



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



**Connecticut State Advisory Council for Special Education**

**Full Council Committee Meeting**

**Date: February 25, 2026**

**Time: 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

**Zoom Meeting:**

<https://ctserc.zoom.us/j/94786855861?pwd=i7KSgmhMMnDMBabq7bQRbPzhJ9JUJYZ.1>

**Meeting ID: 947 8685 5861**

**Passcode: 224370**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Missy Wrigley (chairperson), Brandalyn Williams (vice chairperson), Brian K. Smith, Catherine Summ, Representative Robin Comey, Jeffry Spahr, Jennifer Lussier (secretary), Eve Hurley, Lori Fortuna, Louis Tallarita, Nachi Bhatt, Tom Cosker, Mary Beth Bruder, Susan Yankee, Kim Williamson, Jonathan Metcalf, Ana Wittig, Stacey Palker, Meghan Gallagher, Amy Messinger, Jake Shumbo, Goviana Morales, Dimpny Malvania, Sean Cronin (CSDE), Bryan Klimkiewicz (CSDE)

**Members Absent:** Representative Dan Gaiewski, Evan Simlack (Janelle Marella), Michael Scanlon, Lena Esposito, Allison Kopie, Cassandra Reilly, Nancy DeCrescenzo, Denise Drummond, State Senator Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox

**SERC Administration:** Lauren Johns, Christine Kuehlewind

**I. Call to Order and Welcome: 10:37 am**

**II. Council Purpose and Function**

**III. Introduction/Roles**

**IV. Public Comment: 10:44 a.m.**

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

Call In: 929-205-6099

Meeting ID: 947 8685 5861

Participant Code: 224370



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**V. Consent Agenda: 10:45 a.m.**

- i. Approval of Full Council Minutes from January 28, 2026: Tom Cosker motions to approve the meeting minutes as written, Goviana Morales seconds, Amy Messinger and Jake Shumbo abstains, vote unanimous in favor to approve.

**Old Business**

**VI. Executive Matters: 10:46 a.m.**

- i. Discussion- Legislative Breakfast  
Originally scheduled event was canceled due to severe weather. Rescheduling is challenging due to space, timing, and legislative session constraints. Alternative options discussed: hosting an afternoon or midday event (e.g., coffee, brunch, or informal gathering), holding the event on a different day (not necessarily aligned with SAC meetings), and exploring different locations or flexible formats. Coordination with legislative activities: potential collaboration with an upcoming dyslexia documentary screening hosted by a legislator. The proposed idea was to leverage that event for SAC visibility and engagement. It was mentioned that timing is critical because legislative session is already underway, limiting opportunities to influence new legislation this year. Focus may shift toward relationship-building rather than immediate policy impact.
- ii. March 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting- This SAC Full Council meeting will be an in-person/hybrid meeting at the Lyceum Conference Center in Hartford. Time frame will be determined shortly.

**VII. Membership/Nominating Report/Updates: 11:00 a.m.**

No major changes since the last update.

Current vacancies: 9 total, including:

3 student positions (1 potential candidate identified)

1 paraprofessional

2 legislative

1 teacher

1 charter school

1 Department of Correction

11 applications received, mostly from special education teachers. Ongoing effort to coordinate a meeting to review applicants. Continued need for candidates in underrepresented roles (para, legislative, charter, DOC). Suggestion to contact a former DOC representative (Rita) for guidance on filling that role. Council currently has 28 filled positions out of 37 total.

**VIII. Legislative Report/Updates: 11:04 a.m.**



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Legislative outreach paused due to high volume of emails to the Education Committee. Plan to wait before sending follow-ups. Recent hearings covered topics like cell phones in schools and homeschooling, but nothing requiring immediate SAC action. Existing proposals already include protections for students with IEPs. Team will monitor future hearings and respond as needed.

## **New Business**

### **IX. Roundtable: 11:09 a.m.**

Disability Rights Connecticut released a report on out-of-state placements, in collaboration with the Office of Child Advocate.

### **X. BSE Updates : 11:12 a.m.**

Leadership Change: New head of OSEP: Erin McHugh (replacing acting director David Cantrell).

Guidance & Systems Work: Updating 2008 SRBI guidance into a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. Includes: updated guidance document, district self-assessment tools, and future training and technical assistance. Focus Groups for families (input on support systems), and educators.

Surveys: Connecticut Comprehensive Literacy Survey due March 23. Ongoing request to increase participation in Parent Guide survey.

Grants: Special Education Enhancement & Expansion Grant: Applications submitted; under review. The funds must support direct student services only. 50% already distributed; remainder coming in April. Continued funding expected next year.

Parent Guide Update: Collaboration with CPAC and SERC to modernize the guide. Possible SAC subgroup to contribute. Goal: make the guide more interactive and accessible, not just static.

Data Systems & Feedback: CTSEDS survey results: average usability rating: 3/5, improvements noted, but issues remain (navigation, training access, MFA login delays—now being fixed). Some inequity in training access across districts.

Performance Monitoring: annual district determinations based on compliance and outcomes. 107 districts met requirements; others need support. Challenges include: chronic absenteeism and delays in evaluation timelines. SAC engaged in discussion on improving indicators of effectiveness, including: graduation rates, dropout rates,



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assessments, inclusion (LRE), preschool outcomes, and parent involvement.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): discussion emphasized balancing inclusion (time with non-disabled peers) with student outcomes. LRE metrics include multiple categories (e.g., highly inclusive vs. separate settings). Concerns were raised about focusing too heavily on placement percentages without considering whether students are actually benefiting. Participants supported combining LRE data with academic or functional outcomes. Connecticut’s inclusion rates have not fully returned to pre-COVID levels. Importance of Supports in Inclusive Settings: Nachi Bhatt highlighted that increasing inclusion must be paired with adequate supports (e.g., supplemental aids/services) to ensure student success.

**Adjourn: 11:58 a.m. Jake Shumbo motions to adjourn, 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	10:30 am -12:00 pm	Virtual Meeting
6.	March 25, 2026	9:30 am-12:30 pm	Lyceum Resource & Conference Center, 227 Lawrence St, Hartford
7.	April 22, 2026	10:00-2:00 pm	Goodwin University, 1 Riverside Drive, East Hartford
8.	May 20, 2026 (Tentative-if needed)	9:00-10:30 am	Virtual Meeting