

State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)/Stakeholder Meeting

Virtual Meeting Conducted Utilizing Microsoft Teams

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Members in attendance: Paul Barbato, Debbie Esposito, Mark Brugger, Vikas Jain, Viviana Litovsky, Andrea Moore, Lonjete Nias, Lynda Shanahan, Kerri Walsifer, Chris Shamburg, Kristy Ritvalsky

Members not in attendance: Barbara Gantwerk, Pat White, Susan Vandermark

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

Resource Representatives not in attendance: Dawn Mergen, Eva Scott

Guests and members of the public: Kim Buxenbaum, Dominic Rota, Kathy Ehling, Damian Petino, Alexis Ziegler, Chinwe Osondu, Keshia Trotman, Lori Marabella, Maria Lorenz, Matthew Korobkin, Erin Seigh, Rachel Ledden-Albadine, Lauren Agoratus, Monique Dujue, Deborah (no last name), Michelle (no last name)

Stakeholders in attendance: Julie Norflus-Good, Lisa Ford, John Lestino, Sean Murphy, Fred Buglione, Katherine Solana, Carolyn Marano, Deborah Spitalnik, Debra Jennings, Gerard Thiers, Peg Kinsell, Sharon Lohrmanno

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Kim Buxenbaum, Director of Office of Special Education at 9:35am.

II. Acceptance of January Minutes

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

III. Office of Special Education Updates

Dr. Kim Buxenbaum, Director Office of Special Education, provided an updated regarding the Mental Health Work Group and their drafting of the Resource Guide to school districts. A draft should be available within a few months. The Office of Special Education and The Office of Special Education Policy and Dispute Resolution continue to respond to and support parents and school districts with questions and concerns. The Learning Resource Centers continue to provide professional development to teachers and districts through the Universal Design for Learning and continue to deliver CST presentations.

State Board Members not present at meeting. Email sent to Cathy Anthony by Kathy Goldenberg, President, stated no update to provide to the Council.

IV. Presentation

Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director of the Office of Special Education Programs, presented on SPP/APR Indicators 4, 9, and 10. Indicator 4: Suspension/Expulsion; Indicator 9: Disproportionate Representation in Identification of Student's with Disabilities; Indicator 10: Disproportionate Representation in Specific Disability Categories. Stakeholders were encouraged to discuss thoughts and provide feedback throughout the presentation. Presentation will be provided when approved by the Department.

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

V. Old Business

Lynda Shanahan is working to bring together members for the Transition Committee, considering reaching out to the Transition Coordinator Network. Will be announcing a date for the first meeting of the committee shortly.

VI. New Business

Dr. Barbato read the SEL Resolution that NJASP sent to the Governor's Office for an official proclamation recognizing the last Friday in March as SEL Day. All committee members voted to adopt the resolution presented to SSEAC by Sol Heckelman on behalf of NJASP.

Chris Shamburg requested to revisit the discussion surrounding the restraint and seclusion guidance document SSEAC was working on prior to the pandemic. Mr. Shamburg also formally thanked Sol Heckelman for all of his work and presence over the years as a voice for students and his work with SEL.

VII. Announcements

None.

VIII. Public Comment

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

Dr. Barbato read a letter sent to SSEAC for public comment from Maria Lorenz voicing her concerns with Elizabeth School District and SEPAG. Debbie Esposito stated the SEPAG is lacking in many districts throughout the state and would like to see an open discussion regarding this concern. Mr. Shamburg stated that SEPAG should be added as a formal agenda item in the future. Lori Marabella entered her public comment regarding dyslexia into the Teams Chat box.

IX. Adjournment

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

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