

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

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

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 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, Dr. Carmen Henderson

**Members (not in attendance):** *All appointed council members were in attendance*

**Resource Representatives (in attendance):** Eva Scott (CBVI), Donna Holzschuh (JJC), Aaron Samuels (DOL); Kelley Michalowski (DCF), Daniel Heitner (DOH), Lu Periera (OSSS), Peg Kinsell (SPAN)

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

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

**Proxy Representatives (not in attendance):** *All proxy members were in attendance.*

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

**Guests and Stakeholders from the Public (in attendance):** Lauren Agoratus, Beth Cosentino, 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 9:31 a.m.

### **Approvals – Minutes**

The March minutes were not reviewed. Minutes are to be reviewed during the June meeting.

### **Presentation(s)**

#### *Office of Special Education Updates*

- Presenter: 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*

## 619 Coordinator Update – Guidance, Resources and Projects

- Presenter: Jennifer Nicosia, 619 Coordinator, Office of Special Education

### *Council Work Plan Presentation Request*

Highlights from the Division of Early Childhood Services and Supporting Preschoolers in the Preschool Expansion Program

- Presenter: Kimberly Fridell, Director, Office of Preschool

## **Council Recommendations and Work Plan**

### Priority 1: Emotional, Behavioral, and Social Well-Being for Students with Disabilities

- On behalf of this priority committee, Jennifer Vecchiarelli presented the committee report.
- Recommendations were brought forth to the council for discussion and approval. Recommendations were not formally approved at this time. The priority committee postponed bringing formal for formal consideration until further notice.

### Priority 2: Least Restrictive Environment

- On behalf of this priority committee, Jocelyn Gottlieb and Scott Longazel presented the committee report.
- Recommendations were unanimously approved with friendly amendment.

### Priority 3: Professional Growth

- On behalf of this priority committee, Dr. Pam Brillante presented the committee report.
- Recommendations were unanimously approved with friendly amendment.

### Priority 4: Transition

- On behalf of this priority committee, Elizabeth Alves presented the committee report.
- Recommendations were not brought forth to the council for discussion or approval.

## **Council Discussion –**

### **Old Business**

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.

Council members were updated on the status of the Debbie Esposito Award.

Council members were provided a link to the Dispute Resolution Findings. Members were notified that this will be a standing item on the agenda moving forward.

### **New Business**

The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson presented the proposed amendments to the NJ-SSEAC By-Laws. Per *Article X. Amendments to By-Laws* “Amendments to...by-laws may be made by a majority vote at a regularly scheduled Advisory Council meeting, providing copies of the proposed amendments have been disseminated to all council members for review and comment at least fifteen (15) days prior to such a meeting.” Council members were not required to vote at this time and will have 28 days to review the proposed amendments.

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](mailto:SpEdAdvisoryCouncil@doe.nj.gov).

### **Adjournment**

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 1:38 p.m.