**STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SSEAC)**

**to the Virginia Board of Education (BOE)**

**Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)**

# SSEAC Meeting Minutes Draft

March 10-11, 2022

SHERATON RICHMOND AIRPORT HOTEL

5501 Eubank Road

Sandston, Virginia 23150

## Wednesday, March 9, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Dr. Jeffrey Cassell, Member-at-Large (absent)

Mr. Michael Garrison, Member-at-Large

Mrs. Christine Germeyer, Member-at-Large

Ms. Margarete Hecker Jeffer, Vice-Chair

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Brian Summo, Chair

Mr. Mychael Willon, Member-at-Large

**VDOE Representatives:**

Mrs. Lisa Crafton (Recorder), SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

### Executive Committee Meeting

**Brian Summo,** SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:46 p.m.

### Business Session

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was distributed prior to the meeting via email. Mr. Garrison made a motion to approve the agenda, and Mrs. Germeyer seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Draft Annual Report to the Virginia Board of Education (BOE)**

The executive committee reviewed and edited the draft annual report provided by email from Mr. Summo.

Mr. Summo adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

## Thursday, March 10, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett

Ms. Suzanne Bowers, Ex-officio

Dr. Dani Bronaugh

Dr. Jeffrey Cassell, Member-at-Large

Ms. DaleAnna Curry

Ms. Anne Downing (absent)

Mr. Russel “Rusty” Eddens (absent)

Mr. Michael Garrison, Member-at-Large

Mr. Justin Gatling (absent)

Mrs. Christine Germeyer, Member-at-Large

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski (absent)

Ms. Clare Huerta, Ex-officio

Ms. Margarete Hecker Jeffer, Vice-Chair

Mx. Aaran Kelley

Ms. Amanda Kelsey (absent)

Ms. Kellie Lockerby (absent)

Ms. Mary Frances Morse

Ms. Caren Phipps

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Robert Schwartz (absent)

Mr. Brian Summo, Chair

Ms. Sandi Thorpe

Mr. Mychael Willon, Member-at-Large

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Kendra Belcher, SEPI, SESS

Dr. Zenia Burnett, SEIS, SESS

Mrs. Lisa Crafton (Recorder), SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Ms. Maribel Saimre, SS, SESS

Ms. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

**Brian Summo,** SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. He welcomed attendees and asked members and VDOE staff to introduce themselves. Mr. Summo also welcomed guests. He reminded everyone of the purpose of SSEAC. Mr. Summo noted several members who would be leaving the board after this meeting: Mx. Kelley, Mr. Gatling, and Mr. Schwartz.

### Business Session

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was distributed prior to the meeting via email. Dr. Bronaugh made a motion to approve the agenda, and Mr. Willon seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from previous SSEAC Meeting**

Mr. Willon made a motion to approve the minutes and Dr. Bronaugh seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Review/discussion/finalization of Draft Annual Report to the Virginia Board of Education (BOE)**

Mr. Summo shared the draft of the Annual Report edited by the Executive Committee the previous evening. The format of previous reports was followed. Mr. Summo led the committee in reviewing and making additional changes to the report.

**Business as put forth by the Chair and Committee**

Mr. Summo requested nominations for the open positions. There are two open member-at-large positions. Member-at-large nominees are Candace Barnett, Dani Bronaugh, and Dale Anna Curry. Mychael Willon was nominated for Vice Chair. Mrs. Germeyer nominated Michael Garrison as Vice Chair. Ms. Jeffer seconded the nomination and all approved.

**The Annual Plan Applications**

***Hank Millward*,** *Director, Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement (SEFFE), SESS, VDOE*

Tracie Coleman was not available and Mr. Millward provided the presentation. Since state-operated programs (SOP) do not have a local SEAC (LSEAC) to which they can submit their plans, the SSEAC provides this review. Committee members were mailed the plans with a two-page summary. The allocations are formula-based and Mr. Millward responded to clarifying questions regarding per capita amounts on several applications.

Cortical Visual Impairment Briefing -

**Val Kircher,** Education Coordinator in the Tidewater Area, Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired Department (DBVI) and **Caren Phipps,** Director of Services for Children and Youth

Refer to PowerPoint “What Is CVI? Why Do We Need to Know About It?”

Mr. Summo welcomed Ms. Kircher, and Ms. Phipps provided a formal introduction. Ms. Kircher explained causes for ocular and cortical/cerebral visual impairment (CVI). Significant autism or cognitive disabilities make evaluation for visual impairment challenging; however, comorbidity exists. CVI is the primary cause of visual impairment in children. Visual clutter or crowding in text can be addressed with modifications such as the application (app), “Look,” which modifies sentences to address crowding, specialized magnifiers that block out some text, and use of low-tech ways to block text. Discussion addressed building awareness of CVI among special education staff, including teachers for the visually impaired and ophthalmologists. There is no regulatory mandate to have CVI training. Preservice programs are just beginning to include CVI in coursework. Red flags that should lead to early screening are a stroke in utero, hydrocephalus with a shunt, and cerebral palsy. Currently, there is no standard for pediatricians to have this information and provide screening. Mr. Willon suggested CVI training is an area for the SSEAC to provide a recommendation. Ms. Kircher suggested Massachusetts has been a state leader. Ms. Phipps and Ms. Kircher are willing to craft a short recommendation statement for the SSEAC. Ms. Jeffer noted that traditional assessments may be invalid if the format affects the child’s performance.

**Report on Follow-up to Public Comment from Previous Meetings**

***Hank Millward*,** *Director, Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement (SEFFE), SESS, VDOE*

Mr. Millward responded to an advocate’s claim that special education in Virginia is broken and being outsourced to lawyers. There are ongoing conversations with the advocate explaining that school divisions may consult, by law, with others as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. The concern that IEP Team members do not know their responsibilities is being addressed with the creation of modules to improve the understanding of IEP Teams. Another comment related to an individual concern from a parent related to her child. SSEAC addresses systemic issues rather than individual issues. Dr. Hollins met with the parent and provided a written follow-up to the parent. The comment that the SSEAC lacks diversity is being addressed by updates to the application for future recruitment. This will be addressed later in the meeting. Mr. Millward’s response for the grandparent who commented that Pennsylvania has stronger rights noted that states will vary in implementation and Virginia continues to strive to improve its program.

**Working Lunch -** Mr. Summo reminded members that lunch is a working lunch and members should discuss ideas for future presentation and committee goals/objectives.

### Call to Order

**Brian Summo,** Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Summo read two public comments provided by email. The first addressed being unable to engage in school fundraising without parent permission in private school settings. The second voiced concern that students being transported with buses modified for students with physical disabilities feel stigmatized. Mr. Millward will provide a response on behalf of the SSEAC.

**Supplemental Guidance on Evaluation and Eligibility Briefing**

**Dr. Zenia Burnett,** Director, Office of Special Education Instructional Services (SEIS), SESS, VDOE and **Maribel Saimre,** Director, Office of Student Services (SS), SESS, VDOE

Refer to PowerPoint “Evaluation and Eligibility”

The supplemental guidance is the result of the 2020 JLARC recommendations. Committee members were provided a hard copy of the one-pager summary. The electronic version has hyperlinks to additional resources. The VDOE conducted a survey to identify practices across Virginia which identified inconsistencies in practice. Following the survey, meetings were held with stakeholders for additional input. An early draft was revised further following 30 days of public comment and became official in October 2021. Mrs. Saimre emphasized this guidance is supplemental and does not replace earlier guidance. The first video developed for parents which is still under development was previewed during the presentation. Committee members suggested sharing videos with teacher preparation programs and foster care caseworkers in addition to parents and school divisions.

**Constituency Reports**

**Region 1** -

* Commendations:
  + Schools are back in person
  + Programs are being developed and implemented
* Recommendations:
  + Widening gaps between general education students and special education students.
  + Some students did not receive differentiated instruction during the pandemic or did not actively attend virtual classes. Most students did not receive special education services during the pandemic, and compensatory and recovery services will not eliminate the setback. The gap is not repairable for some students and has been detrimental moving forward.
  + Increase behavior and mental health issues within the school system.
  + Developmental delays being noted across the board.
  + Teacher retention is an issue even during the school year. Some highly qualified teachers are leaving for better pay and are career switchers. On the other hand, some teachers leave for school divisions with better support and pay, and some leave the profession.

