# **APPROVED** LTF Minutes and Proceedings

Wednesday, June 2, 2021

Allegheny Intermediate Unit

Local Task Force

475 East Waterfront Drive

Homestead, PA 15120-1144

# **Members Present**

Mr. Regis Charlton

Mrs. Megan DeFries

Mrs. Cynthia Grace Devine-Kepner

Mrs. Cindy Duch, Co-Chairperson

Mrs. Debra Efkeman

Mrs. Mary Evrard

Ms. Penny Gardner

Ms. Debbie Garvic

Ms. Amy Guthrie

Ms. Kelly Hast

Ms. Sharon Janosik

Ms. Marci Katona

Ms. Natalie Krall, Recording Secretary

Ms. Ursula Lesik

Mr. Brian Welles

Mrs. Susan Wuenstel

Mrs. Heather Zak, Chairperson

# **Guests Present**

There were three guests present at this meeting.

Mrs. Heather Zak, Chairperson of the Local Task Force on the Right to Education (LTF #3) called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM on June 2, 2021.

**I. Welcome, Introductions, Excused Members**

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations.

The following members have been excused from this meeting: Leeanna Lawson and Michelle Walker.

**II. Guest Speaker – Ms. Kim Resh – McCayla’s Voice**

Ms. Resh informed the membership about her organization McCayla’s Voice which is named after her daughter Mickayla who died two years ago. McCayla’s Voice is voice for children with disabilities and the organization provides enrichment activities and inclusion programs for schools and presents them as assemblies to students. McCayla’s Voice has also published books for disabled children and has made up artwork kits for children during the pandemic. If you are interested in McCayla’s Voice, please feel free to contact Kim Resh at [kim@mccaylavoice.com](mailto:kim@mccaylavoice.com) for more information on their programs.

**III. Review/Acceptance of the Minutes of May 5, 2021**

The minutes from the May meeting were reviewed. A motion was made to accept the

minutes. Motion was made by Cindy Duch and seconded by Debra Efkeman.

**IV. Treasurer’s Report – Mrs. Heather Zak**

Mrs. Zak reviewed the June treasurer’s report with the membership.

**V. Consumer Concerns**

The following consumer concerns were brought up at this meeting:

A concern was brought up by a parent regarding a week long summer camp being held at Commonwealth Connections Academy. The parent’s child attends this school and wanted to attend the week long summer camp but was denied participation by the school due to her disability. The reason for the denial is that the school does not have supports available to accommodate this student at the summer camp. Several members of the LTF encouraged the parent to contact the Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education to report this issue.

A concern was brought up by a parent from the Montour School District regarding her child taking the Keystone test. The child currently has a 504 plan and is supposed to receive special accommodations during standardized testing. However, when the child took his Keystone test, he was in a noisy environment and distracted during testing. Several members of the LTF encouraged the parent to contact the school principal to try to get a small group testing environment with no distractions for her son.

A concern was brought up by a parent regarding the AIU Center School – PRIDE program. A student who was attending the PRIDE program now needs a wheelchair and was told by school administration that he could not attend the program again. Brian Welles stated that he will look into this issue and get back to the parent.

A concern was brought up by a parent who is currently homeless and would like her children to attend the Woodland Hills SD since they are staying there in someone’s home. The school district will not register the children since the parent does not have a home. Several members of the LTF suggested that the parent contact the school district and reference the McKinney-Vento Act for homeless children.

**VI. Informational Items**

1. **ODS – Mrs. Mary Evrard**

Mrs. Evrard shared the following items with the membership:

* If you have any questions about supports and services for individuals with an intellectual disability and / or autism. If you need information for individuals with disabilities or resources for basic needs.: [mevrard@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:mevrard@alleghenycounty.us)  412-253-1251
* Visit the ODS webpage: <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Disabilities/Intellectual-Disability-Autism.aspx>
* Find a more organized announcement page here! [https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Programs-Services/Disabilities/Key-Communicators.aspx](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.alleghenycounty.us%2fHuman-Services%2fPrograms-Services%2fDisabilities%2fKey-Communicators.aspx&c=E,1,IcO_-J7TGonMoZO4SCUwu9dQgGh3aa0OC7u2GgYrvUTDlsDYBUGV5PQ42kn-5eRV1BOtwr_PAmSZA6a_ZQNoztErPkwoUvwXfrkF3OgQKTsyG2s,&typo=1)

**B. AIU – Special Education – Mr. Brian Welles**

Mr. Welles informed the membership that AIU Center based schools will be full in-person learning for Covid Compensary Education in June. They will also be full in-person learning for the fall semester.

Mr. Welles informed the membership that Mr. Welles is part of the new AIU strategic plan committee. He shared some information about the new strategic plan as well as the new AIU mission statement with the membership. It will be finalized by the end of June and presented to the AIU Board of Directors at this time. The AIU strategic plan will be available for public viewing in July.

**C.– AIU – Training and Consultation Program – Mrs. Leanna Lawson**

Mrs. Lawson was not in attendance at this meeting.

