

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

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

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, November 21, 2019**

**Members in attendance:** Debbie Esposito, Viviana Litovsky, Vanessa Lombardo, Deborah Lynam, Andrea Moore, Kristy Ritvalsky, Leslie Rubinstein, Chris Shamburg, Lynda Shanahan, Susan Vandermark, Kerri Walsifer

**Members not in attendance:** Paul Barbato, Susan Colacello, Barbara Gantwerk

**Resource Representatives in attendance:** Donna Holzschuh, Eva Scott, Cheri Thompson

**Resource Representatives not in attendance:** Dawn Mergen, Kelley Michalowski

**Guests and members of the public:** Mary Beth Berry, Lauren English-Mezzino, Sol Heckelman, Damian Petino

### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Deborah Lynam, Chair at 9:43 a.m.

Deborah Esposito was welcomed to SSEAC as a new Council member.

### **II. Acceptance of September Minutes**

The September minutes were reviewed and were unanimously approved.

### **III. Office of Special Education Updates**

Dr. Kim Buxenbaum shared with Council that the new Perkins V Act information is now on the DOE website and that a Stakeholder group has been formed.

Dr. Buxenbaum shared that there are several mental health related initiatives occurring at the DOE to provide supports and services to districts. There is interagency collaboration with the Children's Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC) with the Department of Children's and Families. The Office of Special Education will be forming a mental health work group in the near future working toward a tiered approach to mental health services.

Dr. Buxenbaum informed the Council that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Modules for Educators are now available on the DOE website, here: [SEL webpage](#)

#### **IV. New Business**

It was shared that new information about the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Perkins V legislation is now on the Department of Education (DOE) website.

Lynda Shanahan and Leslie Rubinstein presented the Council with an overview document with actions that the Transition Committee would like to see happen in the field of Transition. Chair Lynam suggested to the committee that they be sure to focus on making feasible suggestions from the Council to the Commissioner rather than suggesting systemwide changes which may or may not be achievable.

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

In lieu of a monthly presentation, Dr. Christopher Shamburg presented to the Council the recommendations drafted by the Restraint and Seclusion (R&S) Committee. There was robust Council discussion as to the steps needed moving forward toward the creation of the final document to be sent to the Commissioner of Education. Topics discussed included de-escalation training, school resource officer training, suggesting that training of R&S be mandatory for all school personnel, the use of crisis plans vs. behavioral intervention plans, and what data the Department currently collects. It was suggested that the current document be sent to Dominic Rota at the DOE for preliminary review as this comes under his office's purview.

#### **VI. Announcements**

Dr. Buxenbaum informed the Council that the federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has asked states to conduct a Stakeholder meeting in order to set goals for several of the seventeen indicators. The January 16, 2020 SSEAC meeting will be used for this purpose.

Cheri Thompson announced that Karen Carroll was appointed the new Director of the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS). Ms. Carroll is a former resource member of SSEAC.

Debbie Esposito distributed a flyer to Council from the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) about their December 7, 2019 Summit.

#### **VII. Public Comment**

Sol Heckelman stated that he found it both frustrating and rewarding not being able to participate in the lively and necessary discussions had today by the Council. He suggested that the Council might look at the ongoing Restraint and Seclusion projects being conducted by the New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council and the School Justice Partnership. He also recommended looking at the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) recently released *Building a Foundation of Hope*, the final report of the NJSBA Task Force on Mental Health Services in the Public Schools.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 12:27 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 19, 2019 at the Robert Wood Johnson Fitness and Wellness Center in Mercerville, New Jersey.