



March 19, 2021 Virtual Conference

Perspectives on “Timely” Mid-Year Issues in Special Education Administration

**Featuring Presentations by Experts/Leaders in Education,
Student Mental Health, Law and Legislation**



Leadership for Evaluations Responsive to Disability and Culture

CONTEXT:

Evaluations of special education programs and services have often been relegated to compliance reviews and results driven accountability measures. Few guidelines have been made available to leaders of special education that include varied approaches to evaluation that deeply examine the responsiveness to the unique conditions that disability and cultural differences represent. Evaluation selection is not independent from approaches to leadership. Findings from evaluations may emerge that otherwise might not be visible with traditional approaches when approaches to leadership are integrated with evaluations that are responsive to disability and culture and inclusive of stakeholders from often disenfranchised groups.

SESSION FOCUS:

The intent of this session is to broaden our understanding of evaluations for special education programs and services that are responsive to disability and takes into account various approaches to leadership within inclusive contexts. Four parameters are considered: (1) employment multiple evaluations that align purposes, questions and methods; (2) recognition of strengths and limits of evaluation approaches in light of their responsiveness to disability and culture; (3) utilization of situational and transitional approaches to leadership in the evaluation process; and, (4) inclusion of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds in the evaluation process. To date, there has been little discussion about the interface between leadership and evaluation approaches, or on the degree to which leaders’ implement responsive evaluation approaches that result in improved outcomes for students with disabilities and those from underrepresented groups. With the culmination of this session, participants will appreciate how leadership approaches support evaluations that are responsive to disability and culture.

PRESENTER:

Mary Lynn Boscardin, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Professor. Editor: Journal of Special Education Leadership (CASE). Past President: Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and Council for Administrators of Special Education (CASE). Project Director: Pathways to Effective Leadership and Administration for Special Education (PATHWAYS) (U.S. DOE, OSEP Grant). Email: mlbosco@umass.edu.



***In the Year of COVID-19, Legal & Legislative Matters Matter,
Especially in Special Education***

CONTEXT SETTING:

During this unprecedented school year, the legal and regulatory issues of special education have been complex and ever changing. Massachusetts school district leaders and administrators have worked with continued rigor in providing remote learning for students while managing the uncertainty of school building closures due to the public health crisis.

As schools begin the new COVID-19 school year, special education will continue to be a primary focus in public schools with the need for continued vigilance in meeting mandates, regulatory requirements and advisories.

SESSION FOCUS

This conference segment will highlight the current legal decisions post-COVID and the impact of COVID-related school closures on FAPE from a legal perspective. There will be discussion on current “hot topics,” such as compensatory services and First Amendment issues during remote learning.

Additionally, discussion will provide highlights of ASE Advocacy work regarding legal, legislative, regulatory and advisory efforts during COVID-19, including discussion on future and on-going special education administrative advocacy efforts for student and school district needs in managing COVID-19 special education.

PRESENTER

Paige Tobin, Esq., Murphy, Lamere and Murphy, PC., legal and legislative expert in special education, counsel to Massachusetts school districts and consultant to the Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education. Contact: Murphy, Lamere and Murphy, P.C., 781-848-1850, email ptobin@mlmlawfirm.org



KEYNOTE

Navigating Our Future

CONTEXT:

The COVID-19 Pandemic has challenged educators to rethink every aspect of our work with students, parents, and colleagues. The complex challenges we face have been enormously stressful and require creative problem solving and attention to multiple perspectives. While we all seek a return to some kind of “normalcy” in the near future, school will never quite be the same.

SESSION FOCUS:

School leadership must develop new pathways for teaching and learning requiring three essential leadership strategies. Dr. D’Auria will focus on these strategies during his keynote address:

1. Establishing essential conditions for adult learning, particularly psychological safety.
2. Applying improvement processes that will allow us to both quickly diagnose problems and develop experimental approaches to address new challenges like teaching online.
3. Tapping into a different set of leadership skills that combine social and emotional dimensions and help people openly address hard to discuss issues such as how schools contribute to institutional racism.

PRESENTER:

John D’Auria, Ed.D Faculty, Organizational and Leadership Psychology, Director, Educational Leadership Concentration at William James College, former President of Teachers21, former Professor of Practice, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, former Principal and Superintendent of Schools, Expert in Educational Leadership, consultant, and author

Embracing the School Challenge

Special Education Leadership during the Extended Unpredictability of School Schedules due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis: Targeted Updates on Mandates, Regulations, and Advisories to Improve Student Outcomes in Challenging Times

PRESENTER:

Dr. Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner of The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), State Director of Special Education, former (MA) special education teacher, Special Education Administrator and Massachusetts School Superintendent



Supporting Students At-Risk for Social, Emotional and Mental Health Issues

CONTEXT:

The social, emotional and mental health needs of our students are of significant concern to educators, administrators and school teams. COVID-19, the public health crisis, and the unprecedented school closures have given rise to an increase of students being at risk.

SESSION FOCUS:

This session will discuss strategies to identify and support students at risk, for in-person and virtual learning environments.

1. Identifying student behaviors that places them at risk
2. Understanding the role of the educator in responding when mental health impacts a student
3. Effective communication with parents/guardians regarding the risks their child may be facing
4. Practical and useful resources for school personnel and school-based teams

PRESENTER:

Kristan Bagley-Jones, LICSW, Program Director for Franciscan Children's school-based counseling program in Boston Public Schools, former director of the school-based counseling program for the North River Collaborative, former clinical social worker in the Boston Public Schools, and adjunct professor in the Graduate School of Social Work at Boston College.



Updates and News from The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families

CONTEXT:

This has been an unprecedented year resulting from the global pandemic. The public health crisis and unpredictable school schedules has added additional stress to the lives of many Massachusetts children and families. Collaboration and communication among public schools and the MA Department of Children and Families is ever more important and needed during this unprecedented time in the joint support of Massachusetts students at-risk and on IEPs who are also in the care/custody of the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families.

SESSION FOCUS:

This session will highlight strategies and tips for supporting at-risk students in the care/custody of DCF during remote/hybrid learning programs in use during the pandemic. The challenges and opportunities for supporting the educational and child welfare needs of children will be addressed along with such topics as:

- ✓ Best practices for school staff to consider when filing a 51A
- ✓ Best practices for schools and DCF to collaborate/communicate regarding student specific concerns, including protocols for confidentiality, and shared responsibility among LEAs and DCF
- ✓ DCF services/resources/supports for children (i.e., DCF workers visiting homes, taking students to counseling services, providing “remote” support services)
- ✓ Conditions for reporting to DCF when students are not engaging in remote or in-person learning
- ✓ June Guidance - overview/tip sheet
- ✓ DCF data/indicators regarding keeping students at-risk safe

HONORED GUEST PRESENTERS:

Atty. Rebecca Brink, Assistant Commissioner, Program Support, Massachusetts Department of Children and Families

James Morrison, M.Ed., MA DCF Education Manager and Foster Care Point of Contact



“In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity”

-Sun-Tzu, Ancient Chinese military strategist, general, writer & philosopher



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**Massachusetts
Administrators of Special Education**



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