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

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

**Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)**

# SSEAC Meeting Minutes Draft

October 13-14, 2022

SHERATON RICHMOND AIRPORT HOTEL

5501 Eubank Road

Sandston, Virginia 23150

## Thursday, October 13, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Member-at-Large

Ms. Suzanne Bowers

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large (absent)

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter

Ms. DaleAnna Curry, Member-at-Large

Ms. Anne Downing

Mr. Adam Dreyfus

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski

Ms. Jen Krayeski

Ms. Amy Hunter

Ms. Margarete Jeffer, Chair

Ms. Kellie Lockerby (absent)

Ms. Mary Frances Morse

Ms. Caren Phipps

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Nathan Selove

Mr. Brandon Stees

Ms. Sandi Thorpe, Member-at-Large

Mr. Mychael Willon, Vice Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Kendra Belcher, SEPI, SESS

Ms. Sabrina Gross, ODRAS, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

**Margarete Jeffer**, SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. She welcomed attendees and asked members and VDOE staff to introduce themselves by sharing their names and roles. Ms. Jeffer also welcomed guests.

### Business Session

**Approval of Minutes from previous SSEAC Meeting**

Mr. Willon made a motion to approve the minutes with ex officio being removed from Ms. Bowers’ designation in the attendance list. Ms. Hunter seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Approval of Agenda**

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

Mr. Willon reviewed the purpose of the SSEAC. Ms. Jeffer reminded members that the purpose is to look at special education issues in Virginia on a systemic, rather than an individual level.

No other business was identified.

**VDOE Teacher Recruitment and Retention Initiatives**

***Dr. Meghan Homer****, Educator Engagement Specialist, Office of Teacher Education, Department of Teacher Education and Licensure, VDOE*

Dr. Homer noted that teacher shortages are exacerbated for special education teachers. The 2020 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report recommended a statewide strategic plan that is due in November 2022 related to special education. Dr. Homer presented on the broader teacher recruitment and retention initiatives taking place at the VDOE. Items included: a [Become A Teacher webpage](file:///C:\Users\dje33973\Documents\SSEAC%202021-2022\becomeateacher.virginia.gov) with targeted ads to recruit teachers; an infographic of the plan which conceptualizes the work being planned, and a summary of current initiatives, including Grants and Funding. Work will include evaluating mentorship programs for new teachers. Dr. Homer is interested in adding members to work on the advisory committee that meets twice a year. Members were asked to contact her if interested in participating. They will collect analytics on efforts and modify the work, as needed.

Ms. Hunter asked if there could be incentives for veteran teachers whose children are entering college that would prevent such teachers from leaving the field in order to fund their children’s education.

Mr. Willon asked how the information will be shared. Sharing will be multi-pronged: news release, superintendent’s memo. The plan will be presented to the Virginia Board of Education (BOE), an executive summary of the plan is being developed, and additional efforts are being identified.

Ms. Curry asked what the timeline was for rolling out the initiatives. Some are in place and continuing (such as grants). Moving forward, Dr. Homer is planning a more intentional focused approach to the work.

Ms. Phipps asked if grants could be expanded to fund training of specialists for high need areas, such as teachers for the blind and visually impaired.

Ms. Jeffer noted the variability among school divisions in terms of teacher salaries. The VDOE is working with Virginia Retirement System (VRS) to explore ways to retain retiring teachers who still want to teach. Currently, there are teachers who retire in Virginia but continue to teach in neighboring states. The General Assembly’s five percent increase this year and next year for teachers was noted. Members supported the need to look at VRS and retiring teachers.

Some members noted the delays in the VDOE response to initial licensure inquiries. Dr. Homer shared that the office has been short-staffed but vacancies are now filled.

Ms. Barnett noted the difference in applications divisions receive for administrator positions and teacher positions, likely due to the lower salaries for teachers. Ms. Thorpe noted “veteran” special education teachers is a myth is her division and others with few seasoned teachers in place. The needed experience to be a mentor does not exist in the numbers needed. Ms. Thorpe did not believe compensation is the answer. While teachers are posting on social media that they are tired, stressed, and frustrated with their work, the shortage will not change. Current teachers need to be supported so they can provide positive messages. Dr. Homer noted the need to celebrate teachers as part of the counter-narrative.

