**STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SSEAC)**

**to the Virginia Board of Education (BOE)**

**Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)**

# SSEAC Meeting Minutes Draft

July 13-15, 2022

SHERATON RICHMOND AIRPORT HOTEL

5501 Eubank Road

Sandston, Virginia 23150

## Wednesday, July 13, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. Candace Barnett, Member-at-Large

Ms. Margarete Jeffer, Chair

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Mychael Willon, Vice Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Mrs. Lisa Crafton (Recorder), SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

### Executive Committee Meeting

**Margarete Jeffer,** SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m. and welcomed members.

### Business Session

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was distributed prior to the meeting via email. Mr. Willon made a motion to approve the agenda, and Dr. Bronaugh seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Jeffer shared a recording of the June 2022 Board of Education meeting in which SSEAC recommendations were presented and the questions that were asked by the Board.

Ms. Jeffer reviewed the SSEAC subcommittee roster and proposed changes in membership based on changes on the Board. No revisions were offered.

**Review of Goals**

A summary of the personal goals identified during the March 10-11, 2022, SSEAC meeting was shared by Ms. Jeffer.

Members were asked, “What are the most pressing issues in special education?” Responses included:

* Staffing, teachers leaving the field or going to another division for a greater salary.
* Foster care increasing and lack of placements.
* How is the VDOE articulating the priority special education should have with school divisions?
* Teacher candidates are struggling with licensure requirements – assessments for licensure have biases and candidates who qualify for accommodations must apply for them with each administration. Can they be granted for a year?
* How to address attendance in the era of COVID-19.
* The impact of the pandemic was greater for many students with disabilities: How do you provide needed support? Can there be more discussion of extended year eligibility?
* On the other hand, COVID-19 affected all students and its impact on students has led to greater referrals for special education where a student does not have a disability but is struggling as a result of the time out of school.
* School divisions face challenges in transportation to private schools, especially in rural communities given the lack of school bus drivers and limited options for contracted services and the cost of gasoline.
* Accountability concerns - not tailoring services appropriately for needs.
* Need for a third diploma option.
* How to hold staff accountable when there are no other options for hiring a replacement.
* Administrators need greater understanding of special education – the VDOE modules are helpful.
* Changing times and preference for fast/short bits of information that are technology-based versus traditional text and lecture – teachers need to be trained to use technology effectively.
* What can we do for teachers to improve perception of teaching and reward good teachers?

Item 4: Presentation suggestions compiled during the March 2022 meeting were reviewed and edited.

**Meeting Schedule**

The Executive Committee added March 2-3, 2023, and July 13-14, 2023, to the 2022-2023 meeting dates.

Ms. Jeffer adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

## Thursday, July 14, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Member-at- Large

Ms. Suzanne Bowers, Ex-officio

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter (absent)

Ms. DaleAnna Curry

Mr. Adam Dreyfus

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski (absent)

Ms. Amy Hunter

Ms. Margarete Jeffer, Chair

Ms. Kellie Lockerby

Teri Morgan (absent)

Ms. Mary Frances Morse (absent)

Ms. Caren Phipps (absent)

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Nathan Selove (absent)

Mr. Brandon Stees

Ms. Sandi Thorpe

Mr. Mychael Willon, Vice Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Kendra Belcher, SEPI, SESS

Mrs. Lisa Crafton (Recorder), SEFFE, SESS

Peter Grabowski, SEFFE, SESS

Mrs. Patricia Haymes, ODRAS, SESS

Mrs. Tracy Lee, SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Ms. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

**Margarete Jeffer,** SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. She welcomed attendees and asked members and VDOE staff to introduce themselves by sharing name, role, something unique, and why they are on the SSEAC. Ms. Jeffer also welcomed guests. She reminded everyone of the purpose of SSEAC.

### Business Session

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was distributed prior to the meeting via email. Mr. Willon made a motion to approve the agenda, and Dr. Bronaugh seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from previous SSEAC Meeting**

Dr. Bronaugh made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Willon seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Executive Committee recommendations**

Ms. Jeffer shared a summary of the recommendations brainstormed at the March 2022 meeting; the recommendations were edited by the Executive Committee during the previous evening. Ms. Jeffer asked the committee to review these recommendations for discussion on Friday. Ms. Hunter requested that surrogate be added to the bullet related to child welfare.

