

# **State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)/Stakeholder Meeting**

## **Virtual Meeting Conducted Utilizing Microsoft Teams**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, November 18, 2021**

**Members in attendance:** Paul Barbato, Mark Brugger, Viviana Litovsky, Lonjete Nias, Patricia White, Andrea Moore, Kerri Walsifer

**Members not in attendance:** Debbie Esposito, Chris Shamburg, Vikas Jain, Kristy Ritvalsky, Susan Vandermark, Lynda Shanahan

**Resource Representatives in attendance:** Toni Scott, Brendan Myers, Kelley Michalowski, Donna Holzchuh

**Resource Representatives not in attendance:** Eva Scott, Susan Evans

**Guests and members of the public:** Kathy Ehling, Damian Petino, Mary Beth Berry, Chinwe Osondu, Nicole Buten

**Stakeholders in attendance:** Julie Norflus-Good, Fred Buglione, Tracy Amerman, John Lestino, Lauren Agoratus, Corinne Catalano, Sol Heckelman, Michael Pearson, Sharon Lohrmann, Carolyn Marano, Lisa Ford

### **Call to Order**

Meeting called to order by Dr. Paul Barbato at 9:36am.

### **Acceptance of September Minutes**

October minutes were reviewed and were approved unanimously with no corrections.

### **Office of Special Education Updates**

Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director Office of Special Education, updated SSEAC members regarding the personnel additions at the Office of Special Education. Dr. Maurice Ingram, Mental Health Specialist, joined the Office on November 8, 2021. This is joint position between Office of Special Education and Office of Student Support Services as Dr. Ingram will support both students with special needs and general education students. An Autism Specialist will be starting November 22, 2021. Coordinator of Federal Reporting will start December 6, 2021 and will be coordinating stakeholder feedback and organize SSEAC moving forward.

Training and Presentations: Kim Murray presented at a webinar hosted by Congressman Kim focusing on the needs of Military families. Other members of the Office presented at the New Jersey School Board Conference – Dr. Petino presented on Tiered Systems of Support to address mental health issues of all students, Bill Freeman presented about Transition and collaborative efforts on post-secondary transitions for students with disabilities, and Wendy Eufemia presented on deaf hard of hearing and supporting child study teams for their specific needs. Mrs. Eufemia has been hosting many webinars for child study teams to help address deaf and hard of hearing students. Mr. Freeman and Brian Berry have hosted a Dare to Dream event. The workshops that

are conducted are done so by students with special needs. Dr. Petino has done 12 webinars with districts around the use of American Rescue Plan ESSER 3 funds.

Upcoming trainings:

December 1, 2021 PerformCare Virtual Town Hall for Educators

### **State Board of Education Update**

Mary Beth Berry present and requested feedback from the Council regarding the letter presented by the New Jersey Speech and Language Association during the November State Board Meeting. Letter discussed the importance of in person services as opposed to virtual. Currently virtual speech services can be provided until January 11, 2022. Pat White stressed that when at all possible, that services be provided in person; however, if circumstances require something is better than nothing. Virtual should not be considered an equal substitute. Dr. Barbato mentioned that a medically fragile student could benefit from a virtual option of in person is not an option. Mark Brugger also mentioned that masks often can hinder the learning experience for speech related services.

Kerri Walsifer asked about the level of representation of special education when The Roadback was developed. Feels that special education guidance and consideration was not great for this population. Dr. Barbato suggested this be a New Business item for the Council and asked Ms. Walsifer to draft a letter to the Commissioner regarding this concern. Pat White volunteered to assist Ms. Walsifer with this sub-committee.

### **Presentation**

Dr. Damian Petino presented on SPP/APR Indicators 3, 5, and 7. Immediately following the presentation, SSEAC and Stakeholders were assigned to breakout rooms to discuss the indicators and set targets through 2025. Feedback and suggestions will be discussed during the December SSEAC meeting. Members of the breakout discussions can continue to add comments to Jamboard.

### **Council Discussion – New Business**

New sub-committee developed to seek Council representation going forward in The Road Back discussions. Kerri Walsifer and Patricia White have volunteered to work on this sub-committee.

### **Old Business**

None

### **Announcements**

New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association hosting a Director Toolkit Virtual Meeting on November 19, 2021 and is an opportunity for administrators to hear about the eligibility categories of SLD, OHI, and CI from experts in the field that provides perspectives that can expand knowledge of those categories.

### **Public Comment**

No public comments were submitted to the Council.

Public Comments can be submitted to [SpEdAdvisoryCouncil@doe.nj.gov](mailto:SpEdAdvisoryCouncil@doe.nj.gov).

### **Adjournment**

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