



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Connecticut State Advisory Council for Special Education

Full Council Committee Meeting

Date: January 28, 2026

Time: 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Virtual Zoom Meeting:

<https://ctserc.zoom.us/j/95146927605?pwd=hWVf8zAaGMoWzJfbISPkqoGBkpxDr5.1>

Meeting ID: 951 4692 7605

Passcode: 637237

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Missy Wrigley (chairperson), Brandalyn Williams (vice chairperson), Brian K. Smith, Catherine Summ, Representative Dan Gaiewski, Representative Robin Comey, Jeffrey Spahr, Jennifer Lussier (secretary), Eve Hurley, Lori Fortuna, Louis Tallarita, Nachi Bhatt, Tom Cosker, Evan Simlack (Janelle Marella), Mary Beth Bruder, Susan Yankee, Kim Williamson, Jonathan Metcalf, Michael Scanlon, Lena Esposito, Ana Wittig, Stacey Palker, Allison Kopie, Meghan Gallagher, Sean Cronin (CSDE), Bryan Klimkiewicz (CSDE)

Members Absent: Dimpy Malvania, Amy Messinger, Cassandra Reilly, Nancy DeCrescenzo, Denise Drummond, Jake Shumbo, Rita Halkias, State Senator Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox

SERC Administration: Lauren Johns, Christine Kuehlewind

I. Call to Order and Welcome: (9:02 am)

II. Council Purpose and Function

III. Introduction/Roles

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

- i. SAC meetings are public meetings; members of the public may participate by calling in:
Call In: 929-205-6099
Meeting ID: 963 8731 6963
Participant Code: 788959



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Aubrey Gonzalez (parent of an adult child with a disability)- spoke on importance of “future mapping” as an effective practice across all school districts

V. Consent Agenda

- i. Approval of Full Council Meeting Minutes of November 19, 2025: Representative Dan Gaiewski motions to approve the meeting minutes, Tom Cosker seconds, Allison Kopie abstains, vote unanimous in favor to approve.

Old Business

VI. Executive Matters (9:15 a.m.)

- i. Annual Report
Annual report completed; due February 15. Executive Committee approved the report on January 7. Members were encouraged to review it carefully, especially the four legislative priorities. Detailed explanations supporting those priorities (page 7). Distribution will include the State Library, Legislature, and Education Committee leadership. Emphasis placed on proactive outreach to legislators.
- ii. By-laws
Updated By-laws were presented (following required 21-day review period). Key updates included: clarified council functions and membership structure (37 members), added paraeducator representation, updated titles, added Secretary role, included Open Meeting Law reference, incorporated Robert’s Rules of Order, and clarified public participation procedures.

Motion and Vote: Tom Cosker makes a motion to accept and adopt the new By-laws as amended by November 2025, Jennifer Lussier seconds, vote passed unanimously (meeting two-thirds requirement).

- iii. Priorities & Legislative Recommendations
Final legislative priorities documents were distributed. Members are encouraged to review the annual report for full context and rationale behind priorities.
- iv. Legislative Breakfast Update



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Jeff Spahr motions to amend the agenda to add the discussion regarding the legislative breakfast to the agenda, State Representative Dan Gaiewski second, vote unanimous in favor.

February 25, 2026- The breakfast is expected to run approximately 9:00–10:00 a.m. in the back dining room at the Legislative Office Building, followed by the regular meeting (exact room/location still being finalized). A finalized flyer (updated by Brandalyn and shared by Representative Comey) is ready for distribution pending final approval. Christine will share last year's sample email language for inviting legislators. Members are encouraged to: attend the breakfast, invite their local legislators. Use the sample email letter that will be provided and attach the one-pager (with a link to the full report). Send invitations promptly to secure RSVPs and headcount.

VII. Membership/Nominating Report/Updates (9:25 a.m.)

Goviana Morales has transitioned into the role of Membership Committee Chair. There are currently 8 vacancies: 3 student positions, 1 parent position, 2 legislative positions, 1 teacher position, and 1 charter school position. Several applications have been received and will be reviewed soon. Updates are forthcoming.

VIII. Legislative Report/Updates (9:30 a.m.)

The committee plans to hold standing Thursday morning meetings at 9:30 a.m., serving as placeholders to be used as needed. There are currently no active legislative proposals affecting the group's priorities, so the immediate meeting was canceled. However, members agreed to meet next Thursday (the 5th) to proactively strategize advocacy efforts rather than wait for bills to be raised. Tom Cosker agreed to serve as Legislative Committee Co-Chair. Proactive legislative engagement is encouraged.

New Business

IX. Roundtable (9:45 a.m.)

Concerns were raised that many parents, particularly those with outplaced students, are unaware of the Transition Bill of Rights. Members discussed the need for better dissemination of this document.

X. BSE Updates (10:50 a.m.)



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State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Update:

Alycia Trakas presented an update on Connecticut's SSIP (Indicator 17 of the State Performance Plan), which focuses on improving 3rd-grade reading outcomes for students with IEPs. The state uses an ELA Performance Index (0–100 scale) based on statewide assessments. Connecticut has met its SSIP targets for the past three years, including the current reporting year (most recent score: 50.17, exceeding the target of 49). The state will soon begin resetting baselines and developing new targets, including stakeholder engagement to inform future goals, theory of action, and evaluation questions.

Key infrastructure and improvement efforts include:

Cross-agency SSIP leadership collaboration (including literacy and dyslexia offices).
Ongoing professional learning and technical assistance.
Structured literacy training (e.g., Orton-Gillingham, Wilson).
Data-Based Individualization through the CT Intensive Intervention Initiative.
Members were encouraged to complete a stakeholder survey to inform next year's planning.

WestEd Special Education System Review:

Bryan Klimkiewicz provided an overview of the WestEd evaluation of Connecticut's special education system. The report includes recommendations in four major areas: vision and leadership, infrastructure improvements, strategy activation and instructional impact, and accountability and continuous improvement. Immediate action: BSE posting a new legal position to strengthen dispute resolution capacity. Ongoing updates will be provided at future meetings.

Legislative Reporting Updates:

Outplacement & FBA/BIP reporting, new law requires districts to report when a student is outplaced without a completed Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). 12 submissions from 11 LEAs have been received to date. This is a reporting requirement (not a waiver process). Discussion emphasized ensuring placements follow Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements and are not delayed improperly.

Staff Vacancy Reporting- approved private special education programs and RESCs must report vacancies lasting more than 10 days. 4 submissions have been received. Programs must notify parents and districts and provide updates on vacancy status.



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Special Education Workforce & Grants:

A new \$500,000 competitive grant aims to strengthen the special education teacher pipeline, particularly for paraeducators pursuing certification.

Updates were shared on:

MTSS framework revision (replacing the 2008 SRBI document) is in the works.
SEED (Special Education Enhancement and Development) grants and High-Quality Special Education Incentive grants (~\$20 million available). New prior written notice guidance documents. Autism eligibility worksheet revisions (finalizing after public comment).

Adjourn: 10:32 a.m.- Lena Esposito motions to adjourn, Brandalyn Willans seconds, vote 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
4.	January 28, 2026	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
5.	February 25, 2026	10:00-1:00 pm	Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Ave #5100, Hartford
6.	March 25, 2026	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting
7.	April 22, 2026	10:00-2:00 pm	1 Riverside Dr, East Hartford
8.	May 20, 2026 (Tentative-if needed)	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting