



**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**P.O. Box 500**  
**TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0500**

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*Governor*

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*Acting Commissioner*

Kim Guadagno  
*Lt. Governor*

March 31, 2011

Dr. Brian Zychowski, Chair  
New Jersey Educator Effectiveness Task Force  
North Brunswick Administrative Offices  
Maple Meade School  
Old Georges Road  
North Brunswick, NJ 08902

Dear Dr. Zychowski,

On behalf of New Jersey's State Special Education Advisory Council, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for both inviting us to speak to the New Jersey Educator Effectiveness Task Force, and for recognizing in the Task Force's Interim Report the need for additional work to develop a fair and comprehensive method for evaluating teachers of special education students.

There are several points that we believe will be important to keep in mind as these evaluation methods are developed and implemented:

1. We very much agree with the Task Force's recommendation that for all teachers (general education teachers and special education teachers alike), "The system should make use of multiple measure or data sources so an array of evidence is utilized when assessing a teacher's effectiveness." (p.13).
2. We are in no way advocating that teachers of special education students be automatically assessed differently than other teachers. The range of disabilities that are included in "special education" is quite large, and there can be no "one size fits all" solution.
3. Our focus of concern is specifically students with the most significant intellectual disabilities, for whom the acquisition of academic knowledge may progress very differently. In addition, the explicit learning of non-academic skills, such as functional, social, and community living skills, may be especially important for successful post-school outcomes and, whenever that is the case, should be included in the assessment of teacher effectiveness.

4. We want to ensure that whatever assessment process is ultimately adopted, it does not have the unintended consequence of discouraging talented teachers from choosing to educate students with the most significant intellectual disabilities. We also want to avoid any disincentives that would make it more difficult to expand inclusive educational practices in New Jersey.

Again, we want to thank the Task Force for taking into consideration the issues we raised. If there is the need for further assistance in the development of these assessment processes, please do not hesitate to contact us through the State Special Education Advisory Council Coordinator, Paul Fogarty at 609-292-9033.

Sincerely,

Howard Lerner, Ed.D, Chairperson  
New Jersey State Special Education Advisory Council

c Barbara Gantwerk