

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

MINUTES

Thursday November 15, 2012

Members in attendance: Myriam Alizo, Melanie McGacken, Michael Nevin, Bonni Rubin-Sugarman, Dr. Tekelah Sherrod

Members not in attendance: Lauren Agoratus, Dr. Tracy Amerman, Mary Ann Comparetto, Beth Kelley

Resource Representatives in attendance: Susan Avny, Suzanne Canuso, Karen Carroll, Tracy Nowlin

Guests and members of the public: Martha Brecker, Natasha Chase, Maureen Cline, Maria Docherty, Kate Hamm, Sol Heckelman, Peg Kinsell, Donna Krenc, Tina Mann, Mary Ormer, Renay Zamloot

I. ACCEPTANCE OF OCTOBER MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Co-chairperson Melanie McGacken

The October minutes were reviewed and one minor correction was made. All were in favor.

II. DIRECTORS UPDATE

John Worthington informed the Council of the anticipated timeline for the changes to special education code by the State Board of Education. At this time, the process is scheduled to begin at their February 2013 session. Mr. Worthington speculated that adoption could happen by August or September, barring any timeline changes. But, also noted that all things are subject to change.

John Worthington shared with the Council the efforts being made by the New Jersey Department of Education to assist districts affected by Hurricane Sandy in reopening their schools. He reported that to date 99% of schools were open and that the US DOE would be supplying a guidance document on changes to timelines/submission dates.

John Worthington reported that at the October State Board of Education meeting the Board had begun the process to eliminate the emergency certificate for Speech Language Services (SLS) and to provide an alternate route to certification.

John Worthington informed the Council that Senator Ruiz had introduced Senate Bill 2189 that: "Establishes Response to Intervention initiative in DOE to support and encourage school districts in implementation of Response to Intervention framework." There will not be a task force related to this bill.

John asked Kathy Ehling, Coordinator of State Performance Planning to discuss some of the current and ongoing initiatives happening within the Office of Special Education.

III. PRESENTATION

John Worthington gave an overview of the proposed changes to regulatory code, statute, and accountability systems as recommended by the Education Transformation Task Force. He reviewed in detail the proposed changes to the 26 sections under N.J.A.C. § 6A:14, giving an item by item synopsis. There was Council discussion throughout.

IV. PUBLIC

Renay Zamloot inquired as to why the Office of Special Education was blindly adopting the changes recommended by the task force. She expressed her disappointment and inquired as to where she could send a letter to further express her concerns and ask additional questions.

Note: A letter was received from her via email on November 16, 2012 and was forwarded to Dr. McDonald, Mr. Worthington, and Dr. Amerman.

Peg Kinsell also shared her disappointment with DOE OSE for moving forward with the proposed changes verbatim. She stated that she was "crushed" that seven years of hard work and collaboration was being threatened. She asked the SSEAC to take a stand against the action and act as an advocacy group.

Martha Brecher reiterated the concerns expressed by the previous speakers and questioned the need for most of the changes. She believes that most of the proposed changes will lead to less efficiency and questioned who the reviewers of the special education section were.

Sol Heckelman believes that the advocacy community will be as active as they have been previously during code discussions.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 pm. The next full meeting of the Council is scheduled for Thursday, December 20, 2012 at the Holiday Inn in East Windsor.

VI. LUNCH