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

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

**Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)**

# SSEAC Meeting Minutes

July 17-19, 2024

Hilton Garden Inn Richmond Airport

441 International Center Drive

Sandston, Virginia 23150

(804) 222-3338

## Wednesday, July 17, 2024

**Committee Members:**

Mr. Adam Dreyfus, Member-at-Large (absent)

Ms. Amy Hunter, Member-at-Large

Ms. Kellie Lockerby, Member-at-Large

Ms. Jason Longcor, Member-at-Large

Dr. Dani Murray, Chair

Ms. Majorie Stallard, Member-at-Large (absent)

Vacant, Secretary

Vacant, Vice-Chair

**VDOE Representatives:**

Mrs. Lisa Crafton (Recorder), SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, SEFFE, SESS (absent)

### Executive Committee Meeting

**Dr. Dani Murray,** SSEAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

### Business Session

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was distributed via email before the meeting. Ms. Lockerby made a motion to approve the agenda, and Mr. Longcor seconded and amended it to note that Dr. Murray has become chair following the resignation of the chair-elect due to an out-of-state move.
Dr. Murray noted the change of her last name from Bronaugh to Murray. The motion was approved unanimously. Ms. Hunter took the notes for this meeting.

**2024-2025 Goals:**

It was the consensus of the subcommittee that the following issues should be considered for action by the SSEAC subcommittees, as designated below. In addition to these issues, subcommittees are encouraged to address and identify other priorities. Subcommittees will be asked to establish goals/priorities for their work in the coming year.

 **Family Engagement and Community Outreach Subcommittee**

Chair: Jason Longcor

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.

Issues for consideration:

* Local SEAC Resource Recommendation for Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Website
* Additional Support for Parent and Teacher Representatives, and Individuals with Disabilities in Fulfilling their SSEAC Roles
* Consideration of expanding Community Access to State SEAC Meetings (For example: Livestreaming and Recording Meetings)
* Review June 2023-2024 Due Process Outcomes to Identify Systemic Issues
* Seeking More Information About Due Process Filings

 **Policy and Regulation Subcommittee**

Chair: Amy Hunter

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.

Issues for consideration:

* Impact of the Governor’s Executive Order regarding cell phone use in schools on Students with Disabilities
* Reporting regarding Age Ranges in Special Education Classrooms (For example: K-8 Classrooms)
* Statewide Teacher Shortage
	+ Recruitment and Retention (For example: “Grow Your Own”)
	+ Ways to Elevate the Special Education Teaching Profession
	+ Paraeducator Career Opportunities, Training, Resources, etc.
* Implementation of SB/220HB 1089 Special Education Legislation
* General Education Teachers—Training, Licensing Requirements, and Support for Inclusive Practices

**Student Achievement and Student Outcomes Subcommittee**

Chair: Kellie Lockerby

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**.**

Issues for Consideration:

* Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) Participation Decision-Making Tool Implementation
* Local Inclusive Practices Self-Assessments and Plans
* Review of Indicators and State Plan (future meeting)

Ms. Hunter pointed out that the SSEAC currently does not have a majority of members who are parents and/or individuals with disabilities, which is a federal requirement. Dr. Seaborne said that it is unclear which members may have disabilities. Ms. Hunter stated that members representing other constituencies should not be counted toward these totals even if they are parents or have a disability since they are not on the committee to represent those perspectives. Dr. Seaborne will investigate and get back to the committee. She stated that identifying additional members with disabilities is a priority. Ms. Hunter suggested reaching out to I’m Determined Youth Leaders.

There was consensus that the Executive Subcommittee should meet from 12-2 p.m. on Fridays beginning March 2025. These meetings would replace the Wednesday evening dinner meetings. In addition, members agreed that during the Friday afternoon Executive Subcommittee meeting each March, there should be an orientation for new members.

Ms. Lockerby motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Hunter seconded the motion. Dr. Murray adjourned the meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

## Thursday, July 18, 2024

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Ann Bueche (absent)

Ms. Tammy Burns

Dr. Tameka Burroughs

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter

Mr. Adam Dreyfus, Member-at-Large (absent)

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins

Mrs. Laura Hackett

Mrs. Stephanie Hoover

Ms. Amy Hunter, Member-at-Large

Ms. Jennifer Krajewski

Ms. Heidi Lawyer (absent)

Mr. John Littleton

Ms. Kellie Lockerby, Member-at-Large

Mr. Jason Longcor, Member-at-Large

Ms. Mary-Frances Morse

Dr. Dani Murray, Chair

Mrs. Manuela Robinson

Ms. Kristi Schabo

Mr. Nathan Selove (absent)

Ms. Marjorie Stallard (absent)

Mr. Brandon Stees

Ms. Erica Swenson

Ms. Taylor Thomas-Harris (absent)

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Kendra Belcher, SEPI, SESS

Ms. Hallie Bereny, ODRAS, SESS

Mrs. Tracie Coleman, FAB, SESS

Mrs. Pat Haymes, ODRAS, SESS

Mrs. Lisa Crafton, SEFFE, SESS

Mr. Peter Grabowski, SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS (absent)

Mrs. Tracy Lee, SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

**Dr. Dani Murray,** SSEAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Dr. Murray asked for a motion to call the meeting to order. Ms. Lockerby motioned and Ms. Hunter seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. Dr. Murray had SSEAC members introduce themselves and share their constituency and what committee they previously and currently serve.

### Business Session

**Approval of the Agenda**

Dr. Murray called for a motion to amend the meeting agenda regarding the new Subcommittee Chairs.

* Family Engagement and Community Outreach Subcommittee, **Chair:** Jason Longcor
* Policy and Regulation Subcommittee, **Chair:** Amy Hunter
* Student Achievement and Student Outcomes Subcommittee, **Chair:** Kellie Lockerby

Ms. Hunter motioned to accept the amendment. Mr. Eddins seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from previous SSEAC Meeting**

Ms. Hunter asked to amend the March 2024 Region 4 Constituency Report with her corrected report. Dr. Murray called for a motion to approve the March 2024 minutes with the amendment. Ms. Hunter made a motion to approve the March 2024 minutes and Ms. Lockerby seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Subcommittee Assignments**

Dr. Murray read the description of each subcommittee for the new SSEAC members and had the SSEAC members select their subcommittee.

Family Engagement and Committee Outreach

Jason Longcor **(Chair)**

Laura Hackett

Manuela Robinson

Erica Swenson

Brandon Stees

Dr. Dani Murray

Policy and Regulation

Amy Hunter **(Chair)**

Dr. Tameka Burroughs

Monica Cabell

Dennis Carter

Jennifer Krajewski

Heidi Lawyer

Mary-Frances Morse

Kristi Schabo

Student Achievement and Student Outcomes

Kellie Lockerby **(Chair)**

Rusty Eddins

Stephanie Hoover

John Littleton

**Nomination for SSEAC Vice-Chair and Secretary**

Dr. Murray asked for a call for nominations for SSEAC Vice-Chair and Secretary. Mr. Carter motioned for opening the floor for nominations and the motion was seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Nominations for Vice-Chair and Secretary

* Dr. Murray nominated Kristi Schabo for the position of Vice-Chair
* Dr. Murray nominated Jason Longcor for the position of Secretary

A motion was made to elect the nominated candidates for the positions of Vice-Chair and Secretary and was subsequently seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Hunter motioned for John Littleton to fill the Member-at-Large vacancy. Mr. Longcor seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Open Floor Discussion**

Dr. Murray opened up the floor for discussion. Ms. Morse asked to amend the March 2024 meeting minutes. The minutes stated that she was leaving the SSEAC; she was reappointed to a second term, on July 1, 2024. A motion to approve the amendment to the March 2024 minutes was made and seconded by Ms. Hunter. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Murray, Chair asked the VDOE staff to introduce themselves.

**MCV and VSDB Annual Plan Review**

***Tracie Coleman,*** *Director, Office of Special Education Finance and Budget (FAB), SESS, VDOE*

Mrs. Coleman presented on the State Operated Programs’ (SOP) *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) 611 HO27A240107. She shared how these funds will be used to support the purchase of assistive technology and augmentative communication systems for students with disabilities. This would include iPads, switches, communication devices, switch access systems, and other instructional technologies as deemed appropriate to support students.

**Annual Report on Dispute Resolution – Facilitated Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

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

Ms. Haymes shared longitudinal data on state complaints, mediations, due process, and facilitated IEPs. There has been a significant increase in state complaints with increased complexity. Systemic issues are more frequent as are discipline matters.

Dr. Sandra Ramsey, Corrective Action Specialist for Complaints and Due Process is finishing her first year. This has played a significant role in both the design of corrective action and our ability to support sustainable corrective action. Recruiting for an additional staff is underway.

**Ombudsman Report on Constituency Issues**

***Peter Grabowski****, Special Education Ombudsman, Office of Special Education Family Support and Special Facilities (SEFFE), Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)*

Mr. Grabowski explained the role of the Ombudsman. There were 1,604 unique contacts this year versus 1,326 contacts the previous year. Possible reasons for the increase could be more concerns and/or greater awareness. The top five constituent concerns were dispute resolution, suspension/discipline, 504 Plans, IEP implementation, and evaluation/eligibility. Notable trends include workforce issues and placement.

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

***Dr. Chiquita Seaborne****, Family Engagement Specialist/Special Projects Coordinator, SEFFE, VDOE*

No reports.

**Working Lunch**

Members were asked to discuss subcommittee goals and objectives.

