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

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

**Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)**

# SSEAC Meeting Minutes

July 12-14, 2023

DoubleTree by Hilton Richmond Airport

445 International Center Drive

Sandston, Virginia 23150

(804) 236-1111

## Wednesday, July 12, 2023

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Vice-Chair

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. DaleAnna Curry, Member-at-Large

Mr. Adam Dreyfus, Member-at-Large

Ms. Amy Hunter, Member-at-Large

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Mychael Willon, Chair**VDOE Representatives:**

Mrs. Lisa Crafton (Recorder), SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Executive Committee Meeting

**Mychael Willon**,SSEAC Committee Chair, welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

### Business Session

Mr. Millward started by making announcements. The new leadership at the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has an interest in special education and he anticipates the State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC) will be called upon for input. In addition, the United States Department of Education (USED) will be conducting a special education monitoring review in September and is requesting a virtual meeting with the SSEAC. He asked the Executive Committee if there was a time of day that would be best. Questions that will be asked are included in members’ packets. The SSEAC is referred to as the Virginia’s State Advisory Panel (SAP) in the handout. Availability will be discussed with the full committee tomorrow. Ms. Hunter asked if disputes were available by school division. This information can be requested but is currently unavailable on the website. Mr. Millward noted this could be discussed during the full meeting and be a recommendation from the Committee. Ms. Haymes will be sharing information about complaints and disputes during tomorrow’s meeting. Mr. Millward suggested the Committee may wish to make recommendations during each meeting rather than addressing all of them in the annual report. The VDOE could provide updates throughout the year. There were delays in sharing the annual SSEAC report with the Virginia Board of Education (BOE). There have been changes in membership on the Board.

**Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Willon requested a move to accept the agenda. Motion was made by Ms. Barnett and seconded by Ms. Hunter. Motion was approved unanimously.

**Establish SSEAC 2023-2024 Goals**

Proposed goals were shared with the Committee.

1. Expanding SSEAC membership to include representation of military families (e.g., parent, School Liaison, Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) staff).
* Ms. Hunter noted the new Navy advocates. Mr. Millward explained these are Judge Advocate General (JAG) officers who can act as the family’s attorney at individualized education program (IEP) meetings for the Navy and Marines. Mr. Willon noted that there are school liaison officers (SLO). These people are located in the schools. An update from Mr. Dan Dunham, Military Student and Family Specialist, Office of Student Services at the VDOE could be considered for a future meeting. The VDOE has a contract with the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) related to military-connected students.
1. Expanding SSEAC membership to include representation of charter/lab schools and adult correctional centers - not in the report but needs to be considered, as they are a requirement of the federal and state special education laws and regulations.
* Mr. Millward noted this is a large push of the Department. A lab school has been created between in Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and Richmond Public Schools (RPS). There are approximately ten charter schools in Virginia. Ms. Hunter recommended there be a motion to adopt this recommendation. Mr. Millward suggested it be posed during the full committee meeting. Ms. Barnett asked if there was representation from a general education teacher. The Committee discussed the value of this with inclusion initiatives. Mr. Millward asked the Committee to consider the balance of teachers on the Committee with parents and individuals with disabilities.
1. Videotaping SSEAC presentations and organizing them by topic for parents to access later.
* Mr. Millward explained access to technology is the greatest challenge. Recording for later posting rather than livestreaming was the preference of the committee at this time.
* Mr. Millward asked if a microphone system should be reinstated. This received positive comments.
* Committee discussed having the video focus on the presentations and be stationary.
* Ms. Barnett noted that the local Special Education Advisory Committee (LSEAC) would benefit from being able to view recorded meetings.
* Dr. Seaborne noted that accessibility would need to be addressed prior to posting.
1. Developing procedures to livestream SSEAC meetings.
* Committee felt this should be held until videotaping meetings was explored.

Explore ways to further emphasize how the Commonwealth’s constituency can submit public comment.

* Mr. Millward began a discussion about what constitutes public comment. He is including written comments submitted to SSEAC’s website tomorrow. These are included in members’ packets.
1. Concerns related to the effectiveness of the school division’s local SEAC - not in the recommendations but was addressed in public comment and Mr. Millward’s office gets frequent calls on the organizational and functional aspects of the local SEAC.
* Mr. Millward noted the number of regional “no report” in SSEAC minutes. There is a lack of awareness. When there are requests for input, response is limited.
* Ms. Hunter explained she did not know about constituency reports when she attended her first meeting. How can new members know about this expectation?
* Dr. Popp suggested a checklist on how to get input for new regional representatives.

**Orientation for New Members**

Mr. Millward suggested revisiting an orientation document for new members. A binder was developed when Mrs. Germeyer was chair.

**Establish Subcommittee Assignments for New Members**

The Committee discussed allowing new members to self-select. Efforts to have balanced numbers among subcommittees should be encouraged.