**Region 2 –**

* Need for student special services support in extracurricular activities and electives
* Engagement of LSEAC members and recruitment of new members
* Continuation of issues resulting from the loss of instructional time during the pandemic
* Support local budgets to increase salaries for teachers and recruit more qualified special education teachers

**Region 3** – No report

**Region 4** -

* Concerns:
  + Teacher retention, recruitment and staffing shortages
  + Mental wellness of students, parents, teachers, and staff
  + Transition services
* Delivery of IEP services
* Level of intense divisiveness and lack of civility at public meetings that include SEAC, school board, and local level assemblies
* Resource:
* Upcoming webinar on “What the ICC and Panel Members should know about a System of Special Education General Supervision SAP-SICC Members”: [OSEP Collaboration Spaces](https://osepideasthatwork.org/resources-grantees/sap-sicc)

**Region 5** – No report

**Region 6** –

* Continued concern over recovery from COVID-19
* Lunches provided for qualifying students at private day schools
* LSEAC electronic notebook at RCPS to make access to information easier
* Region 6 is hosting a virtual Lunch & Learn next week

**Region 7** – no report

**Region 8** -

* After the last meeting, I sent out requests to be invited to all region 8 meetings.
* I attended Mecklenburg County, they reviewed their Annual Plan, no complaints or concerns. Very few members.
* Virtual meetings continuing to lead to better attendance.
* Buckingham County shared minutes, informative, Annual Plan. Virtual meeting
* Nottoway: we had 7 people total in attendance, this is growth for us. We also reviewed the Annual Plan. No concerns. Virtual meetings continuing have led to better attendance.

**The Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS)** -

VASS has the following areas of focus for the 2021-2022 school year:

* Equity for all Virginia Learners
* Shortage of Qualified Teachers and Support Staff
* Student/Staff Social and Emotional Needs
* Learning Recovery Assessment and Accountability Requirements of the Standards of Accreditation

The representative read the VASS letter to Superintendent Balow regarding Executive Order 1 and the 30-day report. The VASS letter was emailed to committee members.

**Teacher Representative** -

* The representative did not receive much input from the field. Teachers reported the comments from October and December capture ongoing issues. One concern was voiced by a retired teacher who stated the Governor’s tip line was inappropriate.

**Private Schools** -

* Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) private day rate-setting
* Continuing CSA-DOE workgroup looking at the transfer of private special education funding to DOE
* Outcomes implementation
* Implementation of VDOE restraint and seclusion regulations
* Implementation of CSA coverage of transition services to public schools

**Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)** -

* We continue to balance in-person instruction with virtual instruction should students need to quarantine. We are seeing a decline in our need for virtual instruction but are also concerned about how the effects of “Long COVID-19” may impact us in the future. We continue to monitor the information as it becomes available and we are working to create an information session for the school staff to raise awareness about how students may be impacted.
* This school year we have moved to a year-round school calendar and are about to enter our second intercession session. Using information from our previous session. We have taken advantage of these sessions to provide additional time for students who need assistance. Our special education department remains involved in this process to make sure our students receiving special education can take advantage of these sessions as needed.

**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD)** -

* General Assembly: The Board educated legislator about school discipline bills that have a disproportionate impact on students with disabilities, including mandatory referrals of school incidents to law enforcement and disorderly conduct as a misdemeanor offense. Students with disabilities are disproportionately referred to law enforcement in Virginia at one of the highest rates in the country. Advocates were pleased to see exceptions for students with disabilities in the mandatory referral legislation. We also expressed concern that any requirement for schools to employ School Resource Officers (SRO) needs to also address the lack of training SROs have in interacting with students with disabilities.
* Concerns about masking as it relates to students with disabilities. Families are concerned about changing mask guidance and if it will be safe for students with high-risk conditions to attend school when masks are not required.
* Concerns around VDOE’s Rescission of EdEquity Guidelines. The guidelines addressed important disparities for all students and contained a special section for students with disabilities. With the rescission of the guidelines, the Board is concerned that the unique needs of students with disabilities, particularly in a discipline context, may not be addressed. We are interested to see what guidance replaces the EdEquity guidelines.

