

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

**Virtually on Microsoft Teams**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Paul Barbato at 9:31 a.m.

### **Acceptance of Minutes**

June minutes were reviewed and approved.

### **Presentation(s)**

#### *Opening Remarks*

Dr. Paul Barbato, Chairperson, welcomed members of the council, the New Jersey Department of Education, Stakeholders, and members of the public. Dr. Barbato reviewed NJ-SSEAC's bylaws as they pertain to council responsibilities, public meeting procedures, and engagement with the members of the public.

### **Presentation(s)**

#### *Standing Update: 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.

#### *Standing Update: State Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator (ECSE/619) Preschool Updates*

- Presenters: Jennifer Nicosia, ECSE/619, Office of Special Education; Ilene Goy, Preschool Disabilities Specialist, Office of Special Education; Sriparna Bhattacharyya, Preschool Disabilities Specialist, Office of Special Education

#### *Priority Subcommittee Request/Standing Update/Whole Council Action Priority: Indicator 8: Parent Survey (FY23 Results) and Supplemental Survey*

- Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director, Office of Special Education; Dr. Alexandra Pensiero, Coordinator of Federal and Local Reporting, Office of Special Education; Essence Maradiaga, Family Engagement Specialist; Siobhan Power, Associate Director, Bloustein Center for Survey Research at Rutgers University; Camille D'Andrea, Senior Research Specialist, Bloustein Center for Survey Research at Rutgers University

#### *Priority Subcommittee Request: The New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS)*

- Luiz Pereira, Director, Office of Student Support Services; Stephanie Osgoodby, Supervisor, Office of Student Support Services

#### Council Discussion –

##### **Old Business**

Council members were notified that their updated biographies are now available online.

Council members were provided with a link to the Dispute Resolution Findings.

##### **New Business**

The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson proposed NJ-SSEAC By-Law amendments made by the by-law subcommittee. Council members were notified they would have 28 days to review the proposed amendments. Attendees were informed that formal vote would take place at the next public meeting.

The Ad Hoc informed the council members of upcoming meeting topics and agendas.

Members of the council were invited to join the engagement and bylaw committee. They were informed that these committees are voluntary and separate from priority subcommittees.

Due to time constraints, subcommittees did not provide subcommittee updates. However, they were asked to email the council member with updates.

The Ad Hoc reminded the council of best practices for council priority committee explorations.

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**

Several council members announced training and resource opportunities during the public meeting. The engagement committee captured these announcements and sent them out in an email following the meeting with corresponding links.

#### **Public Comment**

*The chairperson, Dr. Paul Barbato, verbally recited excerpts from the NJ-SSEAC bylaws regarding public comment procedures. He identified that 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.*

A public comment was received via email. The Assistant Chairperson read the public comment aloud. The individual (MDB), identifying as a person with a disability, provided public comment expressing concerns regarding her experiences as a pro se litigant in special education due process matters. She stated that required procedures—such as resolution meetings and

communication during mediation—were not followed, and she described interactions with the Office of Administrative Law that she perceived as biased and discouraging. She also raised concerns about how IEP meetings are being conducted at her child’s current school, including issues with services, staff training, and disciplinary practices. Additionally, she highlighted challenges with transportation services and school accessibility, which she reports remain unresolved. She reports that she plans to file state-level special education complaints and encourages awareness of available state resources and programs.

The chairperson invited all public participants to provide further correspondence via email if they had not already done so. Dr. Barbato informed all participants that upon written receipt, someone from the Office of Special Education would contact 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 12:59 p.m.