**Call to Order and Public Comment Period**

**Dr. Dani Murray,** SSEAC Chair

Dr. Murray reconvened the meeting at 1 p.m. No one signed to provide public comment.

**Constituency Reports**

**Dr. Dani Murray,** SSEAC Chair

**Region 1 – Manuela Robinson** – no report

**Region 2 – Stephanie Hoover** – no report

**Region 3 – Kellie Lockerby**

We are doing a great job disseminating information about the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) training, the Ombudsman, Dispute Resolution, and the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

There is a desire to see guidance from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to localities on age span in classrooms, mainly on self-contained.

There are concerns over general education teachers not wanting students with disabilities in their classrooms. We would like to see ways to improve this for more inclusive practices.

There are staffing shortages, especially in special education.

**Region 4 – Amy Hunter**

Region 4 parents and SEAC representatives identified state-level funding and the shortage of special education teachers as top priority concerns. In addition, the following issues are also significant concerns:

* Meeting the unique needs of twice-exceptional students, including providing specialized instruction and implementing accommodations for those students. A particular concern was raised about schools’ alleged refusal to provide specialized instruction and individualized education program (IEP) support in honors and AP classes.
* Concern that the state complaint process may not be adequately accessible to parents, evidenced by the number of complaints dismissed due to issues with how the complaint was submitted. Parents do not realize their complaints could be dismissed because the information they provide is insufficient. Rather the form makes it appear that they are just supposed to give a summary, and they assume that the VDOE will follow up with them to gather the additional information needed to investigate the complaint. Also, school division and the VDOE responses are written by attorneys who often use complex legal language that is unclear to parents.
* Concern of state code language regarding enrollment for students with consecutive absences, and how this policy will impact students with disabilities.
* The Fairfax SEAC Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ACSD) is focused on the provision of related services, which is its annual charge from the school board. In addition, referrals to private placements are a significant concern in that division because of a legal settlement prohibiting the school division from placing students in any schools that practice restraint and seclusion. Due to the limited number of such private schools, there is now a bottleneck for Fairfax students requiring private placements.

Highlights in Region 4 included the following:

* Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) has created and filled a new position to address the needs of twice exceptional (2E) students, who are working to develop an action plan. The Fairfax SEAC ACSD is also advising the division’s new Office of Equity regarding the implementation of FCPS’s equity policy as it relates to students with disabilities. The ACSD has also studied implementing a pay differential for special education teachers to accommodate the extra time they spend on IEPs and other tasks outside of the classroom. The school board was receptive to the advice, but it faces many challenges, including teacher unions, funding levels, and budget cycle timing.
* The Loudoun County SEAC is focused on enhancing the division’s transition programs. SEAC members are touring training facilities in other counties to get ideas for Loudoun. The SEAC is also identifying that Inclusive Practices can be implemented in all classrooms and is providing that feedback for the Instructional framework that is being developed. The committee is also preparing a report on the status of inclusive playgrounds in Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) and will be developing recommendations on features to prioritize and aim for universal design. They are also advocating for increased accessibility to student special education data for parents, advocating to ensure that students receive appropriate remediation for learning loss.
* Fauquier County held a division-wide Disability Awareness Month in March, which included an elementary school poster contest and the distribution of a resource list with recommended books and videos for all grade levels to school librarians and administrators.
* Winchester City schools held an I’m Determined Spring Showcase event on April 13. Schools presented their I'm Determined projects followed by breakout sessions for students and parents. Break-out sessions will focus on self-determination across grade/age spans. The Winchester SEAC is accepting nominations for its annual SEAC Awards, which honor teachers, students, staff, parents, and community members who go above and beyond for those with disabilities in the school community.

**Region 5 – Jason Longcor**

Some common challenges faced by the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) in Region 5 include:

* Limited Resources and Funding
* Inclusion and Accessibility
* Parent Engagement
* Compliance with Regulations
* Communication and Collaboration
* Training and Professional Development
* Addressing Individual Student Needs

**Region 5 - Brandon Stees (People with Disabilities)**

Upcoming Speaking Engagements:

1. Speaking at the Parent and Youth Empowerment Summit (PYE). He will be talking about his (Brandon Stees) story and how he achieved his goal as a self-advocate.
2. The Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) in Chantilly, Virginia. He will be on a panel with other I’m Determined youth leaders. It will cover his perspective on leadership, inclusion, and self-determination.

**Region 6 - John Littleton**

Concerns

* Truancy is still high compared to pre-COVID-19
* Teacher turnover rate and lack of teachers
* Lack of providers for OT, PT, and Speech
* Increasing behavioral concerns

Recommendations

* Make local SEAC meetings hybrid to have more interest and participation. Checking into legal aspects.

