

# **State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)**

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

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, September 19, 2019**

**Members in attendance:** Paul Barbato, Susan Colacello, Barbara Gantwerk, Viviana Litovsky, Deborah Lynam, Andrea Moore, Leslie Rubinstein, Chris Shamburg, Amy Smith, Susan Vandermark, Kerri Walsifer

**Members not in attendance:** Vanessa Lombardo, Kristy Ritvalsky, Lynda Shanahan

**Resource Representatives in attendance:** Donna Holzschuh, Dawn Mergen, Kelley Michalowski, Eva Scott, Cheri Thompson

**Guests and members of the public:** Lauren Agoratus, Mary Beth Berry, Alyson Black, Lauren English-Mezzino, Debora Esposito, Kathy Goldenberg, Sol Heckelman, Matthew Korobkin, Lori Marabella

### **I. Call to Order and Election of Chair and Co-chair**

The meeting was called to order by Deborah Lynam, Chair at 9:41 a.m.

Deborah Lynam was re-elected as Chair and Dr. Paul Barbato was re-elected Co-chair.

### **II. Acceptance of June Minutes**

The June minutes were reviewed. They were approved with one correction and two abstentions.

### **III. Office of Special Education and State Board of Education Updates**

Dr. Kim Buxenbaum announced the Dr. Peggy McDonald was appointed Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Student Services at the September 4, 2019 State Board of Education meeting.

Dr. Buxenbaum shared that she is working on several initiatives that are in the early planning stages and that she will share them with the Council in the near future.

Dr. Buxenbaum informed the Council of lease issues effecting Learning Resource Center (LRC) North Satellite and LRC North.

Dr. Buxenbaum shared that it is Hispanic Heritage Month.

Dr. Buxenbaum informed the Council of intra-agency collaborations the Offices of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and the Office of Special Education in the area of Transition.

Dr. Buxenbaum announced that Wendy Eufemia is now the Coordinator of Deaf or Hard of Hearing programs and is leading the Deaf Bill of Rights initiatives.

Kathy Goldenberg, President of the New Jersey State Board of Education shared with the Council that the State Board is in discussion on science assessments.

Kathy Goldenberg informed the Council that she has created a new State Board committee on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). She also shared that Mary Beth Berry will now be chairing the Career and Technical Education Committee.

Mary Beth Berry shared with the Council her passion for both Special Education and Career and Technical Education and is pleased to be leading both committees for the State Board of Education.

#### **IV. Presentation**

Barbara Chabner, Program Manager at the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome and Associated Disorders, Inc. presented to the Council. For additional information about the syndrome and available training programs go to: <https://njcts.org/>

#### **V. Old Business**

Christopher Shamburg gave a brief update on the activity of the Restraint and Seclusion committee. They will meet today during lunch.

The Assessment committee asked that if anyone else was interested in joining them that they let them know during lunch.

#### **VI. New Business**

Christopher Shamburg asked if there would be interest in SSEAC drafting a letter in support of special education and Career and Technical Education (CTE) collaboration.

The Council discussed topics of interest for upcoming meetings. They include: CTE, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Community Based Instruction (CBI) vs. structured learning, parent supports, Unified Sports, and an update on the activities of the Ombudsman and the Facilitated IEP project.

#### **VII. Announcements**

Leslie Rubinstein made an announcement about the upcoming LDANJ Fall Conference.

Cheri Thompson updated the Council on activities at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) that included: a paid summer intern program and pre-employment opportunities, WIOA, and new and anticipated personnel hires at DVR.

## **VIII. Public Comment**

Debora Esposito spoke to several Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) initiatives around the START project such as the difficulty in getting parents to attend IEP training sessions, school support challenges hindering Child Study Teams (CSTs) and issues around efforts to build capacity.

Lauren Agoratus mentioned several initiatives that she is involved with that can assist parents and students: the Special Education Volunteer Advocates (SEVA) project at SPAN with a focus on inclusion/transition, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and the Family Engagement Toolkit.

Sol Heckelman spoke to the challenges facing school administrators and CSTs with IEP meetings. He then discussed his wish that parents be treated as consumers/clients and be guided by CSTs to avoid an attitude versus knowledge issue.

Lori Marabella stated that she was a frustrated parent dealing with an issue in which she believed that there would be no consequence to the district when an IEP meeting falls apart or doesn't even happen. She inquired as to whether there was DOE data concerning resolution meetings and court settlements.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 12:19 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 21, 2019 at the Robert Wood Johnson Fitness and Wellness Center in Mercerville, New Jersey.