

State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)/Stakeholder Meeting

Virtual Meeting Conducted Utilizing Microsoft Teams

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 21, 2021

Members in attendance: Paul Barbato, Debbie Esposito, Mark Brugger, Barbara Gantwerk, Vikas Jain, Viviana Litovsky, Andrea Moore, Lonjete Nias, Lynda Shanahan, Pat White, Susan Vandermark, Kerri Walsifer, Chris Shamburg

Members not in attendance: Kristy Ritvalsky

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

Resource Representatives not in attendance: Dawn Mergen

Guests and members of the public: Kim Buxenbaum, Dominic Rota, Kathy Ehling, Damian Petino, Kathy Goldenberg, Mary Beth Berry, Chinwe Osondu, Ajaya Katta, Padmaja Konuganti, Lori Marabella, Maria Lorenz, Sol Heckelman

Stakeholders in attendance: Patricia Dowd, Julie Norflus-Good, Lisa Ford, John Lestino, Sean Murphy, Fred Buglione, Emily Springle, Lauren Agoratus, Rebekah Novemsky, Jerry Petroff, Michelle Santos, Katherine Solana

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Kim Buxenbaum, Director of Office of Special Education at 9:36am.

II. Acceptance of December Minutes

The December minutes were reviewed and were approved unanimously with no corrections.

III. Office of Special Education Updates

Dr. Kim Buxenbaum, Director Office of Special Education, welcomed everyone to the first combined SSEAC/Stakeholder meeting in a series of meetings to discuss SPP/APR indicators. Dr. Buxenbaum provided an OSEP update including the continuance of fielding emails and calls from all Stakeholders who have educationally driven questions and concerns as the world continues to deal with the pandemic. With the new federal administration in place, everyone remains hopeful that education will be able to resume in person in September. For OSEP, it is the time of year for renewal of contracts and the office is working hard to ensure that OSEP can continue to support the field as things evolve. The Curriculum Based Instruction (CBI) training series is upcoming in conjunction with the Boggs Center. As well, the Children System of Care will hold its 2nd virtual town hall geared towards educators on February 11, 2021 from 10am-12pm. Capacity is limited to 500 and will be the same presentation as the 1st town hall. The Inclusion Leadership Group will have its first meeting on February 19, 2021. The group is a diverse representation of school district personnel, parent advocacy groups, and higher education.

State Board Update provided by Kathy Goldenberg, President of the State Board of Education. President Goldenberg discussed the State Board meeting which took place on January 6, 2021 which included a resolution honoring the school board members across the state. There was a focus on returning local control back to the Paterson School District after 20 years of state control. Many sent congratulatory messages to the district. The State Board also readopted amendments regarding transportation, adult education, and programs supporting student development.

Mary Beth Berry, State Board Member, provided an update on the CTE Committee which discussed programs throughout the state and the status of those programs due to the pandemic during their last meeting. There are a lot of great things going on in regards to these programs. Mrs. Berry also discussed the Structured Learning Experience (SLE) and described how the program is offering apprenticeships to students.

IV. Presentation

Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director of the Office of Special Education Programs, presented on SPP/APR Indicators 5A, 5B, and 5C. Stakeholders were encouraged to discuss thoughts and provide feedback throughout the presentation. Presentation will be provided when approved by the Department.

Dr. Buxenbaum noted that larger Stakeholder groups may have people who specialize in certain areas as it relates to the indicators of SPP/APR. Dr. Buxenbaum invited those people to be in attendance during the meetings which discuss those particular indicators.

The end of the presentation closed the Stakeholder meeting portion of the meeting.

V. Old Business

Debbie Esposito – great idea to explore the way SEPAGs are utilized throughout the state in terms of sharing info with parents and getting parent input regarding the indicators. Think it would be a great idea to create a Committee for this.

VI. New Business

Dr. Barbato received several emails about SSEAC Committee Formation. Lynda Shanahan discussed the need for new council members for the Transition Committee. Lynda would entertain the inclusion of Stakeholders in the Committee in order to discuss ideas and plans for how to reach students, families, and school regarding reaching transition goals. Mark Brugger noted his interest in the Transition Committee. Mark brought up equity in special education for minorities and disadvantaged groups and the lack of visibility especially since the onset of COVID. Mark would like to create a Committee for equity. Debbie Esposito, Fred Buglione, and Julie Norflus-Good interested in this committee.

VII. Announcements

Debbie Esposito with SPAN offering SRP – SPAN Resource Parent Training currently taking place. Begin about once a month. It is a 6 week program. There will be one available in Spanish

John Tkacz – Labor/ DVRS has a new website for career services.

Lynda Shanahan – Learning Disabilities Assoc. International Conf Feb 18-21, 2021. Transition Coordinator Network Winter Meeting Lunchbreak February 3, 2021. Rutgers BOGGS offering a lot of trainings – information available on RWJ website.

VIII. Public Comment

Public Comments can be submitted to SpEdAdvisoryCouncil@doe.nj.gov

IX. Adjournment

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for a virtual meeting Thursday, February 18, 2021.