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

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

**Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)**

# SSEAC Meeting Minutes

December 7-8, 2023

DoubleTree by Hilton Richmond Airport

445 International Center Drive

Sandston, Virginia 23150

(804) 236-1111

## Thursday, December 7, 2023

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Vice-Chair (absent)

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. Ann Bueche

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter

Ms. DaleAnna Curry, Member-at-Large (absent)

Mr. Adam Dreyfus, Member-at-Large

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins (absent)

Ms. Amy Hunter, Member-at-Large

Ms. Jennifer Krajewski

Ms. Heidi Lawyer

Mr. John Littleton

Ms. Kellie Lockerby

Mr. Jason Longcor

Ms. Mary-Frances Morse

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Ms. Manuela Robinson

Ms. Kristi Schabo (absent)

Mr. Nathan Selove (absent)

Ms. Marjorie Stallard (absent)

Mr. Brandon Stees

Ms. Taylor Thomas-Harris

Mr. Mychael Willon, Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Kendra Belcher, SEPI, SESS

Ms. Hallie Bereny, ODRAS, SESS

Mrs. Lisa Crafton, SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Dan Dunham, OSSS, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Mrs. Marianne Moore, OIS, 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.

### Business Session

**Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Willon asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Lawyer asked if we would be hearing about three recent reports. Mr. Millward responded these would be addressed by Dr. Hollins. Ms. Hunter asked if Dr. Hollins would have enough time and Mr. Millward assured us there would be time for questions. Ms. Bueche moved that the agenda be approved. Ms. Hunter seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from previous SSEAC Meeting**

Ms. Lawyer made a motion to approve the September 2023 minutes and Ms. Bueche seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**SSEAC Overview**

***Hank Millward****, Director, Office of Special Education Family Support and Special Facilities (SEFFE), VDOE and* ***Dr. Chiquita Seaborne****, Family Engagement Specialist/ Special Projects Coordinator, SEFFE, VDOE*

Overview provided in response to SSEAC members’ requests and the large number of new members. Meeting dates were provided. Attendance is critical and members were encouraged to participate; a quorum of members is needed to conduct any votes. Please contact Dr. Seaborne (email preferred) if you cannot attend a meeting. This is a change from contacting Mr. Millward. Please complete the survey emailed before meetings regarding attendance and the need for lodging/meals (provided by the VDOE). Reimbursement questions should be directed to Lisa Crafton. Members should sign in each day. Sign-in sheets are kept on the table outside the meeting room.

Mr. Millward explained the membership process. Members are appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Terms are three years, and a second term can be requested. Required membership representation was reviewed. Members were asked to include a description of their role during introductions to help newer SSEAC members. Mr. Millward suggested regional representatives for persons with disabilities. Ms. Hunter asked about the size of school divisions with parent representatives. Mr. Millward explained that staff at the Virginia Department of Education and the Board of Education work to ensure balanced representation and diversity; however, people need to volunteer to participate.

Dr. Seaborne reviewed the functions of the SSEAC; these are delineated in the by-laws. Mr. Millward emphasized the focus is systemic issues, not resolving individual issues that are presented. Individual issues can inform the need to consider whether there are systemic elements. Ms. Hunter recommended that any regulations being proposed that may impact students with disabilities be provided to SSEAC members; quarterly meetings may not meet timelines for public comment which members can make as individual citizens (not as a SSEAC member). The Chair or designee may make public comments for SSEAC.

By-laws will be reviewed later in the agenda. Constituents’ reports are provided at each meeting. This is an opportunity for each member to share pertinent information with the committee. Members were asked to inform their constituents of the VDOE training, such as SEAC online training. Ms. Lockerby shared her difficulty getting input from the local Special Education Advisory Committee (LSEAC) to bring their voice to the meeting. Mr. Millward noted that LSEACs are mandated. If members question whether a locality has a local SEAC, please notify Mr. Millward and Dr. Seaborne. Mr. Longcor asked if there were any best practices to get constituent input. Conversations with other parent representatives were suggested.

