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STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Connecticut State Advisory Council for Special Education

Full Council Committee Meeting

Date: April 23, 2025

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

Location: CREC, 111 Charter Oak Ave, Hartford CT, 06106

Zoom Meeting:

<https://ctserc.zoom.us/j/98132063923?pwd=0ceW6FgkbZAw3LPI1Za7L4lTED5Qnl.1>

Meeting ID: 981 3206 3923

Passcode: 077113

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Brandalyn Williams, Brian K. Smith, Catherine Summ, Dan Gaiewski, Dimpy Malvania, Goviana Morales, Jake Shumbo, Jeffry Spahr, Jennifer Lussier (Vice Chairperson), Joshua Martin, Lena Esposito, Lori Fortuna, Louis Tallarita, Michael Scanlon, Missy Wrigley, Nachi Bhatt, Robin Comey, Stacey Palker, Tom Cosker, Ana Wittig, Denise Drummond, Kim Williamson, Mia Giantonio, Sean Cronin (CSDE), Bryan Klimkiewicz (CSDE)

Members Absent: Amy Messinger, Cassandra Reilly, Evan Simlack, Nancy DeCrescenzo, Rita Halkias, Tylar Young, Allison Kopie, Jonathan Metcalf, Mary Beth Bruder, Susan Yankee (Chairperson)

SERC Administration: Holli Ryan, Christine Kuehlewind

- I. Call to Order and Welcome (10:12 a.m.)** Jennifer Lussier, Vice Chairperson, calls the meeting to order at 10:12 am. CT-N will be joining us today.
- II. Council Purpose and Function (10:13 a.m.)**
- III. Introduction/Roles (10:14 a.m.)**
- IV. Public Comment (10:17 a.m.)** No public comment
 - i. SAC meetings are public meetings; members of the public may participate by calling in:
Call In: 305-224-1968
Meeting ID: 951 7295 5236
Participant Code: 795808



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V. Consent Agenda (10:19 a.m.)

- i. Approval of Full Council Minutes from March 26, 2025: Tom Cosker moves to approve the minutes with corrections, Bryan K. Smith seconds, Denise Drummond abstains, vote unanimously in favor.

Old Business

VI. Executive Matters (10:21 a.m.)

- i. Welcome our new student member
SAC would like to welcome Evan Simlack as SAC's new student member. Congratulations and extended thanks to Mia Giantonio who will be leaving SAC after several years with the council. Mia will be missed, looking forward to all the wonderful accomplishments she will be doing, and will be given a state citation for her participation on SAC.
- ii. TOW Institute
No update on TOW institute.
- iii. July Retreat
Hold July 9th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in your calendars while the logistical details are worked out.

VII. Membership/Nominating Report/Updates (10:23 a.m.)

- i. Slate of Officers
Catherine Summ, Chair of Membership Committee: thank you for recognizing Mia. Another thank you to Mia for her service to SAC. There are now 3 student vacancies for SAC. There is a SAC paraeducator member availability because the current paraeducator member had to resign from SAC. Please reach out to Catherine with any recommendations. Also, legislative member positions are also available. Several educators have reached out to Catherine who were interested in SAC. Please email Catherine with any educator organizations interested. Missy mentioned they could look into their local Special Education Advisory Council in their area. Also, CPAC would be a great resource to assist. Tom mentioned they could also come to our meetings to see what SAC is about.
Brian K. Smith begins the nominating process for slate of officers. He opens the floor for any additional nominations for chair and vice chair:



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Vice chair- No additional nominations to add to vice chair from the floor.

Chair- No additional nominations for chair from the floor.

Nominations for chair and vice chair are as follows: Brandalyn Williams for Vice Chair and Missy Wrigley for Chair. Paper ballots were distributed, and online votes were gathered via email and private Zoom message.

Votes announced at 11:31 a.m. as follows:

Vice Chairperson- 12 paper ballot votes and 7 virtual votes for a total of 19 votes to elect Brandalyn Williams as SAC's new Vice Chairperson.

Chairperson- 12 paper ballot votes and 7 virtual votes for a total of 19 votes to elect Missy Wrigley as SAC's new Chairperson.

Special thanks to Susan Yankee and Jennifer Lussier for their commitment as SAC Chair and Vice Chair during their terms.

VIII. Ad Hoc Bylaw/Policy Report/Update (10:40 a.m.)

Jennifer Lussier- the Bylaws committee is looking for SAC members to join. We will welcome any new members to this committee. Brian Klimkiewicz- members who have worked on Bylaws over time have done an awesome job. CSDE has a technical assistance center that we can run the Bylaws by that they support all of the state advisory councils across the country, so there is support besides the SAC group here. SAC is starting off from a really strong foundation. Hopefully, to have these Bylaws ready by September for completion.