1. **Superintendent Update – Mrs. Sue Mariani**

Mrs. Mariani was not in attendance at this meeting.

**E. LTF/STF Update – Mrs. Cindy Duch and Mrs. Heather Zak**

Mrs. Duch and Mrs. Zak did not have any new updates at this time regarding the State Task Force.

1. **MH Update – Allegheny County MH Children’s Team – Ms. Kelly Hast**

Ms. Hast did not have any new information to report to the membership this month.

1. **Right to Education – Ms. Amy Guthrie**

Ms. Guthrie informed the membership about the following items:

**Achieva/ Arc of Greater Pittsburgh updates for LTF2 & LTF3, May, 2021**

***I. Resources from Achieva*-**<https://www.achieva.info/>

***A. Advocacy***- **1. Individualized support** to assist families in navigating special education and support systems (e.g., Early Intervention, Intellectual Disability, Mental Health, Autism); 412-995-5000 ext. 486.

**2. Free Webinar:**

***B. Achieva Family Trust*-** information on webinars, long-term planning, and other resources on the [Achieva Family Trust](http://achievafamilytrust.org/) website; to subscribe to the AFT newsletter, see: [Trust Matters newsletter, May 12, 2021](https://mailchi.mp/achieva/trust-matters-april2021-5233640?e=a3c18524db)

1. NEW: Get Wise Wednesdays- Please call 412-995-5000 x589 or x434 to speak to a staff member between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm.

2. For information on the Residual grant program: <http://achievafamilytrust.org/charitable-residual-account/>

3. [Achieva Family Trust Webinars](http://achievafamilytrust.org/our_services/webinars-and-events/)- a. see this link for archived webinars such as: **Accessing Employment Opportunities Through Achieva**, as well as to register for upcoming topics.

***C. Achieva’s Empowered Voices Leadership group for self-advocates*; it** meets on Thursdays from 6-8pm on zoom. [Achieva.info/ EV Meeting](https://achieva.zoom.us/j/96795009607?pwd=%20WEJPNjR6TUg1bFZqZjBFc3RYRXI0dz09#success)

***D. The Cecil and David Rosenthal Memorial Fund*** can provide grants to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live more fully included in their community. [For more information and to apply see this link](https://www.achieva.info/cecilanddavid).

***E. Achieva’s Compass newsletter***  [May 27, 2021](https://mailchi.mp/achieva/compass5-27-21?e=0429402a66)

***II. Special Education Topics***

***A. Transition*-**

1. **Post-secondary initiatives** for students with Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities (IDD)-

a. [Think College](https://thinkcollege.net/);

b. PA Inclusive Higher Education Consortium <https://pihec.com/>

c. Achieva Post-Secondary College Planning Project [Koosterhous@achieva.info](mailto:Koosterhous@achieva.info); 412-995-5000 ext. 606

**2.**  **PEAL-** <https://www.pealcenter.org/>

a. [PEAL's Youth Resources for Transition](https://www.pealcenter.org/youth-and-young-adults/)

b. Transition Planning: Transition Tuesdays [Register here for May 25 and June 22 sessions](https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5510238114783286288)

**3.** Person-centered planning- <https://www.lifecoursetools.com/>

4. <https://www.transitiondiscoveries.org/>

***B. FISA Foundation webinar:***

**Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline**- June 8, 2021, 2:00-3:30

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dismantling-the-school-to-prison-pipeline-tickets-145762432359>

***III. Legislative/ systems advocacy-***

**A.** [**The Arc Pennsylvania**](https://thearcpa.org/)**;** [The Arc of PA Pennsylvania Message, Spring 2021, Vol XXI, Issue 1](https://thearcpa.org/file_download/inline/33858ce3-27e1-4f26-a53a-efa3661205a9);

Virtual Advocacy Conference June 7-8, 2021 [Register here](https://thearcpa.org/what_we_do/apc/apc.html)

**1.** [COVID-19 resources](https://thearcpa.org/resources/corona-virus-resources/corona-virus-covid-19-resources.html): The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) has partnered with Rite Aid to provide COVID-19 vaccines to people with an intellectual disability or autism and their caregivers at Rite Aid stores across the Commonwealth. ODP also secured a call center to support scheduling efforts. Call 1-800-424-4345

[PA Department of Health](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx); <https://www.pa.gov/guides/responding-to-covid-19/>

* If an individual does not have a direct support professional (DSP) that can provide them with the appropriate COVID-19 vaccine and healthcare provider information, they can call the **PA Health Hotline**at **1-877-724-3258**
* Persevere PA is a COVID-19 crisis hotline designed to link callers with counselors to assist with the mental health impacts of COVID-19. They can also assist a caller in finding a healthcare provider to administer the vaccine when their corresponding phase arrives. Resources in both English and Spanish are attached with more information. **Call Persevere PA at 1-855-284-2494**
* When arranging for an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing to receive information via telephone, PA Relay Services are available by **dialing 711.**

**2. Making connections for the 21st century workforce:** [The Arc of PA's youtube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN_3iaU-WYuY_MdO1i5ZWtw/videos)

**3. Include me** education resources: <https://includemepa.org/e-learning/>

**4. Arc Discovery Employment Transitions (ADEPT):** <https://includemepa.org/what-we-do/adept/>

**5. Policy Information Exchange newsletter:** [A Slice of Pie, Vol. 22, Issue 1, 2021](https://thearcpa.org/file_download/inline/a151f6d9-0b6c-4145-93c5-6d0acbfd4758) from the PA Developmental Disabilities Council,with information on the state budget, current legislation, and other topics. <https://thearcpa.org/actionalert.html>

a. **Senate Bill 664- sent to the House the week of May 24, expected to be voted on by June 7: would give parents the power to decide whether their child should advance to the next school year (it would also prevent 21 year olds from aging out**). It also stipulates that the **decision must be made by July 15**. *Source- McAndrews Law Office MLO Minute, May 2021:* [*https://mcandrewslaw.com/*](https://mcandrewslaw.com/)

**B. PA School funding:**

**1. PA Schools Work** <https://paschoolswork.org/resources/webinars/>

**2. Fund Our Schools PA Case Trial** – Apr. 2, 2021 press release: the trial has tentatively been scheduled for Sept. 9, 2021, with a pretrial conference on June 21. <https://www.fundourschoolspa.org/>

**C. Office of Developmental Programs:**

1. Autism and Intellectual Disabilities in PA: <https://aidinpa.org/>; <https://paautism.org/resources/>; [ASERT Newsletter, April 2021](https://mailchi.mp/asertinfo/april-2021-newsletter?e=6a56f2e584)

**2.** [My ODP Podcast](https://www.myodp.org/mod/data/view.php?id=28133) covers topics relevant to supporting individuals with disabilities. The current topic is self-determination.

**D. The Arc of the US:**

**From *The Capitol Insider*, June 1, 2021:**

**White House Unveils FY 2022 Budget**

On May 28, President Biden released his budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2022. In addition to details of the American Jobs Plan and American Families Plan, the budget provides substantial increases for many of The Arc’s priority discretionary programs. The most notable increases were for Vocational Rehabilitation Demonstration and Training programs (604%), Individuals with Disabilities Act Personnel Preparation (177%), and Lifespan Respite Care Act (100%).

**Credit for Caring Act Reintroduced (S.1670 / H.R.3321)**

The bill supports family caregivers by offering a federal tax credit of up to $5,000 for those who qualify. The tax credit would provide eligible family caregivers caring for loved ones of all ages with some financial relief and help them pay for services such as home care, adult day care, respite care, and other supports. The Arc supports this legislation, which will help to ensure the financial security of family caregivers of persons with disabilities.

**Keeping All Students Safe Act (H.R.3474 / S.1858)**

This bill would prohibit physical restraint that is life-threatening or restricts breathing, mechanical restraint, chemical restraint, and seclusion in schools that receive federal funding. Physical restraint would only be allowed when a student’s behavior poses an imminent danger to self or others. The bill also requires states to ensure schools have appropriately trained personnel and prohibits individualized education programs or behavior intervention plans from including provisions allowing the use of restraint or seclusion, among other provisions. The Arc strongly supports this legislation.

1. **Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) – Ms. Marci Katona**

Ms. Katona informed the membership of the following items:

She sent a list of OVR providers to Heather Zak to e-mail to the LTF membership.

OVR is still working remotely from home at this time.

The Closed Order of Selection prior to May 25, 2021 enabled all individuals on this list to be released. There is a few people on the waitlist on May 26, 2021.

The MOU Toolkits have been given to school districts by OVR and the series of trainings with school districts who are using the toolkit has been running smoothly.

1. **Disability Options Network – Mr. Regis Charlton**

Mr. Charlton shared with the membership that his organization has Cares money and his office is in need of a care coordinator.

**VII. Committee Update**

1. **Parent Assistance Line**

There were no calls to the parent assistance line in the month of May.

1. **Cyclical Monitoring – Mrs. Heather Zak**

Mrs. Zak informed the membership that Cyclical Monitoring is finished for the 2020-2021 school year.

**VIII. Old Business**

A motion was made to elect Heather Zak and Cindy Duch as LTF officers for the 2021-2022

school year.

Nomination was made by Debra Efkeman and seconded by Sharon Janosik.

Motion was discussed.

Motion was passed unanimously.

**IX. New Business**

Several members of the LTF suggested potential guest speaker topics for 2021-2022 school year meetings and they were Benefits Counseling and the AIU Pride Program.

**X. Membership Rounder**

Everyone wished each other a wonderful and safe summer.

Sharon Janosik shared with the membership that she was able to get on the Bethel Park SD School Board ballet for the November 2021 election.

Heather Zak shared with the membership that her son plays football and has had a wonderful experience playing with his team this year.

**XI. Motion for Adjournment**

A motion was made for adjournment.

Motion was made by Cindy Duch and seconded by Debra Efkeman.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.