

State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)/Stakeholder Meeting

Hybrid Meeting Conducted Utilizing Microsoft Teams and In-Person at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton, NJ (Learning Resource Center - Central)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 21st, 2024

Members (in attendance): Dr. Paul Barbato, Elizabeth Alves, Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Jocelyn Gottlieb, Dr. Cynthia DeFina, Dr. Peggy McDonald, Scott Longazel, Dr. Eniola Ajayi, Dr. Pamela Brillante, John Worthington, Dr. Harold Abraham, Dr. Jennifer Vecchiarelli

Members (not in attendance): Dr. Carmen Henderson

Resource Representatives (in attendance): Eva Scott (CBVI), Donna Holzschuh (JJC), Toni Scott (DOL); Kelley Michalowski (DCF), Daniel Heitner (DOH), Kelly Allen (OSSS), Peg Kinsell (SPAN)

Resource Representatives (not in attendance): Tauheedah Hill (DOC), Tamira Chapman (McKinney-Vento)

Proxy Representatives (in attendance): Rafeeza Shahabudeen

Proxy Representatives (not in attendance): Jennifer Kaufman

Guests from the NJ Department of Education (in attendance): Dr. Damian Petino, Ilene Goy, Wendy Eufemia, Dr. Chinwe Osondu, Dr. Amanda Philp, Alexandra Pensiero, Victoria Marcheski, Ashley Pichardo, Iris DeV Vaughn, Eileen Osieja, Tiffany Whitaker, Melissa Pearce, Nanci Moore, Alison Pankowski, Jaime Jackett, Adam Kendler, Jolie Battista, JoAnn Johnson, Bill Freeman, Christina Orozco, Melissa Jackson

Guests and Stakeholders from the Public (in attendance): Lauren Agoratus, Beth Cosentino, Brad Unick, Melanie Sweeney, Michael Vargas, Luke Babits

*The following members of the public were identified based on the name/number reflected upon accessing the meeting.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Paul Barbato at 9:36 a.m.

Approvals – Minutes

The February minutes were reviewed and approved (1st – Dr. Dorothy McMullen; 2nd – Dr. Pam Brillante; Public Comment Amendment).

Presentation(s)

Office of Special Education Updates

- Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director of the Office of Special Education, updated SSEAC members on several items pertaining to the Office of Special Education.

Office of Special Education Presentation

Introduction to Local Special Education Determinations

- Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director, Office of Special Education, and Alexandra Pensiero, Federal Reporting and Engagement Specialist, Office of Special Education

Council Work Plan Presentation Request

Local Education Agencies Supporting Inclusive Preschool Programs (NJPIEP)

- Presenter from Belleville Public Schools: Michael Vargas, Director of Early Childhood
- Presenters from Glassboro Borough School District: Melanie Sweeney, Principal, and Brad Unick, Preschool Instructional Coach

Council Recommendations and Work Plan

None at this time

Council Discussion –

Old Business

Council members were updated on the status of the Debbie Esposito Award. SPAN Parent Advisory Network will be facilitating the communication, selection, and presentation of this award.

Council members were provided a link to the 2022-2023 Annual Report.

New Business

Council members were notified that Dr. Paul Barbato and Jocelyn Gottlieb were selected to be a part of the National State Advisory Panel and Interagency Coordinating Council (SAP/SICC)

Council members reviewed, with support of the Council Ad Hoc, the process for council reporting procedures and recommendations.

Council members formally voted to open the by-laws for potential amendment. (1st – John Worthington; 2nd – Dr. Dorothy McMullen)

Council members were asked to complete the Annual NJ-SSEAC Member Evaluation Form (2023-2024). Evaluations are to be completed by the end of April 2024.

Council members were notified that they are at the end of their two-year term and will need to reapply to the council. Reappointment to the council will be made determined and approved by the State Board. Applications will be open until the end of April 2024.

Appointed members from each subcommittee reported to the council on updates from their subcommittee activities and discussions.

Stakeholders, council members, and members of the public were invited to complete the NJ-SSEAC meeting evaluation form following the formal portion of the meeting.

Announcements

There were no announcements at this time.

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.

No public comments were made via email or during the meeting.

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.

Adjournment

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 12:43 p.m.

Committees met following the meeting to develop their priority committee annual reports.