**General Discussion**

* Ms. Hunter explained her desire to increase public participation in the meeting. Could there be a way to help visitors access meals? Can we make the meetings more welcoming to families? Ms. Barnett suggested a brochure with places to eat. Mr. Millward suggested the Committee explore how to provide food and made a recommendation to the VDOE. Returned to a welcoming, user-friendly brochure about SSEAC which includes food options.
* Discussed adding another subcommittee meeting during the year outside regular SSEAC meetings. These would need to follow the same rules for public access. Mr. Millward will look at the budget to accommodate this.
* Discussed loss of seasoned teachers and number of new, provisionally licensed teachers.
* Have the SEAC training from the VDOE available to members.
* Ms. Hunter requested a summary of the inclusive practices plans schools were required to complete. The challenge with increasing inclusive options for preschool continues to be a challenge. Is there a state policy on inclusive practices? Mr. Millward noted that Virginia, being a Commonwealth, would need a legislative change to mandate this. Dr. Seaborne explained the VDOE can provide guidance and will share this with Dr. Zenia Burnett, Director, Office of Instructional Services.
* Ms. Hunter noted that the by-laws need to be reviewed to determine if SSEAC is fulfilling all the responsibilities listed. There are committees listed that should have SSEAC representation; it is unclear if this is happening.
* Ms. Hunter stated that funding for students with intensive support needs does not align with current needs and disability incidence. This impacts local funding for special education. Could there be a presentation about how school divisions can maximize this funding?
* Should inclusion be a separate subcommittee?
* Was the SSEAC involved in reviewing the revisions to the Parent Handbook? Dr. Seaborne will check with Tracy Lee, Family Engagement Coordinator, Office of Facilities and Family Engagement.
* Ms. Hunter asked about whether there is a way to get regular VDOE updates? Ms. Barnett mentioned Superintendent Memos. That is changing to a newsletter format. Members can sign up for GovDelivery to access this information. How to access GovDelivery should be included in orientation materials.

Mr. Willon adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

## Thursday, July 13, 2023

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Vice-Chair

Ms. Suzanne Bowers

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter (absent)

Ms. DaleAnna Curry, Member-at-Large

Mr. Adam Dreyfus

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski (absent)

Ms. Jen Krajewski

Ms. Amy Hunter, Member-at-Large

Mr. John Littleton

Ms. Kellie Lockerby (absent)

Ms. Mary-Frances Morse

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Nathan Selove

Mr. Brandon Stees (absent)

Ms. Marjorie Stallard

Mr. Mychael Willon, Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Hallie Bereny, ODRAS, SESS

Ms. Tracie Coleman, FAB, SESS

Mrs. Lisa Crafton, SEFFE, SESS

Ms. Sabrina Gross, ODRAS, SESS

Ms. Patricia Haymes, ODRAS, SESS

Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins, SESS, VDOE

Mrs. Tracy Lee, SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

**Mychael Willon,** SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. Mr. Willon asked members and the VDOE staff to introduce themselves.

### Business Session

**Approval of the Agenda**

The agenda was distributed before the meeting via email. Dr. Bronaugh made a motion to approve the agenda and Ms. Hunter seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from previous SSEAC Meeting**

Dr. Bronaugh made a motion to approve the March 2023 minutes and Ms. Hunter seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Executive Committee Recommendations on By-laws**

Mr. Willon presented the committee with draft recommendations that had been discussed with the Executive Committee the prior evening for consideration.

1. Expanding SSEAC membership to include representation of military families (e.g., parent, School Liaison, Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) staff).
	* This recommendation will be explored in subcommittee.
2. Expanding SSEAC membership to include representation of charter/lab schools and adult correctional centers – not in the report but needs to be considered, as they are a requirement of the federal and state special education laws and regulations.
	* Ms. Hunter made the motion to accept this recommendation. Ms. Bowers seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Videotaping SSEAC presentations and organizing them by topic for parents to access later.
	* Discussion addressed videotaping and livestreaming. This included questions about confidentiality and participation/engagement in the meeting versus one-way transmission. Members discussed the format would follow public participation at the physical meeting which is limited to public comment. Ms. Bowers asked who would be responsible for the technology, organizing content, and posting. Ms. Hunter made the motion to pursue videotaping with a fixed camera beginning with the December 2023 SSEAC meeting. Mr. Selove seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
4. Developing procedures to livestream SSEAC meetings.
	* Discussion by members supported holding on this recommendation.
5. Explore ways to further emphasize how the Commonwealth’s constituency can submit public comment.
* The following QR Code can be used to access Gov Delivery. This can be used to sign up for the new Virginia Education Updates Newsletter that will replace Superintendent’s Memos.



1. Concerns related to the effectiveness of the school division’s local SEAC - not in the recommendations but was addressed in public comment and Mr. Millward’s office gets frequent calls on the organizational and functional aspects of the local SEAC.
* This will be considered by the Family Engagement and Community Outreach subcommittee.

**Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind (VSDB) Annual Plan Review**

***Tracie Coleman****, Director, Office of**Special Education Finance and Budget (FAB), SESS, VDOE*

Ms. Coleman explained the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind is funded by a process different from regular applications. She requested that the SSEAC review the application. There were no comments or questions.

**Annual Report on Dispute Resolution – Facilitated IEP**

***Patricia Haymes****, Director, Office of Dispute Resolution and Administrative Services (ODRAS), SESS, VDOE*

Ms. Haymes introduced herself and her background, including being a parent of a son with a disability. Ms. Haymes shared longitudinal data on state complaints, mediations, due process, and facilitated IEPs. There has been a significant increase in state complaints with increased complexity. Systemic issues are more frequent as are discipline matters.

A new position, the Corrective Action Specialist for Complaints and Due Process, has been filled. Dr. Sandra Ramsey has been hired and there is recruiting for an additional compliance specialist.

Ms. Haymes and the Committee discussed the rate of complaints for large and small school divisions and SSEAC making the recommendation that redacted complaints be made available publicly. Ms. Haymes shared the [CADRE | The Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (cadreworks.org) website](https://www.cadreworks.org/), which is the national dispute resolution technical assistance center. The site includes state data and comparisons with other states. Virginia falls in the middle in terms of the number of complaints filed. Ms. Hunter asked about hearing officers and how they are appointed. The VDOE provides training for hearing officers. The Virginia Supreme Court maintains a list of hearing officers who are independent contractors.

**Ombudsman Report on Constituency Issues**

***Peter Grabowski****, Special Education Ombudsman, Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement (SEFFE), SESS, VDOE*

Mr. Grabowski explained the role of the Ombudsman. There were 1,326 unique contacts this year versus 1,120 contacts the previous year. Possible reasons for the increase could be more concerns and/or greater awareness. Top five constituent concerns were dispute resolution, suspension/discipline, placement, IEP implementation, and evaluation/eligibility. Notable trends include 504 Plans and workforce issues.

**Freedom of Information Advisory (FOIA) Presentation**

***Alan Gernhardt, Esq.****, Executive Director, Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council*

Mr. Gernhardt provided general rules on access to public meetings to comply with the *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA). The PowerPoint can be accessed from the [FOIA Council](https://foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov/foiacouncil.htm) website. Mr. Gernhardt recommended reaching out with any specific questions and concerns. He discussed emails that may be considered at a meeting. Members should avoid emails to multiple members or blind carbon copy (BCC) to avoid meeting the definition of a meeting. Mr. Gernhardt recommended self-censorship when sending emails. A session with three members (or two of a three-member committee) constitutes a meeting. Any emails or other documents related to SSEAC meet the definition of a public record. Record retention can be addressed by sharing records with the VDOE staff. Notice of meetings must be posted in multiple places, by *Code*, at least three workdays in advance for regular meetings. For special emergencies or continued meetings, notice must occur at the same time members are notified. A question about retaining SSEAC meeting recordings was asked. Mr. Gernhardt recommended checking with the Library of Virginia, but recordings can be destroyed after final minutes are completed. Elections should be public; no written or secret ballots are allowed. Electronic meetings are allowed during a declared state of emergency. Using this provision during the pandemic led to changes to the *Code of Virginia* effective September 2022. Refer to Sections 2.2-3708.2 and 2.2-3708.3. Two or 25 percent of meetings can be virtual but cannot be consecutive.

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

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

One public comment was made last meeting. The follow up was advising the parent to file a due process complaint which was pursued. Final outcome is awaiting Mr. Millward’s signature.

**Working Lunch**

Members were asked to discuss subcommittee goals/objectives

**Call to Order and Public Comment Period**

***Mychael Willon,*** *SSEAC Committee Chair*

Mr. Willon called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

Ms. Lucas is completing her doctorate looking at trauma experienced by black mothers who have children with disabilities who challenge the school division. She plans to share this information at a subsequent SSEAC meeting. Ms. Lucas stated that hearing officers are on the take and the due process system is not impartial and is unfair. School divisions are charging for educational records. Ms. Lucas stated Virginia is in danger of losing its special education funding due to ten years of noncompliance.

Minister S. Sims, a grandparent from Goochland, spoke about her two grandchildren with special needs for whom she has not been able to obtain private placements. She stated there has been retaliation including a CPS complaint and being given a no trespass notice.

Kathy Halvorsen, a Powhatan mother, spoke about her son who has been out of school since November of 2021 despite her providing partial consent for IEP. The mother stated that restraint caused trauma to her son, and that the LEA has spent over $1 million to fight her legally, and this is an issue across Virginia.

Mr. Millward read a written public comment from Wendy Little. Her son has had no access to education since 2022. Specialized transportation was not provided. Ms. Little’s full written public comment was included in members’ packets.