**Other business as deemed necessary**

Ms. Jeffer noted that we need to appoint two members-at-large to fill open positions. Ms. Bowers asked about voting status. Ms. Jeffer shared that Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) is now a voting member.

**The Annual Report on Dispute Resolutions**

***Pat Haymes*,** *Director, Office of Dispute Resolutions and Administrative Services (ODRAS), SESS, VDOE*

Refer to PowerPoint “2021-2022 Dispute Resolution Overview”

Mrs. Haymes shared an overview of counts with preliminary 2021-2022 data included. State complaints and due processes are at a record high while mediation is approaching pre-pandemic levels. This is occurring across the nation. The first year of data for facilitated Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings were included. Ms. Bowers asked if a facilitated IEP needed to be pursued prior to mediation. Mrs. Haymes explained the facilitated IEP is not required prior to mediation. Potential benefits of the facilitated IEP versus mediation were presented. Due process common issues were free appropriate public education (FAPE), IEP appropriateness, placement and reimbursement for private placement or tutors, IEP implementation, development, review and revision, Child Find, evaluation, eligibility, and independent educational evaluations (IEEs). Complaints are becoming increasingly more complex with a variety of issues. Challenges with staffing and its relationship to complaints were discussed. Options while unable to provide services could be reimbursing family if they can access a service or be prepared to provide compensatory education. Mr. Willon asked what the SSEAC could do to reduce complaints and disputes. Mrs. Haymes responded that communication is critical and developing a positive relationship between families and educators. Mr. Millward added that his office offers an alternative to the complaint and dispute process which incorporates these recommendations. Mrs. Haymes recommended the [CADRE website](https://www.cadreworks.org/) as a resource.

**Role and Responsibilities of the SSEAC**

**Hank Millward,** *Director, Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement (SEFFE), SESS, VDOE*

Refer to PowerPoint “Roles and Responsibilities of SSEAC Membership”

Mr. Millward reviewed SSEAC roles and responsibilities. The SSEAC is mandated in the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA 2004). Required membership was reviewed. Members serve for three-year terms that can be renewed for a second term. Mr. Millward emphasized that SSEAC is to advise on unmet needs. The number of meetings can be adjusted, if necessary. Mr. Millward noted how critical constituency reports are to this process and encouraged more reports be shared at meetings. (Constituency reports should be emailed to the secretary for inclusion in the minutes; members should send reports to [pxpopp@wm.edu](mailto:pxpopp@wm.edu).) Unmet needs can be identified through coordination with local SEAC. The *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA) requirements were reviewed as it relates to SSEAC. Mr. Millward emphasized that three or more SSEAC members constitutes a meeting; therefore, SSEAC business should not be discussed if not conducted as an official meeting. Ms. Jeffer noted that the by-laws state attendance should be monitored. Mr. Millward provided clarification that ex-officio members can vote.

**Ombudsman Report on Constituency Issues**

**Peter Grabowski,** *Special Education Ombudsman, SEFFE, SESS, VDOE, and* **Chiquita Seaborne,** *Family Engagement Specialist, SEFFE, SESS, VDOE*

Refer to PowerPoint “State SEAC Ombudsman”

A summary of data and trends since January 2021 was presented. The ombudsman process is independent of the formal dispute resolution process. While Mr. Grabowski is the official ombudsman, the entire office acts as a team and fulfills the role. There has been an increase in contacts with the office since January 2021. This is seen as a positive sign of awareness that the office is available for assistance. Virtual meetings during the pandemic likely increased awareness of the office, as well. Graph of contacts in the PowerPoint reflect the number of people, not the number of individual communications. Notable trends each quarter were described. Mr. Willon suggested ombudsman should be ombudsperson. Ms. Bowers suggested receiving quarterly trends at each meeting rather than annually. Ms. Bowers asked how the trends are used by the office. Ms. Seaborne shared that deeper analyses are being done and resources and trainings are developed based on the trends. Ms. Lee shared an example: a previous trend related to SEACs and lack of awareness about them by local school boards led to a proposal submitted for the next Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) conference. The information presented is shared with upper VDOE administration. Ms. Curry asked if the data could be analyzed based on times in the school year.

