# Agenda Item: I

## Date: September 28, 2023

## Title: State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC) – Annual Report

## Presenter: Dr. Samantha M. Hollins, Assistant Superintendent, Special Populations

  **Mr. Mychael Willon, SSEAC Chairperson**

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## Purpose of Presentation

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

## Executive Summary

The State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC) met in four sessions to support *Priority 1: Provide high-quality, effective learning environments for all students* of the [Virginia Board Of Education Comprehensive Plan: 2018-2023](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/1154/637946384285670000). The SSEAC met in full committee and within subcommittees to address student achievement and student outcomes, family engagement and community outreach, and policy and regulations. Based on the work of these subcommittees, constituency reports, presentations, and public comments, the SSEAC report includes recommendations that support and recommend actions to increase accountability for student learning. To achieve that goal, there needs to be a qualified special education teacher in every classroom to ensure students are receiving specially designed instruction in accordance with their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Additionally, all students, regardless of their disabling condition, need a pathway to graduation with a diploma that is rigorous in its requirements which equips them to readily transition from the school setting into their communities and become independent citizens of the Commonwealth.

The annual report identifies several key areas of concern and recommendations. Most notably in relation to Priority 1, the SSEAC recommends revising the Applied Studies curriculum and diploma to include individualized pathways of tangible transition workplace skills that add value to potential community colleges and employers. Additionally, the report speaks to increasing competency regarding working with and teaching students with disabilities among all instructional staff through results-based professional development focused on in-person training and follow-up mentoring. To enhance the Virginia Department of Education’s family engagement and community outreach initiatives, the report notes the need for considering the establishment of parent liaisons, such as are available for Title I and Title III, or establishing local/regional special education ombudsman positions.

The report recognizes Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins, Assistant Superintendent of Special Populations, and her team for keeping children with disabilities a priority throughout the year.

## Action Requested

No action requested.

## Superintendent’s Recommendation

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board receive the SSEAC report and its recommendations to inform their priorities for student success, specifically as they relate to students with disabilities.

## Previous Review or Action

No previous review or action.

## Background Information and Statutory Authority

In accordance with the requirements of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, effective December 3, 2004, (IDEA 2004), its implementing federal regulations, effective October 13, 2006, at 34 C.F.R. 300.167 through 34 C.F.R. 300.169, and the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia*, effective July 7, 2009, reissued on January 25, 2010, and July 29, 2015, at 8VAC 20-81-20.15(c)(2), the SSEAC assists the Board of Education by providing advice on policies and practices that help increase accountability for academic success for students with disabilities.

## Stakeholder Engagement

The SSEAC provides opportunities for public comment at each of its meetings, provides an opportunity for each member to report on his/her constituency group, as well as inviting presentations about initiatives and programs pertaining to students with disabilities. The SSEAC approved its annual report at its July 2023 meeting for submission to the Board of Education. The SSEAC membership is comprised of individuals representing an array of stakeholder groups to include a parent representative from each of the eight superintendent’s regions; individuals with disabilities; teachers; a representative of an institution of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel; an individual whose responsibilities are to carry out the activities of the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Act*; an administrator of programs for children with disabilities; a representative of a state agency involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities; a representatives of private schools; a representative of a vocational school concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities; a representative from Virginia's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ); and a representative from a Virginia child welfare agency responsible for foster care.

## Implementation and Communication

There are no identifiable additional steps that will need to be taken by the Board or VDOE staff regarding this report beyond any action that the Board may take as they consider the recommendations outlined with the report. The VDOE staff stands ready to provide any additional information that the Board may request regarding this report and will monitor board actions taken during its regularly scheduled meetings and communicate any pertinent information taken on the SSEAC’s recommendations to the SSEAC membership and the Commonwealth’s constituency as whole using; but not limited to, email, the VDOE newsletter, memorandums, GovDelivery, Twitter, and Facebook as appropriate for the information being disseminated.

## Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

The impact on fiscal and human resources is reliant on any action taken with respect to the recommendations.