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

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

**Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)**

# SSEAC Meeting Minutes Draft

December 1-2, 2022

SHERATON RICHMOND AIRPORT HOTEL

5501 Eubank Road

Sandston, Virginia 23150

## Thursday, December 1, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Member-at-Large

Ms. Suzanne Bowers (absent)

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter

Ms. DaleAnna Curry (absent)

Ms. Anne Downing (absent)

Mr. Adam Dreyfus

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski (absent)

Ms. Jen Krajewski (absent)

Ms. Amy Hunter

Ms. Margarete Jeffer, Chair (absent)

Ms. Kellie Lockerby

Ms. Mary-Frances Morse

Ms. Caren Phipps

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Nathan Selove

Mr. Brandon Stees

Ms. Sandi Thorpe

Mr. Mychael Willon, Vice Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Kendra Belcher, SEPI, SESS

Ms. Hallie Bereny, ODRAS, SESS

Mrs. Lisa Crafton, SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Peter Grabowski, SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Dawn Hendricks, ECQW, ECCE

Ms. Katrina Lee, SEPI, SESS

Ms. Teresa Lee, SEIS, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Jeff Phenicie, SEPI, SESS

Ms. Marianne Moore, SEIS, SESS

Dr. Patricia Radcliffe, SEPI, SESS

Ms. Amy Vineyard, SEPI, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

**Mychael Willon**, SSEAC Committee Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. Mr. Willon asked members and VDOE staff to introduce themselves by sharing their names and roles.

### Business Session

**Approval of Minutes from previous SSEAC Meeting**

Ms. Lockerby made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Barnette seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was distributed before the meeting via email. Mr. Millward shared that Deputy Secretary of Education, McKenzie Snow, would be joining Dr. Hollins Thursday afternoon to discuss agency priorities. Ms. Hunter made a motion to approve the agenda, as amended, and Ms. Barnette seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**SPP/APR Data Discussion and Workgroups**

***Mr. Jeff Phenicie****, Director, Office of Special Education Program Improvement (SEPI), SESS, VDOE*

The VDOE staff joined to facilitate workgroups focusing on different indicators: early childhood, transition, disproportionality, and “other” indicators. Members chose an area of interest for one hour and then rotated to a second workgroup for an additional hour.

Mr. Phenicie asked if the change in format was helpful. Many agreed the change was positive. Mr. Willon noted that the format allowed for greater interaction with staff and getting questions answered.

Ms. Hunter asked for a follow up on the one percent cap on alternate assessments. Virginia has been slightly over the one percent cap for many years. Since 2019, Virginia has requested a waiver for the one percent. This does not change the need for a corrective action plan but changes the status of being in non-compliance. The VDOE made the decision to submit the waiver this year as the participation rate was over 95 percent (higher than expected). Mr. Phenicie described efforts underway with the current corrective active plan. Staff are exploring instances where students’ primary disability suggested an alternate assessment would not be warranted. Files of students whose primary disability was learning disability (LD), speech/language, other health impairment (OHI), and emotional disability (ED) are being reviewed across multiple school divisions. This will be the third year using this practice. One critical issue when reviewing IEPs was the Team not reviewing the impact of alternate assessments on graduation and promotion.

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

***Hank Millward****, Director, SEFFE, SESS, VDOE*

Comments from emails received prior to the last meeting were shared with appropriate SESS staff. There were no action items for Mr. Millward to share with the committee.

**Musical Entertainment**

**Brandon Stees**

Mr. Stees performed a collection of holiday music on the euphonium. Mr. Stees followed his performance by sharing some of his personal story and identifying those who have helped him succeed, including his mother and father, high school counselor, teachers, and his high school paraprofessional. Mr. Stees then shared highlights of accomplishments in music and high school, including receiving a standard diploma. Currently, Mr. Stees is doing public speaking at colleges and universities, taking classes at a community college, and co-teaching in college courses for educators and other service providers planning to work with individuals with disabilities. He is interested in exploring further work in communication. In five years, he would like to continue his public speaking, pursue a four-year college degree, and become an activist for people with disabilities. He is creating a podcast, Disability Rocks!

Mr. Willon thanked Mr. Stees and noted that the purpose of the SSEAC is to ensure more students with disabilities are as successful. Mr. Stees is an inspiration to the members.

**Working Lunch**

Member used the working lunch to discuss subcommittee goals/objectives.

### Call to Order and Public Comment Period

**Mychael Willon,** SSEAC Committee Vice Chair

Mr. Willon called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and reviewed the purpose and procedure to be followed.

Ms. Lucas stated IDEA is a civil rights legislation and that there are barriers to protecting these rights in Virginia. Ms. Lucas stated that Virginia’s procedural safeguards are out-of-date and noted that a lawsuit regarding hearing officers has been filed.

Ms. Tisler spoke to the Office of Civil Rights finding regarding Fairfax County Public Schools providing Free Appropriate Public Education during the COVID pandemic. She requested all complaints and due process complaints for the past several years be reopened. Ms. Tisler stated that Virginia’s complaints and investigation process needs to be revamped.

Ms. Williams spoke to the addition of a statement waiving rights to special education that was added to Individualized Education Program (IEPs) in Chesterfield during the pandemic.

Ms. Klein requested the written version of her comments be included in the minutes:

“Good afternoon, first, I want to support Ms. Williams’s statement is accurate. Chesterfield County during COVID included language in students’ IEP‘s to rid them of any obligation to make up missed services. I want to add that they also sent letters cohering parents into signing these IEPs stripping children of their rights by implying schools could not provide any services without these being signed.

I am a lifelong resident, taxpayer, small business owner, and mother of 2 students of Chesterfield County. My children are both twice exceptional and were failed by Chesterfield as they refused to evaluate them for years despite my requests. My daughter they refused evaluations for 4 years and my son now for 5 years. At 14 years old we have just now begun evaluations.

I want to read you an email I sent back in August. After the release of the OCR investigation from Fairfax yesterday, it is very relevant.

After our due process hearing in March Chesterfield, in their closing statement said

“The hearing officer should not penalize the school board for reasonably relying upon the assurances of the VDOE’s and ED, the agencies directly responsible for overseeing the implementation of the IDEA.”

I would like to note that Samantha Hollins told me the VDOE is not responsible for oversight.

“to do so now would open the floodgates to additional claims against the school board and other Virginia school boards, who attempted in good faith to support students and staff during the unprecedented COVID-19 school closure period….”

“if the school board’s inability to implement the students IEP during the COVID-19 school closure period procedurally violated the IEP, the parents did not meet their burden of proof to demonstrate that this procedural issue substantively impacted the student’s ability to make progress within her educational program…”

“The Student, like all other CCPS students, was given access to the continuity of learning activities during the COVID-19 school closures”

They went on to say my daughter’s inability to access the curriculum was because she simply was not trying hard enough. That is Chesterfield’s stance on the issue.”

In a written closing statement from Chesterfield County Public Schools (LEA), they stated the following.

“The Hearing Officer should not penalize the School Board for reasonably relying upon the assurances of the VDOE and ED, the agencies directly responsible for overseeing the implementation of the IDEA. To do so now would **open the** **flood gates** to additional claims against the School Board and other Virginia School Boards who attempted in **good faith** to support students and staff during the unprecedented COVID-19 school closure period.”

“the School Board’s inability to implement the Student’s IEP during the COVID-19 school closure period procedurally violated the IDEA, the Parents did not meet their burden of proof to demonstrate that this procedural issue substantively impacted the Student’s **ability to make** **progress** within her educational program.”

“The Student, **like all other CCPS students**, was given access to **continuity of learning** activities during the COVID-19 school closure period”

Ms. Siddiqi spoke to concerns with Chesterfield County Public Schools and her inability to enroll her children. She shared one child has voiced suicidal thoughts. Ms. Siddiqi ended by stating if something happened to her child, she would burn everything down.

No written comments were received that needed to be read.

**Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Special Education**

***Dawn Hendricks****, Early Childhood Specialist, Office of Early Childhood Quality and Workforce, VDOE*

***Sandy Wilberger****, Co-Director, VDOE’s T/TAC at VCU*

Dr. Hendricks provided an overview of the organization of early childhood programs at VDOE. Unified Measurement and Improvement (VQB5) will be mandated by fall 2023 for all early childhood programs receiving federal funds. Dr. Hendricks described the metrics that will be used. Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) serves children ages two to five (not kindergarten). Virginia is the only state that serves two year-olds in the ECSE program.

Dr. Hendricks explained the ECSE environments for serving students with disabilities to members since the locations shape Indicator 6 in the Annual Performance Report (APR). Virginia is below the national average for the percentage of students receiving their early childhood special education services in a regular education setting.

Dr. Hendricks shared recent changes to the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). Students with IEPs are now eligible for VPI without having to meet the poverty requirement, and a target of ten percent of students having an IEP has been set for VPI classrooms.

Ms. Wilberger presented information about Virginia’s efforts to provide high quality inclusion. The benefits of high-quality inclusive practices were highlighted, and Ms. Wilberger noted the importance that this starts early. Ms. Wilberger shared the Inclusive Classroom Profile which is an observational tool being used to guide quality improvement in inclusive classrooms. This tool is currently being piloted in Virginia classrooms to explore how this may complement the VQB5 metrics. Ms. Wilberger shared some of the challenges to implementing preschool inclusion. Resources in place include:

* The Virginia Early Childhood Inclusion Guidance Document that outlines the efforts to promote inclusive practices
* Virginia Inclusive Self-Assessment and Action Planning Tool to meet the *Code of Virginia* requirement starting with the 2022-2023 academic year
* Inclusive Placement Opportunities for Preschoolers Intensive Technical Assistance (IPOP)
* VCU Autism Center for Excellence which offers Project PASS (including young children with autism)
* Community of Learning for Itinerant Teachers
* Co-teaching in PreK book study

Dr. Hendricks described the LEADS initiative, Leadership in Effective and Developmentally-Appropriate Services in ECSE.

Mr. Willon asked about the wide disparity in percentages of regular education environments. What is working in those states with high rates of inclusion? Dr. Hendricks explained some of the highest rates were in territories with few students. The highest rate for a state is in Colorado that has universal PreK. Dr. Hendricks suggested that increases in VPI slots and the recent changes could improve rates of inclusion in Virginia.

Refer to PowerPoint “Early Childhood Special Education”

**Constituency Reports**

**Region 1 – Margarete Jeffer**

No report

**Region 2 – Mychael Willon**

There is ongoing concern for the recruitment and retention of special education and support staff.

Some divisions are not able to get substitutes when collaborative teachers and paraprofessionals are out and so the services that are in a student’s IEP are not being delivered.

**Region 3 – Kellie Lockerby**

Teacher openings

Qualified speech and language therapists

As a participant at Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), Ms. Lockerby noted that none of the initiatives for legislation identified related to special education.

**Region 4 – Amy Hunter**

School divisions and SEACs in Region 4 have identified the following priorities and recommendations since the last State SEAC meeting:

* Staffing Issues Remain Top Priority:

Recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining special education teachers, therapists, and other staff remain at the top of everyone’s priority list. School divisions are using creative recruiting events and are seeking non-traditional candidates. Smaller school divisions often find that they hire and train new and provisional teachers, only to have them move to larger divisions that are able to pay more once they are training and certified. This is especially problematic when these teachers have received expensive training in specialized interventions. Supporting teacher mental health and work-life balance is also a high priority.

* Behavioral Supports:

Several school divisions have experienced increased behavior-related challenges in classrooms and other school settings, involving both students with and without disabilities. Support and training for staff and families in the use of positive behavioral supports, including dedicated staff to assist in this area, was mentioned as a priority by a few counties. Classroom behavior challenges were also mentioned as a factor impacting teacher morale, especially for less experienced teachers.

* State Reviews Underway:

Special education directors in several divisions have been occupied with state reviews of their special education programs and will be following up on findings.

* Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Comprehensive Special Education Review:

In 2020, FCPS contracted with American Institutes for Research to conduct an independent third-party review of the county’s special education practices. The purpose of the review was to evaluate the following: (1) the system’s design, structure, and processes; (2) the adequacy of human capital resources; (3) the alignment of services with evidence-based practices; and (4) the effectiveness of communication with stakeholders. The final report following the two-year comprehensive review is a 213-page document, including findings and recommendations, was presented to the School Board at a work session in October. The final report is at [Fairfax County Public Schools: Special Education Comprehensive Program Review Year 2 Final Report](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/CJNPCT622FEC/%24file/FCPS%20Special%20Education%20Comprehensive%20Review_Year%202%20Final%20Report.pdf).

* Fairfax County Advisory Committee on Students with Disabilities (ACSD):

The Fairfax ACSD (SEAC) also presented its 2021-2022 annual report to the School Board in October. Recommendations focused on three major areas: (1) Communications, including parent information phone lines, a 2E Handbook for parents, and a Transitions Resource Guide; (2) Inclusive Practices, especially focusing on the intersectionality between disability and other areas of marginalization (e.g., race, culture, and socio-economic status), promoting inclusion in extracurricular activities, and supporting the district’s hiring of a Neurodiversity Specialist; and (3) Staffing and Funding to address programs and facilities that disproportionately impact students with disabilities.

**Region 5 –** **Melinda Hemp-Gardzinski**

No report

**Region 6 –** Vacant

**Region 7 –** Vacant

**Region 8 – Candace Barnett**

Need for qualified special education teachers

**The Virginia Association of School Superintendents** **–** **Dennis Carter**

Staffing across positions, need for trauma-responsive skills, and concern about homeschooling that has limited accountability

**Teacher Representative – Dale Anna Curry**

No report

**Private Schools – Adam Dreyfus**

Rate resetting in July 2023 is a focus. Financial impact report is due soon. Admissions referrals are higher and younger children are being referred than in the past. Most referrals are from public school divisions. Pleased to see licensure delays are being addressed at the VDOE. The shift from the Office of Children’s Services to VDOE will be a significant change.

**Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice – Mary-Frances Morse**

We are creating and implementing a schoolwide reading program. This program, while open to any student, will add another layer of support to our students with disabilities (SWD). We understand the new reading legislation is aimed at the elementary level, but we appreciate the wealth of information available and recognize the implications of this at the secondary level. In addition to the reading classes we have always offered, we are in the beginning stages of designing a systematic approach to identifying and addressing reading difficulties in our population.

The first phase is a schoolwide program to standardize the reading scores of our students as they enroll to give us a more reliable baseline data to determine specifically in what areas of reading our students struggle. This will enable us to deliver more individualized interventions.

Challenges:

After the pandemic, we were somewhat isolated from the staffing challenges most schools faced; however, in the last few months we have been experiencing these effects as well.

**Transition/Vocational Education – Rusty Eddins**

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) - No significant reports since last meeting.

The Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) - Executive level decisions are being made to increase students served per year and reinstate a work behaviors training program at WWRC. The earliest this will be concluded is by April 2023. This should reduce wait lists in some training areas and assist DARS in providing gap building programming for students that will have difficulty moving from evaluation to actual training.

Postsecondary Education/Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) hosted the National Retail Federation Credentialing Academy the week of November 13, 2022. Ten students participated in the National Retail Federation’s Foundations of Retail course. Nine passed the final exam and earned a workforce credential that they could apply towards their high school diploma.

On December 16, 2022, migration from Google back to Microsoft will occur at the Center. This could negatively impact programming at the beginning of the year.

PERT is hosting a New Team Training January 5-6, 2023. 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. During two half days of on-site training, participants reside in the student rooms, eat cafeteria food, experience vocational evaluation, independent living assessments, and recreational activities. This will better allow school transition staff to explain what happens at WWRC during a PERT intake to prospective student referrals. Funding for this activity is supported by a VDOE grant.

**Board for People with Disabilities – Absent**

No report

**Individual with Disabilities, Region 5 – Nathan Selove**

No report

**Individual with Disabilities, Region 5 – Brandon Stees**

No report

**Individual with Disabilities, Region 2 – Anne Downing**

No report

**Higher Education – Dani Bronaugh**

Concerns:

How to respond to our Governor's plan to empower school districts to develop "grow your own" licensure options. Partnering with other school divisions so that universities can be part of the solution instead of doing the traditional programs that are seeing decreasing enrollments despite the high need for fully licensed special educators.

How will the VDOE support this work given competency requirements – three credit courses being linked to multiple competencies and the VDOE timeline for reviewing changes to matrices which can limit the ability to be fully collaborative with school divisions.

How to help Catholic schools access and utilize funds to help pay for tuition for their teachers to further their education by taking Special Education classes, completing Special Education (SPED) certificate programs, and even pursuing a master’s degree in Special Education.

Commendations:

The state support for traineeship grants to provide tuition assistance to provisionally licensed SPED teachers as they work towards obtaining a K-12 Special Education General Curriculum renewable license.

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

Concerns:

* Continued concerns with staffing, finding, retaining, and training new and provisional staff
* Finding the right supports for the social-emotional needs of our students. Therapeutic Day Treatment (TDT) is becoming more difficult to provide and get funding. Many agencies are discontinuing there TDT services.

**PEATC – Suzanne Bowers** – written report submitted:

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

1. IEP: Implementation, lack of progress, measurable goals
2. Behavior: FBA/BIP, resources
3. Placement: location, time, behavior

**PEATC Trainings 2022**

November 9- WAZE to Adulthood – Turning 18 (en Español)

November 14- Successful Transition Planning and IEP

November 15- Successful Transition Planning and IEP

November 15- Connecting the Dots “Knowing What I Know Now”

November 16- Special Education Series: Dispute Resolution Options in Virginia

November 16- The Power of Engaging Families (en Español)

November 28- Youth Sexual Health and Wellness: Consent and Body Rights

November 29- Youth Sexual Health and Wellness: Public versus Private

November 30- Youth Sexual Health and Wellness: Online Safety

December 1- Connecting the Dots “Medical Waivers”

December 1- Your Voice Matters

December 6- Connecting the Dots “Getting Started on Self-Determination”

December 9- Turning 18 in Virginia: What Individuals Need to Consider

December 13- Sexual Health and Wellness for Parents and Professionals

December 14- Sexual Health and Wellness for Parents and Professionals

**PEATC / VDOE Trainings 2022**

October 10 – November 29- Transition University Fall

October 30 - November 20- IEP University

November 14 – December 19- Early Childhood Academy

November 21 – December 12- Building Strong Parent Advocates

**Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired – Caren Phipps**

Limited staffing leads to office providing direct services. Assessments with visuals and graphs that are not accessible is a concern and challenges teachers. Since the pandemic, more families are choosing to homeschool. Teachers for the visually impaired working in these homes are concerned that education is not occurring and unsure that there is accountability for this.

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

A Navigating IDEA and McKinney-Vento Q&A was recently released via the Assistant Superintendent email. A webinar related to the Questions and Answers (Q&A) is scheduled for December 12, 2022, at 1 p**.**m. The registration link can be found at [University of William & Mary](http://www.wm.edu/) website. In addition, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) issued letters to state directors of

special education on November 10, 2022**,** on [Ensuring a High-Quality Education for Highly Mobile Children](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/letter-to-state-directos-of-special-education-on-ensuring-a-high-quality-education-for-highly-mobile-children-november-10-2022/) which increases awareness of the need to address this intersection.

The Project HOPE conference is scheduled for March 6-8, 2023, in Staunton. Registration for the conference should be open in mid-January.

Data for 2021-2022 was not available at the December meeting. Dr. Popp should be able to share these data at the next meeting.

**Foster Care – Monica Cabell**

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) partners with Project HOPE to provide educational stability support to local school divisions and local department of social services agencies for youth in foster care.

The VDOE-Project HOPE and VDSS are wrapping up joint virtual trainings on maintaining educational stability for children and youth in foster care.

There was an amendment to the *Appropriations Act* that allows youth participating in the Fostering Futures program (extended foster care for youth) and receiving post-secondary education through a Virginia public college or university to remain in the dorms during breaks when no other housing alternatives can be secured. The amendment requires Virginia’s public colleges and universities to provide for access to housing for eligible students in foster care to the degree that the institution maintains operation of its university housing during scheduled breaks in the academic year. This housing will be made available at no additional cost to the student.

The VDSS youth services unit will be working with a vendor called [iFoster](https://www.ifoster.org/%20) portal that will hold tangible resources in Virginia for youth with foster care experiences.

**Reminders and Dates**

Mr. Willon proposed changing the fall meeting from October to the end of September next year. Proposed dates are September 28-29, 2023, and December 7-8, 2023. Mrs. Crafton reminded members to sign in. Workgroups will meet Friday.

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

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

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) released its report on the impact of the pandemic; it reflects many of the issues the SSEAC has identified. Special education teacher shortages are noted. Dr. Hollins observed that shortages are now occurring in areas not previously impacted. There is a new report on transition. There is now a way to capture vacancies real-time. The VDOE is putting greater resources behind successful teacher retention programs such as increasing access to higher education teacher preparation and teacher apprenticeship programs that pay student-teachers while completing their licensure. The work is limited to federal funds. The SSEAC may wish to advocate for state funds to enhance efforts.

Mr. Willon asked what initiatives Dr. Hollins would like to see championed. Dr. Hollins responded there is a need for Institution of Higher Education (IHE) programs for significant disabilities and a need to review licensure requirements. Grow your own programs across Virginia are promising initiatives occurring in school divisions such as Montgomery, Campbell, and Hanover. Montgomery’s program is an approved alternative route. Dr. Hollins also mentioned continuing efforts to support teachers early in their careers.

One new development is the increase in data reporting. There is a new program that will allow the public to disaggregate data along multiple measures, including growth measures. This may be a topic for the spring meeting.

Mr. Willon asked about licensure delays. Dr. Hollins explained that this summer there was a significant influx of renewals, partly due to new requirements for module training for re-licensure. There were questions due to the changes that required follow up. The timing is about six weeks at this time, and it is anticipated this be reduced further.

Ms. Hunter asked about the revised Parent Handbook. A final draft is being reviewed internally. Timing for having the document in people’s hands is not available. Dr. Hollins noted a firmer answer will be available by the next SSEAC meeting. The document will be translated into Spanish and additional languages.

Dr. Hollins introduced **Deputy Secretary of Education, McKenzie Snow**. Ms. Snow began by thanking members for their service. Ms. Snow then provided a summary of her work in education, working as a policy director at an education reform non-profit, serving in the federal government, and most recently working for the New Hampshire Department of Education. Ms. Snow requested that members introduce themselves.

Ms. Snow noted that recent data supports the catastrophic effects of the pandemic on student achievement that impacted underserved populations most significantly. While SOL performance has improved, it is well below pre-pandemic levels. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results released in October revealed that Virginia had the greatest decline in the nation in math and reading.

Ms. Snow identified the priorities in the administration’s report, “Our Commitment to Virginians: High Expectations and Excellence for All Students” that was released in May:

* Advancing Parent and Teacher Empowerment to best serve students in partnership
	+ Ms. Snow described efforts to empower parents and address teacher shortages. She also discussed a focus on ensuring teachers are prepared and empowered to provide inclusive educational environments.
* Establishing and maintaining High Expectations for students, schools, and ourselves.
	+ Inclusion is a vital component of high expectations, and the administration supports higher quality education programming for students seeking the Applied Studies Diploma.
* Providing Transparency and Accountability so that each child is seen and receives what they need to succeed.
	+ Beginning in February 2023, comprehensive student success reports will be provided to every grade 4-12 teacher and family.
	+ The “Learning Needs Dashboard” will provide an easy-to-navigate platform for the public to see and compare learning loss and recovery.
	+ The VDOE has worked to complete the JLARC 2020 recommendations.
	+ Ms. Snow noted that the independent educational evaluation (IEE) regulations have been modified, clarifying that the parent of a child with a disability has the right to an IEE at public expense if the parent disagrees with an LEA’s evaluation.
* Ensuring Post-secondary Readiness so that all learners can succeed in life.
	+ Ms. Snow highlighted “I’m Determined” and the PEATC Transition University. She also noted the work of two work-based learning initiatives, Project SEARCH and Start on Success as efforts for students with disabilities under this fourth focus and the collaborative work with TTACs implementing a new measurement and improvement system focusing on transitions from early intervention to early childhood special education to kindergarten.

Mr. Willon asked if there has been any search for licensed teachers who are not teaching to look for ways to encourage them to return to the field. Mr. Willon also suggested reaching out to military families as a means of recruiting teachers. Ms. Snow thanked Mr. Willon for these suggestions.

Mr. Willon asked if members needed anything else to prepare for Friday. Nothing was requested.

Dr. Bronaugh motioned to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Phipps seconded. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

## Friday, December 2, 2022

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Candace Barnett, Member-at-Large

Ms. Suzanne Bowers (absent)

Dr. Dani Bronaugh, Member-at-Large

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter (absent)

Ms. DaleAnna Curry (absent)

Mr. Adam Dreyfus (absent)

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins

Ms. Melina Hemp-Gardzinski (absent)

Ms. Amy Hunter

Ms. Margarete Hecker-Jeffer, Chair (absent)

Ms. Jen Krajewski (Member-at-Large) (absent)

Ms. Kellie Lockerby

Ms. Mary-Frances Morse
Ms. Caren Phipps

Dr. Patricia Popp, Secretary

Mr. Nathan Selove

Mr. Brandon Stees

Ms. Sandi Thorpe

Mr. Mychael Willon, Vice Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Lisa Crafton, SEFFE, SESS

Mrs. Tracy Lee, SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Mychael Willon, SSEAC Committee Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. He reminded members to submit their constituency reports to Dr. Popp at her email address Dr. Pat Popp, submit travel expense forms, and sign in.

Mr. Stees motioned to approve the agenda and Ms. Thorpe seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### Business Session

**Subcommittee Meetings**

Ms. Hunter asked if the focus for workgroups is working on recommendations for the annual report that will be drafted during the March meeting. Mr. Willon explained this was the focus. Ms. Phipps asked what the outcome of previous recommendations to the Board has been. Mr. Millward stated that a number of recommendations have led to action. Members were interested in exploring this further.

Members asked how public comment was captured in the minutes. Dr. Popp explained she tries to capture the main themes presented. If a written version is submitted, this is included, as well. Ms. Hunter noted one speaker referenced an OCR report on Fairfax County Public Schools that was just released. Mr. Selove asked if the committee should explore this further. The recommendation was made to have the Policy and Regulation subcommittee consider this. The committee discussed potential implications of the ruling. Topics included what compensatory education might entail and how to differentiate the Governor’s order that closed school from March 2019 through the end of the 2019-2020 and how IEPs were implemented the following academic year. Ms. Hunter suggested this be a topic for further discussion by the full committee at the March meeting. Mr. Millward emailed members a link to the materials for this case. Ms. Barnette suggested the ruling and committee conversations support the need for ongoing pandemic funding.

Members then broke into their subcommittee workgroups.

**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 impact policy and regulations pertaining to students with disabilities.

Chair: Kellie Lockerby, Anne Downing reported out

* Goal: Bridge the diploma gap; transition and diploma options – Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP)
* Goal: Improved teacher recruitment and retention

Recommendations:

* Applied Studies Diploma: transition standards for students to document evidence (e.g., portfolios for work-based skills)
* Standard Diploma: instead of exceptions, create clear pathways (clear language and clear training)
* Arkansas and New Jersey systems were offered as states with clearer pathways.

**Family Engagement and Community Outreach.** This subcommittee provides recommendations to the VDOE on best practices for family engagement and community outreach. 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

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

Recommendations:

* Provide more support to help parents understand the special education process and the impact of decisions. Possible responses should be:
	+ Establish a mentoring program to support parents navigating the special education process using parents with expertise to attend meetings with new parents.
	+ Establish parent liaisons (could be similar to Title I, A or Title III parent liaisons)
	+ Fund PEATC to train at least one liaison for each school division
	+ Establish a local/regional ombudsman
* Training PreK-12 teachers and administrators on the possible harmful effects of a restrictive setting and the benefits of inclusion.
* BOE should direct VDOE to review higher education matrices to ensure inclusive practices are required in training for all teachers and administrators.
* Ensure the PEATC one-pager for ages two through grade 2 that explains what to expect when the IEP Team begins to discuss graduation tracks in third grade (or other method to cover the content) be required in early childhood teacher training.
* Inclusion video with lived experience voice that includes potential harmful effects of restrictive settings and the benefits of inclusion (PreK–12 issue).
* Require each LEA have an IEP auditor to ensure they are in compliance. Consider a pilot with measures to identify outcomes: e.g., student achievement (broad), parent complaints/disputes, and findings. Region 2 has done this in the past. The auditor should be present in the school.
	+ Have each IEP reviewed/signed off for legal compliance
* BOE should evaluate Virginia's due process procedures independently and develop suggestions to make the process more equitable for all families.
* Allow five-year-olds with disabilities to be served in preschool programs if it is in the student’s best interest.

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

Chair: Sandi Thorpe

* Goal: Increase competency among all instructional staff (teacher recruitment and retention)

Recommendations:

* Consider expanding and keeping the growth assessments for students with disabilities
* Require all schools to have designated transition specialists

**Future Topic**

Mr. Selove teaches a class on models of disability rhetoric (moral, medical, and social) through history. Mr. Selove would be happy to provide a lecture/discussion on this topic. Ms. Hunter supported the proposal and suggested it be videotaped, if possible. Members supported the offer. This will be scheduled for the March meeting.

Mr. Willon thanked members for their participation and focus during the Thursday meeting.

Ms. Cabell suggested each meeting begin with a reminder of the expectations for others attending the meeting.

Dr. Bronaugh moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Eddins seconded. Mr. Willon adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

## Future Meeting Dates

* December 1-2, 2022
* March 2-3, 2023
* July 13-14, 2023
* September 28-29, 2023
* December 7-8, 2023