Carter and Craig Gunn, Minister Sims’s grandchildren, requested help.

Ms. Bowers revisited a morning question regarding making redacted disputes available. Ms. Bowers made the motion that the VDOE create a process so redacted complaints can be viewed online by the public. Ms. Hunter offered a friendly amendment to add the outcomes. The committee discussed the proposal.

Revised motion: **That VDOE create a process so redacted state complaints and outcomes and filed due process complaints can be viewed online by the public.** The motion passed unanimously.

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

***Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins****, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services (SESS), VDOE*

Dr. Hollins brought greetings from the new State Superintendent, Dr. Coons. Goals for the new leadership include high expectations for all learners, ensure a high-quality licensed educator for every student, innovation pathways for every learner, invest in safe and healthy schools. The focus will lead to some reorganization. Learning Acceleration Grants and school-based mental health (Right help. Right now.) are recent initiatives. Dr. Hollins suggested a Right Help. Right Now. representative from the Governor’s Office present to SSEAC.

Dr. Hollins shared updates for SESS offices and legislation being addressed by the offices. She recommended subcommittee review of monitoring results and request Stat updates on the process being developed. Dr. Hollins shared a graph showing ongoing increases in SSIP target on graduation with a standard or advanced diploma. Monitors are using VAAP data to target support for LEAs with greater than one percent participation.

SISNA Program for tuition reimbursement was described. Ms. Hunter noted that there are concerns with the current way funds are allocated and that intellectual disabilities are not included on the list. Dr. Hollins stated that changes would require a legislative change.

The number one critical shortage area is school psychologists. The Office of Student Services has initiatives to recruit and retain school-based mental health professionals and has been very successful in obtaining federal grants to fund the work. Dr. Hollins shared the Career and Learning Center website ([Learning and Resource Center for School Mental Health Professionals (vastudentservices-clc.org)](https://vastudentservices-clc.org/learning-center/) for School Mental Health Professionals which includes recruitment and professional learning.

Dr. Hollins explained a state plan amendment has been submitted for Medicaid Free Care and is awaiting approval. Ms. Hunter asked if this might prioritize Medicaid eligible students to receive services over other students. Dr. Hollins stated she would bring the question back to the VDOE’s point person on this initiative, Amy Edwards.

The Regulations on VDOE’s website has a new link; the purple book is out of date: [Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter81/). Ms. Hunter noted the need to have the criteria for eligibility included. This should be linked to the new parent guide, when available.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is monitoring Virginia this year looking at implementation of processes, practices, and procedures identified in its previous visit. Interactions with stakeholders, including SSEAC are expected.

**Constituency Reports**

***Mychael Willon,*** *SSEAC Committee Chair*

**Region 1 – vacant**

**Region 2 – Mychael Willon**

* There continues to be a need for special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff.
* Having a difficult time getting local SEAC members to stay engaged.
* The William and Mary Special Education Advocacy law clinic has returned and will be in full operation beginning in the fall semester. The website and intake form will be operational soon; in the meantime, interested families may contact the new director, Jim Wheaton, at jim.wheaton@wm.edu. The clinic is also looking to meet with parent groups to find opportunities to do advocacy training.

**Region 3 – Kellie Lockerby - no report (absent)**

**Region 4 – Amy Hunter**

*Staff Recruiting, Retention, and Training:*

Staffing issues continue to top the agendas of many districts. Fairfax County’s Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities made several HR-related proposals in its annual report this year, including additional planning days for teachers, university partnerships for teacher training, a variety of hiring incentives, optional year-long contracts for certain special ed teachers and aides to support ESY and other summer programming, and more formal opportunities for mentorship and teacher collaboration.

*Early Childhood:*

Early childhood and family engagement are priorities for SEACs in several Northern Virginia school divisions. Winchester Public Schools will hold a readiness fair, in which the SEAC will participate. Family engagement is also a top priority for the Winchester SEAC. A group of parents in Fairfax County is working to expand inclusive preschool opportunities for all students with disabilities, regardless of family income. Parents from this group recently testified before the school board. Fairfax County is also addressing the workload created by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) decision requiring compensatory services following reduction of services during the pandemic.

*Expanding Parent Online Access to SEAC Meetings:*

Rappahannock County held one of its quarterly meetings via Zoom, with a presentation by the Disability Resource Center on a new autism support group. In 2023-2024, Fauquier County will begin livestreaming its SEAC meetings.

*Loudoun County Excellence in Supporting Special Education Awards:*

On June 6, the Loudoun County SEAC and Loudoun County Public Schools held their annual awards ceremony. “Outstanding” award winners were recognized in the following categories: Special Education Teacher, Inclusive Administrator, Teacher Assistant, General Education Teacher, Special and General Education Team, Inclusive School, Inclusive Student, Inclusive School Club, Inclusive Transportation Team, Inclusive Sports Team, Community Member, Related Service Provider, Inclusive Event, and Job Training and Community Collaboration.

