



**GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CITIZENS (GACEC)**  
**Leadership Committee Meeting**  
**6:00 PM, March 3, 2026**  
**VIRTUAL MEETING**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bill Doolittle, Ann Fisher, Tika Hartsock, Kristina Horton, Jessica Heesh Mensack, Molly Merrill, Beth Mineo, Trenee Parker, Erika Powell, and Jennifer Pulcinella.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Theresa Moore/Operational Support Specialist

**GUESTS PRESENT:** None

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Al Cavalier (On Leave of Absence)

**ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:**

Bill called the meeting to order. The agenda was approved unanimously without modification. The minutes from February 6, 2026, Leadership Meeting were reviewed. Molly Merrill made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Jennifer Pulcinella. The motion carried unanimously, with Kristina Horton and Trenee Parker abstaining. Beth Mineo was not present at the time of the vote.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** No public comment tonight.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Data Sharing Agreement**

The committee reviewed its recent meeting with Michael Saylor, Ph.D., Chief of Staff at the Delaware Department of Education, and Dr. Monica Gant, Associate Secretary. Concerns were raised regarding the current relationship with the department and the committee's level of involvement in drafting regulations.

Discussion included the development of a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the department, which will incorporate a data-sharing agreement to ensure the secure and appropriate handling of sensitive information.

Concerns were also expressed about the department's use of a pre-inclusion model for managing policies affecting students with disabilities, with the view that more direct involvement in the policy development process would better support inclusive and effective outcomes.

## **Special Education Inclusion Challenges**

The group discussed ongoing challenges with special education inclusion, noting that students with disabilities are often considered after policies are developed rather than being integrated from the outset. Concerns were raised about resource limitations, including a shortage of therapists, and the need for sustainable, long-term solutions that go beyond procedural compliance.

Plans were shared to submit a follow-up letter to the Delaware Department of Education outlining concerns about the continued use of a pre-inclusion model and the need for improved management practices.

The discussion concluded with several positive developments, including the Department's acknowledgment of the committee's authority to request data and the State Council for Persons with Disabilities offering support with data collection and potential legislative advocacy.

## **Improving Education Agency Coordination**

The meeting centered on concerns about the management of approximately \$600 million by a small team, highlighting the need for improved organizational structure, financial oversight, and staffing capacity. Concerns were raised about insufficient state funding for the team and unmet expectations, particularly regarding proactive communication with families.

Plans were discussed to submit a follow-up letter to the Delaware Department of Education to ensure the council remains informed and to revisit the discussion in about a month.

The group also emphasized the importance of stronger coordination between local education agencies (LEAs) and the state education agency (SEA) to enhance services and outcomes for children with disabilities.

## **District Funding and Cost Recovery**

The group reviewed the recent Redding general body meeting, during which a plan was approved without public comment. The next meeting is scheduled for April.

An analysis of district tax bases was shared, noting significant variation among districts. It was also reported that the Public Education Funding Commission (PEFC) is developing a new funding model that includes a proposed \$250 million education funding allocation, although specific details remain unclear.

Concerns were raised about cost recovery practices, particularly related to speech-only Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and the need for clearer disclosure requirements. Follow-up communication was planned to address these issues.

## **Infinite Campus Special Education Issues**

The meeting focused on concerns related to Infinite Campus, the student information system currently in use. Reports from the subcommittee highlighted issues affecting special education functionality, including difficulties with document access and attendance tracking.

Concerns were raised about the absence of a dedicated Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) compliance team within Infinite Campus, which may be contributing to ongoing system challenges. Questions were also discussed regarding why some students with special needs were not properly identified in the system.

The group emphasized the need for coordinated collaboration and strategic advocacy with both Infinite Campus and the Delaware Department of Education to ensure these issues are addressed and compliance and service delivery are improved.

### **Data Transfer and System Interoperability**

The group discussed ongoing data transfer and system interoperability challenges following the transition from eSchool and PowerSchool to Infinite Campus. The transition has resulted in incorrect contact information and other data inaccuracies, raising concerns about data integrity. Additional concerns were raised regarding preschool special education data tracking and the lack of interoperability between early childhood systems and the Delaware Department of Education. These gaps hinder efforts to improve indicator data and strengthen transition processes. Follow-up outreach was assigned to determine whether the Interagency Coordinating Council is addressing these issues.

The group also discussed the removal of mid-year unit count funding from the governor's recommended budget, noting concerns that this decision may not accurately reflect actual increases in student enrollment.

### **Special Education Services Investigation**

The group discussed concerns that students with disabilities are not being adequately served in alternative schools and programs, particularly in relation to transition services and access to appropriate supports.

It was noted that progress is being made by Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) and the Children's Department; however, concerns remain regarding certain district-run programs. These programs reportedly claim to provide special education services but may lack sufficient resources and certified staff to fully meet student needs.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was officially adjourned at 7:30 pm.

## **NEW ACTION ITEMS:**

- Bill: Write and send a follow-up thank you letter to Michael (Chief of Staff) and Assistant Secretary summarizing the meeting, highlighting agreed points, and addressing concerns about the pre-inclusion model and data sharing; share with full council.
- Pam (or designee): Send examples of previous data requests to the Chief of Staff/DOE as discussed, particularly the class composition request.
- Bill: Raise with Dale (and in the next meeting) issues regarding cost recovery language, cost recovery funding flows, and the requirement for annual parent disclosure/signature for Medicaid cost recovery.
- Theresa: Note and bring up at the next meeting with Dale the ongoing concerns about "speech-only" IEPs for older students and the need for full evaluations as required by recent federal guidance.
- Bill/Theresa: Add to the to-do list the need to document and address issues with alternative/special schools, including gathering student counts and disability data for each facility, and determine at what level GACEC should engage on this issue.
- Jennifer: Reach out to ICC (or relevant group) to determine if Infinite Campus preschool/early childhood data system concerns are being addressed, and if not, coordinate with GACEC to elevate these issues.
- Tika: Look into publicly posted local DSEA contracts to review for IDEA compliance, and report back to group.
- Bill/Theresa: Add to the to-do list the need to track and document ongoing issues (e.g., compliance, resource gaps, data system problems) for follow-up with Dale and DOE.
- Erika.: Reach out to Pam for information on the transition committee for DSCYF students and determine how to engage or support that work.
- Bill/Theresa: Consider elevating Infinite Campus data system issues (including IDEA compliance and data transfer problems) to a GACEC work group if issues persist.
- Bill: Pursue details from PEFC and/or JFC regarding the proposed \$250 million in additional education funding, specifically the portion for disability services, and report back to the group.
- Bill: Follow up with Beth (and/or research) regarding the legislative history and enabling statute that moved Autism Resources to DOE, to determine if/when restrictions on school-based training were imposed.
- Bill/Theresa: Add to the to-do list the need to consider recommending legislation or policy changes requiring districts to house and properly resource their own alternative programs for students with disabilities.
- Bill: Consider drafting a letter to DSEA regarding review of local contracts for IDEA compliance, if collaborative review is not forthcoming.
- Tika: Collaborate with other Infinite Campus subcommittee members to prioritize and communicate shared concerns to Infinite Campus/DOE for resolution.
- Bill: Attend next scheduled meeting with DOE leadership (around April 4th) to continue discussions on data sharing, MOU, and inclusion in regulatory processes.