SSEAC members and VDOE members introduced themselves.

**Secondary Transition-Partnerships that Work**

***Marianne Moore****, Special Education Coordinator Transition Planning and Services, OIS, VDOE and*

***Matt Luther****, Transition and Education Services Manager, DARS Program Improvement*

The Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) regions and the VDOE regions are not aligned. Transition planning starts in elementary school with career exploration. Resources include Virginia Education Wizard, Virginia Career VIEW, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Resource Centers. Academic and Career Plans begin in middle school – collaboration should occur with family, school counselor, and special education. DARS offers pre-employment transition services (foundation skills) and vocational rehabilitation services.

**Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)**

***Dan Dunham****, Military Student and Family Specialist, OSSS, VDOE*

Enhancements were made to the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) recently. A video of the changes was viewed. These changes included: a focus on consistency and standardization, processes for enrollment and service provision, and monitoring to improve transitions for students and families. EFMP & Me is a resource. Ms. Hunter asked about numbers in Virginia. Ms. Lawyer shared that PEATC has resources for military families with children with disabilities as another resource.

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

***Dr. Chiquita Seaborne****, Family Engagement Specialist/Special Projects Coordinator, SEFFE, VDOE*

All three cases presented at the last meeting are under review and being monitored by the VDOE.

**Working Lunch**

Members were asked to discuss subcommittee goals/objectives.

**Call to Order and Public Comment Period**

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

Mr. Willon reconvened the meeting at 1:03 p.m. No one signed the sheet to provide public comment; however, three emails were received in advance. Mr. Willon read the emails.

**Spotsylvania SEAC chair** listed difficulties with staffing for students with learning disabilities and the need to support special education teachers.

**Ms. Wendy Little**, a Chesterfield parent, requested contact information for the SSEAC Region 1 representative and shared concern about being charged for records.

**William & Mary Advocacy Center** letter addressed concerns with the implementation of seclusion and restraint legislation and regulations citing the VDOE ODRAS letter they received which stated that VDOE did not have the legal authority to enforce the regulations.

SSEAC recognized Ms. Shelby, a hospitality staff person who has served the committee meetings for several years. This will be her last meeting; she will retire on December 31, 2023.

**SSEAC Business Session – Review of By-laws**

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

Mr. Willon asked members to divide into groups and review sections of the by-laws to consider any needed changes.

Article IV – Procedures align with regulations but have a different order; suggest reordering.

Article VI, Section 4 – Recommends clarifying the “simple” majority needed for a quorum; Section 5 – should be discussed during this meeting for voting that will occur in March 2024.

Article VII – Recommended adding representation from pediatricians; discussed EFMP which can fall under Article VI; recommended regional representation for people with disabilities.

Article VII, Section 2 – Recommendation that a “simple” majority for parents and people with disabilities be used for consistency.

Ms. Hunter suggested a careful review of state regulations with by-laws to ensure consistency. The executive committee will work with the VDOE to review the by-laws considering these suggestions.

**Constituency Reports**

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

**Region 1 – Manuela Robinson**

Ms. Robinson has reached out to the Special Education Directors in Region 1 and is awaiting responses from many of them. However, she was able to receive valuable information from those who did respond. Furthermore, she was able to communicate with the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) and the Gifted Program. Recommendations and Concerns include:

1. No responses from the administration regarding scheduling IEP meetings/to discuss IEP concerns.
2. No acknowledgment that parents request a Child Find completion.
3. Services in the IEP are not provided.
4. No speech therapy services for the first nine weeks of school with no communication or solution being offered to the parent.
5. It was requested that all students at every elementary school participate in the CogAT testing that takes place in second grade each January.
6. Twice-exceptional students do not always fit the “gifted mold” when it comes to applying their abilities. Resource teachers for the Gifted Program need to be better trained to provide services to twice-exceptional students in the classroom and/or pull-out services.
7. Resource teachers for the Gifted Program need to be consulted before IEP/504 meetings for identified twice-exceptional students, to provide a narrative for the present level of performance. Gifted resource teachers should be a part of the IEP/504 Team and attend the meetings.
8. Frequently, IEP team members, request to be excused during IEP meetings, and parents, due to the lack of knowledge, often agree and continue the meeting.
9. Difficulties providing services to twice-exceptional students, when placed in collaborative classrooms rather than clustered with other identified gifted students within the grade level. Conversely, without support, it is difficult to provide services to twice-exceptional students in clustered classrooms when there may not be a learning specialist available to enter the classroom.
10. Many staff working with twice-exceptional students have been great advocates, seeking resources and help to implement strategies to best support them.
11. Past and current directors/coordinators of gifted services were cognizant of the need to assist staff in the identification process relative to twice-exceptional students.
12. Resource teachers for the Gifted Program are careful to implement accommodations in IEPs and 504s, the screening process, and services provided.

**Region 2 – Mychael Willon**

There is a growing concern that the new attendance policy can negatively impact students with disabilities.

The divisions still have difficulties recruiting and retaining highly qualified special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff.

Many of the local SEACs report that they continue to struggle to find committee members and to keep them engaged. Some local SEACs report the meetings are more about parent education and less about looking at policies that can or may be changed to better the programs for special education students.

**Region 3 – Kellie Lockerby**

No concerns or comments were provided by localities. Feedback from parents and personal experience includes:

We need to improve our ability to protect our most vulnerable students (referred to incidents in the news occurring in Virginia recently.) We need oversight to prevent abuse of students with disabilities through video and audio, and by implementing best practices. Also, the state needs to prevent school divisions from disabling features of devices such as AngelSense that allow parents to listen in. Since typically developing students can have cellular phones, the disabling of these devices is discriminatory.

We need to implement better IEP oversight. Parents have no way of knowing if IEPs are being followed.

**Region 4 – Amy Hunter**

**Region 4 SEACs**:

The profiles and priorities of SEACs in Region 4 vary dramatically due to the wide range of division sizes. Seven of the divisions in Region 4 are among the 30 largest in Virginia. Three divisions have less than 30,000 students. The largest divisions have very large and active SEACs that address the vast range of issues and policies in those divisions. SEAC chairs in smaller school divisions are struggling to recruit and retain enough members to keep their SEACs operational. When those SEACs do meet—often quarterly—the focus is on the needs of parents more than policy issues (other than the required review of the budget). They seem to be functioning more as parent resources than as advisory panels. In some, school division personnel play a more significant role due to the lack of parent participation.

**Staff Recruitment and Retention**:

Staffing remains at the top of most divisions’ priority lists. Hiring and retaining teachers and aides, and training/mentoring new teachers were mentioned as challenges. Several divisions have unfilled openings for related service providers, psychologists, and social workers.

**Training for General Education Teachers**:

Parents in several divisions mentioned concerns about inadequate training of general education teachers in providing IEP accommodations and modifications for students in their classrooms. This is a particular concern for parents of students with significant disabilities who are included in general education.

**“I’m Determined” Programs**:

Both Fauquier County and Winchester SEACs held meetings focused on Virginia’s “I’m Determined” program. In both cases, the response from parents was extremely positive. Other SEACs reported that support for post-secondary transition planning is a priority issue this year.

**School Board Post-Election Transitions**:

Several school boards in the region had significant turnover following the November elections, and some SEAC leaders noted that they are watching to see how these changes may affect the boards’ policies and expectations of their advisory committees.

**Region 5 – Jason Longcor**

Region 5 continues to strive to recruit more family members. School overcrowding due to population growth. Region 5 is searching for solutions to sustain summer programs due to staffing and needs additional funding for special needs programs.

