



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
*DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION*



**Connecticut State Advisory Council for Special Education**

**Full SAC In-Person/Virtual Meeting**

**Location:** CREC, 147 Charter Oak Avenue, Harford, CT

**Wednesday, February 26, 2025**

\*\*\*\*\* 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. \*\*\*\*\*

**Zoom Virtual Meeting:** Member Participation

<https://ctserc.zoom.us/j/97536450851>

**Meeting ID:** 975 3645 1968

**Passcode:** 293810

**YouTube Live Stream:** Public Participant Viewing

[https://youtube.com/live/z\\_5TOKZtsds?feature=share](https://youtube.com/live/z_5TOKZtsds?feature=share)

*(Conference Call Information included below)*

**Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Susan Yankee (Chairperson), Jennifer Lussier (Vice Chairperson), Allison Kopie, Ana Wittig, Brandalyn Williams, Brian Smith, Catherine Summ, Dimpay Malvania, Goviana Morales, Jeffery Spahr, Jonathan Metcalf, Joshua Martin, Kim Williamson, Lena Esposito, Louis Tallarita, Mary Beth Bruder, Missy Wrigley, Nachi Bhatt, Rita Halkias, Stacey Palker, Tom Cosker, Sean Cronin & Bryan Klimkiewicz

**SERC Administration:** Holli Ryan & Christine Kuehlewind

**Members Absent:** Allyson Brunetti, Amy Messinger, Cassandra Reilly, Dawn Dickau, Denise Drummond, Jane Hampton Smith, Jake Shumbo, Lori Fortuna, Mia Giantonio, Michael Scanlon, Nancy DeCrescenzo, Rick Raucci, Robin Comey, Tyler Young

- I. Call to Order and Welcome (10:05 a.m.)-** Susan Yankee called to order at 10:05 a.m.
- II. Council Purpose and Function-** Susan Yankee reviews purpose and function with members
- III. Introductions/Roles**
- IV. Consent Agenda (10:15 a.m.)**
  - a. Full Council Minutes from January 15, 2025: Tom Cosker motion to approve with edits, Jeffery Spahr second, vote unanimous in favor
- V. Public Comment (10:20 a.m.)-** No public comment
  - a. SAC meetings are public meetings; members of the public may participate by calling in:  
*Call In:* 305-224-1968  
*Meeting ID:* 975 3645 0851

*Participant Code: 29381*

## **Old Business**

### **VI. Executive Committee Report (10:30 a.m.)**

- a. Overview of LOB Event: Susan Yankee thanked the full council, Representative Comey for her assistance in planning, and legislators who were able to attend.
- b. Listening Session discussion: Take aways from the members who attended
  - Rita Halkias*: in regard to the \$40 million funding- Unified District 1 (USD1) is not considered to receive funding. Funding can be a barrier for USD1.
  - Tom Cosker*: funding still in discussion to keep students in their district.
  - Susan Yankee*: advocate for USD1 through priorities and recommendation.
  - Jennifer Lussier*: concern that students don't have access to certified teachers all year long, some students only receive instruction from a tutor. Noticed that Paras/teachers want extra training.
  - Tom Cosker*: issue remains, funding and outplacement costs, teacher caseload, retention and recruitment.
  - Stacey Palker*: Is there a debt/payment forgiveness for teachers working in the state?
  - Tom Cosker & Susan Yankee*: current legislation is discussing loan forgiveness for teachers.

*\*5-minute technology break\**

*Lena Esposito*: expressed that there is a need for funding and staffing, especially in Special Education.

*Jennifer Lussier*: stated that these were just listening sessions, and no solutions have been made, concerns were heard.

### **VII. Membership Committee Report (10:40 a.m.)**

- a. Student membership applications
  - Catherine Summ*: potential student application to join SAC, additional student vacancies so please encourage to apply; still legislative vacancies (appointed positions), so please advocate for legislatures to express interests
- b. Attendance and vacancy updates
  - Catherine Summ*: time of year to look at upcoming vacancies; if term is coming to an end, then members are encouraged to let Catherine know.
  - Jennifer Lussier*: reminder of chair and vice chair roles coming up for election; nominating committee will need to meet

### **VIII. Legislative Committee Report (10:50 a.m.)**

- a. *Jeffrey Spahr*: Legislative committee meets once a week as a workgroup to review proposed legislation; expectation that legislation will pick up as legislative session progresses

## **New Business**

### **IX. Proposal of By-Law and Process Review Committee Ad Hoc (11:20 a.m.)**

- a. *Susan Yankee*: review of by-laws, but also consider clear policies and procedures for committees. This will assist SAC members with something to refer to.  
Discussion continued amongst the full council.  
Susan Yankee, as chair, implemented this ad hoc committee. Susan asked for a minimum of 3 members, and a chair and vice chair would be needed. Sean Cronin offered to sit on committee. Bryan Klimkiewicz advised that this would be a great committee and opportunity for SAC new members to sit on.

## **X. Round Table (11:30 a.m.)**

### **a. Agency/Parent Updates**

*Nachi Bhatt*: brought attention to the two unified schools district in CT (one is the department of corrections and second is the department of children and families). It's important to remember that there are children there with high needs.

*Ana Wittig*: approved private schools for outplacement have difficulty getting information to superintendents to bring them information on cost of outplaced students, especially separating out costs of services. Discussion continues around how outplaced approved private schools vary with pricing, and how Connecticut doesn't regulate or set the price of approved private schools for outplacement. Every state is different in how they set rates for outplacement and services. Bryan Klimkiewicz mentions the study conducted (should be completed by March 2025) by UCONN that was set forth by the Governor's bill to study the cost of outplacement. The legislative Special Education Task Force recommended reviewing and researching sample contracts for an understanding of some rate settings and services. Every contract is different because every student has different needs and services. Connecticut does approve and set rates for students that are in residential placements and programs, even for approved private schools.

## **XI. Break (15 minutes)**

## **XII. BSE Update (11:55 a.m.)**

*Bryan Klimkiewicz*: CT Commissioner of Education and Governor's Office is watching and staying informed with current movement on federal level. Federal update with reference to IDEA funding, Pell grants, and Medicaid. Federal level, Secretary Linda McMahon, has publicly mentioned that these funding sources won't be touched at this time, but it may be moved to another department like Health and Human Services and funds will be distributed by a different entity. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at federal level has had some reductions, but it's still intact and in place. Connecticut will soon have a new point of contact at OSEP. The federal laws are still in place at federal level and states are still accountable to them.

*Jennifer Lussier*: mentions how families are showing some concern about ensuring their child receiving services, especially during PPTs.

*Lena Esposito*: mentioning immigrant families concerned about ICE with students with disabilities. Bryan Klimkiewicz mentioned how the state department's legal department posted guidance in this area, and school districts also worked with their attorneys on providing guidance. It's up to each district what they want to do with the legal guidance.

*Sean Cronin:* Due process perspective for Section 504, the U.S. Department of Education has taken down Office of Civil Rights website, so as far as 504 issues. Bryan Klimkiewicz mentioned that the 504 complaints go to Boston for Section 504 complaints from Connecticut. Each district has a Section 504 coordinator, so parents/families should reach out to that district contact if there's a need.

*Bryan Klimkiewicz:* Katherine Matz, the new Bureau Chief for the Bureau of Special Education (BSE), will start on April 4<sup>th</sup>. She comes to BSE from Easton/Redding/ Region 9 school district where she was the Director of Special Education.

### **XIII. Priorities and Recommendation Work (12:20 p.m.)**

- a. Discussion around Least Restrictive Environment (LRE); Recommendations for CT State Department of Education/ CT State Board of Education (Annual Report, page 8).

\*5-minute break\*

- b. Discussion around Special Education Staffing (Recruitment and Retention); Recommendations for the CT State Department of Education/CT State Board of Education (Annual Report, page 10).
- c. Discussion around Social/Emotional Mental Health and Restraint and Seclusion "R/S"; Recommendations for the CT State Department of Education/CT State Board of Education (Annual Report, page 11).
- d. Discussion around Students with Disabilities School Safety in Emergencies Recommendations; Recommendations for the CT State Department of Education/CT State Board of Education (Annual Report, page 12).

### **XIV. Adjourn (1:54 p.m.);** Missy motioned to adjourn, unanimous 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
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 Harford, CT
6.	March 26, 2025	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
7.	April 23, 2025	10:00-2:00 pm	TBD
8.	May 21, 2025	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting (if needed)

