

# ***Frequently Asked Questions***

## **Introduction**

The State Superintendent's Conference for Special Education and Pupil Services Leadership Personnel has changed significantly over the years. Attendance has grown and the various roles of the attendees have broadened. Every year, the Conference Planning Committee depends on the evaluations and other feedback in organizing the conference. In the last few years, the committee has received many comments and suggestions beyond the content of the conference. We have listened to the feedback and want to address those issues in the Q-and-A below.

Thank you, again, for your attendance and for your feedback!  
The Conference Planning Committee

## **Conference Q and A**

### **1. Who sponsors this conference?**

The official title of the conference is "The State Superintendent's Conference for Special Education and Pupil Services Leadership Personnel." It is sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and the planning committee comes from the two teams in the Division for Learning Support: Equity and Advocacy (DLSEA). Those teams are the Special Education Team and the Student Services/Prevention and Wellness (SSPW) Team.

### **2. What is the history and purpose of the conference?**

The 2011 conference is the 27<sup>th</sup> annual conference. It was started in order to give DPI an opportunity to meet with leadership personnel in special education and pupil services to share information and the statewide agenda. The conference has grown over the past 27 years from approximately 150 attendees to nearly 600 (see question 4).

### **3. I thought this was supposed to be a special education conference. Why are there so many workshops and speakers on pupil services issues?**

The conference is designed for leadership personnel in both special education and pupil services. As noted in question 1, the two DPI teams coordinating the conference are the Student Services/Prevention and Wellness Team and the Special Education Team. Many of the attendees have responsibilities in both pupil services and special education, while some concentrate in one area or the other. We believe there is much interaction and many cooperative efforts between these two areas. For example, pupil services personnel such as school psychologists, school counselors, school nurses, and school social workers are frequently participants on IEP teams. They may also provide direct services, including related services, to students with disabilities.

**4. Who are the attendees?**

In 2009, conference attendees included the following:

<b>Role</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Administrator	20	3%
CESA Personnel (including WSPEI staff)	64	11%
State Superintendent's Advisory Council Members	15	2%
DPI Staff	74	12%
Higher Education Staff	8	1%
Interpreters	6	1%
Office Staff	4	0%
Other	22	4%
Parent	2	0%
Parent Advocate	17	3%
Principal	6	1%
Program Support Teacher	13	2%
RSN	13	2%
School Counselor	1	0%
School Nurse	1	0%
School Psychologist	30	5%
School Social Worker	3	0%
Special Education Administration	46	8%
Special Education or Pupil Services Director	208	35%
Special Education Teacher	16	3%
599 TOTAL REGISTERED		

**5. Why is the conference at the Marriott Hotel? Why isn't it held outside Madison?**

There are few facilities in Madison large enough to accommodate our group. We have held the conference at the Alliant Energy Center, but there were many complaints. Our only other options were the Marriott and the Hilton/Monona Terrace Convention Center. The latter would not book hotel rooms at the state government rate we can pay (see question 12), and so the conference is now at the Marriott.

We must hold the conference in Madison due to the number of DPI staff who present, cover the registration booth, and attend. Participants regularly tell us they appreciate having DPI staff available at the conference. Travel restrictions and efficiency limit us to Madison.

**6. Why is the conference in November again? I liked it when it was in October.**

When the conference was held at the Alliant Energy Center, they were able to offer us October dates. The only time in the fall the Marriott has space available for such a large state conference is in November.

**7. Why are there so many DPI speakers?**

This is a conference sponsored by DPI and our opportunity to communicate with leaders in the fields of special education and pupil services. The planning committee takes into account the topics and speakers recommended by conference attendees, but it is also important to present the department's position on regulations and requirements, as well as to get the latest information out on statewide programs and initiatives.

**8. Why aren't the sectionals more interactive?**

The sectional rooms at the Marriott hold either 130 or 260 participants. In the limited time available (75 minutes) and with groups that size, it is difficult for speakers to include interactive or small group features.

**9. Why don't you put all of the conference workshop handouts on CDs or flash drives and hand them out at the conference?**

There are a number of reasons. We do not always get the handouts in time to create a master and make hundreds of copies prior to the conference. Even with those handouts we do receive, making all the copies head of time would be a significant challenge for DPI staff. Most people ask for paper copies of the handouts for the sessions they attend, and we do post all handouts to our website after the conference for those who want electronic copies and/or who want copies of all handouts. Those handouts can be found at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/falleader.html> Starting with the 2012 conference, we will be going green and will not provide handouts at the conference. Handouts will be posted on-line and participants will need to print and bring handouts for the sectionals they wish to attend.

**10. I have some questions about the menus. Why can't we get more fruit with the continental breakfast? Why are there limited luncheon choices? Why can't we get better food at meals and breaks? I'd be willing to pay a higher registration fee to get better food.**

DPI must operate within approvable limits set by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) and applicable to all state agencies and functions. This includes limits for mileage, lodging, and meals. Current limits are \$8 for breakfast, \$9 for lunch, and \$17 for dinner, including service charges. We are tax exempt. We cannot exceed those limits, even if conference registration fees were to be increased. Hotels and other conference facilities have limited menu choices within the approvable state government rates.

**11. Why can't we get free wireless Internet access? I need to check my e-mail when I am out of the office.**

This year we have an agreement with the Marriott where we will be providing Internet service at the breaks for people to check their e-mail. However, depending on the number of people using the Internet connection and bandwidth, your response time may be slow. We will re-evaluate this option after the 2011 conference.

**12. How has the registration fee changed over the years?**

We have ten years of documentation as follows:

2002	\$ 110
2003	\$ 110
2004	\$ 130
2005	\$ 135
2006	\$ 135
2007	\$ 135
2008	\$ 135
2009	\$ 135
2010	\$ 140
2011	\$ 150

The conference operates on a break-even basis. The amount of money we can carry over from year to year is limited. Raising the conference fee would not allow us to have a wider array of menus (see question 10).

**Please take the time to complete the electronic evaluation to be sent shortly after the conference.  
We appreciate and use your feedback!**