*Special Education Regional Tuition Reimbursement Program—Request to the State SEAC:*

The Fauquier County SEAC discussed concerns with the Regional Tuition Reimbursement Program. This state program was originally created in 1977 as a way for groups of smaller school divisions to provide services to students in low-incident disability categories in regional settings. Over the years, the program has expanded and evolved, along with other developments in special education policy. These services are now provided almost exclusively within individual school divisions where they are used to fund students with “intensive support needs,” including services to support inclusion of some students in general education classrooms. This program amounts to $80 million in critical funding to support students with the greatest disability-related needs.

When a school division elects to use regional program funding for a student, it forfeits the student’s basic aid. In Fauquier, that is approximately $7,000. Because the basic aid calculation varies based on a division’s Local Composite Index (LCI), a calculation must be made for each student to determine which option is more cost effective. This student-by-student calculation is made by divisions across the state.

In addition to the loss of basic aid for these students, the fact that funding from this program is only available for students in specific disability categories is a significant concern. The category list is vestige of the original intent to fund regional placements for students with low-incident disabilities. Most notably, Intellectual Disability (ID) has never been “low incident,” and is not on this list of categories. However, students with ID are often among those with the most significant support needs, including supplementary aids and services to support inclusion. It was suggested that the SSEAC consider recommending that the state replace the outdated list of disability categories with the more appropriate criteria of “Student with Intensive Support Needs.” In fact, the application for funds is now officially called the Students with Intensive Support Needs.

**Region 5 – vacant**

**Region 6** – **John Littleton – no report** (new SSEAC member)

**Region 7** – **Marjorie Stallard – no report** (new SSEAC member)

**Region 8 – Candace Barnett**

Concerns from parents and school faculty/staff on shortages in licensure areas and non-licensed people also do not have experience and are providing services to children.

Teacher shortages and low numbers coming out of prep programs.

**The Virginia Association of School Superintendents** – **Dennis Carter - no report (absent)**

**Teacher Representative – Dale Anna Curry**

Loss of teacher contacts, concern with the large number of teachers with limited experience, and the burden that places on seasoned teachers.

**Private Schools – Adam Dreyfus**

Discussed rate setting implementation and concerns; surveyed private schools for input – average 40 students per school; increase in public school teacher salaries has made private school pay less competitive; request VDOE calendar of due dates; requests for VDOE Professional Development (PD); reduce duplicative reports

**PEATC – Suzanne Bowers**

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

1. General IEP questions
2. Eligibility and ESY
3. Behavior/Suspension

Additional Items:

* We are still hearing from parents who are unable to use the Education grants due to the strict guidelines, including deadlines, not being able to pre-bill, and vendors not being approved. Also, the “database” is an Excel file, and very difficult to search for vendors and is not accessible for most.
* LEAs are advising families that LRE does not apply in preschool. For example, FCPS administrators including PSLs have said “LRE is not a provision for FAPE for preschoolers.” We are requesting that VDOE issue a superintendent memo related to LRE in preschool.
* We are requesting that VDOE issue a superintendent’s memo/clarification on how to give partial consent since Virginia IEP does not allow for this provision within the system.
* A parent who filed a state complaint was notified by VDOE that they can no longer open Google Drive as part of their IT guidelines. (He submitted his complaint and exhibits through a Google Drive link). How are parents supposed to submit supporting information?
* We have added a Due Process Toolkit to our [PEATC website](http://www.peatc.org/) and a Transition Checklist: [Employment Checklist for Students (Ages 14-22) with Disabilities (peatc.org)](https://peatc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Employment-Checklist-Booklet.pdf)

**Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice – Mary-Frances Morse** – no report

Looking forward to discussion of the format that SSEAC will use for reports.

**Transition/Vocational Education – Rusty Eddins**

Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) has a new Director. Alison Shaner has a Special Education background as an administrator and teacher.

Martin Kurylowski the Transition and Education Services Coordinator

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) moved to a new position on May 24, 2023. Our own Matt Luther, former SSEAC member, was recently chosen as his successor. He plans on continuing the work with reinstalling memos of understanding and meeting people in the field to shore up existing Transition efforts. He will be hiring two new staff members to assist him.

The Work Readiness Program (WRP) has restarted at the Center. It is a program designed to introduce workplace readiness skills to consumers to assist consumers with transitioning into employment or further education/training opportunities. It does not have a life skills component like some of the programs in the past.

Consumers will receive differentiated instruction on 13 workplace readiness skills.

* Punctuality/Attendance
* Personal Presentation
* Attention to task/concentration
* Safety Awareness and Practices
* Response to Supervision and Feedback
* Following Instruction
* Initiative and Dependability
* Communication and Interpersonal Skills
* Attention to Detail/Quality Work
* Care with Materials and Property
* Work Energy/Stamina
* Work Tolerance/Persistence
* Meets Work Schedules

WRP is a six-week long Program and will run year-round. It started with two classrooms but currently has a vacancy as one teacher has left.

