

STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Holiday Inn and National Conference Center
East Windsor, New Jersey

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 16, 2017

Members in attendance: Myriam Alizo, Paul Barbato, Susan Colacello, Barbara Gantwerk, Beth Kelley, Deborah Lynam, Melanie McGackin, Magaly Milton, Chris Shamburg, Amy Smith

Members not in attendance: Mary Ann Comparetto, Leslie Rubinstein, Fred Tchang, Dorothy Van Horn

Resource Representatives in attendance: Kelley Michalowski, Eva Scott, Cheri Thompson

Resource Representatives not in attendance: Donna Holzschuh, Dawn Mergen

Guests and members of the public: Lauren Agoratus, Rachel Bissonnette, Sharon Dauber, Monique Dujae Wilson, Kelly Emanuel, C. Groom, Sol Heckelman, Samantha Lamb, Jeannie Lopez, Lori Marabella, Carroll Miller, Collene O'Reilly, Mary Ortner, NCle Whitfield

I. CALL TO ORDER/PRESENTATION

The meeting was called to order by chair Deborah Lynam at 9:39 a.m.

Jill Hulnick, Assistant Deputy Commissioner/Chief Talent Officer for the New Jersey Department of Education presented *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in New Jersey: State Plan Overview* to the Council. The complete PowerPoint presentation is here:
<http://www.state.nj.us/education/ESSA/plan/Overview.pdf>

Public comments on the plan may be made until March 20, 2017 here:
<http://www.state.nj.us/education/ESSA/>

Additionally, questions or comments from the public can be sent here: essa@doe.state.nj.us

Ms. Hulnick and Colleen O'Reilly accepted questions and provided answers to Council members as well as to the public in attendance.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF JANUARY MINUTES

The January minutes were reviewed. After being properly moved and seconded, they were approved with one abstention.

III. CO-DIRECTORS UPDATE

Lorelei Drew-Nevola updated the Council on the ongoing Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) settlement training. Year 3 training is just beginning and will use Implementation Science to build on the Evidence-Based Practice focus from Years 1 & 2. The LRE working group is researching additional resources to be placed on the department's Special Education website.

Lorelei Drew-Nevola shared with the Council an update on job postings and offers in the Office of Special Education Professional Development.

John Worthington announced that the Ombudsman position has been offered to a candidate and that they will begin working upon final approval.

Lorelei Drew-Nevola informed the Council on work being done with regard to supports for classroom instruction and that a training module is being developed for administrators/school leaders. She also updated the Council on the progress of the submission of the SSIP to the federal office by April 3, 2017.

John Worthington provided information to the Council on the progress of the Dyslexia Handbook work group. Deborah Lynam stated that the work group has a self-imposed deadline of May for the final draft copy. John also updated the Council on the Special Education Parent Advisory Groups (SEPAGs) Manual, stating that it was in final review. Deborah Lynam asked if it would be possible for SSEAC to review the manual prior to distribution.

John Worthington shared additional information on the Dispute Resolution Summit being organized by his Office. It will be held on April 25, 2017 at the Learning Resource Center-Central (LRC-C) in Trenton. Invitations have gone out to Stakeholders. Several Council members expressed interest in attending. Speakers will include Stephen Miller, Esq. and Michael Steinbruck.

John Worthington and Lorelei Drew-Nevola asked Council for recommendations for future SSEAC meeting presentation. Magaly Milton would like to see something that would inform SEPAGs on the measurement of district success – interpreting QSAC, data reports, etc. Deborah Lynam suggested something on the topic of vocational education for special education students. She also queried the Council if there was any interest in a presentation on restorative practices. As there was, several presenter's names were recommended by members of Council.

IV. COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Amy Smith inquired as to whether or not the Council wanted to write a letter to the Acting Commissioner and State Board of Education on the topic of Private School funding. The Council took no action.

Susan Colacello updated the Council on the draft letter to Acting Commissioner Harrington on the issuance of high school diploma's in New Jersey. Council discussion followed. Amy Smith moved to send the amended letter to the Commissioner. Myriam Alizo seconded, and the vote was unanimous.

Myrian Alizo, Barbara Gantwerk and Deborah Lynam all made announcements about training opportunities that their organizations are offering.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Monique Dujue Wilson responded to Council's comments regarding "measuring success" in relationship to SEPAGs. She stated that all SEPAGs are different; welcomed the sharing of ideas; but, cautioned not to try to place "success" in a one size fits all box.

Kelly Emanuel asked if there is unannounced compliance monitoring in schools. She expressed concern about the limited information given to parents about compliance issues and questioned the receptivity of school administrators to make changes when found not in compliance.

Sharon Dauber inquired as to whether steps are taken by NJDOE to ensure that charter schools are providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

NCle Whitfield stated that there should be representation on the Council from inner city school districts. She also discussed the need for passage of Senate Bill S2757 which would require a minimum of one school bus aide for every 15 special needs students on school bus. Her concerns are that there is currently nothing in Code, the number of bus assaults and classroom staffing issues.

C. Groom would like to see updates from SSEAC meetings provided to SEPAGs.

Sol Heckelman stated that he was glad to hear the comments being made about supports needed in urban districts. He shared with the Council that he made the suggestion to Deborah Lynam on the presentation on restorative practices. Since there is interest, he made a speaker recommendation.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

The next meeting of the SSEAC is scheduled for Thursday, March 16, 2017 at the Holiday Inn and National Conference Center in East Windsor, New Jersey