Ms. Phipps noted reports from provisional teachers that are just returning to classrooms after the pandemic whose principals do not understand special education. Some teachers are receiving written warnings for not meeting timelines or not using a curriculum that may not meet the needs of students who received virtual learning during the pandemic. Ms. Phipps also noted the July 2022 minutes comment from Dr. Bronaugh that accommodations for teacher licensure tests must be requested for each administration. Ms. Downing noted the limited sites for the tests.

Ms. Hemp-Gardinski suggested using social media used by young people (such as TikTok) to focus on the positive messaging.

**Transfer of Rights at Age of Majority**

**Hank Millward**, Director, Office of Specialized Education Facilities and FamilyEngagement SEFFE, SESS, VDOE

Mr. Millward shared that his office receives few complaints on this issue but the office does receive questions about the process. The age of majority is 18 years old in Virginia and all procedural safeguards and other rights related to the student transfer at this time. Parents and students must be notified. This includes a statement in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) at least one year before the student reaches the age of majority. Mr. Millward explained that the procedures can be followed if it is believed that the student cannot provide informed consent. At age of majority, parent and student must receive all notices but the student is the decision maker.   
Mr. Millward will share a handout the VDOE has developed if it is up-to-date.

Ms. Hunter asked if there is a specific training for surrogates. There is no specified training. A caseworker or social worker for the student cannot act as a parent.

Ms. Hunter asked if the date the parent and student are notified about the transfer of rights could be self-populated with the initial date that notice was provided in the Virginia online IEP system. This request will be explored.

Ms. Gross shared some of the concerns that her office has received. Problems occur if the legal process was not pursued early enough.

Ms. Phipps asked if there are any financial supports for parents in this process. Ms. Bowers shared that Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) has some new resources on this topic.

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

**Hank Millward**, Director, SEFFE, SESS, VDOE

Mr. Millward’s presentation on transfer of rights was in response to public comment from the last meeting.

**Constituency Reports**

**Region 1 – Margarete Jeffer**

Issues identified: teacher shortage, loss of staff due to legal case in Henrico, lack of small classroom settings, lack of behavior supports, increase in mental health needs and threat assessments, and long-term substitutes without special education training affecting services. The new Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) report would limit lack of training for substitutes being acceptable.

**Region 2 – Mychael Willon**

Issues identified: recruitment and retention and IEPs not being followed. Students with disabilities are disproportionately affected by rigid grading practices. They are looking at the Fairfax model to address this.

**Region 3 – Kellie Lockerby**

No report

**Region 4 – Amy Hunter**

School divisions and SEACs in Region 4 have identified the following priorities and recommendations since the last State SEAC meeting:

* Human Resources:

Hiring, retention, and training of teachers, therapists, aides, and substitutes, is the highest priority in every school division. There is an urgent need for more innovative recruiting and retention programs at the state level. One idea mentioned was state tuition incentives for teachers’ children, since this would benefit many veteran teachers. SEACs are urging school divisions to provide mental health and other supports for teachers, related service providers, and all staff who support students with disabilities. One division suggested that VDOE require training in special education documentation and objective data collection for general education teacher licensure.

* Parent Support:

Local translators are overwhelmed in many Northern Virginia counties. Even families who understand most school communications in English require translation of special education documents and interpretation in IEP and 504 meetings due to their complexity and the potential consequences of miscommunication. The VDOE should offer more translated versions of all special education documents intended for parents, so that translators can focus on student-specific issues. The VDOE should provide training for translators regarding IEP and 504 process and terminology to help ensure accurate interpretation and translation of meetings and documents. Parent training and improved communication with families are priorities in several divisions.

* Other Priorities:

Full funding of IDEA Parts B & C and the federal and state levels. Monitoring the class action lawsuit recently filed in U.S. District Court against the VDOE and Fairfax County Public Schools regarding allegations of bias against parents in the state’s due process system. Increased state and local funding to support inclusion of students with disabilities, including academic and extracurricular opportunities. Monitoring effects of the new Virginia law regarding referral of students to police for misdemeanor offenses was mentioned by one school division. Requesting that the VDOE provide more support for transition programs, especially education and incentives for employers to expand placement opportunities. Recruitment and training of SEAC members is a priority in several school divisions.

