

New Jersey State Special Education Advisory Council (NJ-SSEAC)

Virtually on Microsoft Teams

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 21st, 2026

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Paul Barbato at 9:32 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

April minutes were reviewed and approved.

- First motion: John Worthington.
- Second motion: Jocelyn Gottlieb.

Presentation(s)

Standing Update: Office of Special Education Updates

- Presenter: Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director, Office of Special Education, updated SSEAC members on several items pertaining to the Office of Special Education.

Examining Preschool Inclusion Quality in New Jersey: A Research Collaboration between the NJDOE Office of Special Education and Rutgers NIEER

- Presenter: Jennifer Duer, Ph.D., Assistant Research Professor, National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers University.

Introduction to the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery (LEAR Office)

- Presenter: Vanessa Hatton, Ph.D., Program Specialist, Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery, Division of Teaching and Learning, New Jersey Department of Education.

Old Business

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

New Business

The Ad Hoc of the council informed the council members of upcoming meeting topics and agendas. Membership updates were shared, including the introduction of Phenice Walker as the Youth Justice Commission's new council representative.

The council was reminded of the NJ-SSEAC Summative Evaluation and upcoming meeting reminders, including the June in-person meeting (9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.) and the NJ-SSEAC Summer Institute scheduled for August 25 and 26.

Council Subcommittee Annual Report Presentations and Approvals

Each priority subcommittee presented its annual report. Following each presentation, the council voted to approve the report.

- **Least Restrictive Environment Subcommittee Annual Report** – Presented by Christina Battiato.
 - First motion for approval: Jocelyn Gottlieb.

- Second motion: Pam Brillante.
- **Tiered Systems of Support for Behavior and Early Literacy Subcommittee Annual Report** – Presented by Elizabeth Alves.
 - First motion for approval: John Mulholland.
 - Second motion: John Worthington.
- **Special Education Student Outcomes Subcommittee Annual Report** – Presented by John Mulholland.
 - First motion for approval: Elizabeth Alves.
 - Second motion: Jocelyn Gottlieb.
- **Family Engagement Subcommittee Annual Report** – Presented by Stefanie Babits.
 - First motion for approval: Peggy McDonald.
 - Second motion: John Worthington.

Announcements

Several council members announced training and resource opportunities during the public meeting. The engagement committee captured these announcements and the corresponding links can be found in the appendix.

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.

One public comment was received and verbally presented during the meeting. The individual did not disclose their name. The commenter raised concerns regarding lack of public access to advisory council meetings and requested that meetings be recorded and made available online for asynchronous access.

The chairperson invited all public participants to provide further correspondence via email. 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.

Adjournment

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

Minute Appendix: Links Shared During Meeting

Several council members announced training and resource opportunities during the public meeting. The engagement committee captured these announcements and will distribute them via email following the meeting with corresponding links.

Organization	Resource / Event
New Jersey Inclusion Project (All In)	All In Summer Inclusion Leadership Conference
TCNJ's Assistive Technology Project	May 21, 7:00 pm – AT and Transition Workshop in collaboration with SPAN: Join via Zoom ; All In Summer Inclusion Conference Presentation: Building AAC Capacity in School Districts
Rutgers' Family Engagement Project (BRIDGE)	June 2, 1:00 pm – Supporting SEPAGs: Practical Guidance for District Leaders: https://cesp.rutgers.edu/bridge
New Jersey Department of Health	The Arc of NJ's Criminal Justice Advocacy Program Presents: 'The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Justice Innovation Summit': Event Details