

**STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**National Conference Center at the Holiday Inn**  
**399 Monmouth Street**  
**East Windsor, NJ 08520**

**MINUTES**

**Thursday, Sept. 27, 2007**

**Members in attendance:** Dr. Sharon Maricle, Dr. Howard Lerner, Philip Gartlan, William Sellar, Scott Elliott, Melinda Jennis, Katherine Roberson, Angela Durso, Blanche Stetler, Debra Fernandez, Carolyn Hayer, Kathleen Mullery

**Members not in attendance:** Dr. Norma Blecker

**Resource Representatives in attendance:** Donna Brown, Gordon Reibman, Debbie Stewart

**Resource Representatives not in attendance:** Elizabeth Collins

**Guests and members of the public:** Lynn Guiser, Martha Brecher, Dianne Malley, Pamela Wood

**I. ACCEPTANCE OF JULY MINUTES**

The meeting was officially called to order at 9:40 a.m. by Chairperson Sharon Maricle. The gavel was temporarily yielded to Dr. Roberta Wohle so that council could conduct voting for a chairperson and co-chair. The Council reelected Dr. Sharon Maricle as the chairperson for the 2007-2008 school year. Dr. Howard Lerner was reelected as co-chair. **All in favor.** The July minutes were approved and seconded. **All in favor.**

**II. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

**SSEAC Recommendations:** NJOSEP will address the SSEAC's recommendations to the Commissioner in the following manner:

- To address the issue of parent involvement the NJOSEP will identify promising parent group practices in collaboration with the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network;
- To address the issue of an increased emphasis on social skills for students with disabilities, NJOSEP will begin by collecting local district practices through the county office staff. These practices will be shared with the SSEAC.
- To address the issue of increased dissemination of evidenced based practices NJOSEP will develop and maintain a website page focused on research-based practices. SSEAC members agreed that literacy practices should be the first area addressed on the new website page.

SSEAC members expressed a continued desire to meet with the Commissioner. Dr. Wohle will contact the Commissioner's office to determine her availability.

**NAEP:** The results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were released September 25, 2007. New Jersey trailed only one state (Massachusetts) in fourth grade reading results.

Among the promising results was the performance of students with disabilities. The average scaled score for this subgroup increased from 188 in 2005 to 202 in 2007; New Jersey was one of six states with the greatest change for students with disabilities on the fourth grade assessment. Dr. Wohle acknowledged the efforts of NJDOE literacy initiatives, including Reading First, under the direction of Maryann Capetola and Intensive Early Literacy, that had been under the direction of Fred Carrig, and the collaboration of the Office of Special Education in these efforts, as well as the efforts of school personnel in focusing on improving instruction for all students.

**APA/Statewide Assessments:** Dr. Wohle and Peggy McDonald from the Office of Special Education Programs and Elizabeth Celentano from the Office of Evaluation and Assessment attended meetings in Washington DC this month regarding both the Alternate Proficiency Assessment and the 2% flexibility introduced by the USDOE. Firstly, the APA has been revised, in accordance with peer review recommendations, and will no longer include program dimensions. Further APA revisions will be made to ensure linkage of assessment skills to grade level standards.

NJOSEP in collaboration with the Office of Evaluation and Assessment issues pertinent to the development of an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards. This assessment, although different from the general assessment, is intended to assess students on **grade level academic content standards for an individual student's enrolled grade**. Dr. Whole provided examples of how a general education assessment may be adapted in manner consistent with the intent of modified academic achievement standards:

- **Fewer questions**, however the questions must cover the same content standards as the general assessment;
- **Reduce multiple choice options**, for example from 4 selections to 3.

Conference presenters emphasized that the states first must answer the question: "Who are the students for whom an alternate assessment on modified achievement standards assessment is appropriate?" The NJDOE will collaborate with consultants that have an expertise in this area in examining the possibilities for this assessment.

**New Jersey Special Education Revisions:** NJOSEP will not introduce code revisions until January 2008, at the earliest.

**Transition Outcome Study:** NJOSEP has completed its first cohort data collection for the Transition Post-School Outcome Study required as part of the State Performance Plan (Indicator 14). A 67% response rate has been received. Several district responses were as high as 95% - 100%. The results will be analyzed in preparation for the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance report due February 1, 2008. NJOSEP is preparing to post the Transition Outcome Study district cohorts on its website.