* Recognition for Inclusive Programs in Region 4:

Prince William County offers “Fin Friends” at Colgan High School as an inclusion model for other schools. Liberty and Kettle Run High Schools in Fauquier County were recognized in September as National Unified Champion Schools by Special Olympics. Fauquier County also is celebrating October as Disability Awareness Month with a county-wide elementary school poster contest and programming for older students.

**Region 5** – **Melinda Hemp-Gardzinski**

Staffing was identified as the greatest issue.

**Region 6** – Vacant

**Region 7** – Vacant

**Region 8 – Candace Barnett**

With input from five local educational agencies (LEAs), the request for more information on transition and concerns for staffing and services were the main concerns.

**The Virginia Association of School Superintendents** – **Dennis Carter**

Roll out of trauma-informed care training, lack of providers when someone is in crisis, increase in behavioral concerns post-pandemic, looking at additional behavioral options.

**Teacher Representative – Dale Anna Curry**

No report

**Private Schools – Adam Dreyfus**

**Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice**

No report

**Transition/Vocational Education – Rusty Eddins**

Planning has begun for Region 7 Interagency Transition Training. This will be a repeat of the   
August 2, 2022, training in Newport News.

At The Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC), the work behaviors programming has been infused into the training structure and the semester system has begun. This, hopefully, will lead to better post-training outcomes by eliminating time from training to job placement.

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and WWRC continue to struggle with new documentation systems. Training continues. DARS, Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) and WWRC will transition from Google to Microsoft 360 on   
December 16, 2022.

The Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation and Transition (PERT) will have a New Team Training on campus January 5-6, 2023.

DARS offices in the Skyline District were selected to pilot some of the new grant-funded programs such as the Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program (RAMP) and the Pathways 2 Careers Program.

1. Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program (RAMP) is a mentoring program for at-risk youth with disabilities. DARS Pre-Employment Transition Program partnered with Valley Associates for Individuals with Disabilities (VAIL) to offer this program.

* Career Focused mentoring and goal setting
* For students with disabilities (ages 14-21) connected with DARS
* Combination of group and one on one mentoring
* Explore careers and gain skills for employment

1. Pathways to Careers Program - The goal of this program is to assist VR eligible individuals with disabilities to acquire marketable skills and recognized postsecondary credentials that help then secure competitive integrated employment.

* Alternative hiring process
* Unserved and underserved populations
* STEM-H and trade related occupations
* Apprenticeship programs
* Career Academies
* Training Cohorts

1. Real Pay for Real Jobs Grant - This grant focuses on assisting 14c organizations with decreasing the number of people earning subminimum wages while being employed with their organizations. This grant will begin planning in January 2023.

**Board for People with Disabilities, Region 5 – Nathan Selove**

There is an overemphasis on the medical impact of a disability. There needs to be more attention on the social impact such as bullying. A recommendation was made to add the history of disabilities in history courses similar to incorporating civil rights history in courses. Another issue identified was that the focus on behavior rather than causes of behavior can prevent an appropriate response that will support the student.

**Board for People with Disabilities, Region 2 – Anne Downing**

Issues identified: large class sizes, too great a proportion of students with disabilities to general education students, size of a small group for testing accommodations being larger than the number of students remaining in the class, and special education substitutes being pulled to cover general education classes.

**Higher Education – Dani Bronaugh –** written report submitted

Issues identified:

* The need to prepare teachers, specifically special education teachers, to thrive in digital learning environments.
* The national teacher crisis and what IHEs can do to promote the education profession.
* The delay of roll out of traineeship grants to support students in programs. Fall semester is already underway and grants were just awarded. Some students did not enroll as they did not know if they would get funding.

**Local Director of Special Education – Sandi Thorpe**

Commendations:

* Audit and Self-Assessment Process – Ms. Thorpe’s perspective only
* Leadership teams subbing or spending more time out in classrooms- not just stopping in – Ms. Thorpe’s perspective that this helps leaders understand the challenges teachers are facing.

