

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

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

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, February 17, 2022**

**Members in attendance:** Paul Barbato, Debbie Esposito, Mark Brugger, Viviana Litovsky, Susan Vandermark, Lynda Shanahan, Andrea Moore, Patricia White

**Members not in attendance:** Chris Shamburg, Vikas Jain, Kerri Walsifer, Kristy Ritvalsky

**Resource Representatives in attendance:** Toni Scott, Eva Scott, Kelley Michalowski, Donna Holzchuh-Crocamo

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

**Guests and members of the public:** Kimberly Murray, Damian Petino, Alexandra Pensiero, Ajaya Kumari, Fred Edora (IDC), Amy Bitterman (IDC), Jennifer Schaaf (IDC), Renee Eccles-Hardy (IDC), Jennifer Horne, Catherine Anthony, Angie Farrel, Tracy Amerman, William Moises, Leanne Paolazzi, Nicole Buten, Beth Consentino, Bill Freeman, Carla Perez, Chinwe Osondu, Lauren Tyndorf

**Stakeholders in attendance:** Deborah Spitalnik, Michael Pearson Jr., Julie Noflus-Good, Sean Murphy, Lauren Agoratus, Tonya Hardin Santos, Sol Heckelman, Fred Buglione, Lisa Ford, Sharon Lohrmann

### **Call to Order**

Meeting called to order by Dr. Paul Barbato at 9:42am.

### **Acceptance of November Minutes**

December minutes were reviewed and were approved unanimously with no corrections. This took place following the IDC presentation, when the meeting reached quorum.

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

Kimberly Murray, Assistant Director Office of Special Education, updated SSEAC members regarding her appointed to the position of Director of the Office of Special Education at the February State Board of Education meeting.

The Office of Special Education has been expanding to develop new positions including Transition Specialist, Deaf Education Consultant, and Policy Coordinator. Postings have closed and the next step in the process will be interviews.

The Office of Special Education has been fielding and addressing concerns from the counties and districts regarding staff shortages, provisions of remote related services, and mask mandates.

There has been a successful launch of the Mental Health Resource Guide on February 9<sup>th</sup>. A comprehensive transition plan has been developed as part of a roll-out. SSEAC will be oriented on the new Resource Guide at the March 2022 SSEAC Meeting.

Two recent broadcasts have been released:

- January 12, 2022: Department of Health Updated Guidance on Quarantining
- January 19, 2022: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Resources
  - Two recent pieces of legislation (18A:35-4.35-6) and 18A:35-4.36(a) highlight the contributions and experiences of individuals with diverse abilities, cultures, identities and perspectives
  - NJDOE webpage contains guidance and resources on lessons, activities, culturally responsive practices, materials and FAQs
- January 19, 2022: Training for State Mandated Language Development Reporting of Pre-School Aged Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
  - In August 2019, PL 2019, Chapter 205 was signed. This legislation directed the NJDOE to establish a Working Group on Deaf Education. This work made three major recommendations that are in some stages of implementation.
    - First was the Parent Resource Guide for Children from Birth to Five Years of Age Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, which is posted on the NJDOE website.
    - Second was the guidance on how to Select Assessments to Use with Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, which is posted on the NJDOE website
    - The last piece is the Language Acquisition Rating Scale for Preschool-Aged Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. School districts and early childhood providers are required to collect and report on the language development of preschool age children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. NJDOE will be holding a series of training sessions to prepare folks for the initial June 2022 collection.
- January 26: SSEAC Seeking Members
- February 9: Mental Health Resource Guide

Training and Presentations: Kim Murray presented the following upcoming trainings

- February 24<sup>th</sup>: Training on State Mandated Language Development Reporting for DHH Children Ages 3-5
- March 4<sup>th</sup>: Roundtable for Audiologists who Consult in Education
- March 9<sup>th</sup>: Roundtable for Educational Sign Language Interpreters
- March 15<sup>th</sup>: Roundtable for Teachers of the Deaf and Speech-Language Specialists
- March 29<sup>th</sup>: Conducting CST Evaluations for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

At the next SSEAC meeting in March of 2022, Dr. Damian Petino in collaboration with the Office of Student Support Services will be presenting on the new “New Jersey Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Resource Guide”.

In April, the Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) will be working with SSEAC to develop and approve by-laws that will go into effect in September of 2022. This will be a closed meeting.

### **Presentation**

Fred Edora, Amy Bitterman, Jennifer Schaaf, and Renee Eccles-Hardy from the IDEA Database Center (IDC) presented to the SSEAC Council and Stakeholders. Topics of discussion included Reasonable Progress and Significant Disproportionality in Special Education.

SSEAC Council Member and Stakeholders were provided opportunities to reflect and give feedback on whether New Jersey should adopt Reasonable Progress and Significant Disproportionality in Special Education.

The SSEAC Council Member and Stakeholders were presented with three scenarios and voted as follows:

- Scenario 1: 10% over the course of 1 year (2 votes)
- Scenario 2: 10% decrease over the course of three (3) years (12 votes)
- Scenario 3: Not in favor of adopting Reasonable Progress (3 votes)

### **Council Discussion –**

#### **New Business**

Mark Brugger identified that there is legislation in the process of being passed regarding compensatory deadlines. He extended gratitude to the State Parent Advisory Network (SPAN) that has been working with parents to enrich their knowledge of this legislation prior to the March 18<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Lynda Shanahan presented on the upcoming transition subcommittee at the March 2022 SSEAC meeting. The subcommittee will take place under Mr. Bill Freeman’s guidance. Email her if interested. Additionally, she advised that the Transition Coordinator Network of New Jersey had a presentation on January 20<sup>th</sup> by Bill Freeman and Toni Scott.

that was P. Learning Disabilities Association of New Jersey is hosting a virtual conference on April 22, 2022. They are in need of presenters. If interested contact [info@ldanj.org](mailto:info@ldanj.org). Presentation submissions due by March 1, 2022.

Lonjete Nias resigned as a council member on February 17,2022.

#### **Old Business**

There were no Old Business items presented.

#### **Announcements**

Alexandra Pensiero, The Office of Special Education's Federal Reporting and Engagement Specialist, identified that during the January 26<sup>th</sup> broadcast, the new State Special Education Advisory Council application period opened. The application deadline is March 14, 2022. Please note that there are new application procedures highlighted in the broadcast. This includes a new application form accessible online as well as the addition of a requirement of cover letters to accompany the previously required resumes. All SSEAC members are required to complete the application form if intended to return for an additional term. The only member not required to apply is Ms. Debbie Esposito. Attendance will be a factor moving forward to ensure that the council is consistently meeting quorum and is able to conduct business as it is intended.

Moving forward, SSEAC has utilized outside technical assistance from John Copenhaver, Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE), to develop by-laws. John will be presenting during the April 2022 SSEAC meeting.

### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments made during this portion of the meeting.

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

### **Adjournment**

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.