**Unfunded Mandates:** A challenge was made to the State's Council on Unfunded Mandates regarding the reduction in the special class age span from four to three years. The regulation was challenged by the Special Service School Districts and several local districts. The Council ruled that the reduction in age – span was an unfunded mandate.

**Parent Survey:** Samples of the Parent Surveys for Special Education and Preschool Special Education will be mailed to all SSEAC Members. These surveys are being used to collect data relevant to Indicator #8 of the State Performance Plan. Dr. Wohle reported contractor's bids have been received. A December dissemination of the Parent Survey to cohort 1 districts is anticipated.

**State to Local Determinations and Public Reporting Requirements:** Dr. Wohle discussed the federal requirement for state determinations of local district performance regarding the implementation of special education requirements. She indicated that in its first year of state to local determinations, factors that will be considered in the determination process include a district's ability to correct non-compliance within a year; a district's history of non-compliance; and the degree of oversight NJOSEP has needed to enforce regarding the correction of non-compliance. SSEAC members responded positively to the consideration of these factors.

The NJOSEP is required to publicly report on the following SPP indicators during the 2007-2008 school year:

- Indicator 1 – Graduation rates of students with disabilities;
- Indicator 2 – Drop-out rates of students with disabilities;
- Indicator 3 – Assessment
- Indicator 4A – Suspension/Expulsion
- Indicator 5 – Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment – (6-21)
- Indicator 6 – Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment – (3-5)
- Indicator 12 –

A projected date for the public reporting is December 2007.

### III. PRESENTATION

Joe Seaman and Linda Carmona-Bell from the Office of Educational & Informational Technology presented highlights of the **INCLUDE GRANT (Implementing New Curricular Learning with Universally Designed Experiences)**. Together with funding from the Office of Special Education Programs, the grant (\$2,100,000) will unfold over four years. Phase I is a planning phase for the academic achievement in mathematics by using education technology effectively. The **INCLUDE** project is designed to ensure all students in the general education classroom including those with mild to moderate disabilities, struggling students and English language learners are provided the necessary accommodations in the general mathematic classroom that will support their achievement in mathematics by using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework.

### IV. COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Suggestions for this year's speakers/topics were varied and included: APA, CODE, Commissioner Lucille Davy, Transition/Self Advocacy, Assistive Technology Center Update, Governor's Office (Clarify Vision)(Autism), School Funding Formula (Different rules for Local Schools, Private Schools and County Schools), Special Education Commission Report, Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), Due Process Issues (Cynthia Holmes)

#### Possible Calendar

October: Subcommittee Break-Out Sessions

- Inclusion Committee - Topic of **Universal Technology** with *Joe Seaman*
- Transition Committee – Topic of **Self Advocacy (Best Practices)** *Bob Haugh*

November: **Positive Behavior Support** (PBS) *Boggs Center/Peggy O'Reilly*

December: **CODE** - *John Worthington*

January:

February:

March:

April: Assistive Technology Center (Spring)

## **COUNCIL DISCUSSION con't**

After discussion of speakers/topics, the council once again expressed interest in having a student representative on SSEAC. Members thought a College student would have advantages over a high school student since there would be fewer issues for transportation and perhaps a more flexible class schedule. Members were asked to seek resumes of possible candidates.

The SSEAC Standing Committees will remain the same as last year: 1) Inclusion; 2) Transition; 3) Committee of the Whole.

## **V. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

A number of public attendees commented on the need for trainings and guidance regarding Special Education Parent Advisory Groups. Concerns included:

- Multiple groups popping up because of the code
- Direction for parent group focus
- Getting more administration involved
- Wanting to get involved but not knowing how
- A need for formal trainings: Parent & School Together
- Follow up after a TA session
- Setting an agenda that is mutually agreeable
- How can we enhance SPAN trainings and expand them further

## **VI. LUNCH**

Standing committees met over lunch to determine possible focus for the 2007-2008 school year.

## **VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### Transition

- Continue work with Bob Haugh (Self Advocacy), DDD and Pathways
- Look at the code as it relates to Transition Services – what needs to be strengthened and highlighted
- Employment & the Community together
- Collaboration of agencies such as DDD, Mental Health

### Inclusion

- Continue looking at Universal Design

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m. The next meeting of the Council is scheduled on Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at the Holiday Inn in East Windsor.