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STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Connecticut State Advisory Council for Special Education

Full Council Committee Meeting

Date: October 15, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Location: Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Ave #5100, Hartford, CT 06106

Room: 1C

Zoom Meeting:

<https://ctserc.zoom.us/j/93137515293?pwd=QBFccf4zCa7lk8LoDuHWHbAgbXCNVT.1>

Meeting ID: 931 3751 5293

Passcode: 272066

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Missy Wrigley (chairperson), Brandalyn Williams (vice chairperson), Catherine Summ, Representative Dan Gajewski, Goviana Morales, Jeffry Spahr, Jennifer Lussier (secretary), Eve Hurley, Lori Fortuna, Louis Tallarita, Nachi Bhatt, Representative Robin Comey, Tom Cosker, Allison Kopie, Mary Beth Bruder, Susan Yankee, Kim Williamson, Jake Shumbo, Denise Drummond, Sean Cronin (CSDE), Bryan Klimkiewicz (CSDE)

Members Absent: Jonathan Metcalf, Stacey Parker, Evan Simlack (Janelle Marella), Tylar Young, Brian K. Smith, Dimpy Malvania, Lena Esposito, Michael Scanlon, Ana Wittig, Amy Messinger, Cassandra Reilly, Nancy DeCrescenzo, Rita Halkias

SERC Administration: Christine Kuehlewind, Linda Adorno (Lauren Johns- Absent)

I. Call to Order and Welcome: (10:04 am)

II. Council Purpose and Function

III. Introduction/Roles

IV. Public Comment (10:05 a.m.)

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

Call In: 312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 931 3751 5293

Participant Code: 272066

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V. Consent Agenda

- i. Approval of Full Council Minutes from September 24, 2025- Tom Cosker motions to accept meeting minutes as amended, Jake Shumbo seconds, Abstentions:Denise Drummond, vote unanimous in favor to approve

Old Business

VI. Executive Matters (10:15 a.m.)

- i. Annual Report
 - Missy- Review of timeline and responsibility for each of the sections of the report, deadline for final report is February 15, 2026, goal is to finalize report by December 3, 2025
 - Susan- possibility for one page flyer document can be created and shared sooner

VII. Membership/Nominating Report/Updates (10:25 a.m.)

Catherine is stepping down as chair of the Membership Committee but will remain on the committee. She is willing to mentor and support anyone interested in taking over the chair role.

Current vacancies on the SAC include:

Paraeducator position

Several student seats (one student may be interested)

Legislative vacancies

A parent is interested in being considered, the application is on file.

Catherine will assist with or write the membership section of the annual report.

VIII. Ad Hoc Bylaw/Operational Procedures/Update (10:35 a.m.)

The ad hoc group is still finalizing updates.

Goal: Complete By-law by the end of the month and provide materials with enough time to meet the 21-day review requirement before voting.

Expected to have the draft by the next meeting.



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IX. Legislative Report/Updates (10:45 a.m.)

Current focus is planning and preparation for the upcoming legislative session.

Legislators are actively gathering information now; early communication is important.

The special education legislative subcommittee from last year will continue into this session, with membership and chairs still being finalized.

Last year included a major omnibus bill, but this year will focus on smaller, more targeted bills.

Emphasis on maintaining and using connections made during last year's legislative breakfast; another breakfast is planned for early February.

New Business

X. BSE Updates (11:00 a.m.)

Annual Performance Report (APR) & District Determinations:

Each year, the State Department of Education issues special education determinations for every LEA (Local Education Agency), based on 18 data points within the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR). Districts receive one of four ratings: Meets Requirements, Needs Assistance, Needs Intervention, or Needs Substantial Intervention. The 2025 APR reports are expected to go live on EdSight shortly; districts have been notified. Districts in Needs Assistance (Year 2) receive targeted technical support. The Council will receive an overview of statewide results at a future meeting.

Integrated Monitoring Process:

The state uses a 3-year cyclical monitoring system; this year is Cohort B (~55 districts). From these, 12–15 districts are randomly selected for unannounced on-site visits. Visits include: Parent interviews (supported by CPAC), IEP (individualized education plan) document reviews across grade ranges, service verification (ensuring IEP services are scheduled and implemented), classroom observations, and staff interviews. Districts receive a report noting: noncompliance (requiring corrective action within 1 year per federal rules), potential noncompliance (districts may submit clarifying information), positive practices, and corrective actions are tracked;



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unresolved issues count against a district's APR. Districts are generally cooperative despite the disruption of unannounced visits. Members requested more detailed information about the monitoring process (IEP selection, follow-up procedures, credible allegation/off-cycle reviews). The state will provide a one-page summary at a future meeting.

Legislative Updates:

Public Act 25-67, Section 7 – Special Education Expansion & Development Grant: \$30 million allocated statewide, distributed based on the ECS (Education Cost Sharing) formula. An entitlement grant (not competitive)—districts receive a set amount but must submit an application showing funds will be used for allowable special education purposes. Funds may not be used for: administrative costs and contractors/third-party vendors. Funds may be used for: special education instruction & related services, tiered interventions supporting students with disabilities, misuse carries significant penalties (repayment $\times 2$, loss of future funds). FAQ and application guidance are being finalized.

Public Act 25-67, Section 1 – Developmental Delay Eligibility:

Age limit to use Developmental Delay as a primary disability increased from age 6 to age 9. No changes to eligibility criteria; guidance is being developed to support teams.

Out-of-District Placement Due to Challenging Behavior:

Before placing a student out of district for challenging behaviors, districts must: conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and develop or implement a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Exception: if safety concerns prevent this, districts must report the circumstances to the State Department of Education. The state does not grant approvals but collects and analyzes submissions. Only a small number have been received so far. Requirement only applies when the placement is due to challenging behavior—not other disability-related reasons (e.g., dyslexia schools). "Challenging behavior" is statutorily defined; guidance has been shared with districts. Common questions from districts include: whether requirement applies to in-district specialized programs (answer: No, but FBAs/BIPs are strongly recommended as best practice), and whether the law specifies how long a BIP must be in place before placement (answer: No, timing is individualized). SAC members expressed concern about potential overuse of the safety exemption and asked for data tracking.



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Broader Discussion Themes:

Need for improved monitoring of behavior-related outplacements, exemptions, and district practices. Importance of considering sensory needs and broader student profiles, not just behavior. Recognition that FBAs/BIPs are long-standing best practices under IDEA, and the law is reinforcing existing expectations. The State will continue updating SAC on: patterns in safety-based exemption reports, out-of-district placement data, and themes that may warrant further guidance or policy adjustments.

XI. Roundtable (11:15 a.m.)

Federal Layoffs and Funding Cuts (Mary Beth Bruder):

Significant layoffs occurred among federal colleagues in Washington. Major cuts were made to discretionary grants for personnel training, expected to worsen workforce shortages over the next five years. Decreased enrollment in pre-service teacher programs is contributing to a looming personnel crisis. Potential SAC Action/Needs: Explore alternative certification pathways and micro-credentials (being used in other states). Consider incentives to attract high school students into teacher preparation programs. Concern raised regarding reduced federal support for graduate and doctoral students, which threatens the pipeline for future faculty.

Legislative Insights: (Representatives Comey, Jeff Sphar, and others provided discussion points):

Some elements of HB1 may require follow-up for legislation. Growing legislative interest in homeschooling; currently in early “research phase.” Legislators emphasized the need for timely feedback from SAC to help shape proposals. Encouraged ongoing communication to understand real-world impacts. A question was raised about whether homeschooled children receive special education services: school districts generally cannot provide special education services once a child is formally withdrawn for homeschooling. Exception: The Bureau of Education Services for the Blind can provide limited services.

Parent & Family Matters (Goviana Morales):

Language Access- families are not consistently receiving quality interpretation at PPT (Planning Placement Team) meetings, especially during discussions about program changes, placement shifts, or more restrictive settings. Poor quality interpretation

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contributes to misunderstandings and tension at meetings. Reduced Hours in self-contained classrooms- some districts have attempted to reduce school hours only for students in self-contained special education programs. One district implemented a one-hour-per-day reduction, which disproportionately affects students with the greatest needs. This may conflict with state law prohibiting reductions in school hours specifically for students with disabilities.

ADHD Awareness Month (Jeff Spahr):

Connecticut's governor issued a proclamation recognizing October as ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) Awareness Month. Jeff proposed highlighting the proclamation and related resources on the state's special education website. Legislators suggested also holding public events and inviting media and state leadership.