Consumers also can apply these skills in a simulated workplace environment through our pre-employment skills labs. Also, workplace readiness skills will be supported by ancillary staff such as Occupational Therapy (OT), Behavior Health, Communication, Residential Services and Recreational Therapy.

If there is a need, a student will receive a Vocational Evaluation while attending the Work Readiness Program.

The Vocational Training Programs at WWRC is adding a General Building Trades Program. The Automotive instructor also retired and has been replaced.

DARS offices still have multiple vacancies. WWRC has been looking for a qualified Vocational Evaluator for some time. PERT has an administrative support posted available.

**Board for People with Disabilities – Nathan Selove**

Report is no report and that is a problem

**People with Disabilities – Brandon Stees** – no report (absent)

**Higher Education – Dr. Dani Bronaugh**

**Commendations:** The state’s continued support for traineeship grants to provide tuition assistance to provisionally licensed Special Education teachers as they work towards obtaining a K-12 Special Education General Curriculum renewable license that just came out this week.

James Madison University (JMU) partnership with Fairfax to provide courses for Instructional Assistants (IAs) to complete bachelor’s degrees in Elementary Education, Special Education, and this fall Inclusive Early Childhood Education. These courses are also open to all IAs in the state who are working to complete a bachelor’s degree and interest is growing from divisions across the state.

**Concerns:** The timeline for the request for proposal (RFP). The call came out July 10, 2023, and is due at 4 p.m. July 24, 2023. Given that Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) have to go through offices of sponsored programs to review grant submissions, this gives faculty about one week to write the grant.

Also, the grant runs July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024, however IHEs will most likely not hear about funding until the fall semester courses have begun and some students are apprehensive about registering for courses in the fall without knowing if there will be tuition support provided.

Given the staffing issues in public schools, universities are concerned with having classroom teachers to serve as cooperating teachers that have been in the classroom for three years to supervise student teachers completing education programs.

**Local Director of Special Education – vacant**

**Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired – vacant**

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

Interest in the intersection of IDEA and McKinney-Vento (MV) Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program continues to increase.

* OSEP offered a webinar on February 23, 2023, which addressed the intersection of MV and IDEA and highlighted Virginia. Link is available at [Monitoring and State Improvement Planning (MSIP) | OSEP Ideas That Work](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fosepideasthatwork.org%2Fresources-grantees%2Fprogram-areas%2Fmonitoring-and-state-improvement-planning-msip%3Ftab%3Dpa-measurement&data=05%7C01%7Cpxpopp%40wm.edu%7C6856cc870621469b2a3a08db7338d386%7Cb93cbc3e661d40588693a897b924b8d7%7C0%7C0%7C638230460172035585%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=nLgdTkbrnCsuqUIlSgHCKkpxHhTdtxJ1jI9jw6%2FI%2FNY%3D&reserved=0).
* Dr. Popp and the federal MV coordinator will have a poster session on the intersection during the OSEP Leadership Conference on July 24, 2024.
* The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) is planning a webinar on the intersection this September. Dr. Popp will share the link to the recording at the next meeting.
* Dr. Popp noted that ARP-HCY (American Rescue Plan homeless education funds) are still available and encouraged local discussion about students with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness and meeting unmet needs with these funds.

**Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Foster Care - Monica Cabell**

Number of children and youth in Virginia foster care - Approximately 5,100

Number of school age youth in Virginia foster care – Approximately 4,000 of the youth in foster care are school age 5-20.

The Project HOPE-VA and VDSS have scheduled this year's upcoming virtual and in-person educational stability trainings throughout the state. And continue to work on revising education stability joint guidance.

Current new initiatives connected through VDSS Youth Services Unit:

* Housing Support Program
* Immigration/Undocumented Youth services
* Managed Care Organization (MCO) support of first-time four-year college/university students
* Virginia Driving Assistance Program (VDAP) - Additional funding is pending the signing of the State budget to support foster youth obtaining learner's permits, driver's licenses, and the required training needed to obtain driver's licenses. Partnering with community partners to strengthen practice strategies.

Workgroups

* Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Requirements/Driver’s Education
* Car Insurance Barriers
* Caretakers Concern/Needs/Training

There has been a major decrease in children and youth in an alternative placement setting such as a DSS office, due to the Safe and Sound task force.

Mr. Willon initiated a discussion about how to proceed with constituency reports. Any report is better than no report. Committee members recommended having something written day of meeting that can be emailed to the secretary that day.

The committee discussed what might be convenient times for the SSEAC meeting with OSEP regarding monitoring.

**Subcommittee Meetings**

Mr. Willon initiated a discussion about how to proceed with constituency reports. Any report is better than no report. Committee members recommended having something written day of meeting that can be emailed to the secretary that day.

