

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

**Hybrid Meeting – Held at 200 Riverview Complex at the Learning Resource Center in Trenton, NJ and Virtually on Microsoft Teams**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Members (in attendance):** Dr. Paul Barbato, Elizabeth Alves, John Worthington, Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Jocelyn Gottlieb, Cynthia Defina, Peggy McDonald, Debbie Esposito, Scott Longazel, Dr. Carmen Henderson, Dr. Eniola Ajayi, Dr. Lottie Watson, Dr. Pamela Brillante, Dr. Jennifer Vecchiarelli, Dr. Harold Abraham

**Members (not in attendance):** *All members were in attendance.*

**Resource Representatives (in attendance):** Eva Scott (CBVI), Daniel Heitner (DOH), Toni Scott (DOL), Donna Holzschuh (JJC), Tamira Chapman (McKinney-Vento), Pheobie Thomas (McKinney-Vento)

**Resource Representatives (not in attendance):** Tauheedah Hill (DOC)

**Proxy Representatives (in attendance):** Lori Alter, Jennifer Kaufman, Rafeeza Shahabudeen

**Guests from the NJ Department of Education (in attendance):** Diana Pasculli, Dr. Damian Petino, Wendy Eufemia, Erice Reid, Dr. Chinwe Osondu, Alexandra Pensiero, Dr. Amanda Philp, Jaime Jackett, Melissa Jackson, Sandy Gogerty, Christina Orozco, Adam Kendler, Tania Mongioi, Jolie Battista, Kerri Tomasello, Melissa Pearce, Catherine Thomas

**Stakeholders and Members of the Public (in attendance):** Karen Cortellino, Irene Febvre, Nicholas Pecht, Anjali Viswanath, Lisa Ford, Luke Babits, Michael Pearson Jr., Aviva, Lauren Agoratus, John Burns, Rhonda Tyree, John Mulholland, Awardees from P.G. Chambers School (Patty Sly and Holli Schult), Neptune Township Regional School District (Dr. Tami Crader), Evesham School District (Elizabeth Piccinnini), Lebanon Township School District (Colleen Andrade, Dana Weiss, and Ashley Nitchkey), New Road School of Somerset (Michele Rieman), Brick Township Schools (Jennifer Grenger and Nicole Pannucci), Jeannie Oneill, Michelle McGovern, Dr. Julie Norflus-Good, Mushana K Dunham Bey, Paulina Vargas, Charlene B

## **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Paul Barbato at 10:05 a.m. The meeting was postponed due to a delayed opening of state agencies due to air quality, as determined by Governor Murphy. Prior notice was provided.

## **Acceptance of Minutes**

May minutes were reviewed and were approved.

## **Presentation(s)**

### *Opening Remarks*

Dr. Paul Barbato, Chairperson, welcomed members of the council, the New Jersey Department of Education, the New Jersey Board Association, Awardees, Stakeholders, and members of the

public. Dr. Barbato reviewed NJ-SSEAC's bylaws as it pertains to public meetings and public comments.

### *Special Education in Action Celebration*

#### *Innovations in Special Education Awards 2023*

- Presenters: Dr. Karen Cortellino, President of New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), Irene Febvre, Immediate Past President of NJSBA, and John Mulholland, Executive Director of ASAH serving private special education schools and agencies in New Jersey
- 2023 Awardees and Attending Recipients: P.G. Chambers School (Patty Sly and Holli Schult), Neptune Township Regional School District (Dr. Tami Crader), Evesham School District (Elizabeth Piccinnini), Lebanon Township School District (Colleen Andrade, Dana Weiss, and Ashley Nitchkey), New Road School of Somerset (Michele Rieman), Brick Township Schools (Jennifer Grenger and Nicole Pannucci)

#### *Autism Awareness Awards 2023*

- Presenters: Dr. Amanda Philp, Autism Specialist, Office of Special Education, New Jersey Department of Education
- 2023 Awardees and Attending Recipients: Brick Township School District (Jennifer Grenger and Nicole Pannucci), and South Mountain School in Mullburn Township School District (*Not in Attendance*)

#### *NJ-SSEAC Annual Evaluation Review*

- Presenter: Alexandra Pensiero, Council Secretary, Office of Special Education, New Jersey Department of Education

### **Council Subcommittee Recommendations**

- Presenter: Dr. Paul Barbato, Council Chairperson, and Debbie Esposito, Council Assistant Chairperson, and Subcommittee Members
- Facilitation: Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director, and Dr. Chinwe Osondu, Assistant Director

Summary: Subcommittee recommendations were presented by each of the subcommittees (5). The subcommittee leads identified which recommendations were moving to council level. Those recommendations were individually voted on by the full council. **All recommendations made to council level were approved (10).** Additionally, the council had the opportunity to get feedback and insight from the two representatives from the Office of Special Education's Assistant Commissioners, Dr. Damian Petino and Dr. Chinwe Osondu. The insight was reported to be considered "not in formal response of recommendations" but to provide probing questions for the Council to consider as they were moving into full council study in 2023-2024.

Recommendation of Committee Letter to Commissioner: The Recruitment and Retention subcommittee recommended supporting the recent package of bills introduced in the Legislature

to address recruitment and retention of teachers in New Jersey. A letter to this effect, stating specific reasons for the recommendations was read aloud to council members for formal vote. **The letter was approved with two amendments.**

### **Council Discussion –**

#### **Old Business**

Dr. Paul Barbato reminded NJ-SSEAC members about the 2023-2024 calendar for the upcoming council year.

#### **New Business**

No comments were made for New Business.

#### **Announcements**

A review of the stakeholder event announcements were read allowed by Dr. Paul Barbato, Council Chairperson, from the agenda.

### **Public Comment**

*The chairperson, Dr. Paul Barbato, verbally recited excerpts from the NJ-SSEAC bylaws regarding public comment procedures. He identified the council would not comment during the public portion of the meeting. However, he reported that comments, concerns and recommendations were to inform current and future work of the council.*

Mushana K Dunham Bey made a public comment in regards to her personal experience with her children's attending district and the lack of effective services and supports she feels they are receiving.

The chairperson invited all public participants to provide further correspondence via email, if they had not done so already. Dr. Barbato concluded to all participants that following written receipt, someone from the Office of Special Education would be in contact with them. 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 1:32 p.m. The time was extended due to the delayed start time,