meetings on teacher evaluation that have been held in Harrisburg and Lancaster. During these committee meetings PSEA asked questions and shared research documents provided by PSEA Research and Education Services.

U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, Speaks on Evaluations

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) posed the question on evaluations to the U.S. Secretary of Education. Here is his response:

“Teachers are the most important part of a child’s education. What teachers do every day in classrooms has a tremendous effect on how much children learn and the options they have in the future. Unfortunately, in many states the system we have for evaluating and supporting teachers is fundamentally broken. Teachers don’t receive meaningful feedback, and their evaluations are not used to help them grow professionally or advance in their field. To treat teachers as the professionals that they are, I support states and districts moving away from current systems of teacher evaluation and compensation. Instead, I would like them to move towards a more meaningful system of supporting, recognizing, and rewarding teachers based on their effectiveness in the classroom.”

A teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom must be determined using multiple measures. These measures should include observations by trained evaluators who have knowledge about teaching, the subject matter, and the context. They could also include student and parental feedback and portfolios of student work. And the evaluations should include the academic growth their students make over the course of the year. Growth should be determined based on fair and objective assessments, but should not be based on the results of one test given a single day. States and districts should consider using results from district-developed assessments or portfolios of student work throughout the year graded against a consistent rubric.

Principals may be among those who evaluate teachers, but they needn’t be the only ones- some systems are having veteran teachers with experience in the community and classroom assignment conduct observations. Either way, it is vital that principals be given the support and training to serve as strong instructional leaders who understand the needs of all their students and teachers. To support this, the Department is proposing to nearly triple funding for leadership preparation and to set-aside \$50 million in state-level funds for states to invest in better support and training for principals in implementing evaluation systems and using the results from them to inform sound instructional decisions.

Many current updates and other helpful information on Special Education can be found on the PSEA website. Go to www.psea.org Teaching and Learning > Special & Gifted Education



If you use Twitter, you can receive updates on special education when new information becomes available. Information will be sent as it is received rather than on a daily or weekly schedule. You can sign on to follow at www.twitter.com/bernie_miller



Systems will have to recognize, of course, that a simple 25-1 relationship of students to teachers isn't the reality for many students and teachers. Sometimes this may mean giving multiple teachers recognition for the achievement gains of a student they both taught. Other times, it may mean using group-based measures for a team of teachers who work with overlapping groups of students. So states and districts should work with their teachers to determine which arrangements best reflect the reality of how teaching and learning happens in their schools. We recognize the prevalence and effectiveness of team teaching; for example, a regular education teacher and a special educator working together in the same classroom. Teacher evaluations have to support and reward teachers working in team teaching or other cooperative models."

National Data

The total number of students identified as having specific learning disabilities has declined from 2.87 million in 1999 to 2.53 million in 2008. Intellectual disabilities (mental retardation) and emotional have also seen similar declines. The number of students with autism has quadrupled from 66,043 to 292,818.

Data shows that 1.5 percent of students with developmental delays were in separate schools. 62 percent of the students were essentially mainstreamed at least 80 percent of the time which is up from 57 percent in 2004.

Comments or questions about the items in this newsletter may be directed to this mailbox: bmiller@psea.org



Gettysburg Leadership Conference in July

Several special education events will be available at PSEA's Summer Leadership Conference in Gettysburg, so make sure you look at your schedule carefully. Bernie Miller will update IPD School participants on trends, issues, and activities occurring across the state, followed by a facilitated panel discussion of special education advocates from PEN, ARC, and the Disabilities Rights Network.

On July 27, following the conclusion of classes, Vicki Rice Campbell, Vice-Chairperson of the PSEA Special Education Board, Leslie Collins, Esq., and Bernie Miller, Director for Education Services will host a special education forum for interested members. The session will include a legal update, great handouts and time to ask questions. All are welcome to attend.



Recession Trend

Parents are looking at graduation with a discerning eye, given the current state of the economy. They see the job market as lackluster, creating challenges when their children graduate from high school. Some parents are opting to continue their child's education until age 21 instead of having them spend days at home unemployed or under-employed. Educational opportunities are different for graduates aged 18 to 21, with an emphasis on transition to adult life. Plans that assess a student's interest, aptitudes, and abilities are typically followed by programs like community-based work experience, travel training, community-based instruction, and independent living skill development.

A Recent Court Case on Allergies

P.K. v. Middleton School District, 56 IDELR 105 (D.N.H. 2011)

In this case, the court concluded that Middleton School District did not violate IDEA in a situation in which latex products made their way into the school on a number of occasions, despite the district's ban on latex products. The student at issue was severely allergic to latex and his IEP provided that the District would monitor the use of latex in school and endeavor to make school environment as latex-free and safe as possible. The student's health plan provided that staff would inspect classrooms for possible latex products, remove as many products as possible, and send letters home to parents informing them of the need to maintain a latex-free classroom. Although latex items on occasion were brought to school, the student was not exposed to the items. Under these facts, the court found that any violation of the student's IEP was immaterial and that the District complied with the literal meaning of the IEP by monitoring the use of latex and attempting to keep the school as latex-free as possible.

Special Education Advisory Panel Meeting Dates for 2011-12

The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) is a federally-mandated panel that advises the PA Department of Education on special education matters. They have set their schedule for the upcoming year. The public is welcome to attend. The locations will be listed on the PDE website.