Concerns:

* Serving students in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and implementing inclusive practices in our schools. Salaries, state staffing ratios, and workload expectations necessary to implement these practices to fidelity continue to be barriers.
* Changes to private day funding are being considered by the General Assembly.
* The increased obligations of the *Comprehensive Services Act* (CSA) process and the schools’ responsibility.
* Local SEACs need to be a more collaborative group whose true purpose is to support special education in the district.

**PEATC – Suzanne Bowers**

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

1. General IEP questions (eligibility, services, goals) – Region 1 (15), Region 4 (14), Region 3 (9)
2. Transition: The transition from Early Childhood and the transition to Adulthood — Region 7 (12), Region 2 (7), Region 4 (2)
3. Placement/inclusion concerns — Region 7 (10), Region 4 (4), Region 2 (3)

**Additional Concerns throughout Virginia:**

1. PEATC continues to be concerned about vacant Parent Representatives on the SSEAC.
2. **As reported last meeting, early childhood teams are not doing** **comprehensive evaluations**. Parents are told Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) only does developmental assessments at this age as other evaluations – e.g., psychological, educational, speech, Occupational Therapy (OT), and Physical Therapy (PT) “are not appropriate from ages 2-5.” Speech is frequently a “wait and see” until the student is in kindergarten. This is heard often from Fairfax and Chesterfield Counties. Parents also are told that OT and PT do not start until elementary school or, since they are related services, evaluations will not be completed until after the student is found eligible. The related services evaluations comment has been heard from several families going through the initial process in all grade levels, not specific to early childhood.

* The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Head Start released **new documents to encourage collaboration between state educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), and Head Start programs to effectively meet the *Individual with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requirements**. These documents make clear that all SEAs, LEAs, and Head Start programs have responsibilities for implementing IDEA to ensure that all children with disabilities enrolled in Head Start programs receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. These new documents include:
  + [Dear Colleague Letter on Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Services in Head Start](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__lnks.gd_l_eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..nS5AG7oZWy1oCPhnxaDI4vH-5Ft3QBAJrDTPij32wRUwQ_s_82140070_br_145546154927-2Dl&d=DwMFAA&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=oim5UWoGEYqiv9OSDPk1FA&m=8RnSzUiXxI5emKqslYUR5P-Yv_T5OT3JqkkRlQ68ZuE&s=SPZKkqapuEtb1A5-XdYo8qt8hOLyroacZYaxuKekIF4&e=) (9 pages)
  + [Guidance on Creating an Effective Memorandum of Understanding to Support High-Quality Inclusive Early Childhood Systems](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__lnks.gd_l_eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMjEwMDUuNjQ3MTA3ODEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3NpdGVzLmVkLmdvdi9pZGVhL2lkZWEtZmlsZXMvZ3VpZGFuY2Utb24tY3JlYXRpbmctYW4tZWZmZWN0aXZlLW1lbW9yYW5kdW0tb2YtdW5kZXJzdGFuZGluZy10by1zdXBwb3J0LWhpZ2gtcXVhbGl0eS1pbmNsdXNpdmUtZWFybHktY2hpbGRob29kLXN5c3RlbXMtb2N0LTUtMjAyMi8-5FdXRtX2NvbnRlbnQ9JnV0bV9tZWRpdW09ZW1haWwmdXRtX25hbWU9JnV0bV9zb3VyY2U9Z292ZGVsaXZlcnkmdXRtX3Rlcm09In0.jUPIpBzG7mvok0b6o3nm91G9Kf-2DoyaF12QjUIzVdm50_s_47671464_br_145246633890-2Dl-3Futm-5Fcontent-3D-26utm-5Fmedium-3Demail-26utm-5Fname-3D-26utm-5Fsource-3Dgovdelivery-26utm-5Fterm-3D&d=DwMFAA&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=oim5UWoGEYqiv9OSDPk1FA&m=8RnSzUiXxI5emKqslYUR5P-Yv_T5OT3JqkkRlQ68ZuE&s=FwBKyVEqMEmyUOBouRPbHhgwM0NrIAvlI1gobakipEE&e=) (15 pages)

**Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired – Caren Phipps**

**Project HOPE-Virginia – Dr. Patricia Popp**

A Navigating IDEA and McKinney-Vento Q&A was released via Assistant Superintendent’s email recently. This puts into writing which school division is responsible when a student with a disability is experiencing homelessness. The office hired three part-time ARP Analysts to assist with state initiative funded by the American Rescue Plan (ARP). Data for 2021-2022 is being collected and should be available at the December meeting.

**Foster Care – Monica Cabell**

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) continues to partner with Project HOPE-VA to provide educational stability support to local schools and local departments of social services. The team is currently providing joint virtual trainings to education and child welfare to ensure youth in foster care maintain educational stability.

The VDSS Youth Services recently updated its Educational Stability Liaison list, which provides a direct point of contact in local department of social services to assist with navigating educational stability needs between the local departments of social services and local schools. The updated list should be posted by the end of the month.

The VDSS continues to support the Youth Welfare Approach by encouraging all entities of the child welfare system to ensure youth voice is included in the work that they do. Continuing to lead by example, the Youth Services unit held interviews to hire a youth with lived experiences to fulfill our Youth Services Education and Training Voucher (ETV) administrative assistant position. The VDSS hopes to have the position filled by the end of the month. This young adult will support and advocate current ETV eligible youth navigate the ETV process and be a connection between the VDSS Youth Services team and the Community Colleges, Great Expectations program. Great Expectations supports youth with foster care experience navigate the community college system.

Division X of the Consolidation Appropriate Act 2021 supplied increased Chafee Program and Education and Training Voucher funding to support older youth in foster care during the pandemic. All flexibilities and access to those additional funding streams ended on September 30, 2022.

**Working Lunch**

Member used the working lunch to discuss subcommittee goals/objectives.

### Call to Order and Public Comment Period

**Margarete Jeffer,** SSEAC Committee Chair

Ms. Jeffer called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and reviewed the purpose and procedure to be followed.

Mr. Willon read written public comments regarding provision of services; IEPs for Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Northern Virginia need for assistive technology training; not prioritizing students with disabilities; questions about hearing officers and lack of oversight; and the need for services for twice-exceptional students.

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

**Dr. Samantha M. Hollins,** Assistant Superintendent, SESS, VDOE

Dr. Hollins shared highlights of the educational focus for the Youngkin administration:   
advancing parent and teacher empowerment, high expectations, transparency and accountability, and post-secondary readiness.

VDOE Department of Special Education and Student Services Areas of focus for 2022-2023

* Continued implementation of Year Two federal program monitoring, recruitment and retention of special education staff and school-based mental health. Current federal grants will be available again. Virginia has obtained $9.2 million over the past few years for special education and student services.
* Recruitment and retention – Ms. Downing asked Dr. Hollins to explain the work of the new IDEA-funded position in Teacher Licensure.
* Implementation of the *Virginia Literacy Act* and a focus on specialized reading instruction at the secondary level. Dr. Hollins recommended that the Committee request an update on the *Virginia Literacy Act*.
* Secondary transition partnerships between VCU-CTI and TTAC for division-level support. Commission on Youth action and the next step beyond demonstration projects.

Dr. Hollins will share the statewide strategic plan for transition with the SSEAC once finalized.

Discussed possible gaps for required online training that is required for re-licensure but it is not required for new teachers/initial licensure.

Ms. Hunter asked about verification that the actual staff member participated in the mandatory training. VDOE shared that the certificates printed from the trainings are only awarded after the participant completes the training.

Applied Studies Curriculum guidance intended to provide more structure and support when students are pursuing an Applied Studies Diploma. An update following the Board of Education review and a report to the General Assembly could be requested by the SSEAC.

Dr. Hollins noted that all recommendations in the 2020 JLARC report have been addressed.

The next step is determining if the changes have the intended effect. Dr. Hollins noted that special education funding and what happens at the local level continue to need attention and were not a focus on the JLARC report.

Mr. Willon asked if there were any priorities the SSEAC is missing and should address.

**Subcommittee Meetings**

Mr. Willon reviewed subcommittee membership.

Subcommittees were asked to review today’s public comment report, constituency reports, and presentations and identify issues that the subcommittee might be able to incorporate this year and recommendations for presentations.

Following workgroup meetings, subcommittees reported out ideas for priorities and presentations. The agenda includes additional subcommittee work for Friday. Detail of subcommittee work is included in the Friday minutes.

**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: Kellie Lockerby
* Priority: Bridge the diploma gap

**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: Suzanne Bowers

One priority: Ensure that families are provided opportunities to consider long-range planning and outcomes from the beginning of the special education process.

**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: Sandi Thorpe

Priority: Increase competency among all instructional staff

Ms. Jeffer moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Willon seconded. Ms. Jeffer adjourned the meeting at 4:38 p.m.

## Friday, October 14, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Member-at- Large

Ms. Suzanne Bowers

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large (absent)

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter

Ms. DaleAnna Curry

Mr. Adam Dreyfus (absent)

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski (absent)

Ms. Amy Hunter

Ms. Margarete Jeffer, Chair

Ms. Jen Krajewski (Member-at-Large)

Ms. Kellie Lockerby (absent)

Ms. Mary Frances Morse (absent) - Mr. Jay Truex representing DJJ

Ms. Caren Phipps

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Nathan Selove

Mr. Brandon Stees

Ms. Sandi Thorpe

Mr. Mychael Willon, Vice Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Kendra Belcher, SEPI, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Peter Grabowski, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Margarete Jeffer, SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. She welcomed attendees and asked members and VDOE staff to introduce themselves by sharing name, role, and a personal fact that members might not know.

### Business Session

**Applied Studies Presentation**

**Renesha Parks**, Director,Richmond City Public Schools (RPS) Office of Special Education

**Rebecca Ceja**,RPS Office of Special Education

**Rossi Volley**,RPS Office of Special Education

Dr. Volley introduced the RPS Team. The VDOE partnered with RPS to pilot implementation of the Applied Studies curriculum framework. The applied studies framework focuses on students with authentic significant cognitive disabilities. This includes a shift from a caregiver to an educator mindset. The framework provides educators with a research-based adaptive curriculum. RPS uses Unique Curriculum. Educators need to attend to the information in the first 26 pages to understand how to use the tools. Members walked through the process and tools RPS has developed as an introduction to the work teachers are doing with the framework. The Learner Characteristics Inventory is a tool to determine if the Applied Studies Diploma is appropriate for a student.

Mr. Selove recommended that people with disabilities should be included in the continuing development of this initiative (“Nothing about us without us”). Members noted the importance of training for teachers in the curricula that are available.

**Subcommittee 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: Kellie Lockerby, Anne Downing reported out
* Goal: Bridge the diploma gap (transition and diploma options – VAAP)
  + Can we have a division-award (locally verified) diploma instead of only a state option?
  + Quality of life after graduation (competitive employment, job training and meaningful community involvement)
  + Check with higher education about who regulates which diplomas are accepted.
  + Job shadowing as a graduation requirement and/or connecting with higher education
  + Data from indicator 14 – looking at what percentage are not engaged
  + Critical decision points for diplomas (Presentation)
  + Consider an accountability part for schools regarding evidence-based curriculum, for example three percent for accreditation
  + What options are actually available for students who got an applied studies diploma
  + Extra seals for applied studies diplomas to give them more value
  + Redefine the value of diploma in the community setting (employers); rebranding
* Goal: Improved teacher recruitment and retention
  + Until IDEA is fully-funded, not much will change
  + State funding needs to be shared equally
  + Programs for teacher preparation stipends
  + Are teachers able to choose where they want to be (grade) or are they placed where there is an opening?
  + Screening for provisionally-licensed teachers
  + Focus on the positives/benefits of teaching – marketing and advertisement
  + Positive and supportive work environment to retain teachers
  + Keeping retired teachers – 100 percent working but still able to get full retirement
* Presentations
  + Understand the three diploma types and requirements
  + Different ways to get verified credits (SOL) for standard diploma – examples and non-examples from different regions
  + Critical decision points for diplomas
  + Indicator presentation: data on applied studies, students who tool SOL (general education students who fail SOL), number of special education credit accommodations reviewed – how many needed more information and how many had sufficient data
  + Sarah – special education recruitment and retention
  + Request someone from the Governor’s office come to discuss the future of special education in Virginia

**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: Suzanne Bowers
* Goal: Ensure that families are provided opportunities to consider long-range planning and outcomes from the beginning of the special education process.
  + Presentation on early childhood initiatives, including inclusive practices: such as, IPOP, possible presenters include Dawn Hendricks (VDOE, ECSE), Sandy Wilberger (VCU, T-TAC), Jaye Harvey (PD Essentials) – Dr. Popp will resend contact information to Ms. Jeffer.
    - Explore requiring meaningful transition planning in earlier grades
    - Resources to help parents understand the benefits of less restrictive environments and understand the impact of “modified”

**Recommendation:** Training for preK-12 special education teachers on the possible harmful effects of a restrictive setting.