**Higher Education** -

* No concerns
* James Madison University (JMU) has developed a Special Education High Leverage Practices model classroom in conjunction with Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC). The classroom has flexible seating, tables that easily allow changes in configuration as well as having a dry erase surface, glass, and white boards on two walls. The classroom contains assistive technology (AT) devices and materials to demonstrate to teacher candidates. In addition, the room will be available to educators in local division to bring students to try out various AT devices to see what would work for them prior to purchasing.

**Special Education Representative –** no report

**Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) -**

**Our top current STATEWIDE trends from intakes this quarter include (in order of call volume):**

1. Transition to Adulthood
2. Basic IEP questions (Level 1)
3. Dispute Resolution

PEATC uses a triage system to capture the level of severity of intake calls. (Refer to chart below)

PEATC uses a triage system to capture the level of severity of intake calls.

Special Educaion Support Specialist Triage Categories
Level One: 
Eligibility, IEE, Initial Denial of Services
Initial doucment review, assistance in wrting goals
Changing services
Preg for upcoming meetings

Level Two:
Multiple IEP meetings
Bullying
Behavior issues, FBA/BIP

Level Three:
Complaints process
Due process
Local media involvement
Exhausted options with division leadership
Chronic behavior issues, MDR, suspension

**Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VDBVI)** -

* Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) and parents continue to voice concerns about the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP). The VAAP is designed to evaluate the performance of students in grades 3 through 8 and students in high school who have significant cognitive disabilities. The VAAP is based on academic content standards from the Standards of Learning (SOL) in the areas of reading, math, and science. These content standards are referred to as the Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning (VESOL). The testing will take place in the spring. The VAAP is an online assessment, but VDOE has indicated that they did not have sufficient time to implement accommodations (large print, Braille, introduction of tactile objects, and manipulatives) for the online testing so TVIs are giving these assessments to students who are visually impaired, blind, and deafblind via paper and pencil, therefore taking VI students significantly longer than their classmates who do not have visual impairments to complete the assessments. Note: TVIs and parents are concerned about the results, as they do not feel it is equitable and do not think it will be an accurate reflection of the student’s abilities. I have been able to recommend a DBVI Education Coordinator and a TVI for the VDOE VAAP Cut-Scores Committee to assist in determining the cut-off scores for the VAAP so hopefully they will be able to provide a reality check for the VAAP Committee.
* There continues to be a critical need across the state for Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) and Orientation and Mobility Specialists (O&M) at the Infant and Toddler level as well as at the school level to teach children/students who are visually impaired, blind, or deafblind. These are specialized areas and Special Education (SPED) Teachers do not typically have the specific skills necessary to teach this population. The lack of TVIs in the Infant and Toddler programs results in more direct service time from the DBVI Education Coordinators, which is not their primary role and impacts the provision of other services. DBVI’s four full-time and two part-time Education Coordinators cover vast territories and provide services to 187 children aged 0-3, as well as the active cases among the remaining 2,267 children/students aged 4 to 22.
* Due to the deficit of Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs), school divisions are hiring TVIs who have either just completed the VI Consortium program at GMU are in the process of completing it, or they may not have the Braille skills needed to adequately teach students. Couple this with TVIs who are already in the field but may not have had a Braille student for years and need training as VDOE has now adopted Unified English Braille (UEB). Because of these issues, DBVI, VDOE Vision Services, the VI Consortium Program at George Madison University (GMU), and the Outreach program at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind (VSDB) has hosted two UEB Stakeholders Group meetings to identify training needs. Based on the group’s recommendations, there will be training this summer on Braille Curriculums for students who are starting to learn Braille.
* Addressing the significant need for assessment of Cerebral/Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) in children. CVI is currently the leading cause of childhood visual impairment in the United States. The SSEAC felt that there was a need to assess for CVI when a child transitions into school if the medical and eye exam reports are suggestive of issues and a Functional Vision Exam substantiates the need, and this recommendation will be submitted to VDOE for consideration. There is also a critical need for a strong base of knowledge and skills in the area of CVI within educational teams. DBVI is addressing this need and has presented two in-house trainings, and three CVI trainings in collaboration with DOE, Outreach Services through the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, and the Vision Consortium at GMU. Two of the trainings were with Chris Russell from the New York Deaf Blind Project to include one for families. We also hosted a ten-hour training with Dr. Sandra Newcomb for TVIs, O&M Specialists and associated professional staff (i.e., Early Childhood Educators, OTs, PTs, Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs), and we had 129 participants, which is an indication of the need for this type of training.
* Families and TVIs have requested an in-person option for DBVI’s Super Summer Camp and since COVID-19 rates are decreasing, DBVI is addressing this request by partnering with Camp Easterseals outside of Roanoke to provide a free residential week-long camp experience for students who are blind, vision impaired, and deafblind.