**Region 6 – John Littleton**

There is interest in SEAC training from localities. Challenges include retaining and recruiting special education teachers and the influx of PreK-2 students with significant behavior challenges.

**Region 7 – Marjorie Stallard – absent**

**Region 8 – Candace Barnett – absent**

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

Dr. Carter reported on conversations regarding the cost of education for teachers versus other professions and return on investment. Community colleges will be able to offer up to four education courses which may help with costs. Challenges identified were staffing and challenging behaviors. The Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) is focusing on behavioral health through the General Assembly this coming session

**Teacher Representative – DaleAnna Curry – absent**

**Private Schools – Adam Dreyfus**

Concerns included staffing challenges and teacher shortages, regulatory pressures, and staff burnout. Student aggression and self-harm are common reasons for private school placements.

**Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) – Heidi Lawyer**

PEATC continues to be very busy. We currently have three online training sessions in process; Transition University, IEPU University (IEPU), and Building Strong Parent Advocates. Sessions conclude in about a week. The next IEPU session will be in January and the next Transition University and Building Strong Parent advocates session will be in February. SEAC training also resumes in January; there will be a live SEAC training on January 27, 2024. Our Early Childhood Academy will begin in mid-January. In addition, we continue to provide other in-person and virtual trainings, some of which are provided by PEATC and some of which are hosted by PEATC. An exciting development is that we can have simultaneous translation into other languages on some trainings (and hope to increase this).

We recently had a Medicaid Waiver and Social Security training that was simultaneously provided in five languages. Our Latino Summit will be held on Saturday, June 8, 2024. It is presented fully in Spanish. We are getting significantly more of our fact sheets and resource documents translated into Spanish. A good portion are translated but we are increasing our efforts here and hope to address other languages in the future.

We are in Year Four of our RSA WAZE grant in which we serve youth in transition and there are families in five states. This year’s focus is on the vocational rehabilitation system, so we are developing state-specific training and resource documents on Virtual Reality (VR) with training scheduled to occur in the Spring. We are working with DARS through its Pre-ETS program in support of, but separate from, the DARS EPIC project which is about moving people out of subminimum wage jobs or preventing them from entering those jobs. PEATC’s focus is on transition-age youth and their families. This year, we will provide training to students, families, and DARS counselors regarding the myths, fears, and benefits of competitive integrated employment. Resource documents have been developed to support those trainings. Those will be available beyond the project. If you receive the PEATC e-newsletter or follow our Facebook page, you will receive information on all of these trainings and resources. We certainly appreciate dissemination to folks you think may be interested in all these opportunities. We have some resource documents in process in special education and other disability-related areas, so keep your eyes open for those.

**Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice – Mary-Frances Morse**

The Department of Juvenile Justice reports that we continue to fill vacancies for special education teachers. Given the shortage across the state, we are happy to have people willing to apply to work in our challenging environment and excited about the quality of the special education teachers recently hired! We look forward to having them join us in meeting the needs of our students.

**Transition/Vocational Education – Rusty Eddins – no report**

**Board for People with Disabilities – Jen Krajewski**

The Board for People with Disabilities does not have a constituency as its focus is policy. SSEAC meetings provide important information and context for this work.

**Erica Swenson – Military Representative**

The Navy special education liaison pilot is no longer a pilot and is being rolled out across the country. Covers multiple states and focuses on helping families navigate resources.

**People with Disabilities – Taylor Thomas-Harris**

Ms. Thomas-Harris shared a personal story. She is pursuing a master’s degree at Liberty University and would like to be a life coach. Currently, she is taking a break. She noted everyone needs to know when a break is needed. Ms. Thomas-Harris stays active with her community. She shared information about the Capable Now exhibit. If you are interested, please let her know.

**People with Disabilities – Brandon Sees**

Participated on a panel at James Madison University (JMU).

