

Connecticut State Advisory Council on Special Education  
Regular Meeting  
Wednesday, March 18, 2015  
2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Connecticut State Department of Education  
25 Industrial Park Road  
Middletown, CT 06457

**Present:** Michelle Bidwell, Sheila Crocker, Richard Douglas, Lynn Fogg-Cornelio, Lauren Halpin, Beth Hart, Jacqueline Kelleher, Colin Milne, Katherine Musto, Kelly Neyra, Mike Nunes, Charlyne Olko, Nancy Prescott, Marcus Rivera, Stephen Tracy, Linda Adorno (SERC)

**Excused Absence:** Catherine Foley Geib (submitted Election ballot), Uswah Khan, Maureen Masson (submitted Election ballot)

**Absent:** Rep. Hilda Santiago

**Public/Parent Work Group:** Joseph Amenta, Sarah Barzee, Nitza Diaz, Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Bryan Klimkiewicz, Jennifer Lussier, Shelly Matfess, Jaquita Monroe, James Moriarity, Siobhan Peng, Glen Peterson, Sara Reed, Barbara Slone, Janet Stuck, Nancy Taylor.

### Call to Order and Welcome

Council Chair Kelly Neyra called the meeting to order at 2:36 p.m.

Ms. Neyra introduced Mr. Michael Nunes as the appointed Department of Correction (DOC) representative. Mr. Nunes introduced himself to the Council. Mr. Nunes described his service with DOC, as a school principal, special education supervisor, and member of the Transition Taskforce.

Ms. Neyra introduced Ms. Shelley Matfess as the proposed McKinney-Vento representative to the Council per a recommendation from Mr. Louis Tallarita, the CT State Department of Education (CSDE) consultant who oversees McKinney-Vento efforts. Ms. Matfess is the Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services for the Manchester Public Schools and the McKinney-Vento representative for the school district. Ms. Matfess introduced herself to the Council. Ms. Matfess described her experience as a teacher, special education supervisor, and assistant superintendent. Ms. Matfess also serves on the ConnCASE Board of Directors.

Ms. Neyra welcomed the CSDE presenters for the ESEA discussion: Dr. Sarah Barzee, Mr. Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Mr. Glen Peterson and Mr. James Moriarty. Ms. Neyra also welcomed the CSDE presenters for the Student Assessment discussion: Mr. Joseph Amenta and Ms. Janet Stuck.

Council members and invited guests introduced themselves and the constituent group they represent.

### **SAC Election of Officers**

Ms. Michelle Bidwell, SAC Nominating Committee Chair, presented the Nominating Committee report and the 2015 Slate of Officers: Ms. Kelly Neyra, Chair and Ms. Katherine Musto, Vice Chair. The Election of Officers was held and ballots counted. Ms. Neyra was elected unanimously as Council Chair and Ms. Musto as Council Vice Chair (13 ballots in favor and none opposed). Ms. Neyra and Ms. Musto thanked the Council for the opportunity to serve the Council and families.

### **SAC Appointments and Committees**

Ms. Neyra moved and Ms. Hart seconded to submit Ms. Matfess's name to the Commissioner of Education for appointment as the McKinney-Vento representative to the Council. The motion passed unanimously (14 in favor; 0 opposed; no abstentions).

Ms. Neyra moved and Ms. Kelleher seconded to appoint Mr. Nunes to the School Climate Ad Hoc Committee and Ms. Matfess to the Legislative Committee. The motion passed unanimously (11 in favor; 0 opposed; no abstentions).

A meeting grid was shared in order to help determine meeting dates for the following Council committees: (1) Approved Private Special Education Programs Ad Hoc, (2) Educator Evaluation and Support Ad Hoc; (3) Legislative; (4) School Climate Ad Hoc; and (5) Scientific Research-Based Interventions Ad Hoc .

### **ESEA Renewal and State Systemic Improvement Plan**

Dr. Barzee, Mr. Gopalakrishnan, and Mr. Peterson presented the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) Renewal application principles, and Mr. Moriarty presented on the State Systemic Improvement Plan, in order to receive feedback from the Council and invited guests. The Renewal process was explained, including the ESEA flexibility that the CSDE planned to request. The following three core principles to qualify for ESEA flexibility were described:

- Principle 1: College and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students;
- Principle 2: State Developed Systems of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support; and
- Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership.