**Project HOPE-Virginia** -

* Project HOPE just hosted its first in-person training in Staunton, which we titled, "Reconnecting to Support Each Other and the Students We Serve." Over 100 individuals spent time learning about new initiatives and getting the opportunity to network with colleagues.
* The number of students identified as experiencing homelessness during the 2020-21 academic year continued to drop from pre-pandemic counts. Less than 14,000 students were identified last year (compared to greater than 20,000 per year pre-pandemic).
* Virginia received over $13 million in American Rescue Plan homeless education (ARP-HCY) funds. ARP-Homeless II funds are being awarded to 100 of the 132 school divisions, many of whom have never received direct funding for these students. Regular subgrants reached about 25 percent while these funds will reach 75 percent of school divisions. One of the priority populations in the law is students with disabilities. Members were encouraged to ask about these funds and its use at LSEAC meetings.
* Dr. Popp has been developing state guidance regarding the intersection of IDEA and McKinney-Vento for responsibilities and processes. Sabrina Gross is working on this project with her. If you are interested in reviewing a draft, please contact Dr. Popp at [pxpopp@wm.edu](mailto:pxpopp@wm.edu).

**Foster Care -**

* Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) continues to work closely with Dr. Patricia Popp around educational stability for children and youth in foster care. We continue to see difficulties in implementing both Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), where educational children and youth in foster care are addressed, due to the way Virginia's special education regulations are written. We do our best but some cases become very difficult to meet all of the requirements. This same VDSS/VDOE team also recently met with the Human Trafficking Coordinator at VDJJ to discuss services for children and youth who are identified as victims of human trafficking and may need residential placement. Some of these children/youth are in foster care and will be subject to the rights and protections of ESSA but some may still be in the custody of their parent(s). Either way, we do expect that there will be an overrepresentation of children/youth with IEPs, as children/youth who are more vulnerable are at greater risk of human trafficking. This work is still developing but we are excited to be partnering with the right people to ensure that all children and youth are receiving the services and education that they deserve.
* Aaran Kelley has submitted her resignation from SSEAC due to a change in positions. She has taken a promotion within VDSS, shifting from services for youth in foster care to prevention services. My former position has been filled by Monica Cabell (she/her). Monica has been in the foster care profession for several years and has a wealth of knowledge regarding youth in foster care. She is taking over the educational stability liaison role from me. As such, it makes more sense from the VDSS perspective for me to resign and to nominate Monica to sit on the board and bring her expertise to the group and the knowledge she will learn from this group back to the foster care team.

**Subcommittees Meetings**

Mr. Summo directed members to break into their subcommittees to review previous public comment and identify issues the subcommittee might need to address and discuss progress on goals. Mr. Summo requested subcommittees consider possible speakers for future meetings.

**Full Committee Discussion**

The subcommittees reconvened as a full committee and reported out.

**Policy and Regulation.** This subcommittee focuses on initiatives at the state level that either result in policy and regulations or have an impact on policy and regulations as they pertain to students with disabilities.

* + Chair: Candace Barnette
* Five-year plan, teacher signs contract for $8,000-10,000 cancellation of student loan debt for up to five years
* Teacher recruitment and retention workgroup has started
* Administrators’ recertification is different than teachers, even if it was an expectation of internship hours spent with various directors. Or specifically targeted to certain areas
* Unfunded mandates
* Special Permissions Locally Awarded Credits
* More built-in time for teachers due to work loads
* Intercession, program not required but offered
* Teacher Licensure Speaker, teacher prep program enrollment
* Transition services and how COVID-19 has impacted

**Family Engagement and Community Outreach.** This subcommittee provides recommendations to the VDOE on family engagement and community outreach best practices. To educate families, students, and school/community partners on how to strengthen relationships and support one another in the education of students with disabilities.

