



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Connecticut State Advisory Council for Special Education

Full SAC Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, March 27, 2024

******* 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. *******

Zoom Virtual Meeting: Member Participation

YouTube Live Stream: Public Participant Viewing
[https://youtube.com/live/SAC full Council Meetinkidg 0327024](https://youtube.com/live/SAC_full_Council_Meetinkidg_0327024)

(Conference Call Information included below)

Minutes

Members Present: Susan Yankee (Chair), Bryan Klimkiewicz (SDE non-voting), Sean Cronin (SDE non-voting), Jennifer Lussier (Vice Chair) Tom Cosker, Kim Williamson, Joshua Martin, Jolie Medina (non-voting), Missy Wrigley, Lori Fortuna, Jeffry Spahr, Brian Smith, Nachi Bhatt, Ana Wittig, Rep. Robin Comey, Louis Tallarita, Denise Drummond, Lena Esposito, Allison Kopie, and Mary Beth Bruder.

Public Comment Online Guest: Michelle Fitzgerald (Parent) and Virginia Brown (Office of the Child Advocate, Staff Attorney)

Members Absent: Catherine Summ (Membership Chair), Jake Shumbo, Amy Messinger, Mia Dianoto, Matias Casanova, Tommy Mellilo, Cassandra Reilly, Tammy Raccio, Michael Scanlon, Jon Metcalf, Lena Esposito, Nancy DeCrescenzo, John King and Tylar Young,

I. Call to Order and Welcome (9:00 a.m.)

Susan Y. calls meeting to order at 9:03 am.

II. Purpose and Functions of the Council

Susan Y. provides an overview of the council's functions and purpose.

III. Introductions/Roles

Susan Y. introduces herself as Chair and asks members to introduce themselves.

IV. Public Comment (9:05 a.m.)

Michelle Fitzgerald (parent) and Virginia Brown (Office of the Child Advocate, Staff Attorney) provide public comment via Zoom.

SAC meetings are public meetings; members of the public may participate by calling in:

- Call-In Number: 1-866-880-0098
- Participant Passcode: 89689633

V. Consent Agenda

Susan Y. asks for motion to move January 24, 2024, to April 24, 2024, full SAC meeting. All in favor. Allison Kopie and Denise Drummon abstain.

- a. January 24, 2024, and February 28, 2024, Full Council Minutes for Approval

Missy W. makes motion and Jennifer L. seconds Catherine Summ and Abstain. All in favor.

Susan Y. asks for motion. Jane Hampton-Smith seconds. Jeff S. and Ana Wittig abstain. All in favor.

Old Business

I. Executive Committee Report (9:15 a.m.)

Susan Y. provides update on attendance, April 24, 2024, meeting location and an alternate source such as, doodle pro through Microsoft software to schedule subcommittee.

- a. Executive Committee Activities

- i. Special Education Task Force Update

Streamed on CTN and Susan Y. reviews briefly the subcommittee work.

- ii. Ad-Hoc Committee Update

Susan Y. would like to propose a subcommittee for safety and emergencies and utilize the knowledge of the individuals of the committee.

Dimpy M. makes motion and Brian K seconds. All in favor.

Jeffry S. thinks it is a good idea to introduce this committee to the Council.

Dimpy Malvania, Tom Cosker, Johsua Martin and Jane Hampton Smith make comment about the proposed Committee, and some members express interest on serving on the new committee. Jane S. adds that the state should have a plan and not wait for an emergency.

- b. Office of the Child Advocate/Disabilities Rights CT (Joint Investigation Report)

Susan Y. reviews the update that SAC members have previously received.

II. Membership Committee Report (9:30 a.m.)

Susan Y. provides update on vacancies and representatives for Catherine Summ who is Chair.

- a. Updates

Susan Y. asks about a Department of Correction stakeholder on the SAC. She asks Bryan K. to reach out to DOC Commissioner. Brian K. Smith has someone in mind that he has provided information on.

Catherine S. would like to add wording to the SAC Membership Survey.

Rep. Robin C. asks for feedback regarding members from the Legislature. Tom C. responds.

III. Legislative Committee Report (9:35 a.m.)

Jeffrey S (Chair) provides update on Legislative Committee work.

New Business

I. Round Table (9:45 a.m.)

a. Agency/Parent Updates

Jeffrey Spahr (Parent) Announces on April 4th - The Annual Autism Acceptance Program. Describes what to expect at the event.

Jennifer Lussier (Parent): Talks about language access guidance for special education that is needed.

- Families are still reporting that they are not getting their child's IEP translated, long after CT-SEDS and the new IEP has been implemented statewide, with the ability to translate.
- Families are repeatedly being denied when they request translation of evaluations that will help determine their child's eligibility or continued eligibility for special education, and the provision of FAPE through the student's IEP. Instead, they are told they will get oral translation of the reports – often by someone who does not know the educational terms or how to interpret the results of the evaluation. Recently, we have even seen Prior Written Notice (outside of the PPT process) to deny the parent request for a written translation of their child's evaluation.
- Other issues included are not scheduling adequate time for PPTs that require interpretation, and lack of appropriate interpretation for families. • Language Access barriers that are faced by English Learner and monolingual parents of children with disabilities cause an enormous inequity of information about educational opportunities for their children and impedes their right to meaningful participation in the Planning and Placement Team process. As an English-speaking parent, I am afforded a written copy of my child's evaluation that I can access at any time, before, during, or after the PPT. I would not be able to do that with an oral translation. As a person who needs to process information visually, I would never be able to recall details of evaluations. Oral translation of evaluations is simply not enough for a parent to effectively advocate for their child. • From the experiences of my stakeholder group, it appears that there is a widespread belief that IDEA is the only law that districts must consider regarding language access and our special education families. There is a need for clear guidance from the CSDE on the responsibilities of the districts to provide language access and how civil rights laws and IDEA requirements must be considered together.

Jane Hampton Smith (CPAC) Wants to talk about trends in unmet needs. Finding that students with dyslexia are not always being identified or making progress in ready attempts – seems to be because of staff lack of knowledge in reading instruction. Students with behavioral issues have two facts against them – being excluded from learning due to disciplinary procedures due to staff possibilities in not understanding purpose and also they are being outplaced – due to staff not understanding behavioral support options, or not being trained . Students with parents with parents who do not speak English – losing equitable educational opportunities due to lack of staff not providing materials in their language.

Tom Cosker (Disability Rights) Briefly highlights High Roads investigation based on complaints to Office of Child Advocate (OCA). Participated in site visits and record (individual students) reviews, did a lot of work on the investigation side including speaking CSDE and Hartford Public Schools share findings: staffing issues, uncertified staff and overuse of long-term substitutes, non-credential supports, lack of oversight by CSDE and by sending districts. Discusses recommendations and guidance. Encourages SAC members to review reports. OCA made legislative recommendation as Disability Rights CT cannot in their advocacy role.

Rep. Robin Comey asks if Tom C. and Virginia Brown are interested in meeting with her to answer questions on the report. Tom C. and Virginia Brown agree to meet.

II. BSE Update (10:15 a.m.)

Division Director Bryan K. provides update on Bureau staffing, general monitoring (chronic absenteeism), site visits, LEA stipends and early childhood. Council might have a formal presentation in the Spring.

III. Adjourn (10:30 a.m.)

Tom C. makes motion to adjourn. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 10:24 am.

State Advisory Council Meeting Dates/Locations:

Meeting	Date	Time	Location
1.	September 13, 2023	9:00-10:30 pm	Virtual Meeting
2.	October 25, 2023	9:00-1:00 pm	In-Person Meeting Location: CREC, Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford, CT
3.	November 29, 2023	9:00-10:30 pm	Virtual Meeting
	January 17, 2024		Cancelled
4.	January 24, 2024	10:00-1:00 pm	In-Person Meeting Location: Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06103
5.	February 28, 2024	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
6.	March 27, 2024	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
7.	April 24, 2024	9:00-1:00 pm	In-Person Meeting Location: TBD
8.	May 22, 2024	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting (Tentative)