Council members asked how the ESEA Renewal application includes support for teachers of students with disabilities. Statewide Common Core training was described. Council members requested ongoing educator training and support for students with disabilities and English learners, including ongoing training on how educators can support students with significant cognitive needs.

Council members requested regular communication and information to families on Common Core and new statewide assessment systems.

Council members requested additional clarification on the new proposal to develop an index from scaled scores instead of continued use of the four proficiency levels. How will index scores/levels be different from the proficiency levels families have come to understand?

Council members raised concern that the number of changes and initiatives proposed may be too many for superintendents who are already trying to implement new CSDE systems. How will these proposals help to support students who learn differently?

The Council requested that the ESEA Renewal include data to show that CSDE initiatives are making a difference. Families would like to know if statewide initiatives are helping their children to learn/achieve. Is the ESEA Renewal application more process oriented or student outcome oriented?

Council members were concerned that the "ESEA Flexibility Renewal Information for Stakeholders" is too difficult to understand. Is there a way to provide this information in language that is more comprehensible for families?

Council members stated that parent organizations would like to know how the ESEA application addresses school accountability for supports for students with disabilities. Mr. Gopalakrishnan described how the application focuses on school quality and not just grades, and that improvement is noted over time versus a one-year event.

Council members asked if growth on IEP goals will be part of the state metric, or is the State only considering new statewide assessment results to determine student growth over time. How will students with disabilities be supported to move from "below grade level" designations under Common Core?

Council members requested that CSDE focus more on meeting individual student needs versus focusing solely on school accountability. How are proposed state efforts improving individual student outcomes? How is CSDE looking at other measures for student success, such as support to counter chronic absenteeism?

Council members asked if institutions of higher education can help prepare new educators to introduce core transition skills earlier (e.g., in elementary and middle schools) so all students, including students with disabilities, can be more engaged in their learning by seeing a connection of their education to their interests, and to their college and career initial plans.

Council members noted that Principle 3 does seem to focus on educator support and not just educator evaluation. It also seems to consider the educator capacity needs for those serving in different school settings: e.g., residential and day-treatment settings.

Invited guests requested that the ESEA Renewal application include how related service personnel will be supported to help students with disabilities to achieve under Common Core and new statewide assessments.

Council members requested an annual presentation on the results from implementation of the three core principles in the ESEA Renewal application.

Council members requested more information on how the tiered monitoring system will help to improve the quality of education in approved private special education programs (APSEPs). This was described as a social justice issue. Although there is a one-year waiver for APSEPs, Council members wanted to know how these settings will be more effective for these students with disabilities who have more significant needs.

Mr. Moriarty described the tiered intervention model of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), and the "State Identified Measureable Result" defined as "Early Literacy as measured by Grade 3 Reading Achievement."

### **Student Assessment**

Mr. Amenta and Ms. Stuck presented on the Connecticut Alternate Assessment (CTAA) and the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist in Science. These assessments impacted approximately 3,500 students and 2,200 teachers. Additional online, general education accommodations were described.

Council members asked how parents/guardians are helped to understand at PPT meetings these new assessments and accommodation options. Who attends PPT meetings to lend this kind of expertise? How is the student involved so that s/he may understand the accommodations that s/he may need?

Council members requested more information on the results of the piloted statewide new assessments. Council members also asked how checklist scores will impact new teacher evaluation protocols.

Invited guests asked if teaching is taking place during the assessment period. What assurance does the State have that IEP goals and objectives are being addressed per the Services pages of the IEP, during this time of labor-intensive state assessment administration?

Council members wanted to know if parents/guardians can receive information on their child's CTAA and Skills Checklist results at PPT meetings.

### **Other Items**

No additional items were considered.

### **Action Items**

No additional action items were considered.

### **Public Participation**

Members of the public did not provide testimony at 4:50pm.

### **Adjournment**

Ms. Neyra moved and Ms. Bidwell seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.