* + Chair: Christine Germeyer
* Parent Resource Center in Prince William has a welcome packet of important resources, including binders with prepared tabs to keep resources organized and includes who to contact and in what order if you need further assistance. Can we identify additional localities doing creative work to engage parents?
  + Frederick: I’m Determined Mini-Summit
  + Parent Resource Center (PRC) funds can be used for such activities. The VDOE is still awarding these funds: personnel grants ranging between $15,000 - $20,000 and activity grants from $4,000 - $8,000. Note these funds cannot be used for food at events.
  + How can we encourage LSEAC and PRC coordination?
    - PEATC is developing an electronic portfolio for families that can be tailored for school divisions. The electronic could be online with a quick response (QR) code.
  + Reaching teachers – One strategy could be a candy bar with a thank you note that encourages teachers to let families know about the LSEAC with a QR code to the website.
  + Speakers/topics – teacher licensure and merging special education into general education programming; self-care/mental health (a possible speaker would be Shawn Ricks. Open the session to LSEAC chairs and special education directors and record or live stream).

**Student Achievement and Student Outcomes.** This subcommittee focuses on achievement data and the goals under the state plan for students with disabilities. This subcommittee focuses not only on the federal expectations, but also on the growth in achievement for students with disabilities and strategies that are being promoted at the state level to meet expectations.

* + Chair: Mychael Willon
* The VDOE should shift to two diplomas – Student of Learning diploma and Essential Skills diploma

**Review of Annual Report following edits from this morning**

Mrs. Germeyer made the motion to allow the executive committee flexibility to edit the report.   
Ms. Jeffer moved to table the motion for a vote on Friday following the presentation by Dr. Hollins.

**Election**

Mrs. Germeyer made a motion to open nominations. Ms. Jeffer seconded.

The two nominations on the floor for co-chair are Michael Garrison and Mychael Willon. Each nominee was given an opportunity to share their reasons for pursuing the position. Paper ballots were counted, and Mychael Willon was elected co-chair.

Two member-at-large positions need to be filled. The nominees are Dani Bronaugh, Candace Barnett, and Dale Anna Curry. The vote was tabled for Friday to allow Ms. Curry an opportunity to share her reasons for pursuing the position.

Mr. Summo reviewed the agenda for Friday and adjourned the meeting at 3:53 p.m.

## Friday, March 11, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Suzanne Bowers, Ex-officio

Ms. Candace Barnett

Dr. Dani Bronaugh

Dr. Jeffrey Cassell, Member-at-Large (absent)

Ms. DaleAnna Curry

Ms. Anne Downing (absent)

Russel “Rusty” Eddens (absent)

Mr. Michael Garrison, Member-at-Large

Mr. Justin Gatling (absent)

Mrs. Christine Germeyer, Member-at-Large

Ms. Clare Huerta, Ex-officio

Ms. Margarete Hecker Jeffer, Vice-Chair

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski (absent)

Mx. Aaran Kelley

Ms. Amanda Kelsey (absent)

Ms. Kellie Lockerby (absent)

Ms. Mary Frances Morse

Ms. Caren Phipps

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Robert Schwartz (absent)

Mr. Brian Summo, Chair

Ms. Sandi Thorpe

Mr. Mychael Willon, Member-at-Large**VDOE Representatives:**

Mrs. Lisa Crafton (Recorder), SEFFE, SESS

Mrs. Tracy Lee, SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Ms. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Brian Summo, SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

### Business Session

**Review/Approval of the Agenda**

The agenda was distributed prior to the meeting via email. Mr. Summo requested several additions to the agenda: finish elections, finish annual report review, and allow Ms. Jeffer time for an activity after the service awards. Mrs. Germeyer made a motion to approve the amended agenda. Mr. Garrison seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Summo requested a moment of silence for the people of Ukraine.

**Complete elections for Members-at-Large**

Nominees were given the opportunity to describe their reasons for running.

Members voted using a secret ballot for the two positions. Dani Bronaugh and Candace Barnett were elected.

**Approval of Annual Report**

The committee reviewed a draft recommendation on CVI provided by Ms. Phipps and made edits which the committee approved. Mrs. Germeyer made a motion to allow the executive committee flexibility to edit wording and language and prioritize recommendations to the annual report as it was presented. Motion was seconded by Aaran Kelley. Motion passed.

**Department of Special Education and Student Services (SESS), Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Updates**

***Hank Millward*,** *Director, Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement (SEFFE), SESS, VDOE*

Dr. Hollins was not available; Mr. Millward provided her report. The VDOE provided a report to CSA regarding moving funding to VDOE. Committee members can anticipate an update at the next meeting. Executive Order 1 and 30-day report was discussed the previous day. A briefing on 90-day report will be presented at next meeting. With the General Assembly still in session, a legislative update will occur at the July meeting. Mr. Millward discussed new teacher licensure standards and that the VDOE would be offering training to meet those requirements. Mr. Millward consulted with Board Relations and reported that members cannot be reappointed without a break in service. A new appointment the following year is possible. The live streaming of the July meeting is being explored. The call for nomination forms will be released at the end of the month that includes more demographic information to address diversity concerns. Mr. Willon inquired if a comment about removal of the term “equity” would be appropriate from the committee. Mr. Millward explained the current work and move to “opportunity” is still developing. Mrs. Germeyer noted that anyone can make a public comment at a Board of Education meeting. Ms. Barnett shared concern that “social-emotional” also is being rebranded. The SSEAC can provide public comment. Mr. Summo suggested addressing at the July meeting. Ms. Bowers noted that the full SSEAC and constituency would need to agree to the comment. Mr. Garrison requested that Mr. Millward let Dr. Hollins know how much the SSEAC appreciates her efforts and those of her staff.

**Recognition of Service Awards to Outgoing SSEAC Members**

***Hank Millward*,** *Director, Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement (SEFFE), SESS, VDOE*

The SSEAC recognized the following outgoing members with certificates of appreciation: Aaran Kelley (Foster Care Representative) for her three years of service, Dr. Jeffrey Cassell (Local Superintendent Representative) for his six years of service, Brian Summo (Private School Representative) for his six years of service, Christine Germeyer (Region 4 Representative) for her six years of service, Justin Gatling (Individual with Disabilities Representative) for his three years of service, Rob Schwartz (Individual with Disabilities Representative) for his three years of service, and Amanda Kelsey (Region 7 Representative) for her one year of service.

**Goal Setting Activity**

***Margarete Jeffer****, Parent Representative, Region I*

As the future chair, Ms. Jeffer requested input on goals for the SSEAC. Members responded to a series of questions. Mr. Willon and Mrs. Germeyer read the responses, which are summarized in the following table.

1. **What are your personal goals?**

**Focus on Students with a Disability:**

* Fostering positive outcomes for students with disabilities and professionals that serve them
* Lend a voice for students with disabilities
* Understand and not lose focus on the unique situations and circumstances of students with disability
* Ensure that students are represented fairly no matter where they attend school

**Focus on Community, Stakeholders, and Parents**

* Promote and support collaboration and strategic vision
* Strengthen partnerships for serving students with disabilities
* Assist with positive changes
* Continue to learn about initiatives across Virginia
* Share what is heard from parents with a larger entity so their concerns can be heard
* Represent students, families, and professionals who are working with students with visual impairments access resources and services to include transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) services
* Positively work with parents while being a voice for the school system
* Make the world a better place

**Focus on Teacher Training and Professional Development**

* Reconnect with my special education roots
* To better prepare teacher candidates to serve students with disability
* Help institutions change practices in teacher preparation

**Focus on Systemic Changes:**

* Ensure that students with disabilities receive a standard-type diploma so that they can achieve their dreams
* Call to attention the unique and multifaceted needs of students in foster care with disabilities
* Change diploma options for students to receive a standard diploma
* Improve the special education system
* Improve the outcome of individuals living with disability through meaningful engagement, positive collaboration, and willingness to serve