**Office of Children’s Services – Kristi Schabo – no report**

**Local Director of Special Education – Ann Bueche**

Other special education leaders in the Commonwealth are concerned with:

1. Increasing the state funding for special education students. [The JLARC SOQ Formula Study, July 2023,](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fjlarc.virginia.gov%2Flanding-2023-virginias-k-12-funding-formula.asp&data=05%7C02%7Cpxpopp%40wm.edu%7C06fc16700ca24dea9a3b08dbf75b2b82%7Cb93cbc3e661d40588693a897b924b8d7%7C0%7C0%7C638375743182115617%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=yUgfUwBRok85DE2nxMd09oJULoLKhAFQu3rWYx53T0Q%3D&reserved=0) pointed out that the Commonwealth’s share of funding special education has declined by 16 percent over the past decade. Increases in costs over that time have been borne by localities. One strategy defined by Virginia Administrators of Special Education (VCASE) included following the JLARC recommendation to revise SOQ special education funding from a staff-based formula to a student-needs-based formula (refer to Appendix N) and guaranteeing a net increase in the state share of funding.
2. Continuing concerns with critical shortages of special education teachers. We are excited that there is traction for educating future teachers in the Commonwealth. We also must focus on mentoring our new educators. In addition to daily teaching responsibilities, they also have case management duties. We must be able to support them through those first few years.

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

Recent focus has been the increased number of undocumented and immigrant children and youth in foster care, with limited guidance and/or best practices on supporting this population. Undocumented children and youth in foster care are not eligible for many of the funding sources available to the foster care population with legal residence in the United States, including Chafee (Independent Living-IL) and Education and Training Voucher-ETV funds that assist youth in foster care with independent living skill needs and post-secondary education supports.

The VDSS wants to ensure that all children and youth with foster care experience in Virginia can access services and support to achieve their goals, especially youth desiring to pursue post-secondary education. The VDSS has created an Undocumented and Immigrant Children and Youth workgroup to collect resources, formulate guidance, and best practice tools to strengthen how services are provided to the population. The VDSS, along with Project LIFE, has partnered with Casey Family Programs to begin statewide training for foster care workers and our community support partners to begin in February.

The VDSS Youth Services program was awarded additional Chafee funding to support youth in foster care, to achieve transportation and driving goals, and to support foster parents with an increase to car insurance costs when having a licensed driver in their home or added to their policy.

**Higher Education – Dani Bronaugh**

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

**Concerns**: The timeline for the traineeship request for proposal (RFP) call and letting Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) know about funding. The IHEs heard about funding in late October after semester-long courses had begun and second-block classes had started. Many students are apprehensive about registering for courses in the fall without knowing if there will be tuition support provided.

Concerns that newly approved alternatives to get teachers licensed in special education areas do not have to follow the same criteria as already established programs. (Virginia board approval of iTeach to offer online teacher training.)

Educational Testing Service (ETS) accommodations for standardized testing for admission to teacher education require testing within the last three to five years to obtain accommodations. More students are coming to IHE who had accommodations in high school; however, they have not had formalized testing for reevaluation in three to five years before coming to college and need to then pay for testing out-of-pocket to obtain accommodations.

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

Data for 2022-2023 is being analyzed. Initial review indicates the number of students identified as homeless is rebounding to pre-pandemic levels and will be over 19,000. The intersection of McKinney-Vento and IDEA is addressed in a question-and-answer document Virginia developed in 2022. The document can be found at: [Intersection of McKinney-Vento and IDEA](https://education.wm.edu/centers/hope/publications/infobriefs/intersection-of-mckinney-vento-idea.pdf)

The office has been exploring Virginia data related to the intersectionality of disabilities and homelessness. Dr. Popp offered to share these analyses in a future meeting.

Mr. Willon asked subcommittees to break into their groups and reconvene at 4:45 p.m.

**Reconvene as Full Committee**

**Mychael Willon**, SSEAC Committee Chair

The committee agreed to December’s meeting date: December 5-6, 2024.