**Report on Follow-up to Public Comment from Previous Meetings**

**Hank Millward,** *Director, Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement (SEFFE), SESS, VDOE*

Mr. Millward addressed two written comments received at the last meeting. The first comment asked why the private school regulations require parental consent for fundraising, but there is nothing in any regulations that addresses the same for public school children. This comment was addressed directly with the constituent. The second related to the type of transportation provided for a student and was also addressed directly with the constituent explaining that how transportation is provided varies and the need to change the perception of a certain vehicle should be seen as stigmatizing.

**Working Lunch –** Ms. Jeffer reminded members that lunch is a working lunch and members should discuss ideas for future presentations and committee goals/objectives.

### Call to Order

**Margarete Jeffer,** Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

Mr. Millward clarified that committee members can ask clarifying questions of someone providing public comment; however, they should not engage in a discussion/conversation.

Mr. Willon read the requirements for public comment. The committee received one public comment related to implications/considerations when students turn 18 years old. What are the types of resources provided to parents to help them understand these considerations related to special education? How is SSEAC communicating this to local SEAC?

No written public comment was submitted.

Added to agenda while awaiting the arrival of Dr. Hollins; Ms. Jeffer opened discussion for nominations for Members-at-large. Sandi Thorpe and Dale Anna Curry were nominated and shared their reasons for pursuing the position. Both nominees received unanimous votes by show of hands.

**Department of Special Education and Student Services (SESS), Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Updates**

**Dr. Samantha M. Hollins,** *Assistant Superintendent, SESS, VDOE*

Refer to PowerPoint “VDOE Updates”

Dr. Hollins acknowledged the importance of the SSEAC and thanked members for their service. Special Education and Student Services (SESS) is the largest department at VDOE. The office is available to follow up on requests from the SSEAC. Dr. Hollins identified the goal to ensure all educators have an understanding of special education and the needed skillset to support students with disabilities. Academies offered by SESS were described. Ms. Barnett commented that her experience as a member of Aspiring Special Education Leaders Academy (ASELA) was one of the best experiences in her career. There are already approximately 23 new special education directors for 2022-2023. Priority topics for this year include transitions (beginning with early childhood) and literacy (including secondary literacy). New General Assembly requirements were reviewed: 1) training on IEP process to local school divisions, including training modules which are required for all IEP Team participants except parents; and 2) inclusive self-assessment and action planning tool. Dr. Hollins provided an overview of initiatives that are being developed. Office of Students Services (OSS) has received $9.2 million in grants since Dr. Hollins returned to the VDOE which demonstrates the additional support the Department has sought to support its initiatives. Greatest staffing need in the state are school psychologists. One initiative to address this is the Career and Learning Center (CLC) for School Mental Health Professionals Student Services funded with one of the grant opportunities mentioned above.

**Constituency Reports**

Ms. Jeffer requested the format be commendations, recommendations

**Region 1 – Margarete Jeffer**

Need for greater alignment of needs and services/accommodations in IEP. Teacher retention and pay.

**Region 2 – Mychael Willon**

Teacher shortages and the retention of staff remain problematic. School divisions are offering increased salaries and, in some cases, sign-on bonuses, which contribute to the problem by creating competition and inequity across divisions. There are concerns about support staffing, like special education paraprofessionals, as well. Mental health issues are still challenging the region, as divisions try to hire more counselors and social workers. Local SEACs also have problems keeping members on their committees, which creates problems as they try to make recommendations to their school boards, often not reaching quorum at their meetings for months.  
  
On a personal note, I would like to thank James Madison University (JMU) for hosting and coordinating the “I’m Determined” Conference last month. My son had the opportunity to attend and really appreciated the opportunity to learn and network with other special needs students from across the Commonwealth. The parental component was exceptional, as well.

**Region 3 – Kellie Lockerby**

The representative has had difficulty getting larger school division SEACs in the region to respond to requests for input.

* Concerns
  + Teacher shortages
  + Lack of speech/language therapists
  + Need to provide compensatory services due to staffing issues
  + Rural areas have the added challenge of the current cost of gasoline which further discourages recruitment

**Region 4** - **Amy Hunter**

* Commendation
  + Kudos to all the local special education directors, school administrators, and their teams, who are working so diligently this summer to ensure that our schools are well-staffed for the coming school year.
* Priorities/Concerns
* Staffing/Training
* Numerous open positions, including teachers, instructional assistants, and related service providers
* Many new administrators who need special education training for their new roles
* Concern about potentially overwhelming new teachers with the volume of required training, especially provisional teachers who are also taking graduate courses
* Mental Health
* A significant issue for teachers, students, other school staff, and family members
* Unique concerns regarding students with disabilities
* Inclusive Practices
* SEACs are reviewing the results of federal program monitoring visits
* Concern that the new Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) assessment format may unintentionally result in less inclusion, as special education teachers focus on teaching the new assessment content
* Need for education of elementary school administrators and other IEP Team members about the content of high school VAAP versus standard diploma requirements, and the implications of a student being placed on the “VAAP track” in elementary school

**Region 5 –** absent, no report

**Region 6 –** vacant, no report

**Region 7 –** vacant, no report

**Region 8 – Candace Barnett**

Not currently having meetings during the summer.

Ms. Barnett has created a Google Doc that is collecting SEAC information for all Region 8 SEACs. She has shared with the Regional Director representative a request to ask all regions to appoint someone to do this.

Schools that receive free lunch for all because of majority below poverty, Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) relief cards were provided to be very helpful but are ending.

Modules for IEP users, sharing with parents through school websites and Facebook.

Sharing meeting dates and locations ASAP.

**The Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS)** – absent, no report

**Teacher Representative** - **DaleAnna Curry**

* Commendations
* Kudos to the VDOE for continuing into the eleventh consecutive year earning the U.S. Department of Education’s highest rating for improving outcomes for students with disabilities and compliance with the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA).
* Kudos to Governor Youngkin for approving the State budget and providing additional funds for higher compensation for Virginia’s Teachers, especially as the CARES funding ends.
* Kudos to the VDOE for setting the VAAP passing rate scores. While continuing to be challenging through the Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning (VESOL), the VDOE kept the scores at an attainable rate for the majority of the students with disabilities within Commonwealth of Virginia.
* Concerns:
* Concerns for recruiting and retaining qualified teachers holding endorsements in Special Education.
* Continued concerns due to lack of substitutes, especially in smaller localities, along with Special Education (SPED) collaborative teachers being pulled to cover classes as substitutes.
* Concerns for COVID-19 recovery services, especially for upper elementary students who may have been identified at a younger age. In addition, largely due to the pandemic, the identification of concerns has been postponed, delaying eligibility processes.
* Concerns with the increase of the numbers of identification of students with disabilities (SWD) versus numbers of teachers for SWD.
* Complaints:
* Need for more qualified teachers, especially teachers of color and males
* Need for more qualified substitutes
* Need for more money for SPED resources and classroom supplies and supports
* Need for more qualified paraprofessionals
* Continued complaints about pay scale for SPED teachers and workload versus their general education peers
* Need for more time to complete expectations

**Private Schools – Adam Dreyfus**

Concern with rate setting initiated by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report. While not in effect at this time, *Comprehensive Services Act* (CSA) has new software that is anticipating this. Private Day programs are getting more referrals and there are waiting lists. More need than capacity especially for students with more significant needs and autism. Observing increase in mental health events among staff. Questions from parents reflect the current political discourse. Concerns with staffing and retention. Regulatory requirements and time requirement to complete paperwork have been challenging.

**Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice** – absent, no report

**Transition/Vocational Education – Rusty Eddins**

Region 2 Interagency Transition Training will be August 2, 2022, from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Mariners Museum and Park in Newport News. Registration flyers will be disseminated through VDOE to transition teachers in Region 2 school systems.

At the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) multiple positions are available and WWRC is involved in restructuring training. PREP Program positions will be infused into the training structure and a semester system will begin in August.

Postsecondary Education/Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) no longer has to limit assessment activities for SWD students in plan status. Students in full Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) status with Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) can get a Vocational Evaluation with potentially full recommendations for remediation and future training.

Most services through DARS and WWRC require significant additional documentation in the AWARE case management system.

PERT's Credential week in June had 9 out of 10 students earning a Retail Fundamentals Credential. This is a work credential that could be applied to high school diploma requirements.

PERT will resume having New Team Trainings on campus January 5-6, 2023. Twenty–five local PERT team members that are VDOE Transition staff will come to WWRC and participate in two training days. The training will heighten participants' understanding of the PERT process and provide exposure to a student’s perspective on PERT assessment. Participants will sample Vocational Evaluation Assessment areas, Independent Living Skills, and Recreation/Leisure skills assessment activities.  
  
**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities – Brandon Stees**

Concern with effective inclusion efforts. Brandon served on a panel entitled, “The Heart of the IEP.”

**Higher Education – Dr. Dani Bronaugh**

* Concerns
* Grant cycles for State grants – RFPs come out during the summer when faculty are away and funding does not start at the beginning of the academic year.
* Testing accommodations for teacher candidates with disabilities, having to request accommodations each time they take the test if they do not pass it and it takes three weeks to get approval. Need a way that accommodations are in effect for one year.

**Local Director of Special Education – Sandi Thorpe**

* Concerns:
  + Recruitment of highly qualified staff.
  + Recruitment of any staff.
  + Retention of staff.
  + How to meet the needs of all our non-qualified staff.
  + Parent attendance at SEAC.
  + There is a lot with the JLRAC recommendations, lots of new things being asked of teachers, and administrators in a short amount of time.
  + Overall giving of grace over what is going to be another stressful year.

**Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) – Suzanne Bowers**

**Our top three current STATEWIDE trends from intakes this quarter include (in order of call volume):**

1. IEP Questions - Arlington (27), Fairfax (21), Chesterfield (13), Virginia Beach (12)
2. Information Request – Fairfax (25), Wythe (12), Prince William (12)
3. Behavior Unwanted – Chesapeake (17), Suffolk (6), Newport News (4)

**Additional Concerns (noted statewide):**

1. Parents are being told that if they do not sign the IEP, the IEP will be locked, and they will have to start the entire process over. We believe this occurs in counties using the Statewide IEP and the VDOE has addressed the issue, but we continue to get calls.
2. Early childhood IEP Teams are not inviting regular education teachers to IEP meetings citing either the LEA “does not offer preschool so do not apply” or since “children transitioning from Early Intervention (EI) are not of the age where they would be in a school-based program, a general education teacher does not participate in preschool IEPs.” This is happening in several divisions across the Commonwealth and is not isolated to one division.
3. School systems are citing lack of staff as a reason not to meet evaluation deadlines or not being able to provide services to students. Specifically, Prince William County and Fairfax County have told parents this.
4. Early childhood teams are not doing comprehensive evaluations. Parents are being told Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) only does developmental assessments at this age as other evaluations – e.g., psychological, educational, speech, Occupational Therapy (OT), and Physical Therapy (PT) “are not appropriate for ages 2-5.” Speech is frequently a “wait and see” until the student is in kindergarten, heard often from Fairfax County and Chesterfield County. Parents are also told that OT and PT do not start until elementary school or since they are related services, evaluations will not be completed until after the student is found eligible. The related services evaluations comment has been heard from several families going through the initial process in all grade levels, not specific to early childhood.

**Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired** – absent, no report

**Project HOPE-Virginia – Dr. Patricia Popp**

* Office is completing the 2021-2022 federal program monitoring and planning for next year.
* Continuing to finalize American Rescue Plan – Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds to the 100 school divisions that applied.
* Reviewing applications for three part-time positions in the HOPE office to focus on special projects related to the state ARP-HCY funding. We anticipate having the positions filled by the fall.
* Dr. Popp has been developing state guidance regarding the intersection of IDEA and *McKinney-Vento Act* for responsibilities and processes. Ms. Sabrina Gross is working on this project with her. The draft has been shared with Iocal liaisons. If you are interested in reviewing a draft, please contact Dr. Popp at [pxpopp@wm.edu](mailto:pxpopp@wm.edu).
* Foster care Joint Guidance is being revised. Focus groups on special education issues are being planned. Let Pat know if you are interested in participating.
* Both homeless education and foster care educational stability virtual trainings are being planned for back-to-school. Anyone who is interested is welcome to join. Registration links for these sessions will be posted soon, and can be found at the [Project HOPE Professional Development webpage](https://education.wm.edu/centers/hope/professionaldev/index.php).

**Foster Care – Monica Cabell**

Updates: Continuing to partner with Project HOPE to provide training. Approximately 5,000 children are in foster care and 4,000 of them are school-age. This is a return to pre-pandemic numbers and increases are being seen in the field.

**Subcommittee Meetings**

Ms. Jeffer reviewed the subcommittees and the focus of each one. Ms. Jeffer maintained membership from last year and assigned new members who were asked to let Ms. Jeffer know if they wished to be on a different committee.