1. **What have we accomplished?**

**Students with Disabilities**

* Consistent advocating for pandemic recovery for students while supporting our VDOE staff
* Provided expert insight and advice to the BOE regarding the impact of virtual education on students with disabilities
* Throughout the pandemic, we have ensured a voice for our students with disabilities despite the learning gaps, and support for our teachers

**Community, Stakeholders, and parents**

* Stronger awareness in the community

**Teacher Training and Professional Development**

* Focus on teacher education and more special education training
* Recommendations for general education teacher preparation programs to have more special education instruction

**Systemic Changes**

* Advocated for students with dyslexia to be recognized, it has now been embedded in the recertification program for all teachers and support staff
* Elevated issues for further work: diploma, evidence-based interventions, educational stability
* Supporting JLARC recommendations
* Equity

**SSEAC improvement:**

* Strengthen relationships among members
* The SSEAC has become a more cohesive team with a clear vision for the future
* The directions for subcommittees were way clearer this year
* Meaningful conversations to move student learning forward

1. **What would you like to see accomplished next year?**

**Students with disabilities**

* Identifying best practices for long-term COVID-19 recovery services
* Continue to monitor the data from the COVID-19 closures
* Continue to see all students grow with equal opportunities
* Focus on mental wellness for students who are struggling
* Improve the process for youth in foster care to have access to special education services on time
* Provide **easy** to understand special education process information throughout Virginia

**Community, Stakeholders, and Parents**

* Support communities and the VDOE in continuing to provide access to inclusive and equitable practices/services in the field of education and mirror evidence-based practices
* Increase public comment
* Better compilation of trends from around the state to our presentations and hopefully create change
* Focus on mental wellness for parents who are feeling loss

**Teacher Training and Professional Development**

* Additional education and discussion around the intersection of special education and child welfare
* Highlight new trends in research (Cerebral/Cortical Visual Impairment)
* Continue to support the teachers (both new and current)
* Focus on mental wellness and fatigued teachers and administrators
* Continue to elevate support for teachers

**Systemic changes**

* SSEAC has influence on the quality of special education programs, improving individual education, broadening the use of research/evidence-based practices
* Improving the support of network for general education and administration in the buildings
* Change diploma options for special education students to graduate with a standard diploma that is recognized within the communities and stakeholders
* Meaningful diploma options
* Identify or promote promising practices past COVID-19

**Other**

* Eliminate anger and help parents advocate with less anger.
* Additional education and training for SSEAC members regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.
* Follow-up on the recommendations from the annual plan.
* Reminder at the beginning of meetings, especially when guests are present, of the role of SSEAC, in easy-to-understand terms for guests.
* Increase the engagement of the LSEAC through support provided by the SSEAC and VDOE.

**Family Engagement in the Department of Special Education and Student Services (SESS)**

***Tracy Lee,*** Family Engagement Coordinator, SEFFE, SESS, VDOE

Refer to PowerPoint “Family Engagement in the Department of Special Education and Student Services”

Mrs. Lee reviewed the purpose, activities, and composition of the office. Mrs. Lee shared family resources and showed the Family Engagement webpage. Mr. Willon suggested changing ombudsman to ombudsperson. Mr. Millward requested the SSEAC assist in getting out the word that this office exists and can diffuse tense situations to pursue alternatives to formal complaints and dispute resolution.

**Future Meeting Agenda Discussion**

***Brian Summo,*** SSEAC Committee Chair

Mr. Summo reminded members of meeting dates. The following suggestions for speakers at the next meeting were:

* Overview of the purpose and processes for the SSEAC
* Update on the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP)
* Update on the General Assembly actions (Recommendation to have the legislative tracking spreadsheet be sent to Mr. Millward and shared with the SSEAC)
* Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) update on virtual meetings

Ms. Jeffer has requested Mr. Millward explore the ability to add an Executive Committee meeting to July 13, 2022.

Mr. Summo offered a farewell and his appreciation for the time spent with the SSEAC.

Mr. Summo adjourned the meeting at 11:27 a.m.

**Future Meeting Dates**

* July 14-15, 2022
* October 13-14, 2022
* December 1-2, 2022