The committee discussed what might be convenient times for the SSEAC meeting with OSEP regarding monitoring.

***Subcommittee Chairs***

Mr. Willon reviewed membership on subcommittees and allowed members to adjust their assignments. Absent and new members beginning in September will be able to select groups at that time. Mr. Willon asked that the subcommittees review previous meeting public comment reports/constituency reports and identify issues that subcommittee might need to address and establish SSEAC subcommittee goals for the 2023-2024 session.

**Policy and Regulation**

Adam Dreyfus, Subcommittee Chair

Kellie Lockerby (absent)

Mary Frances

Monica Cabell

Dani Bronaugh

Rusty Eddins

**Family Engagement and Community Outreach**

Amy Hunter, Subcommittee Chair

Patricia Popp

John Littleton

Suzanne Bowers

Marjorie Stallard

**Student Achievement and Student Outcomes**

DaleAnna Curry, Subcommittee Chair

Nathan Selove

Mychael Willon

Candace Barnett

**Executive Committee Nominations**

**Adam Dreyfus,** Subcommittee Chair

**Reconvene as Full Committee**

***Mychael Willon,*** *SSEAC Committee Chair*

Mr. Littleton and Ms. Stallard noted they felt welcomed by the committee. Ms. Bowers requested receiving PowerPoint during or prior to the next meeting.

Ms. Bowers made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Bronaugh seconded. Motion passed unanimously and meeting adjourned at 4:51 p.m.

## Friday, July 14, 2023

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Vice-Chair

Ms. Suzanne Bowers

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter (absent)

Ms. DaleAnna Curry, Member-at-Large

Mr. Adam Dreyfus

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski (absent)

Ms. Jen Krajewski

Ms. Amy Hunter, Member-at-Large

Mr. John Littleton

Ms. Kellie Lockerby (absent)

Ms. Mary-Frances Morse

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Nathan Selove

Mr. Brandon Stees (absent)

Ms. Marjorie Stallard

Mr. Mychael Willon, Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Lisa Crafton, SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Mr. Willon, SSEAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. Mr. Willon requested that we delete the break from the agenda. Dr. Bronaugh moved to approve the agenda as amended. Ms. Bowers seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Willon directed members to join their subcommittees to continue working on goals for the year.

**Subcommittee Meetings**

**Reconvene as Full Committee**

Mr. Willon reconvened the full committee and requested subcommittees report out.

**Policy and Regulation**

Adam Dreyfus, Subcommittee Chair

Kellie Lockerby

Mary Frances

Monica Cabell

Dani Bronaugh

Rusty Eddins

* Review special education licensure requirements.
* Review new regulation for a transition person and what the requirements will be for that position.
* Explore shift from qualitative to quantitative data to provide better information about progress on IEPs.
* Explore how to ensure students graduating have current evaluations, etc. to ensure smooth transition to next level.
* Explore use of exclusionary discipline and disproportionally.

**Family Engagement and Community Outreach**

Amy Hunter, Subcommittee Chair

Patricia Popp

John Littleton

Suzanne Bowers

Marjorie Stallard

Issues identified:

* Parent access to education records and charging for records – explore what is best practice and reasonable.
* Including military representation on SSEAC – PEATC has two full-time staff working on military and special education issues. The Navy has new positions to advocate for parents who can speak during an IEP meeting. Suggestions to look for a School Liaison Officer (SLO) with special education experience. Consider SLO involved with high schools and Project SEARCH. Dr. Popp made the motion: **Request that the State Superintendent, as soon as possible, appoint a military representative to the SSEAC who is a school liaison officer (SLO) with special education transition and post-secondary experience (e.g., Project SEARCH)**. Ms. Hunter seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Constituency engagement – Dr. Popp made the motion: Convene an orientation meeting with the Executive Committee for new and interested open to all SSEAC members the evening prior to the September 2023 SSEAC meeting; provide SSEAC binder to all members. Discussion to schedule the orientation on Thursday morning occurred. Mr. Millward explained orientation is not the purpose of the business meeting. Members recommended the meeting be optional but open to all members. Amended motion: Convene an orientation meeting open to all SSEAC members the evening prior to the September 2023 SSEAC meeting; provide a SSEAC binder to all members. Ms. Hunter seconded the amended motion. The motion passed unanimously.