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

Jeffrey Spahr- the legislative committee represents diverse perspectives, including parents and school officials. When reviewing legislation, the committee considers all viewpoints before drafting and approving letters or recommendations. Final letters are approved by the legislative committee and executive committee, rather than the full council, for efficiency. A current bill has several concerns, with concerns from both parents (about rights) and educators/legislators (about standards and costs). A balanced, inclusive response will be developed reflecting the group's diverse viewpoints. Security Guard Training Bill- the original bill required training in physical security (e.g., disarming, perimeters). The committee successfully advocated for additional training in: de-escalation techniques and working with students with mental, physical disabilities or special needs. This change has been included in the current version of the bill. School Safety Committee Representation: the committee



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wants to make it mandatory for a special education representative to be on local school safety committees. Currently, this is only a recommendation. Police Officer Training (POST): currently, officers can elect to take training on working with people with special needs. The committee is pushing to make this training mandatory, especially during the 3-year recertification cycle. The current law only requires training if it is available, free, or funded—the committee wants guaranteed delivery.

Jeffrey Spahr also acknowledged a special thank you to Tom Cosker for stepping up as Vice Chair and being actively involved.

New Business

X. BSE Updates (10:54 a.m.)

Brian Klimkiewicz- Katherine Matz appointed as the new Bureau Chief of Special Education (since April 4). She is already active in evaluating systems and supports improving the Bureau. Brian will stay on as the Bureau's liaison to the State Advisory Council.

The Bureau's new monthly newsletter launched in April to enhance communication and outreach. The content includes policy updates and clarifications (e.g., Extended School Year services), highlights of successful programs, event announcements. The newsletter is searchable on the website and accessible via a listserv. Advisory Council reports, recruitment ads, and other state initiatives may be featured in future editions.

State Performance Plan / OSEP Monitoring: special education data submitted, and minor adjustments made during OSEP clarification period. The determination is expected by June. CT is in Cohort 5 for OSEP's five-year Differentiated Monitoring and Support (DMS) cycle. CT's next on-site review is in Dec 2027. A stakeholder input process for results-based indicators (graduation, dropout, testing) will begin next fall.

IDEA grant posted and application process ongoing. The funding amounts for LEAs are not yet released; prior year amounts are being used for planning.

Two new documents released to clarify roles and responsibilities in Approved Private Special Education Programs (APSEPs). There's an overview of programming and



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oversight responsibilities. A flowchart detailing roles for CSDE, LEAs, schools, and parents. It covers areas like IEPs, financials, data reporting, seclusion/restraint, transition, dispute resolution, and family engagement. It is designed to address recent legislative confusion and public questions.

Save the Date for CSDE's Back-to-School Event 2025 which is scheduled for September 5 (8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.), at Bristol Events Center (new venue).

Unified Sports shared promotional materials for distribution.

Acknowledgments- shout-out given to communications team and two new education specialists (Nicole Deal and Ashley DeGange) for their work on the newsletter. A reminder was given for council members to help with dissemination of resources to ensure families receive vital information.

XI. Roundtable (11:16 a.m.)

Lori Fortuna- outplaced students losing communication with home districts, attended legislation hearing on Monday and noticed that parents are concerned about losing services, and many issues that need to be resolved.

Ana Wittig- approved private schools are monitoring legislation and concerns with impact to students because of funding.

Lena Esposito- concerned as a parent who has a child in a group home about the funding and impact on those students and families. She has heard concerns from other parents as well.

Other topics mentioned: group home and union strikes, IDEA funding concerns, and DDS (Department of Disability Services) hiring campaign. Please forward any requests to share event flyers and email updates from stakeholders to Jennifer Lussier and she will disseminate to the entire SAC members.

Michael Champlin (Oak Hill School), public comment, introduced himself and thanked the council for the opportunity to listen and participate. He mentioned that he submitted testimony regarding the discussed bill.

(Break 11:35-11:48)



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Jennifer Lussier asked for a motion to amend the agenda to include an executive session focused on setting priorities and to move into executive session, Tom Cosker motioned, Missy Wrigley seconds, vote unanimously in favor.

The motion passed, and the group moved into executive session.

XII. Priorities and Recommendations (11:48 p.m.)

SAC members move out of executive session and back into the regular meeting at 1:50 p.m.

A reminder was given about the Legislative Committee meeting this Friday at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom, open to anyone interested.

Adjourn: Tom Cosker motions to adjourn the meeting at 1:51 p.m., Jeffry Spahr seconds, vote unanimously in favor.

State Advisory Council Meeting Dates/Locations:

Meeting	Date	Time	Location
1.	September 18, 2024	9:00-10:30 pm	Virtual Meeting
2.	October 16, 2024	10:00-2:00 pm	CREC, 111 Charter Oak Avenue, Room 202, Hartford, CT



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3.	November 20, 2024	2:00-3:30 pm	Virtual Meeting
4.	January 15, 2025	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
5.	February 26, 2025	10:00-2:00 pm	CREC, 147 Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford, CT
6.	March 26, 2025	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
7.	April 23, 2025	10:00-2:00 pm	CREC, 111 Charter Oak Avenue, (The Council Room), Hartford, CT