BESB Updates (Catherine Summ):

BESB welcomed a new education supervisor, Mike Pompano. Fall in-service trainings were completed with over 240 attendees. Attendance dipped for sessions focused on students with multiple impairments; typically these have waitlists. BESB continues to use DSAP (Durational Shortage Area Permit) hiring processes and has a strong mentorship structure for supporting and retaining new teachers. Offered to collaborate with others exploring alternative teacher preparation routes.

(Break 11:15)

XII. Priorities and Recommendations (11:45 p.m.)

Group share out of the overall discussion points and possible consideration and recommendations

• Least Restrictive Environment

Training general education leaders in what does LRE mean in context to inclusion, belonging and their responsibility to all (recommendation)

Unified programming in school districts and how those programs can be promoted for all students- students supporting unified programming and students partaking in programming with focus on belonging



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Looking for a way to have models (we have some here in CT)- are there other state models for regionalization of services where districts may pull resources and share them so they can provide the continuum within the shared districts. Some districts can provide the full continuum, but some districts are limited with resources to provide them.

- **Special Education Staffing, Recruitment and Retention**

Future meeting, have state department share the variety of pathways for certification for both teachers and related service providers. Also, conversation around reaching out to high schools for next generation programs. Also, discussion on durational shortage certification and long-term substitute criteria for provision of services to students.

Looking at what states have models for micro credentials- the idea of having smaller credentials but working in the classroom while working the full credentials needed. Also, unified programming- high school students obtaining college credentials to be allowed to earning college credits to become educators within our state universities.

Discussion on attraction to the profession with incentives and micro programming- hiring juniors and seniors in college so they can begin early in the profession. Reaching out to high school students to build awareness with information on the field (ie: Future Teachers Clubs).

- **Social Emotional Health**

Mental health is a necessary and important ongoing conversation. Tiered intervention was designed to support the needs of students (ie: PBIS- Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports). Districts going away from these models in the behavior/emotional level.

Recommendation that SRBI needs to be part of the student's plan with planned interventions and supports in the plan. Many children who dysregulate at young ages and haven't learned co-regulating or regulating with support of caring adults. These caring adults are needed to help support these students with data points- and will support all children at a foundational level. All students have a right to tiered intervention with social and emotional needs (ie: CICO- Check-in Check out). The continuum of these supports is necessary as we go forward.

School atmosphere for all students and teachers that promote social emotional stability and growth with best practice for developing appropriate skills for students by trained staff for all students both general and special education students.



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Universal screenings- updates from schools on programming with social emotional screenings. Current landscape of work in other areas with this topic. FBA/BIPs and training/support and process around this area. Training for all staff in schools with de-escalation and source of students' behavior.

- **Parent Information Training and Support/Meaningful Participation in the PPT Process for Parents**

Primary discussion point- development of a CT Special Education Parent Bill of Rights (similar to Transition Bill of Rights and Multi-lingual Learners Bill of Rights) to help outline in CT what meaningful participation looks like and what families have a right to. So families can have a shared understanding with PPT process in all aspects- before, during, and after.

Understand the PPT process as a whole- eligibility, exit criteria, manifestations, determinations, process, PPT process, parents guide to special education, meaning of a meaningful participation. Possibly have a parent support person assigned to each meeting as a support.

A parent guide to special education- thinking about different ways to make that information coming to life for families, accessibility with short videos or technology with information and content that would be updated, and indicator 8 (Parent survey) that focuses on meaningful participation and participation in those surveys. Best practices in ensuring parents participated in PPTs- how meetings are scheduled, when they are scheduled, accommodations to scheduling them, and consideration to spoken language within those meetings.

Adjourn: 1:52 pm- Jeff Spahr motion to adjourn, unanimous in favor

State Advisory Council Meeting Dates/Locations:

Meeting	Date	Time	Location
1.	September 24, 2025	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
2.	October 15, 2025	10:00 am-2:00 pm	Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Ave #5100, Hartford (Room: 1C)
3.	November 19, 2025	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting



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4.	January 14, 2026	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
5.	February 25, 2026	10:00-2:00 pm	Location TBD
6.	March 25, 2026	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
7.	April 22, 2026	10:00-2:00 pm	Location TBD
8.	May 20, 2026 <i>(Tentative-if needed)</i>	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting