

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

**MINUTES**

**Thursday, April 23, 2009**

**Members in attendance:** Dr. Sharon Maricle, Debra Fernandez, Scott Elliott, William Sellar, Kathleen Mullery, Michael Nevin, Philip Gartlan, Angela Durso, Kathy Roberson, Dr. Tracy Amerman

**Members not in attendance:** Dr. Howard Lerner, Carolyn Hayer, Blanche Stetler

**Resource Representatives in attendance:** Robert Paige, Elizabeth Collins, Gordon Reibman

**Resource Representatives not in attendance:** Debbie Stewart

**Guests and members of the public:** Sol Heckelman, Lauren Agoratos

**I. ACCEPTANCE OF MARCH MINUTES AND NEW BUSINESS**

The meeting was officially called to order at 9:44 a.m. by Chairperson Dr. Sharon Maricle. The March minutes were approved and seconded. **All in favor.** Following discussion, the SSEAC meeting dates for 2009-2010 were approved and seconded. **All in favor.**

**II. PRESENTATIONS:**

*OSEP Grant Status/Update*

**Fran Leibner and Sandy Peth, Grant Specialists**

**New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs**

Dr. Wohle began the discussion with a historical perspective on the three NJOSEP Grants: *Local Capacity Building and Improvement Project for Special Education – Least Restrictive Environment (October 2000)*, *The Governor’s Initiative on Autism (October 2006)* and *The Governor’s Initiative: Enhancing and Expanding In-district Program Options for Students with Disabilities (January 2007)*.

Ms. Leibner gave an overview of the Capacity Building and Autism Grants and Ms. Peth discussed the Enhancing and Expanding In-district Programs Grant. They both shared examples of programs created and the successes realized by Grant recipients. Ms. Leibner noted that 53 new Autism programs were created in the State as a result of the \$15 million Grant. Ms. Peth stated that 14 new programs had been created and that 37 programs were enhanced through the \$9 million offered to grantees.

### **III. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

Dr. Wohle provided an update on her testimony before the Joint Committee of the Legislature on the role of Executive County Superintendents. She indicated that the Council can access her statements from February 26<sup>th</sup> and April 16<sup>th</sup> sessions under the archived proceedings at: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/Default.asp>

Dr. Wohle updated Council of the American Recovery and Investment Act (ARRA) and reviewed the Department guidance memo to districts from the Commissioner. It can be found at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/arra/041609memo.pdf>

### **IV. COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Michael Nevin reported that he was spearheading the development of a scholarship in honor of a Principal. He has been asked to speak at West Paterson High School.

Angela Durso suggested that Council devote attention to mental health issues (e.g. resources, supports, services) that pertain to students with disabilities. Dr. Wohle indicated that specific suggestions for speakers, resources to be gathered should be discussed at the May meeting.

Council proposed the creation of a new NJOSEP grant initiative that would focus on the inclusion of students with significant disabilities in general education settings. The Council discussed factors that should be emphasized in the grant (e.g. social skills, peer interaction, communication, community-based instruction, school climate, transitioning from more to less restrictive placements). There will be continued discussion about the grant at the May SSEAC meeting.

### **V. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Lauren Agoratos from Family Voices agreed that mental health issues are significant and that the highest drop-out rates come from this population of students. She is working with the National Alliance for Mental Health Issues (NAMHI).

Sol Heckleman, New Jersey Association of School Psychologists commented that social and behavioral skills were topics of interest and that issues are not exclusive to students with disabilities.

### **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m. The next meeting of the Council will be held on May 21, 2009 at the Holiday Inn/National Conference Center in East Windsor.

### **VII. LUNCH**