Subcommittees were asked to identify a chair, select one priority that will be the focus, and identify goals for this year. Subcommittees were asked to review last year’s public comment report/constituency reports and identify issues that might be able to incorporate this year.

Following workgroup meetings, subcommittees reported out chairs and priorities. Additional work is planned for Friday.

**Policy and Regulation.** This subcommittee focuses on initiatives at the state level that either result in policy and regulations or have an impact on policy and regulations as they pertain to students with disabilities.

* Chair: Kellie Lockerby
* Focus: Bridge the diploma gap

**Family Engagement and Community Outreach.** This subcommittee provides recommendations to the VDOE on family engagement and community outreach best practices. This subcommittee educates families, students, and school/community partners on how to strengthen relationships and support one another in the education of students with disabilities.

* Chair: Suzanne Bowers
* One priority: Ensure that families are provided opportunities to consider long-range planning and outcomes from the beginning of the special education process.

**Student Achievement and Student Outcomes.** This subcommittee focuses on achievement data and the goals under the state plan for students with disabilities. This subcommittee focuses not only on the federal expectations but also on the growth in achievement for students with disabilities and strategies that are being promoted at the state level to meet expectations.

* Chair: Sandi Thorpe
* Priority: Increase competency among all instructional staff

Dr. Bronaugh moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Willon seconded. Ms. Jeffer adjourned the meeting at 4:53 p.m.

## Friday, July 15, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Member-at-Large

Ms. Suzanne Bowers, Ex-officio

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. Monica Cabell (absent)

Dr. Dennis Carter (absent)

Ms. DaleAnna Curry

Mr. Adam Dreyfus

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins (absent)

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski (absent)

Ms. Amy Hunter

Ms. Margarete Jeffer, Chair

Ms. Kellie Lockerby

Teri Morgan (absent)

Ms. Mary Frances Morse (absent)

Ms. Caren Phipps

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Nathan Selove (absent)

Mr. Brandon Stees

Ms. Sandi Thorpe

Mr. Mychael Willon, Vice Chair (absent) **VDOE Representatives:**

Mrs. Lisa Crafton (Recorder), SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Ms. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

**Margarete Jeffer,** SSEAC Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. She welcomed attendees and asked members and VDOE staff to introduce themselves by sharing their names, role, something unique, and why they are on the SSEAC.

### Business Session

**Review/Approval of the Agenda**

The agenda was distributed prior to the meeting via email. Dr. Bronaugh made a motion to approve the agenda, and Ms. Bowers seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Subcommittee Meetings**

Ms. Jeffer presented the operations of the SSEAC and asked subcommittees to focus on priorities and actions that can have long-range impact. Ms. Bowers identified the concern that the same issues are arising over the years and there may be items that the SSEAC can address with specific actions that lead to a resolution. The misalignment in timing for funding identified by the higher education representative over multiple years was an example. Ms. Jeffer requested the SSEAC strengthen a solution focus in its deliberations. Ms. Hunter suggested the agenda add an “action steps”/”unfinished business” section.

Ms. Jeffer suggested an additional diploma option and teacher licensure as possible priorities.   
Ms. Caren Phipps proposed bringing the diploma issue before the Commission on Youth.

**Full Committee Discussion**

The subcommittees reconvened as a full committee and reported out.

**Policy and Regulation.** This subcommittee focuses on initiatives at the state level that either result in policy and regulations or have an impact on policy and regulations as they pertain to students with disabilities.

* Chair: Kellie Lockerby
* Focus: add a third diploma
* Goals/Actions
  + Presentation(s) on the JLARC report, Applied Studies Diploma graduation rates/work outcomes/observed barriers, Mr. Jeff Phenicie to share data on federal monitoring data
  + Explore the impact of true diploma option versus Applied Studies Diploma
  + Present SSEAC concerns regarding Applied Studies Diploma at a Commission on Youth meeting (September 2022)
* Focus: Teacher pay, retention, licensure, training/funding
* Goals/Actions
  + Presentation from Teacher Licensure: initiative and reciprocity with other states
  + Teacher pay scale
  + Teacher education: special education classes and internship for all teachers
* What is state leadership’s vision for special education?
  + Invite the Governor, State Superintendent, and State Secretary of Education to a SSEAC meeting
* Prioritized list
  + Teacher education
  + Better education for parents to get services and resources
  + Practical collaboration between school and parents to improve student behavioral and academic skills
  + Funds students can use in public versus private schools – parent can choose and use the funding appropriately

**Family Engagement and Community Outreach.** This subcommittee provides recommendations to the VDOE on family engagement and community outreach best practices. To educate families, students, and school/community partners on how to strengthen relationships and support one another in the education of students with disabilities.

