

STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION (SAC)**Special Meeting****February 16, 2011****2:30 PM – 5:00 PM**

State Office Building, Room 307A
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

I. Call to Order

Member Attendees: Michelle Bidwell, John Burke, Sheila Crocker, Catherine Foley Geib, Beth Hart, Stephanie Johnson, Katherine Musto, Kelly Neyra, Charlyne Olko, Marcus Rivera, Ben Strong, Ronald Tamura, Fernando Tiago.

Member Informed Absence: Brenda Sullivan, Ana Acevedo, Uswah Khan, Joanna Cooper, Julie Swanson, Nancy Taylor, Rep. Daniel Carter, Richard Douglas.

SERC Support: Linda Adorno, Holly King.

Mr. Rivera called the meeting to order at 2:36pm. Representative Daniel Carter is a new appointment to the SAC and is looking forward to attending the March 2011 meeting.

II. Election of Officers

SAC members voted by ballot on the Slate of Officers approved at the December 2010 meeting.

A. Chair Appointed: John Burke
VOTE 10 votes in favor and 1 vote opposed.

B. Vice-Chair Appointed: Beth Hart
VOTE 11 votes in favor and 0 opposed.

Dr. Burke and Ms. Hart shared their commitment to the SAC and thanked the members.

III. Member Orientation and Expectations**A. SAC By-Laws Overview**

Dr. Burke introduced the SAC review of its by-laws, charge and functional areas. The *SAC By-Laws* and *Operating Guidelines* will be updated by the Executive Committee to reflect current legislative statutes and presented at a future SAC meeting for review and adoption.

- **SAC Purpose: Functional Advisory Areas.** Mr. Rivera reviewed a separate handout outlining the 10 SAC advisory areas from the SAC by-laws and current legislation. Mr. Rivera requested that the members continue to examine these areas in all aspects of their SAC work and as they summarize their initiatives annually.
- **SAC Membership: SAC Appointments and Vacancies.** A handout was distributed summarizing the appointments to the SAC, current vacancies, and the constituent group that SAC members represent at meetings.
- **SAC Officers.** Dr. Burke described the roles of the SAC Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary assigned by CT State Department of Education, Mr. Rivera.
- **Committees: Executive, Legislative, Nominating, Membership, Ad-Hoc.** Mr. Rivera reviewed a separate handout which outlined the role of all SAC committees.

Appointments are made by the SAC Chair and approved by the Council. Mr. Rivera recommended that SAC members use this handout, along with the SAC Functional Areas handout, as a way to help gauge the effectiveness of the SAC in special education.

- **Meeting Attendance and Quorum.** Dr. Burke described the SAC attendance and quorum requirements and encouraged SAC members to be active participants in SAC work – “to keep the momentum going.” He offered to assist members when there are impediments to their attendance.

B. SAC Operating Guidelines and Procedures Overview

Dr. Burke and Mr. Rivera reviewed the SAC’s *Operating Guidelines and Procedures*, including important Freedom of Information requirements.

1. **Bureau of Special Education.** The two-way partnership between the SAC and Bureau of Special Education to share current practice, information, unmet needs and concerns was described.
2. **Meeting Protocols.** Mr. Rivera described the meeting protocols set forth by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as it pertains to members and their ongoing committee work. He requested that members refer regularly to the FOIA handout reviewed at the meeting to ensure compliance with FOIA. Key discussion items included:
 - timelines for posting the notice of meetings, agendas and minutes;
 - decision-making in public meetings vs. sharing information and setting agendas;
 - type of meetings and adding agenda items;
 - creating a calendar of dates to facilitate the regular posting of information; and
 - holding meetings in public locations so that the public may attend.

Mr. Rivera reviewed a sample template for developing committee agendas and minutes in an effort to facilitate public notice. Mr. Rivera will forward an electronic copy of the templates to SAC members. He requested that committee chairs submit, at least a day in advance, any items which require posting with the Secretary of the State. He offered several modes of communication to ensure that he is notified when an item requires posting.

3. **Ground Rules.** Dr. Burke described the SAC Ground Rules regarding active discussion, listening, consensus, voting, and use of parliamentary procedures.
4. **Public Participation.** Mr. Rivera explained the Public Participation guidelines for SAC monthly meetings: sign in, two-minute public comment/person, and Executive Committee follow-up on issues raised.
5. **Inclement Weather.** March 23, 2011, has been proposed as the snow date for the March 16, 2011, meeting. Snow dates will be added to the 2011-12 calendar when drafted.
6. **Reimbursement.** The revised Council Member Reimbursement Form was reviewed and Mr. Rivera will send an electronic copy to SAC members. SAC members should submit completed forms to Ms. Adorno at monthly SAC meetings.

7. **Communications.** SAC members discussed a variety of communications items:
- creating SAC letterhead for correspondence;
 - regular receipt of electronic information related to SAC functional areas (e.g., Legislative Updates, Bureau Bulletin);
 - establishing a mechanism for sharing SAC member email addresses with other related networks, "as a blind carbon copy," at the discretion of the SAC Secretary (e.g., CT Parent Advocacy Center);
 - representing one's SAC appointment constituent group when serving on SAC internal and external committees; and
 - sharing at monthly SAC meetings the outcomes from SAC committee meetings and when representing the SAC with external organizations.
8. **Planning Retreat and Annual Report.** Dr. Burke and Ms. Hart expressed the importance of the SAC Planning Retreat in the development of SAC priorities. Given the current timeframe, the SAC's recent *Annual Report* and 2009 retreat outcomes will be reviewed to develop 2010-11 priorities. A retreat may be scheduled in the near future, as needed. The SAC Annual Report is presented to the State Board of Education and transmitted to the CT General Assembly.

IV. Action Items

A. Consideration of Minutes of December 14, 2010, SAC Special Meeting

- Ms. Bidwell moved, Ms. Olko seconded, that the SAC approve the minutes of the December 14, 2010, meeting. The motion carried unanimously (11 in favor, none opposed, and none abstained).

B. Appointment and Charge of Committee Chairs and Members

- Dr. Burke, Ms. Hart and Mr. Rivera reviewed the chart outlining the committee descriptions and current draft nominations proposed by SAC members to fill positions on the SAC Executive, Legislative, Nominating and Membership Committees. The chart also included nominations to other organizations and Bureau of Special Education stakeholder groups.
- Dr. Burke, Ms. Hart and Mr. Rivera added that SAC members who could not attend today's meeting may choose to join committees at the March SAC meeting. The SAC by-laws state that the SAC Chair makes appointments to committees and organizations with the approval of the Council.
- Dr. Burke and Ms. Hart expressed interest in active participation from SAC members on committees and/or with the external organizations listed. At future SAC meetings there will be a standing item on the agenda for "Committee Reports" and discussion, including when an SAC opinion is requested by a member when s/he has been appointed to an external committee/organization.
- **Motion to Appoint SAC Members to Committees and Organizations.** After discussion, Mr. Strong moved, Ms. Bidwell seconded, the Chair's appointments to SAC committees and external organizations as follows:
 - **Executive Committee:** SAC Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Prior Chair (Ms. Sullivan).

- **Legislative Committee:** Chair – Ms. Sullivan; Members – Ms. Johnson, Mr. Strong, Ms. Musto, Ms. Neyra.
- **Nominations Committee:** Ms. Bidwell – Chair; Members – Ms. Neyra.
- **Membership Committee:** Ms. Bidwell – Chair; Members – Ms. Taylor, Mr. Tiago, Ms. Crocker.
- **BESB State Rehabilitation Council:** Ms. Sullivan until June 2011.
- **Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD):** Dr. Burke, lead; Ms. Bidwell, alternate.
- **CT Parent Advocacy Liaison:** Ms. Olko.
- **Focused Monitoring Steering Committee:** Ms. Cooper.
- **Transition Task Force:** Ms. Musto, lead; Ms. Olko, alternate or possible co-lead.
- **Graduation and Dropouts Indicators:** Ms. Cambria and Ms. Foley Geib.
- **Statewide Assessments and Disproportionality Indicators:** Ms. Johnson.
- **Removal from Regular Class Indicator:** Ms. Bidwell.
- **Preschool Indicators:** Ms. Cooper.
- **Parent Involvement indicator:** Ms. Bidwell.
- **Transition and Post-Graduation Data Indicators:** Ms. Musto, lead; Ms. Bidwell alternate.
- **General Supervision Indicator:** Ms. Taylor.
- **Due Process Indicators** (if a Stakeholder Group is initiated): Ms. Sullivan, lead; Ms. Neyra, alternate.

The motion carried unanimously (11 in favor, none opposed, and none abstained). Ms. Bidwell and Ms. Neyra will hold a Nominations Committee meeting on May 11, 2011, at 9am in Plainville (location to be determined) to offer a Slate of Officers to the SAC at its May 2011 meeting. Mr. Strong recommended that the Executive Committee review the SAC By-Laws and determine if a Nominations Committee is needed in the future. Mr. Rivera will inform Bureau of Special Education consultants and external entities about the appointments and clarify when more than one SAC member was named.

- **Motion to Appoint SAC "Members-at-Large."** In an effort to adequately advise the State Department of Education on unmet needs, Dr. Burke, Mr. Strong and Ms. Hart recommended that a SAC "Member-at-Large" be identified from the CT Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) and the Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA). Ms. Cambria added that CPAC and OPA can advise across disability categories.

Ms. Johnson also added the need to nominate a SAC "Member-at-Large" from the CT Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), given the SAC priority regarding scientific research-based interventions and students with learning disabilities, as well as current information available from LDA's volunteer parent advisors.

Ms. Musto moved, Ms. Johnson seconded, that the SAC approve the Chair's appointments of SAC "Members-at-Large," one from each of the following organizations: the CT Parent Advocacy Center, the Office of Protection and Advocacy, and the Learning Disabilities Association. The motion carried

unanimously (11 in favor, none opposed, and none abstained). Mr. Rivera will follow-up with Dr. Burke and Ms. Johnson and contact the organizations to identify the new members. They will need to complete FOIA training along with other new SAC members.

- **Motion to Share Email List with Other Organizations.** Ms. Bidwell moved, Ms. Musto seconded, that the SAC email distribution list may be shared, as needed, with other organizations (with a blind cc) in an effort for SAC members to receive information related to its role/ priorities. The motion carried unanimously (11 in favor, none opposed, and none abstained).

C. SAC Regular Meeting Dates: March 2011 – January 2012

- Ms. Johnson moved, Ms. Musto seconded, that the SAC meeting calendar include the date of January 18, 2012, and the snow date of March 23, 2011. The motion carried unanimously (11 in favor, none opposed, and none abstained).

V. Report of the Chair

- **2009-10 SAC Annual Report, CSDE Response, and SAC 2010-11 Priorities.** Dr. Burke asked SAC members to review the *2009-10 Annual Report* in the Council packet, the 2010-11 recommendations raised in the report, and the report appendix outlining the 2009-10 priorities, so that the SAC may come to agreement on 2010-11 priorities at its next meeting. Mr. Rivera outlined the four areas raised in the 2009-10 Annual Report: Statewide Assessments, Scientific Research-Based Interventions, Complaint Resolution/Due Process, and Restraint and Seclusion.
- **Key Legislative Bills.** The Education raised bills, Education Committee bills and the Education-related bills, as of February 4, 2011, were discussed in general terms. Dr. Burke and Ms. Hart shared the importance of the Legislative Committee's work and the need for regular legislative testimony from SAC members on priority areas. Mr. Rivera will forward similar bill summaries as they become available. Ms. Hart suggested that information from Beth Leslie's distribution list be shared with SAC members.

Several members requested that the SAC Legislative Committee, as one of its initial actions, review new state education bills regarding restraint and seclusion for further discussion at the next SAC meeting. There was concern raised over the several thousand emergency restraint and seclusion incidences in the state as well as a need for more responsive parent notification.

There was also discussion about state education bills that are drafted and defeated annually because they do not represent the best interests of students with disabilities (e.g., parent "burden of proof"). SAC members would like to know if there is a mechanism through Ms. Leslie or others to alert state legislators of unfavorable bills – ones which have not received public hearings in the past and which do not address the unmet needs of students with disabilities.

- **Committee Meetings.** Mr. Burke requested that Committee Chairs schedule meetings as soon as possible – to set agendas and begin their work. He reminded members of the FOIA requirements, the need to set calendar dates and public locations (although at times special meetings will be needed), and to post information through the SAC Secretary. The Executive Committee will begin to draft an annual calendar of discussion items.

VI. Report of the Bureau Chief

- **Procedural Safeguards.** Mr. Rivera offered the Bureau Chief report on behalf of Ms. Thompson. With regard to the procedural safeguards issue raised in the *2009-10 Annual Report*, Mr. Rivera shared that the procedural safeguards have been revised, reviewed by OSEP, and that two public hearings have been scheduled: April 8, 2011, 5–8 pm and April 11, 10am–2pm at the CT State Department of Education in Middletown, 25 Industrial Park Road. The draft will be available in late February/early March. Mr. Rivera will forward it to SAC members, once released.
- **State Performance Report.** The State Performance Report was submitted to OSEP. The Department anticipates receipt of its determination in June. Bureau consultants are developing a presentation to report to the SAC on the status of the state indicators.
- **OSEP Verification Visit.** OSEP plans to conduct a Department verification visit the week of November 7, 2011, to examine fiscal, general supervision, data and performance areas. Future SAC meetings will include updates so that SAC members may be able to participate in the visit.
- **OSEP Memorandum: Special Education Referrals and Evaluations.** The recent OSEP memorandum was reviewed. It relates to the SAC priority concern regarding school interventions and reported denials/delays in evaluations for special education eligibility.
- **Hearing Officers.** The Bureau has reviewed the SAC recommendations regarding hearing officers and is preparing a system of ongoing training for new hires.
- **SAC Training.** Mr. Rivera shared that the Regional Resource Center Program (RRCP) of OSEP's Technical Assistance & Dissemination Network will be sponsoring a webinar, at no cost, for State Advisory Panels (SAPs) on February 25 to build "meaningful parent involvement" on SAPs. The flyer was disseminated. Mr. Rivera will email the flyer so that SAC members can access the other RRCP training resources available to them.
- **SAC Appointments.** State Senator Stillman has expressed interest in filling vacant SAC seats. Ms. Bidwell was pleased and will follow up as SAC Membership Chair.
- The **Winter 2011 Bureau Bulletin** is now available on the Department website. Mr. Rivera will forward the link to SAC members.

VII. Public Participation. No one requested to address the SAC members.

By unanimous consent, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55pm.

Prepared by: Linda Adorno, Nikki Hendry and Holly King, SERC
Marcus Rivera, SAC Secretary