

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

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

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, February 20, 2020**

**Members in attendance:** Paul Barbato, Susan Colacello, Debbie Esposito, Barbara Gantwerk, Deborah Lynam, Vanessa Lombardo, Kristy Ritvalsky, Lynda Shanahan, Susan Vandermark, Kerri Walsifer

**Members not in attendance:** Viviana Litovsky, Andrea Moore, Leslie Rubinstein, Chris Shamburg

**Resource Representatives in attendance:** Donna Holzschuh, Kelley Michalowski, Eva Scott, John Tkacz

**Resource Representatives not in attendance:** Dawn Mergen

**Guests and members of the public:** Lauren Agoratus, Kelly Allen, Cathy Anthony, Edward Bray, Lauren English-Mezzino, Sol Heckelman, Camy Kobylinski Lori Marabella, Damian Petino, Jennifer Riccards, Dominic Rota

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

The meeting was called to order by Deborah Lynam, Chair at 9:46 a.m.

### **II. Acceptance of December Minutes**

The December minutes were reviewed and were approved unanimously with one correction.

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

Dr. Kim Buxenbaum informed the Council of the formation of a Mental Health Workgroup. Following the Governors announcement, the group is in the formation/planning stages. The purpose of the workgroup is to create documents to aide parents and families in navigating the state's mental health systems available to them. A toolkit/guidance document with a "train the trainer" approach modeling the national Mental Health First Aid program will be created for use by school district personnel.

#### **IV. Presentation**

Kelly Allen, Manager from the Office of Student Support Services presented to the Council on the topic of Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Information on SEL can be found on the Departments website at <https://www.nj.gov/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/>

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

Dominic Rota, Director of the Office of Special Education Policy and Dispute Resolution is currently reviewing the Restraint and Seclusion document.

There was discussion about the document that was sent to the Career and Technical Education portal requesting input on Perkins V legislation. In lieu of sending the content as a letter to the Commissioner of Education it was agreed upon that Paul Fogarty would put the recommendations on SSEAC letterhead and forward them to Linda Carmona-Bell.

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

Deborah Lynam presented the idea of aligning monthly meeting presentation topics for the Fall Council meetings to align with the seventeen Indicators. This discussion arose at the Special Education Stakeholder meeting in January. Kerri Walsifer would like the state funding formula for special education to be a topic. Dr. Paul Barbato suggested that there may be valuable information to be shared by SSEAC members on best practices found in programs related to the indicators.

#### **VII. Announcements**

Barbara Gantwerk shared with the Council the Spring Professional Learning Calendar of Events from the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association/Foundation for Educational Leadership (NJPSA/FEA).

Debbie Esposito shared with the Council two flyers for upcoming sessions presented by the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) on the topics of School Climate and Inclusion.

Deborah Lynam announced that the annual Research Symposium conducted by the AIM Institute for Learning and Research would take place on March 9, 2020 on the topic of Resiliency in the Classroom. It is free of charge and lunch is provided.

Lynda Shanahan announced that the Learning Disabilities Association of New Jersey would hold their Spring Conference on March 22, 2020 at the College of New Jersey. Leslie Rubinstein sent an email with details to Council members.

#### **VIII. Public Comment**

Sol Heckelman representing the School Psychologists Association of New Jersey stated that he is the chairperson of the associations SEL committee. They are soliciting articles for submission to their upcoming newsletter. The associations annual conference will take place on March 20, 2020

## **IX. Adjournment**

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 19, 2020 at the Robert Wood Johnson Fitness and Wellness Center in Mercerville, New Jersey.