* Consider orientation of new members evening before the September SSEAC meeting with the executive committee. This meeting will be open to any members who wish to attend.
1. Content – Purpose of the SSEAC, member responsibilities, rules for public comment and interacting with visitors, procedure for contacting constituents (What is the cc email for VDOE? Should a separate email be needed?) – including a brief FOIA summary; primary who’s who at VDOE for special education issues.
2. Handouts
3. List of committee members
4. SSEAC positions and descriptions which explain their role on the SSEAC
5. Previous minutes
6. Agenda for current meeting
7. By-laws
8. IDEA excerpt that addresses SSEAC
9. Review old binder and update for all members
10. Sample emails to solicit input from constituency and provide follow up.
11. FOIA PowerPoint as a handout
12. Other items, as determined helpful by VDOE staff
* Create a checklist/toolkit to assist regional representatives in obtaining regional input to inform reporting.
1. Inform LSEAC of regional representatives’ role
2. Share updates from SSEAC
3. Encouraging LSEACs to take PEATC SEAC training
4. Survey LSEACs for input
* Tools for parents to understand:
1. PRC
2. Understanding inclusive practices
3. Posting redacted state complaints and outcomes and due process complaints and outcomes
* What documents need to be posted to comply with FOIA
* Increasing involvement in SSEAC meetings
1. Dr. Popp made the motion: Create a welcoming flyer/brochure/one-pager for members, speakers, staff, and visitors, that includes purpose of the SSEAC, and expectations during meetings (including, rules for public comment, solely responding to member questions during presentations, and visitors approaching members only during breaks). Ms. Hunter seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
2. Chair should welcome guests and review expectations at the beginning of each meeting.
3. Can there be a procedure/rules for meals for visitors, e.g., register in advance to be able to have meals, have list of places to eat at registration each time, refer to this in the flyer/brochure.
4. Consider having microphones at meetings – some members found it hard to hear.
5. Have a one-minute and 30-second warning card during public comment.
6. Consider rearranging room during meetings – e.g., place members of executive committee together on a side table with VDOE staff behind the executive committee and place visitors in the back of the room – provide tables (classroom style) for visitors.

**Student Achievement and Student Outcomes**

Candace Barnett, Subcommittee Chair

DaleAnna Curry

Nathan Selove

Mychael Willon

**Teacher Retention and Recruitment: Major impact on student outcomes: This is a major piece to student outcomes; there is no improvement on the horizon; teacher prep programs and licensure programs are not putting out necessary candidates to fill needed positions.**

1. This is from the state: Region’s match: Adjust teacher salary to be a livable wage, e.g., hiring an administrator, you get many applicants while nobody applies for teaching; ways to move up within teaching for salary beyond moving into Administration; we need good teachers (five years, ten years, etc. different “class” of teacher). Not merit-based but longevity base.
2. Stipend for case management for Special Education (they case manage and teach)

Reduction of instructional week 5-4 days. One day would be for planning/professional development (PD)

1. Allows for PD, planning, and remediation.
2. Asynchronous learning on this day.
3. Gives teachers time.

Virginia Public County School Systems become State Employees.

1. Some teachers use most of their paycheck to get insurance for their families.
2. If public school staff members become state employees, salaries would be standardized, resulting in fewer staff members jumping from school division to school division.

**Student Outcomes:**

Encourage mastery-based grading alternatives: **Make a recommendation to all school divisions.**

(For example: No zero) (Example: Division-wide grading policy, not teacher based)

1. There is great momentum for students with disabilities (SWD) based on Special Permissions
* However, they have to be able to pass the class.
* We put in accommodations to protect students as much as possible from punitive grading but often, sadly, accommodations aren't always followed/schools won't allow them to be put in.
1. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) - Our students need more than English and math; continue to increase mental health services in schools and allow students to have access to outdoor classrooms, options, etc.

**Provide tools for the parents** to get help for their students (based on report by P. Haymes most complaints ended in settlements).

Most end in settlements.

Expanding Ombudsman position, we have one, let’s get additional positions.

**Adaptable playgrounds, other unfunded mandates.**

**Big picture questions:**

* How do we equip teachers to prepare students for education and SEL when there are not teachers and not certified/licensed?

* What do we do over the next five years to compensate for teacher shortage and student outcomes being low AND increase achievement post covid closure, faced with these obstacles?
* How should Virginia High School League (VHSL) and VDOE SWD – extracurriculars and IEPs be handled?
* Recruitment? Also, Retention? Supporting the teachers that are certified/licensed if they are supporting so many new teachers who lack experience/licensure/certifications or are long-term substitutes.

**Future Meeting Agenda Discussion**

***Mychael Willon,*** *SSEAC**Committee Chair*

* Due process and Virginia trends
* Review SSEAC By-laws
* Access to educational records and charging parents; Hank can explain FOIA versus a special education request
* Update on Virginia IEP Online – Andrew Greenidge, especially progress monitoring
* Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report regarding funding
* Funding regional programs
* Transition with Marianne Moore
* VHSL and students with disabilities (York – Dr. Shannon Butler and VHSL representative)
* Update on VDOE recruitment and retention efforts

Ms. Hunter motioned to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Bowers seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

### Upcoming Meeting Dates

* September 28-29, 2023, executive committee to meet the evening of September 27, 2023
* December 7-8, 2023
* March 7-8, 2024, executive committee to meet the evening of March 6, 2024