Mr. Dreyfus requested members contact him if they are interested in serving on the Executive Committee.

Summaries from subcommittees were shared.

Dr. Bronaugh motioned to adjourn, Mr. Stees seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Willon adjourned the meeting at 4:54 p.m.

## Friday, December 8, 2023

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Vice-Chair (absent)

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. Ann Bueche

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter (absent)

Ms. DaleAnna Curry, Member-at-Large (absent)

Mr. Adam Dreyfus, Member-at-Large

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins (absent)

Ms. Amy Hunter, Member-at-Large

Ms. Jennifer Krajewski (absent)

Ms. Heidi Lawyer

Mr. John Littleton

Ms. Kellie Lockerby, Member-at-Large

Mr. Jason Longcor

Ms. Mary-Frances Morse

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Ms. Manuela Robinson

Ms. Kristi Schabo (absent)

Mr. Nathan Selove (absent)

Ms. Marjorie Stallard (absent)

Mr. Brandon Stees (absent)

Ms. Taylor Thomas-Harris (absent)

Mr. Mychael Willon, Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Kendra Belcher, SEPI, SESS (absent)

Ms. Hallie Bereny, ODRAS, SESS (absent)

Mrs. Lisa Crafton, SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Mr. Willon, SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Mr. Willon directed the subcommittees to reconvene their workgroups. Discussion should include suggestions for SSEAC training/orientation they would like to have in the future.

**Reconvene as Full Committee**

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

**Policy and Regulation**

Kellie Lockerby reported out.

Discussed considering state funding based on services students need rather than the number of students, bringing salaries to the national average, stipend for mentor teachers, and training for long-term substitute teachers.

**Recommendation**: To enhance consistency in reporting and ensure progress that is appropriate considering the student’s circumstances, we proposed a recommendation to require quantitative data to document student progress reports based on their IEPs (eliminate emerging skill, etc.)

**Recommendation**: Change the state funding formula to focus on student needs rather than staffing (refer to VCASE recommendation).

**Family Engagement and Community Outreach**

Amy Hunter, Subcommittee Chair

**Outreach and Support for Local SEACs** - The subcommittee will work with VDOE staff to develop and add materials to the VDOE SEAC page. At the March meeting, the subcommittee will develop a Local SEAC FAQ and a Model Welcome Letter. SSEAC members are asked to submit samples of the following types of materials to sseac@doe.virginia for distribution to subcommittee members with the March meeting agenda:

* Examples of effective recruitment and retention strategies
* Examples of promotional materials
* Suggested items for a local SEAC webpage

The subcommittee requests that VDOE staff add the following items to the State SEAC webpage:

* Information about the availability of printed copies of the SEAC Guide and how to request them
* Link to VDOE Trainings Page for information about upcoming PEATC SEAC member trainings
* Information about the SEAC's obligation to comply with the state *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA) with relevant links, including a link to the State FOIA Council

The SSEAC regional parent representatives are encouraged to provide draft SSEAC meeting minutes and review resources at [VDOE’s Local SEAC Resources](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/data-policy-funding/virginia-board-of-education/board-committee-meetings/state-special-education-advisory-committee-sseac). It would also be very helpful if regional representatives would ask local SEACs (or special education directors in divisions where SEAC cannot be found); what challenges their SEAC is facing and what types of assistance would be helpful to them? Please forward any such input to sseac@doe.virginia.gov.

**Due Process Hearing Decisions Review** - The subcommittee reviewed due process hearing officer decisions from 2022-2023 and did not identify any trends or systemic concerns based on this group of findings. The subcommittee reiterated its request for summary information regarding all due process complaints filed, including subject matter and location, and aggregated, if necessary, to make a more comprehensive assessment of potential systemic issues affecting students with disabilities. Committee members would like to meet with ODRAS staff during the March meeting to discuss options for providing this data to the subcommittee in a manner that protects confidentiality.