September 28-29
February 28

November 16-17
April 18-19

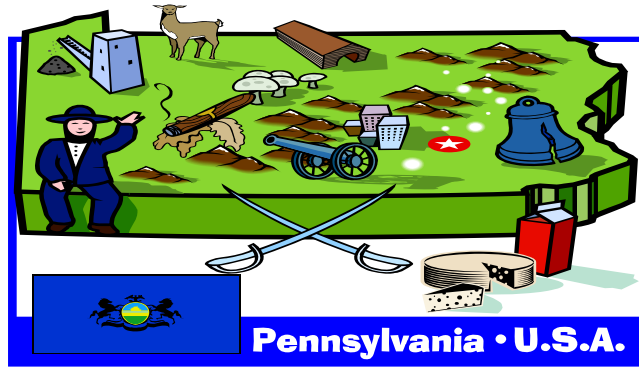
January 11-12
May 16-17

Resource

PaTTAN reports that there will be a continuation of SWPBS grants (School-wide Positive Behavior Support) for the 2011-12 school year. The dollar figure will be reduced but they hope to have more schools apply and join the effort to support students in the area of school climate and behavior. Look for the applications to be available this summer with a quick turn-around timeframe.



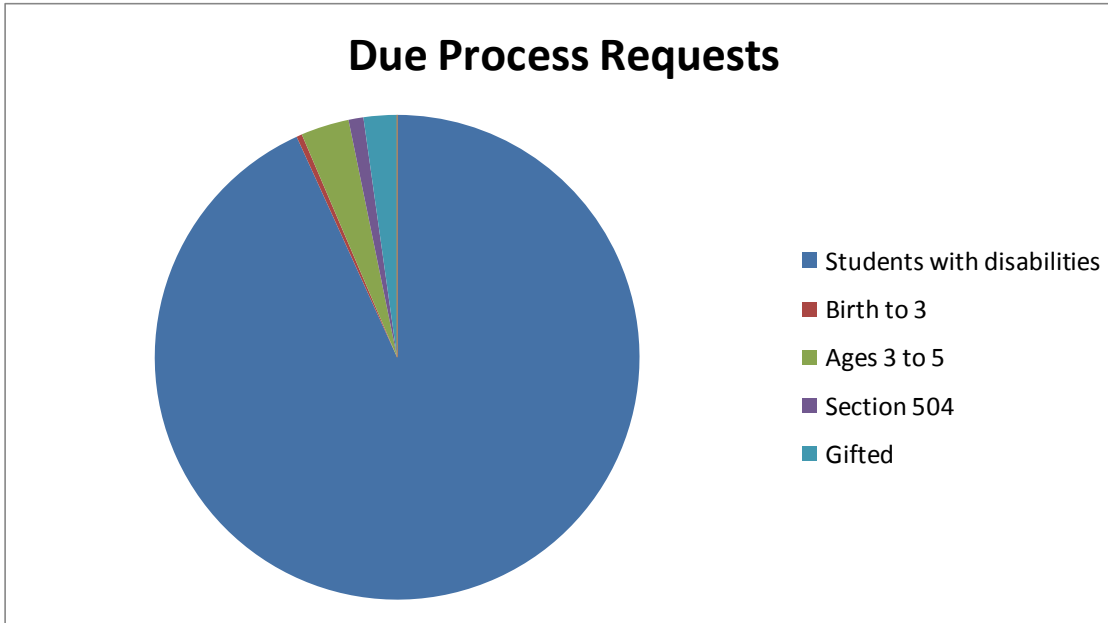
If you would like to subscribe to PSEA's *Current News in Special Education*, please go to <http://www.psea.org/currentnews>. Click on *Current News in Special Education* and follow the directions for the *Stay Connected Section*.



Due Process Cases for 2009-10

During the school year, the Pennsylvania Office of Dispute Resolution received 808 requests for due process hearings. This number of requests reflects a slight decline from the prior year. Here is a breakdown in the cases.

Students with disabilities	753
Birth to 3	3
Ages 3-5	26
Section 504:	8
Gifted:	18



Prior to the commencement of a due process hearing requested by the parent, all parties are obligated to hold a resolution meeting, unless all parties agree to waive the meeting or the parties proceed to mediation instead. 335 resolution meetings were held and agreement was reached in 235 of those cases.

Of the 808 requests for due process, 519 were cancelled prior to the hearing or hearing officer's decision. The hearing officers dismissed 37 of the requests.

The law gives parties a 30-day resolution period to resolve issues prior to the commencement of a due process hearing and 45 days for the hearing, a total of 75 days exclusive of any requests by the parties for continuances. The average number of days a due process case remained open before being fully adjudicated by the full-time hearing officer was 102 days.

In the birth to five-year-old arena, major issues included compensatory education and program placement, followed by transportation. Gifted education issues were compensatory education and IEP content, followed by evaluation concerns.

70 decisions were written. Hearing officers supported parents, in whole or in part, in 38 instances. In 18 instances, the hearing officer supported the school district, in whole or in part. The remaining 14 cases, the hearing officer either dismissed the case, wrote a decision supporting parent in part, and school district in part, or the hearing officer issued his/her own decision.

Below is a chart that reflects the number of *Consultline* calls received by the Office of Dispute Resolution. The Office keeps the data by school district and regions/IUs.

