

State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)

**Robert Wood Johnson Fitness and Wellness Center
3100 Quakerbridge Road
Mercerville, NJ**

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Members in attendance: Paul Barbato, Viviana Litovsky, Vanessa Lombardo, Deborah Lynam, Andrea Moore, Kristy Ritvalsky, Chris Shamburg, Lynda Shanahan, Susan Vandermark, Kerri Walsifer

Members not in attendance: Susan Colacello, Barbara Gantwerk, Leslie Rubinstein, Amy Smith

Resource Representatives in attendance: Cheri Thompson, Deborah Verbos

Resource Representative not in attendance: Donna Holzschuh, Kelley Michalowski, Eva Scott

State Board Members in attendance: Mary Beth Berry, Kathy Goldenberg

Guests and members of the public: Lauren Agoratus, Debora Esposito, Sol Heckelman, Nicole Herd, Camy Kobylinski, Matt Korobkin, Lauren Krempecki, Lori Marabella, Charlene O'Brian

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Deborah Lynam at 9:49 a.m.

II. Acceptance of February Minutes

The February minutes were reviewed. They were approved with one abstention.

III. Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Student Services and State Board of Education Members Updates

Dr. Peggy McDonald, Deputy Assistant Commissioner informed the Council that the mentor program created by Amy Anderson and Chris Sullivan has been approved and will be piloted. Additionally, the first “playgroup” will begin at the Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf on March 24th.

Dr. McDonald shared that the first of twelve Dare to Dream Conferences will take place on March 15th at Middlesex County College.

Dr. McDonald informed the Council that the New Jersey School Performance Reports have been released and can be viewed on the New Jersey Department of Education website at:
[New Jersey School Performance Reports \(https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/SearchForSchool.aspx\)](https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/SearchForSchool.aspx)

Dr. McDonald shared that a federal judge ruled on March 7th that the US Department of Education's delay of a rule that required states to address racial disparities in special education programs must move forward immediately. It would require states to identify districts with significant disproportionality using a ratio involving three metrics. NJ DOE is awaiting the exact start date.

Dr. McDonald updated the Council on the status of the joint agreement under the auspices of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) and the Department of Education (DOE). The official announcement will be forthcoming in the DOE weekly Broadcast Memo.

Dr. McDonald stated that NJ DOE will receive comments on the State Performance Plan (SPP) that was submitted in February sometime in April. The State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), also known as Indicator 17, is due to the federal office on April 1, 2019.

Dr. McDonald updated the Council on the activities of the Deaf Advisory Council.

Mary Beth Berry of the New Jersey State Board of Education (SBE) shared that members of the Board of Education had recently met with Assistant Commissioner, Caroline Marano and Dr. McDonald.

Kathy Goldenberg, State Board of Education Vice President will be attending the National Association of School Boards meeting in Washington, DC next month. The focus is on Social Emotional Learning.

IV. Presentation

Kathleen Dallavalle, Project Specialist and ESSA Coordinator in the Division of Academics and Performance at the New Jersey Department of Education presented to the Council on the state's activities related to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

V. Old Business

Dr. Chris Shamburg gave an update of the activities of the Restraint and Seclusion Committee.

VI. New Business

Deborah Lynam read an email from Susan Colacello who was unable to attend today's meeting. Susan expressed interest in forming a committee(s) around the topics of inclusion and post-graduation outcomes and transition and pre-employment. Deborah asked anyone who was interested to reach out to Susan. Susan also invited Council members to attend the Special Olympics New Jersey Youth Summits and Unified Sports events.

Chris Shamburg began a discussion around alternative classes/course work being used toward graduation requirements. Dr. McDonald suggested that this might be a presentation topic for the next SSEAC meeting. She will follow-up with the Division of Academics and Performance.

Chris Shamburg inquired about PARCC testing moving forward. Kathy Goldenberg shared that the new contract for testing is with New Meridian.

Kerri Walsifer mentioned a state law that allows a third way to find students eligible for services using a pattern of strengths and weaknesses.

Kerri Walsifer inquired about participation guidelines for PARCC and the DLM.

The latest PARCC Accommodations Manual will be emailed to Council members.

VII. Announcements

Vanessa Lombardo announced an Abilities Expo featuring assistive technologies to be held at the New Jersey Convention and Expo Center in Edison, NJ on May 3-5, 2019.

VIII. Public Comment

Charlene O'Brien, representing her schools SEPAG, is attending today's meeting after reaching out to Chris Shamburg to discuss restraint.

Sol Heckelman in discussing the criteria for eligibility, expressed concerns on behalf of school psychologists on the use of the discrepancy model for identification. He referred to Senate Bill No. 2526 which allows for the use of alternate methods, such as patterns of strengths and weaknesses (PSW). He also noted that the annual New Jersey Association of School Psychologists conference will be held on May 17, 2019 at the Raritan Center.

Lori Marabella of Dyslexia New Jersey expressed concerns that many districts are out of compliance with the law. She believes that additional guidance be given to school districts from either the DOE or the SBE.

VIII. Adjournment

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 18, 2019 at the Robert Wood Johnson Fitness and Wellness Center in Mercerville, New Jersey.