**Student Achievement and Student Outcomes**

Candace Barnett, Subcommittee Chair (absent)

No report out.

**Update on Governor Youngkin's Right Help. Right Now. Plan**

***Dr. Alexis Aplasca***, *Senior Clinical Advisor, Behavioral Health Transformation, Commonwealth of Virginia*

Dr. Aplasca is a pediatrician and child/adult psychiatrist. Dr. Aplasca provided an overview and progress of a variety of initiatives such as the 988 hotline which, unlike 911, can be called before a crisis. The goal of Right Help Right Now is to provide same-day care for individuals experiencing behavioral health crises. Virginia ranks 48th among states for youth mental health in 2023. Virginia ranked 21st in 2022. One in five youths (13-17-year-olds) experience a serious mental health condition. Across the country, 275,000 children lost a parent due to COVID-19. The overlap of All In VA and Right Help, Right Now was discussed. Attending school can be seen as a mental health outcome. Ms. Hunter asked about screening tools for mental health concerns being required/offered to parents when suspensions take place. Currently, this is not required. Resilience and the importance of one caring adult were highlighted. The next steps include exploring targeted initiatives in community, schools, and at home; expanding public-private partnerships; increasing/integrating resources for schools; addressing the impact of screen time and social media on mental health; expanding the workforce; and building out community-based services and integrated care. Mr. Longcor asked where the plan could be found. Dr. Aplasca will share it with Dr. Hollins. Workstreams 3 and 5 are the focus for VDOE when exploring the site.

**State of the State Update – Special Education Issues**

***Dr. Samantha M. Hollins****, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Populations, VDOE*

Right Help Right Now, workstream 3, advocacy led to legislator support funding for the initiative; $7.5 million was allocated on an annual basis. A sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CSB has been developed. Twenty-six applications were received totaling over $6 million for these funds. The timing impacted requests as the announcement did not go out until November. Mr. Willon asked for information on what initiatives were funded. Ms. Swenson asked if the funding targets students with disabilities – the funding is for the whole student population – divisions can target their students with the greatest needs.

Following a report released from the Virginia Behavioral Health Commission on school-based mental health, this topic is likely to be addressed by the Virginia General Assembly. Dr. Hollins will share the report recently developed.

Dr. Coons and Dr. Sorenson will present at the March 2024 meeting. Dr. Coons will share information regarding the roadmap for special education and the work of her special education workgroup, and Dr. Sorenson will discuss integration with instruction. Ms. Lawyer suggested a SSEAC member be included in the state workgroup that has been convened.

The legislative session begins in January. Members interested in special education proposed legislation were advised to visit LIS for updates on bills being proposed ([Legislative Information System > 2024 Session (virginia.gov)](https://lis.virginia.gov/))

The Board of Education is working on the Standards of Quality (SOQ) and will meet next week. Dr. Hollins recommended that SSEAC review information related to this topic and how this work can inform development of the SSEAC annual report. This may be an issue for the Policy and Regulation Committee to address at the next meeting.

Ms. Lockerby asked about nonverbal students being assaulted and reduced school day hours for students with disabilities (SWDs) and how we could explore whether the issues are systemic. Dr. Hollins suggested requesting VDOE for data on these issues and reporting back to SSEAC.

Ms. Morse asked about increasing subcommittee time at meetings. This might require reducing presentations. Ms. Hunter suggested having materials sent to members in advance to prepare for the meeting. Mr. Willon reminded members that lunch in March is a working lunch for subcommittees.

Dr. Bronaugh motioned to adjourn, Ms. Morse seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Willon adjourned the meeting at 11:59 a.m.

### Upcoming Meeting Dates

* March 7-8, 2024, executive committee to meet the evening of March 6, 2024
* July 18-19, 2024, executive committee to meet the evening of July 17, 2024
* September 26-27, 2024
* December 5-6, 2024