* + One pager for age 2 through grade 2 that explains what to expect when the IEP team begins to discuss graduation tracks in third grade (PEATC has addressed)
    - Embed in EC teacher training
    - Inclusion video with lived experience voice that includes potential harmful effects of restrictive settings (preK – 12 issue)
    - Subcommittee will review PEATC document at next meeting

**Recommendation:** Encourage more public comment and participation – including strategies for local SEAC.

* + - Livestreaming/video of SSEAC meetings. Organize presentations by topic for parents to access later – Can an intern be hired/given a stipend to explore? Possible option for video-recording – OWL camera which can be integrated with Zoom.
    - Link to the video and minutes sent to an expanding distribution list, maybe through GovDelivery system. Is SSEAC an option that can be selected for information when signing up?
    - Distribution list can be sent the agenda (similar to the process used by the Commission for Youth)
    - LSEAC need to promote SSEAC
    - Are there social media options to promote?
    - Consider having a SSEAC meeting in the evening
    - Consider moving SSEAC meetings around the state
  + Should SSEAC approve waiver for exceeding one percent? - ask for LEA data on segregated settings
    - **Earlier presentation** from Jeff Phenicie: What percentage of students who take the VAAP are in general education settings and for what percentage of time?
    - How is this information captured in monitoring?
  + Have Virginia IEP modified so critical decision points must be considered and unpacked to increase visibility
    - **Presentation**/facilitated discussion with Andrew – brief overview of system and discussion of possible changes to help families understand the implications of decisions (critical decision points)
    - Use applied study one-pager (or similar document) before more restrictive setting is recommended

**Recommendation:** Require each LEA have an IEP auditor to ensure they are in compliance. Consider a pilot with measures to identify outcomes: such as, student achievement (broad), parent complaints/disputes, findings. Region 2 has done this in the past. Auditor should be a presence in the school.

* + - Have IEPs reviewed/sign off for legal compliance
    - **Presentation** on flexibility in credit accrual for diplomas [consider Student Services (Joe Wharf or Sarah Bazemore)]

**Recommendation:** The Virginia Board of Education should conduct an independent evaluation of Virginia’s due process procedures and develop suggestions to make the process more equitable for all families.

**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: Sandi Thorpe
* Goal: Increase competency among all instructional staff (teacher recruitment and retention)
  + Recommendations
    - Value growth over time; consider expanding growth assessments to grades 9-12 for SOL courses and keep the current practice in place.
      * How many counties were accredited because of growth assessments?
      * Are the results from growth assessments available yet?
      * Assessments must be accessible.
    - Consider a four-day in-person instructional week with one day of required PD each week while students have asynchronous learning.
      * Leverage COVID-19 learning
      * Meaningful in-person training: new teachers, PLC
      * Divisions must submit a strategic learning day plan to incorporate designated time for special education training for general educators, training for ….; also have regularly-schedules meetings (principals’ meetings, psychologists department meetings, etc.)
      * Allow common planning for cross-curriculum enhancement
      * Better trained teachers lead to better instruction
      * Better PD should lead to better teacher mental health and bolster teacher morale
      * Reform: link to teacher shortages, relate it to ALL children
      * Addresses staff turnover
      * Evidence of impact: teacher retention rates
      * Is there research supporting four-day weeks?
    - Require divisions to appoint a staff member to address transition for SWD (to attend statewide transition trainings, to develop and implement programs, train staff on transition – Ind. 13 & 14; and collaborate with other state agencies, etc.)
      * This has precedent with dyslexia advisors being required (HB2395, SB1516)

Ms. Jeffer moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Willon seconded. Ms. Jeffer adjourned the meeting at 11:57 a.m.

## Future Meeting Dates

* December 1-2, 2022
* March 2-3, 2023
* July 13-14, 2023