

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

**MINUTES**

**Thursday, September 16, 2010**

**Members in attendance:** Lauren Agoratus, Dr. Tracy Amerman, Angela Durso, Scott Elliott, Phillip Gartlan, Dr. Howard Lerner, Kathleen Mullery, Michael Nevin, Katherine Roberson, Rob Sandusky, Bill Sellar, Blanche Stetler

**Resource Representatives in attendance:** Susan Avny, Karen Carroll, Debbie Stewart

**Resource Representatives not in attendance:** Suzanne Canuso

**Guests and members of the public:** Liz Caplan

**I. ACCEPTANCE OF JUNE MINUTES**

The meeting was officially called to order at 9:55 a.m. by Chairperson Dr. Howard Lerner. The June minutes were approved and seconded. Dr. Howard Lerner was elected as Chairperson and Katherine Roberson was elected Co-chairperson. All in favor.

**II. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

Barbara Gantwerk, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Student Services updated Council on the status of the Department. She also gave a recap of *Race to the Top* activities. Ms. Gantwerk discussed the EEC, a State committee formed by the Governor to establish guidelines that will ensure teacher accountability and student progress. The EEC has looked at the teacher accountability model currently being used by the State of Colorado where the teacher self selects three ways to mark progress in their classroom. After discussion by Council regarding the mission of the EEC, it was suggested that the Council write a letter to the EEC with suggestions and/or concerns specific to special education.

Ms. Gantwerk also shared with the SSEAC that New Jersey has joined a national consortium for the creation of a universal Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA). There was Council discussion about New Jersey's APA.

### **III. COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

SSEAC resource representative, Debra Stewart from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families shared information with Council concerning the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. She also informed Council of the companion bill signed into law by the Governor on September 9, 2010 (P.L.2010, c.69 (A-2137 (Connors))). The new law creates a presumption that a child remains in his or her current school when he or she moves to a foster care placement. The Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is required to consider several factors when making a determination about educational placement. If DYFS determines that changing districts is in the child's best interest, the agency must notify the child's parent and legal guardian (child's attorney), who can seek court review if they disagree with DYFS's decision. If it is determined that a child will attend school in the foster family's district, the "district of residence," i.e., the district in which the child's parents live, remains financially responsible. The law also provides that the child's school district of residence be responsible for paying, as applicable, transportation costs for that child from the resource family home to the child's school.

Dr. Peggy Thorpe O'Reilly, Manager, Bureau of Program Development updated Council on the Social Skills initiative. The Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) will provide two-day training sessions to interested districts beginning in January 2011. The districts that complete the training will be afforded the opportunity to apply for an additional one and one half years of training/technical assistance. The LRCs will also sponsor training offered by the New Jersey affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI NJ) directed toward Special Education directors and school administrators.

Dr. O'Reilly solicited Council for suggestions as to which topic area will be their focus for the 2010-2011 school year. Council consensus was that state-wide assessment of special education students was the most pressing concern. Agreement was reached that the topic for the October SSEAC meeting will focus on Assessment and the November meeting will be devoted to New Jersey Code.

### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m. The next full meeting of the Council is scheduled for Thursday, October 21, 2010 at the Holiday Inn in East Windsor.

### **VI. LUNCHEON**