

State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)

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

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 19, 2019

Members in attendance: Paul Barbato, Susan Colacello, Debbie Esposito, Barbara Gantwerk, Deborah Lynam, Andrea Moore, Kristy Ritvalsky, Chris Shamburg, Lynda Shanahan, Susan Vandermark, Kerri Walsifer

Members not in attendance: Viviana Litovsky, Vanessa Lombardo, Leslie Rubinstein

Resource Representatives in attendance: Eva Scott, Cheri Thompson

Resource Representatives not in attendance: Donna Holzschuh, Dawn Mergen, Kelley Michalowski

Guests and members of the public: Lauren Agoratus, Mary Beth Berry, Tory Bunn, Sol Heckelman, Camy Kobylinski, Matt Korobkin, Lori Marabella, Damian Petino, Marie Torres Perez

I. Call to Order

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

II. Acceptance of November Minutes

The November minutes were reviewed and were approved with two abstentions.

III. Office of Special Education Updates

Dr. Damian Petino shared with Council that members were being identified to join a new Mental Health Work Group.

Dr. Petino shared that information was disseminated to the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) about the work that DOE is doing with the Children's InterAgency Coordinating Council (CIACC).

Dr. Petino stated that the federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has extended the current State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Review (APR) for one more year and that states must set new indicator targets for the one-year

period. A New Jersey Special Education Stakeholder Group meeting will be held on January 16, 2020 to set the targets.

Dr. Petino attended a conference in December in Phoenix, AZ conducted by the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI). The purpose in collaborating with NCSI is to: deepen relationships to foster support and communication that increases success in leading systemic improvement; increase collective capacity related to state responsibilities for improving student outcomes; share lessons learned from experiences to date and discuss solutions to existing and anticipated issues; and shape the details for support provided through NCSI's Cross-State Learning Collaboratives and other forms of technical assistance. A five-year contract has been signed for them to provide technical assistance to New Jersey.

Kathy Goldenberg, State Board President shared with the Council that the State Board of Education has been gathering public input on a variety of topics and that for the most part comments have been positive.

Kathy Goldenberg attended a national conference on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in Washington, DC.

IV. Presentation

Linda Carmona-Bell presented information to the Council on the newest version of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act; aka, Perkins V and how the legislation impacts special education. She began with an overview of the work of the Office of Career and Technical Education (CTE). Some of the key components of Perkins V are the alignment of students wants to industry need, more school counseling provided on career options, programs to begin at the middle school level, work-based learning experiences, and more emphasis on special populations to include: special education, homeless, foster, armed services and the out-of-work. The New Jersey Perkins V plan is currently being formulated and stakeholder input is being collected. New Jersey will roll out the plan in April of 2020.

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. Old Business

A draft version of the Restraint and Seclusion letter to the Commission of Education has been submitted to Dominic Rota for review. Committee chair, Chris Shamburg moved and Barbara Gantwerk seconded that the letter be forwarded to the Commissioners Office after the review. The vote by the Council was unanimous.

VII. New Business

It was properly moved, seconded and unanimously approved that the transition committee (Lynda Shanahan, Chris Shamburg, Deborah Lynam and Susan Colacello) meet over lunch and draft a memo with concerns of the Council about the Perkins V legislation to meet the December 31, 2019 deadline for input. Due to the looming deadline the memo will be submitted via the web link rather as a letter to the Commissioner. Deborah Lynam will submit the final document under her name as chair of the SSEAC.

VIII. Announcements

The January 16, 2020 SSEAC meeting will be replaced with the New Jersey Stakeholder Group Meeting to set targets for the seventeen Indicators. SSEAC members are Stakeholder members.

VIII. Public Comment

Marie Torres Perez shared with the Council that she is the parent of a medically complex child and she is seeking assistance and guidance on handling the obstacles that she has been encountering.

Lauren Agoratus stated that the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) provided supports to parents concerning child protection and advocacy matters.

Camy Kobylinski announced the annual Exceptional Children's Conference to be conducted by the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) on May 2, 2020.

Lori Marabella read the following statement to the Council: I wanted to comment on some things with reading instruction and dyslexia. There seem to be some interesting things going on with the coordinated release of statements by the ILA, NCTE, Reading Recovery and Lucy Calkins of TCRWP. These statements seem designed to protect market share for their programs as a direct response to the growing interest in reading instruction aligned with cognitive science. When Lucy Calkins tells you that "balanced literacy" needs a better word than "guessing" I would hope that it gets some attention from educators, who should not be searching for a better word, but rather questioning why students are being taught to guess in the first place, and how did these practices become embedded in their literacy curriculum.

Having recently attended the LDA-NJ fall conference and TCNJ's annual literacy conference (topic RTI/MTSS) just two weeks ago, there is scant awareness of the NJ Dyslexia Handbook and the laws about dyslexia. The screening law tasks the department with disseminating information about appropriate screeners, and unfortunately, too many districts are using subjective, comprehension-based assessments like DRA, BAS or running records. Students are often able to construct enough meaning from pictures and context so as not to raise concerns; yet can lack any foundational phonological skills. The screening law is now six years old, so it seems there is still a great need for this information to reach district teachers and administration, as well as teacher prep and graduate programs.

X. Adjournment

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m. The transition committee met over lunch.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 20, 2020 at the Robert Wood Johnson Fitness and Wellness Center in Mercerville, New Jersey.