

STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
National Conference Center at the Holiday Inn
399 Monmouth Street
East Windsor, NJ 08520

MINUTES

Thursday, February 19, 2009

Members in attendance: Dr. Howard Lerner, Carolyn Hayer, Scott Elliott, William Sellar, Kathleen Mullery, Michael Nevin, Philip Gartlan, Angela Durso, Blanche Stetler, Kathy Roberson, Dr. Tracy Amerman

Members not in attendance: Dr. Sharon Maricle, Debra Fernandez

Resource Representatives in attendance: Gordon Reibman, Elizabeth Collins, Debbie Stewart

Resource Representatives not in attendance: Robert Paige

Guests and members of the public: Sol Heckelman, Perkie Cannon

I. ACCEPTANCE OF JANUARY MINUTES

The meeting was officially called to order at 9:45 a.m. by Co-Chairperson Dr. Howard Lerner. The January minutes were approved and seconded. **All in favor.**

II. PRESENTATIONS:

Discussion of Social Skills Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Donna Snyder, M.Ed., Director of Field Services

Developing Safe and Civil Schools (DSACS) Project, Rutgers University, Center for Applied Psychology

Ms. Donna Snyder was invited to the SSEAC meeting to provide information regarding the “Developing Safe and Civil Schools” (DSACS) initiative being implemented under the director of Dr. Maurice Elias. After providing an overview of two additional projects, with social skills components, the Center for Social and Character Development and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities, Ms. Snyder lead a discussion with SSEAC members regarding the DSACS project. Each of these projects represents a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Educational Support Services.

DSACS, in its fourth year, is designed to build local educational resources for improving Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD) in participating schools. There are currently approximately 250 schools involved in the initiative. Participating school are eligible to receive, at no cost, training and support for school teams in how to coordinate existing SECD efforts in character development, positive behavior, health promotion and at-risk behavior prevention. An essential component of the initiative is a culture and climate survey completed by staff, students and parents, given once per year. The survey consists of 45 questions and the schools receive feedback to identify areas of strength and those needing improvement.

A follow-up consultation and support component includes technical assistance from the SECD Mentoring Coalition and Leadership teams, as well as DSACS staff through the school DSACS liaison. There is an array of professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance classroom climate and foster engaging teaching methods.

Discussion of Social Skills Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Sharon Lohrmann, Ph.D., Director, Positive Behavior Supports in Schools

Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities

Dr. Lohrmann gave an overview of the Positive Behavior Support in Schools (PBSIS) Initiative, a collaborative project between the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and the Boggs Center at UMDNJ. The goal of this initiative is to support the inclusion of students with disabilities and challenging behavior within general education programs by developing the capacity of schools to create environments that encourage and support pro-social student behavior at the school wide, classroom, and individual student levels using current, research validated practices in positive behavior support. Participating schools have been selected based on a competitive application, demonstrating need and commitment. There are approximately 70 schools that have received training in the school-wide PBSIS.

PBSIS utilizes research based multi-tiered interventions: Universal Interventions for all students, staff and settings; Secondary Interventions for students with repeated behavior problems; and Individualized Interventions for students with the most intensive needs. The outcomes are schools that adopt proactive and instructional interventions; reduce reliance on reactive strategies (e.g., suspension and detention); and that intervene quickly with students to prevent the development of persistent problem patterns.

Dr. Lohrmann discussed social skills within each of the three interventions of PBSIS. Social skills are taught in Universal Interventions by teaching all students a core set of expectations that are displayed throughout the school building and are reinforced through staff embedded instruction in day to day interactions. In Secondary and Individualized Interventions social skills are identified and taught within the context of the function of behavior which indicates the needs; social skills are linked back to larger school-wide expectations; instruction happens individually or in small groups; and instruction uses a model – lead – practice – feedback approach.

III. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Dr. Wohle reported that the New Jersey Annual Performance Report was submitted to the US Department of Education on the February 2, 2009 submission date. The APR has been posted on the NJOSEP website at: <http://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/info/spp/apr/report3.doc>

Dr. Wohle informed the Council that NJOSEP finalized its local school district determinations during the last week of January 2009.

Dr. Wohle discussed the Federal Government Stimulus Package including New Jersey's projected amounts, and reported that guidance from the USDOE is anticipated early next month.

Dr. Wohle reported that the revised Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) are available for public review on the New Jersey Department of Education web site. She requested that the Council review the standards by the March meeting; particularly the standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education and Consumer and Family Science as they relate to Social Skills. She has asked Janis Jensen,

Director of NJDOE, Office of Academic Standards and 21st Century Skills, to attend the March SSEAC meeting to discuss the process that was used to the revise the NJCCCS.

IV. COUNCIL DISCUSSION

William Sellar reported misinformation being communicated regarding the Accountability Regulations that pertained to the role of the Executive County Superintendent in identifying available special class vacancies. Dr. Wohle again clarified that the Executive County Superintendent has no role regarding the determination of placement and this remains the sole responsibility of the IEP team.

Kathy Roberson suggested that the two SSEAC committees meet jointly at the March meeting to review all the information presented to the Council on Social Skills and to decide on a plan of action.

V. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Sol Heckelman, NJASP-COCST commended the Council for their interest and work on Social Skills Instruction for Students with Disabilities. He also stressed the importance of community support, input and outreach with regard to Special Education issues.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m. The next meeting of the Council is scheduled at the Holiday Inn in East Windsor on March 19, 2009.

VII. LUNCH