**Region 7 - Marjorie Stallard (absent)** -no report

**Region 8 – Vacant** -no report

**Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) / Foster Care - Monica Cabell**

Legislative Bills Passed and Signed (Education Related)

HB700

* HB 700 – changed the language from “may” to “shall.” Community Colleges, and public four-year universities to provide grant funding for students with certain foster care experience to cover tuition/fees and room and board.
* Upcoming meeting with State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to discuss public colleges and universities expectations and point of contact list.

HB 777

* HB 777 extended educational stability rights to students involved in Kinship care placements outside of foster care. To include enrollment and funding provisions.

Training

* VDOE / Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) / Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) has begun its annual educational stability training, educating schools and DSS staff on the educational stability process.
* National Educational Stability Convening hosted in (Maryland – May)
* National/Regional Foster Youth to Independent housing voucher for youth who have transitioned out of foster care. (Philadelphia - June)

Concerns

* Inconsistent practices on who can/should sign the IEP as a parent for children and youth in foster care.
	+ Foster parent meets the definition of "parent" according to Virginia Special Education
	+ Special Education supervisors still insisting that foster parent did not meet the "parent"
	+ Foster care workers do not meet the definition of parent and cannot sign special education documents as a parent, however, foster care workers are frequently asked to sign IEPs
	+ Bio parent needs to be invited to special education process meetings (IEP, eligibility, child study/consent for evaluation)
* DSS access to SLSCR
	+ Workgroup with VDOE, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), and VDSS that developed a Student Longitudinal Schedule and Course Records (SLSCR) tool. Currently, DSS will not have access due to security issues. Hope to be able to resolve this as it would help DSS workers in being able to access accurate education information on system-involved children and youth.

**Private Schools - Adam Dreyfus (absent)** - no report

**People with Disabilities Region 1 – Taylor Thomas-Harris (absent)** - no report

**Office of Children’s Services (OCS) - Kristi Schabo**

Constituency Report

* The State Executive Council (SEC) for Children’s Services recently approved a change in policy 4.1.1, which aligns the funding for FAPE with the responsibility for a Free Appropriate Public Education. With this change, local *Children’s Services Act* (CSA) programs will be responsible for funding educational services on the day that a student transfers into their locality.
* There are two new reports regarding the utilization and outcomes of private day schools.
	+ [Virginia Department of Education Private Day Risk Ratios (2022-2023 School Year)](https://www.csa.virginia.gov/content/doc/Utilization_of_Private_Day_Special_Education_Placements_2022-2023_School_Year.pdf)
	+ [Annual Report on the Outcome Data Measuring Student Progress for Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Special Education Private Day Schools](https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2024/RD94/PDF)

**Teacher – Dr. Tameka Burroughs** - no report

**Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) – Tammy Burns**

Over this last quarter, PEATC completed the spring sessions of the SEAC online training, Transition University (two sessions), Building Strong Parent Advocates and IEP University (three sessions), and Early Childhood Academy. We held a successful in-person Latino Summit focused on special education. It was presented entirely in Spanish and was well attended. Registration is currently open for the live virtual Squared Away Summit for military families with exceptional family members who are or will be navigating the special education system in Virginia. Our annual Parent Youth Empowerment (PYE) Summit will be on September 7 in Williamsburg. We continue to develop new resource materials for families and have recently developed resource documents on Parental Consent, physical education for students with disabilities, early childhood, the new VAAP guidelines, FAPE, and a family engagement checklist. In our work with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), which focuses on transition-age students, we provided training on competitive integrated employment (CIE) for families of students in transition and training for students. We also created five resources on CIE - one for parents and four for students (text and visual versions). We trained students with disabilities on the vocational rehabilitation system under our WAZE to adulthood grant from the Rehabilitative Services Administration (RSA). In June and July, we worked with the legislative Commission on Youth (COY) to help them facilitate listening sessions on the special education dispute resolution system. The COY was required to conduct a study on this system and make recommendations for improvement. PEATC collected the public input and provided the raw data and a summary document to the COY. As reported previously, PEATC was called out in HB 1089 to receive funding to provide support in each of the eight VDOE Superintendent’s regions to families, work with school family liaisons, and report on trends that we are seeing to the VDOE Special Education Parent Ombudsman. We issued a press release and will soon post job opportunities once the state establishes the funding. During this quarter, we received contacts from parents on the topics of evaluations and eligibility denials, IEPs vs. 504s, dispute resolution, IEP implementation, Child Find, behavior, transition IEPs and services, placement, graduation challenges, and suspension/expulsion, among other areas. We received a significant number of calls and emails from parents around the state about behavior-related IEP issues. These calls involved things like the IEP Team's refusal to do Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA)/ Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) or not following FBA/BIP, which resulted in suspensions (in some instances 40+ days), placement of the student on homebound/home-based instruction, and/or shortened school days or weeks for the student. PEATC has shared this information with the VDOE, including a list of the school divisions the families were from.

The Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) is pleased to announce a significant expansion of its work as Virginia's designated Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). The 2024 Virginia General Assembly passed HB1089/SB 220 (§ 22.1-214.5), which provides $1.1M in state general funds in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024 and 2025 to PEATC. This funding was provided for PEATC to staff each of the Virginia Department of Education's eight Superintendent's regions with a regional special education family support specialist, effectively doubling our existing family support specialist staff. This expansion will have a profound impact on families of children with disabilities, particularly those in underserved populations and areas of the Commonwealth, by providing them with the support and resources they need to navigate the complex special education and disabilities services systems.

PEATC has a rich history of serving as Virginia's PTI under the federal Individuals with *Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) for over 45 years. During this time, we have been instrumental in helping families of children with disabilities and youth with disabilities navigate the complex special education and disabilities services systems. We empower families by providing them with the information, resources, training, and direct assistance they need to make informed decisions for their family members. Our services are available in over 300 languages, including two bilingual Spanish-speaking staff. We are proud to partner with numerous state, local, and national organizations to help effect positive change in policies and practices affecting students with disabilities.

Through this new program (**PEATC Regional**), PEATC is excited to further our mission to ensure that families of children with disabilities ages 2-22 receive the information, training, and support they need to assist their children in being successful in school. PEATC Regional will help ensure that families of children with disabilities across Virginia, no matter where in the state they reside, will have access to high-quality, consistent services, including family support specialists and other professionals who can help families understand their rights under federal and state special education law and regulations.

“With more than 178,891 Virginia students receiving special education services in support of their unique educational needs, this expansion of PEATC services will ensure that more students and families receive meaningful and impartial support when navigating the process to obtaining a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for their child,” said Tammy Burns, Executive Director of PEATC. “We look forward to expanding our existing work with families and students here in Virginia to enhance educational outcomes and post-school success for students with disabilities.”

PEATC will hire eight full-time family support specialist positions, one in each Superintendent's region and a supervisory position. This significant increase in our staff, from 12 to 21 positions, 17 of which will directly support families, will further PEATC’s ongoing efforts to provide high-quality, consistent services to families of children with disabilities across Virginia.

Our regional family support specialists will:

* Help families understand federal and state special education laws and regulations.
* Review Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and help parents prepare for IEP meetings, transition meetings, and eligibility meetings.
* Work with families to brainstorm options and solutions to identified challenges.
* Explain dispute resolution options and support families to ensure they can effectively prepare and navigate the process.
* Conduct outreach to underserved areas of the state so families know about PEATC services and supports.
* Provide training (in-person and virtually) on special education-related topics to enhance the knowledge of families and the professionals working with them.
* Help students with disabilities build self-advocacy skills that will enable them to actively participate in meetings about educational services and make decisions about their lives.
* Share special education trends and issues seen by parents across Virginia with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Special Education Ombudsman, who will report those to VDOE leadership.

We encourage all families and stakeholders to contact us and learn more about how we can support them. PEATC‘s work to support families and students is ongoing, as we are expanding, and our current staff of family support specialists stands ready to serve you now!

**Board for People with Disabilities – Jen Krajewski**

The Board has recently approved the topics for its 2024 assessments of the disability services system. One of those assessments will be an examination of the current state of pre-employment services (pre-ETS) in the school system and any access barriers. If you like to share any personal experiences or knowledge in this area, contact Jen Krajewski, at jennifer.krajewski@vbpd.virginia.gov.

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

As a school with a year-round calendar, we are now in our first week of school. Last year, we did not consistently attend school in the school building, but we are happy to report that we are starting the new school year with in-person, in-school instruction.

We are experiencing staff shortages as others are reporting across the state.

**Transition/Vocational Education – Rusty Eddins**

As part of a DOE grant with Postsecondary Education / Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) the James Madison University (JMU) Content Academy for Transition, 24 attendees came to the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) on June 26, 2024. These participants represented many DOE regions and roles.

Represented at the 2024 Secondary Transition Academy by 24 Attendees

Students: 2,631

Parents: 2,631

Roles:

* Preschool Life Skills/Inclusion
* Case Manager
* Lead Teacher
* Transition Coach
* Transition Coordinator
* Building Level Administrator
* District-Level Administrator
* Paraprofessional

Divisions: 16

Private School: 1

Regions/Number of Participants:

* Region 1 / 7
* Region 2 / 5
* Region 3 / 2
* Region 4 / 1
* Region 5 / 4
* Region 6 / 3
* Region 7 / 0
* Region 8 / 0

The participants received an overview of transition services at WWRC. They toured the dormitories, Occupational Therapy (OT), Physical Therapy (PT), Communications, recreation hall, and Training. Participants enjoyed lunch in the cafeteria and were exposed to a Vocational Evaluation staff overview of all the evaluation areas. At the end of the day, participants were able to be "simulated shoppers" in PERT - MART at the Switzer Town Center.

DARS and Education had a Cross-Training event at WWRC on July 11, 2024. One hundred and three DARS Counselors and Educators participated in training on the IEP process, the continuum of DARS services, Family Engagement and Secondary Transition, the PERT Process, backward planning, and Vocational Training programs at WWRC, and Autism Services. A panel of experts discussed serving students with more complex support needs.

PERT Programming Expansion is planned to occur in January 2025 focusing on career exploration. This weeklong program at WWRC will run in addition to existing programming provided in conjunction with WWRC Vocational Evaluation. This program will occur in the same weeks Virtual PERT occurs now. This will be a 200 – 250 student number increase in PERT’s yearly numbers. The target base numbers now are 500; 642 were served in the most recent fiscal year. The expansion would bring the yearly PERT number to over 700 students.

PERT is now offering Exploration in Training. PERT TRS/F’s can now offer Exploration in Training as an option for students who have already participated in weeklong PERT programming. This is a modification of the old PERT Situational Assessment Program to align better with *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) initiatives. Students will be able to come all year round in conjunction with other PERT intakes to access training programs at WWRC. Numbers will be limited to two students per intake so potentially an additional 48 students a year. The purpose of this program is to allow students a window into what being in a WWRC training program would be like. They can then better assess if this is something for them. They would spend a week in training at WWRC, get to know the instructors, and still have PERT support during the day and residentially at night. Reports will include what the students did with the classes and how they felt about this as a potential option after graduation.

DARS has contracted with the VCU Center on Transition Innovation for a three-year consultation grant at WWRC. VCU will provide Autism training for staff as part of a staff development project and consult with PERT on program expansion projects.

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

The availability of qualified staff continues to be a problem. All divisions are working to find replacements for open positions, but there are very few applicants, if any, for some positions. Many school divisions are developing a "Grow Your Own" model to help with the teacher pipeline.

Behaviors continue to be a difficult problem for school divisions. Having adequate resources to support students who are experiencing behavioral health issues is difficult to locate.

Support services personnel (speech, guidance, vision, physical therapist, and occupational therapist) are becoming more difficult to locate. Many divisions have to contract these services out to agencies and sometimes utilize a virtual option.

**Erica Swenson – Military Representative** - no report

**Local Director of Special Education – Ann Bueche – absent** - no report

**Project HOPE-Virginia – Laura Hackett**

Homeless education:

* Roughly 19,500 students identified as experiencing homelessness in the 2022-2023 School Year.
* The American Rescue Plan (ARP-HCY) homeless education funds are available until
September 30, 2024, local discussion about meeting the needs of students with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness is encouraged.

 Students in foster care:

* Concerns from the field –
	+ Foster parents are being told they do not meet the definition of a parent or need special training to sign special education documents. This is misinformation – they meet the definition and do not need special training.
	+ Case workers are invited to sign despite not meeting the definition of a parent.
	+ Biological parents with rights intact are not being invited to meetings but should be.
* Training– virtual on Monday and Tuesday (Special Education) and in person on July 30, 2024, at the VDSS office in Richmond. Registration is available on the foster care website.

**Higher Education – Dr. DanI Murray**

Commendations

1. Early call and due date for Traineeship grant applications
2. Removal of VCLA requirement for licensure
3. Additional IHEs on the Virginia Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) team. One benefit to Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) on this team is the ability to use the Innovation Configuration system to have syllabi and course activities loaded into a system so IHEs can determine that they are training students in the High-leverage Practices (HLPs) and to what level.

Concerns

1. Lower enrollment numbers in education-related fields at the undergraduate level.
2. Develop targeted recruitment and retention strategies to recruit and retain Special Education Teachers of Color, specifically African American Males.
3. Explicit direction on what to use as an assessment since the VCLA will no longer be used.
4. Higher education tuition waivers for local school divisions that host students.
5. IHE is competing with programs like iTeach and how do we help students see the long-term value of earning their credentials through a full master’s degree program versus a more abbreviated program that does not have a long-term financial return of the typical bump in pay with earning a master’s degree.

Dr. Murray asked subcommittees to break into their groups and reconvene at 4 p.m.

**Reconvene as Full Committee**

**Dr. Dani Murray**, SSEAC Committee Chair

Summaries from subcommittees were shared.

The subcommittee discussed the possibility of recommending action by the SSEAC action on the following issues. The committee will discuss these items further at tomorrow’s meeting before making recommendations to the full committee.

Student Achievement and Student Outcomes

* Requested that a representative of the State SEAC be included to the Commission on Youth (COY) regarding the advisory group addressing dispute resolution in special education and that a State SEAC representative be invited to participate in any future statewide group formed to provide input on special education issues because the SEAC serves as the federally required “advisory panel for the purposes of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the State.” (IDEA, Sec. 1412(a)(21)(A))
* The State SEAC urges that statewide policy guidance regarding restriction of cell phone use by students contain flexibility for those students who use a cell phone for a purpose specified in the student’s IEP or 504 plan. Many students with disabilities require a variety of assistive technologies, services, and devices to receive a free and appropriate education. The State SEAC requests that VDOE encourage local school divisions and IEP Teams to carefully consider the role that cell phones previously played in the provision of assistive technology for students with disabilities. In addition, VDOE should provide specific guidance for IEP Teams and teachers to use in navigating the implementation of this policy.
* Communicate to the Family and Community Engagement Subcommittee the need for awareness of the role and mandate of the State SEAC.

The Policy and Regulation Subcommittee has identified the following issue areas for further consideration during the coming year:

1. Dispute Resolution and Implementation of Special Education Legislation from the 2024 Virginia General Assembly
	1. Monitoring Commission on Youth Investigation
	2. Examining the Burden of Proof in Due Process Cases
	3. Addressing Parent Misconceptions
	4. Related Issues

1. Addressing the Statewide Shortage in Special Education Teachers
	1. Recruitment and Retention Initiatives
	2. Ways to Elevate the Profession
	3. Dual Certification (General/Special Education)
	4. Training for New Teachers
	5. Long-Term Substitutes in Special Education Positions
	6. General Education Teachers—Training, Licensing Requirements, and Support for Inclusive Practices

1. Paraprofessional Development
	1. Recognizing/Defining the Role of Paraprofessionals (especially in inclusive settings)
	2. Training and Resources (possible certification opportunities)
	3. Creating Opportunities for Advancement Based on Skills and Experience
2. Transition Services

**\*\*Rusty Eddins will present to the subcommittee at our next meeting regarding the following DARS-related issues:**

* 1. DARS Services (range of services and how those vary depending on the locality)
	2. Eligibility for DARS Services
	3. Barriers to Access and How Those Can Be Overcome

**In addition to the DARS issues above, the subcommittee will address the following transition issues:**

* 1. Transition Planning
	2. Reading as a Transition Skill
	3. Technical Assistance for School Divisions
	4. Related Issues

1. Develop expectations for members of the State SEAC who are participating as representatives of the State SEAC on other state-level groups.

Family Engagement and Community Outreach

The Family Engagement and Community Outreach Subcommittee has identified the following issue areas for further exploration during the coming year:

* Define what Community Outreach means.
* Explore what is considered to be “effective” Outreach.
* Explore Outreach best practices as a subcommittee.
* Can Virginia IEP be utilized with a resource tab or a printout QR code?

Dr. Murray requested to adjourn. Ms. Kirsty Schabo motioned to adjourn, Mr. Longcor seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Dr. Murray adjourned the meeting at 4:09 p.m.

## Friday, July 19, 2024

**Committee Members:**

Ms. Ann Bueche (absent)

Ms. Tammy Burns

Dr. Tameka Burroughs

Ms. Monica Cabell

Dr. Dennis Carter

Mr. Adam Dreyfus, Member-at-Large (absent)

Mr. Russell "Rusty" S. Eddins

Mrs. Laura Hackett

Mrs. Stephanie Hoover

Ms. Amy Hunter, Member-at-Large

Ms. Jennifer Krajewski

Ms. Heidi Lawyer (absent)

Mr. John Littleton

Ms. Kellie Lockerby, Member-at-Large

Mr. Jason Longcor, Member-at-Large

Ms. Mary-Frances Morse

Dr. Dani Murray, Chair

Mrs. Manuela Robinson

Ms. Kristi Schabo

Mr. Nathan Selove (absent)

Ms. Marjorie Stallard (absent)

Mr. Brandon Stees

Ms. Erica Swenson (absent)

Ms. Taylor Thomas-Harris (absent)

**VDOE Representatives:**

Ms. Kendra Belcher, SEPI, SESS

Ms. Hallie Bereny, ODRAS, SESS (absent)

Mrs. Lisa Crafton, SEFFE, SESS

Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins, SESS

Mr. Hank Millward, Jr., SEFFE, SESS (absent)

Dr. Chiquita Seaborne, SEFFE, SESS

### Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Dr. Murray, SSEAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

**Reconvene as Subcommittee Committee**

Dr. Murray directed the subcommittees to reconvene their workgroups. Discussion should include suggestions for SSEAC training/orientation they would like to see.

**Reconvene as Full Committee**

Dr. Murray reconvened the full committee at 10:53 a.m.

**Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Updates and Appreciation**

**Dr. Lisa Coons,** *Superintendent of Public Instruction, Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)*

Dr. Coons shared her appreciation for the dedication and hard work of the SSEAC. She shared information regarding Senate Bill 220 and House Bill 1089, the roadmap for special education, and the work of the special education workgroup.

Subcommittees reported out.

**Policy and Regulation**

***Amy Hunter*,** Subcommittee Chair

* Statement requesting that a representative of the State SEAC be included in the Commission on Youth advisory group addressing dispute resolution in special education and that a State SEAC representative be included in any future statewide group formed to provide input on special education issues in light of the fact that the SEAC serves as the federally required “advisory panel for the purposes of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the State.” (IDEA, Sec. 1412(a)(21)(A))
* Consideration by the Virginia Department of Education that any statewide policy guidance restricting the use of cell phones by students include exceptions for students who use a cell phone for a purpose specified in the IEP or 504 plan. Such guidance should also note that IEP Teams may need to consider amendments to address disability-related uses that would no longer be generally permissible due to the policy change.
* Additional discussion regarding data and information collected by the Commission on Youth’s required study of special education dispute resolution regarding the burden of proof in special education due process filings.

The Policy and Regulation Subcommittee has identified the following issue areas for further consideration during the coming year:

1. Dispute Resolution
	1. Monitoring Commission on Youth Investigation
	2. Burden of Proof in Due Process Cases
	3. Addressing Parent Misconceptions

1. Addressing the Statewide Shortage of Special Education Teachers
	1. Recruitment and Retention Initiatives
	2. Ways to Elevate the Profession
	3. Dual Certification (General/Special Education)
	4. Training for New Teachers
	5. Long-Term Substitutes in Special Education Positions
	6. General Education Teachers—Training, Licensing Requirements, and Support for Inclusive Practices

1. Paraprofessional Development
	1. Recognizing/Defining the Role of Paraprofessionals (especially in inclusive settings)
	2. Training and Resources (possible certification opportunities)
	3. Creating Opportunities for Advancement Based on Skills and Experience

1. Transition Services

**\*\*The subcommittee is requesting that a speaker(s) from the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) be invited to address the following issues at the next SSEAC meeting:**

* 1. DARS Services (range of services and how those vary depending on the locality)
	2. Eligibility for DARS Services
	3. Barriers to Access and How Those Can Be Overcome

**In addition to the DARS-specific issues above, the subcommittee will discuss the following transition issues:**

* 1. Transition Planning
	2. Reading as a Transition Skill
	3. Technical Assistance for School Divisions

**Family Engagement and Community Outreach**

***Jason Langcor****, Subcommittee Chair*

The Family Engagement and Community Outreach Subcommittee has identified the following issue areas for further exploration during the coming year:

* Define what Community Outreach means
* Explore what is considered to be “effective” Outreach
* Explore Outreach best practices as a subcommittee
* Can Virginia IEP be utilized with either a resource tab or a printout quick-response code (QR code)?

**Student Achievement and Student Outcomes**

***Kellie Lockerby****, Subcommittee Chair*

* Follow up regarding the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) work conducted by the VDOE
* Push out to parents to take training on the VAAP Participation tool
* Have local SEACs look at their divisions' Local Inclusive Practices Self-Assessments and Plans

Ms. Hunter motioned to a formal request that a representative of the SSEAC be included in the Commission on Youth Advisory Group addressing dispute resolutions for special education and that the SSEAC representative be invited to participate in future statewide groups in order to provide input on special education issues in light of the fact the SSEAC serves as the federally required advisory panel for the purposes of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services with children with disabilities in the state. Ms. Hoover seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Hunter motioned that SSEAC urges the statewide policy guidance regarding restrictions on cell phone use by students to contain flexibility for those students who use cell phones for a purpose specified in the student’s IEP or 504 plan. Many students with disabilities require a variety of assistive technology services and devices to receive a free and appropriate public education. The SSEAC requests that the VDOE encourage local school divisions and IEP Teams to carefully consider the role that cell phones previously played in the provision of assistive technology to students with disabilities. In addition, the VDOE should provide specific guidance for 504 plans and IEP Teams and teachers in navigating the implementation of this policy. Ms. Hackett seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Hunter asked Family Engagement and Community Outreach “to look at ways to share more awareness of what SSEAC has done, why we are here, and why we exist because IDEA requires us.”

**Future Agenda Suggestions**

* Licensing Requirements for General and Special Education Teachers
* Paraprofessional Training – How do school divisions handle training, Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC), and other resources?
* Rusty Eddins - Postsecondary Education / Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Director at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center
* Commission on Youth (COY)
* Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission (JLARC)
* Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP)

Dr. Murray asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Hunter made the motion, Ms. Robinson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Dr. Murray adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.

### Upcoming Meeting Dates

* September 26-27, 2024
* December 5-6, 2024
* March 6-7, 2025
* July 17-18, 2025