

State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)/Stakeholder Meeting

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 20th, 2025

Appointed Members (in attendance): Dr. Paul Barbato, Elizabeth Alves, Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Jocelyn Gottlieb, Dr. Pamela Brillante, John Worthington, Gladasia Trotman, Amanda Villamar, Sonya Bertini, Dr. Peggy McDonald, Dr. Harold Abraham, Cynthia Defina

Appointed Members (not in attendance): Scott Longazel, Jennifer Vecchiarelli

Resource Representatives (in attendance): Donna Holzschuh (JJC), Luiz Periera (OSSS), Carolyn Hayer (SPAN), Rakima Stokes-Little (DOC), Irene Lefebvre (NJSBA), Jessica Cubberley (CBVI), Rachel Ledden-Albadine (DOH), Melissa Shukis (DCF)

Resource Representatives (not in attendance): Amy Gallagher (State McKinney-Vento), Toni Scott (DOL)

Guests from the NJ Department of Education (in attendance): Kimberly Murray, Dr. Damian Petino, Barbara Haake, Ilene Goy, Steven Pasternak, Jean Kelly, Jennifer Nicosia, Tracy Gillespie, Essence Maradiaga, Jaime Jackett, Wendy Eufemia, Bill Freeman, Joseph Dalia, JoAnn Johnson, Jolie Battista, Janina Zak-Krasucki, Erice Reid, Iris DeVaughn, Sarah Schiffelbein, Melissa Pearce, Sandra Gogerty

Guests and Stakeholders from the Public (in attendance): Jeannie O'Neill, Lauren**, D** Mackenzie DiMaria, Roby Borenstein, Meghann Bierly, Jo A.**, Nicole Nicholas, Anela Colby-Visotsky, Lauren Agoratus, Jessica Shedaker, JSF**, Dr. Julie Norflus-Good, Amy Marini, A Colby**, 1802343XXXX** Karen DiMaria, Jennifer King, Ann Suter, Carinne G Catalano, Ellie Santiago, Brenda Figueroa, Ashley Dalia, Deborah Lynam, Paulina Vargas, Ellen Woodcock, Mary L. Hebert, 1347413XXXX**, Rosesommacruz**, Amy Rios, Jodi Bonacci, Danielle Freeman, Stephanie Correia, Olga G, Jessica Cervone, Kai Collins, Danielle Frith, Danielle McNeely, Ali**, Anajali Viswanath

*Partial attendance is defined as less than 75% of the meeting, as reflected in the SSEAC ByLaws (Article VI(7)). Partial attendance does not count as being present.

**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 9:32 a.m.

Approvals – Minutes

The January minutes were reviewed and approved.

Presentation(s)

Office of Special Education Updates

- Presenter: Kimberly A. Murray, 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

FY22 Secondary Success (Indicators 1, 2 and 14)

- Presenters: Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director, Office of Special Education; JoAnn Johnson, Transition Specialist, Office of Special Education; Alexandra Pensiero, Federal Reporting and Engagement Specialist, Office of Special Education

Priority Subcommittee Requested Presentation

NJ Dyslexia Handbook 2024 Update: Aligning to Best Practices in New Jersey Tiered System of Support for Early Literacy (NJTSS-ER)

- Presenter: Deborah Lynam, M.A., NJ Tiered System of Supports–Early Reading; Rutgers University

Council Discussion –

Old Business

Council members reflected on January’s presentations and alignment with council priorities.

The Office of Special Education followed up on public comments from January’s meeting and provided a series of resources around Dispute Resolution, including: Free and Low-Cost Legal Services, Dispute Resolution Website, Dispute Resolution E-Learnings, and the Facilitated IEP website.

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

New Business

Council members were notified that there would be open vacancies for a parent member. The council was advised that the application process and announcement would follow.

Council Ad Hoc reviewed the upcoming meeting reminders and proposed topics as outlined on the agenda.

Jocelyn Gottlieb, assistant chairperson, reviewed the status and activities of the engagement committee, prioritizing parent and family voices.

Priority subcommittee leads gave their committee updates and reports.

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.

Jessica Shedaker sent in a public comment, which was revised to redact names to protect the privacy of individuals. The public comment was read aloud by the council Chairperson. In writing, Jessica Shedaker identified as a special education parent and co-chair of a Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG). She reported growing concerns regarding a SEPAG parent-led Facebook group, where she claims misleading information is being disseminated, explicitly referring to public-school vouchers. She reports that the promotion of these policies could potentially undermine special education. She requested further discussion and investigation with specific attention to the ethical concerns she raised regarding the facilitation and leadership of this group.

Lauren Agoratus made a public comment regarding a recent article released that focused on restraint and seclusion rates in New Jersey. She highlighted concerns in rates, especially those identified with a disability. She shared the article and tip sheet released by SPAN Parent Advocacy Network as part of her public comment.

The chairperson invited all public participants to provide further correspondence via email, if they had not already done so. Dr. Barbato concluded by informing all participants that, following receipt of the written submission, 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.

Adjournment

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 1:13 p.m.