* Chair: Suzanne Bowers
* One priority: Ensure that families are provided opportunities to consider long-range planning and outcomes from the beginning of the special education process.
* Goals/Actions:
  + Presentation on early childhood initiatives, such as: IPOP, possible presenters include Dawn Hendricks (VDOE, ECSE), Sandy Wilberger (VCU, T-TAC), Jaye Harvey (PD Essentials)
  + One-pager for age two through grade 2 that explains what to expect when the IEP Team begins to discuss graduation tracks in third grade (PEATC will work on)
  + Create a one-pager of resources and vehicles that can support families, such as: PEATC activity – the treasure chest – brainstorm resources, newsletter with an alumnus of the month that highlights a former student with a disability (can help parents with young children envision the future and encourage families to open the newsletter – interest in seeing who was selected); videos that highlight success stories
  + Recommendation: Livestreaming/video of SSEAC meetings - Organize presentations by topic for parents to access later
  + Encourage more public comment – including strategies for local SEAC
  + Explore requiring meaningful transition planning in earlier grades
  + Should SSEAC approve waiver for exceeding one percent? - ask for LEA data on segregated settings
  + Resources to help parents understand the benefits of less restrictive environments (LRE) and understand the impact of “modified”
  + Have IEP online modified so critical decision points must be considered and unpacked to increase visibility
  + Use Applied Studies one-pager (or similar document) before less restrictive setting is recommended
  + Each LEA have an IEP auditor to ensure they are in compliance. Consider a pilot with measures to identify outcomes, such as: student achievement (broad), parent complaints/disputes, findings. Region 2 has done this in the past. Auditor should be a presence in the school.
  + Presentation on flexibility in credit accrual for diplomas (consider Student Services – Joe Wharff or Sarah Bazemore and Marianne Moore)

**Student Achievement and Student Outcomes.** This subcommittee focuses on achievement data and the goals under the state plan for students with disabilities. This subcommittee focuses not only on the federal expectations, but also on the growth in achievement for students with disabilities and strategies that are being promoted at the state level to meet expectations.

* Chair: Sandi Thorpe
* Priority: Increase competency among all instructional staff through programmatic and structural strategies.
* Goals
  + Focus on achievement data
  + Growth in achievement for students with disabilities and strategies that are being promoted at the state level
  + VDOE can support school divisions to build in time for planning/PD in work week – learning from pandemic, such as: continue four-day traditional school days plus one day of virtual learning
  + VDOE can establish regional pay scales to support school divisions in retaining related services staff, including benefits (consider similar review for special education teachers)

Student outcomes cannot improve without effective staff and highly qualified teachers.

**Future Meeting Agenda Discussion**

**Margarete Jeffer,** SSEAC Chair

Ms. Jeffer summarized action items identified by the subcommittees.

* Focus: Applied Studies Diploma
  + Early efforts to educate parents on critical decision points
  + Data on outcomes for students with Applied Studies diploma compared to other diploma options, any data on barriers faced due to pursuing these options
    - Presentation on update to JLARC report
    - Presentation on flexibilities in credit accrual
    - Presentation on Applied Studies Diploma
    - Data from federal and other states related to the impact of an Applied Studies Diploma
  + Consider changing Applied Studies Diploma to Applied Studies Certificate
* Focus: Teacher Retention, Recruitment, and Education
  + Presentation from Teacher Licensure
    - Incentives
    - Reciprocity
  + Mandate administrator licensure require a special education law class
  + Special education training for all teachers
  + Barriers
    - Testing and accommodations
    - Funding for class – changing process so funding will be available before students enroll in classes
* Consider inviting Governor, Secretary of Education to attend SSEAC in December, if possible.

Dr. Bronaugh moved to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Bowers seconded. Ms. Jeffer adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

**Future Meeting Dates**

* October 13-14, 2022
* December 1-2, 2022
* March 2-3, 2023
* July 13-14, 2023