

***State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC)***  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**December 5-6, 2013**

**Thursday, December 5, 2013**

**Members Present:** Mr. Adam Amick, Ms. Paula Baker, Ms. Lori Jackson Black, Ms. Jusolyn Bradshaw, Mr. Jack Brandt, Ms. Christie Evanko, Ms. Jackie Fagan, Ms. Fran Goforth, Ms. Sandra Hermann, Ms. Kathryn Hayfield, Dr. Scott Kizner, Ms. Alison MacArthur, Ms. Frederique Vincent, Ms. Jacqui Wilson

**Members Absent:** Ms. Eva Aikins, Mr. Brendan Folmar, Ms. Erica Midboe, Mr. Darren Minarik

**Ex-officio Members Present:** Ms. Suzanne Bowers (PEATC); Ms. Heidi Lawyer (VBPD)

**Virginia Department of Education Representatives Present:** Mr. John Eisenberg, Dr. Suzanne Creasey, Ms. Pat Haymes, Dr. Samantha Hollins, Mr. Jeff Phenicie

**Call to Order**

Ms. Lori Jackson Black, Chair called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. The committee introduced themselves. Members of the sixth cohort of the Aspiring Special Education Leaders Academy were guests of the committee and were welcomed.

**Business Session**

**Approval of Agenda**

The committee was asked to review the proposed agenda. An addition was requested from the published draft agenda. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff asked to include a report on dispute resolution activities for the past year. It was suggested that this be included on Friday's agenda. Ms. Jackie Fagan made a motion to accept the agenda as amended. Mr. Scott Kizner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes**

The committee was asked to review the minutes for approval. Ms. Jacqui Wilson noted that she was present at the meeting, but was neither on the list of attendees nor on the list of those who did not attend. Additionally, the constituency report listed her region incorrectly. She represents Region 5. Ms. Jackie Fagan made a motion to accept the agenda with proposed changes. Ms. Fran Goforth seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and Dr. Suzanne Creasey was asked to make those changes.

## **Report on Follow-up to Public Comment from Previous Meeting**

Two public comments were made at the prior meeting.

1. One comment addressed problems with local Web sites and the lack of information on local special education advisory committees (LSEACs). A letter was sent thanking the individual for her comment and informing her that Web sites are neither regulated nor required and that issues must be addressed locally. The commenter was also informed, however, that the issue would be shared with the Council of Special Education Directors which meets regularly and includes representatives of directors from each region of the state.
2. The other comment regarded test retakes with respect to pencil-and-paper tests and, in particular, those for students with visual impairments. A letter was sent thanking the commenter and, because of the complexity of the issues, referred her to an appropriate professional at the VDOE who could address the issue.

### **Presentations**

#### **Aspiring Leaders Program**

Mr. Doug Cox presented information on the Aspiring Special Education Leaders Academy. Cohort VI has 28 members. Some changes to the program this year include a regrouping of content into a thematic approach. Modules were added to cover interview skills, coaching, enhanced emphasis on data-based decision making for program improvement, evaluation of research, and increased emphasis on transition and secondary issues. The cohort has asked questions of panels of current leaders, and a newsletter was created and sent to all previous and current cohort members, as well as the SSEAC. A formal evaluation of the program after five years is underway. Thus far, previous cohort members have achieved a promotion rate of 30 percent. The Aspiring Leaders introduced themselves with their names, current positions, and school divisions.

#### **Focus Group Activity – Facilitated Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)**

Ms. Pat Haymes, director of the Office of Dispute Resolution and Administrative Services, introduced this activity by providing related background information. It was noted that approximately 40 hours are required for an administrator to respond to a complaint. While the incidence of complaints based on the number of students with disabilities in Virginia is relatively small, those that are logged have a great impact in terms of time and money. Most of the complaints concern IEPs or the implementation of IEPs. Currently, 29 states are using some form of a facilitated IEP system. There are a number of ways being used to provide this option. One strategy is to provide training to representatives in each school division so that there are individuals in each locality who have the skills to be effective meeting leaders. Virginia plans to move forward to provide this type of training. There are also systems in which certain individuals, called IEP facilitators, are trained to facilitate meetings. This activity was used to gather insight, ideas, and thoughts from members of the SSEAC and the Aspiring Leaders as members of two separate focus groups.

Mr. Art Stewart, Coordinator of Mediation Services, provided a presentation on facilitated IEPs that included the distinction between mediation and IEP facilitation. Mediation currently boasts an 82 percent success rate, but the result is an agreement and not an IEP. Reports from states that offer facilitated IEPs indicate that it is effective in helping IEP teams to reach consensus. The objective of facilitating IEPs is to help the team improve its problem-solving and decision-making processes, thus increasing its overall effectiveness. There is no current requirement in the IDEA for IEP facilitation, but there may be one in the next authorization. Mr. Stewart provided a description of a facilitator and what a facilitator does.

Ms. Jeanna Mullins of the Mid-South Regional Resource Center was introduced to conduct the focus group activity for the remainder of the day. The SSEAC members and the Aspiring Leaders participated in group discussions to answer questions posed by Ms. Mullins, and their responses were recorded. Ms. Mullins will be providing two reports that summarize the feedback from each group, and this information, along with information from other focus groups, will be used as the VDOE makes decisions about the use of facilitated IEPs.

The Committee adjourned for a working lunch at 12:02 p.m. and returned for Public Comment at 1:01 p.m.

### **Public Comment**

Two individuals from the group Decoding Dyslexia spoke about the difficulties with eligibility and recognition, appropriate reading instruction (one example given being Orton-Gillingham), the effect of the Chafee amendment on the ability to receive alternate textbooks, and the support needed for parents in regard to dyslexia. Four additional letters were read by SSEAC members on the topic, and copies of the letters were distributed to members.

### **Focus Group Activity - continued**

The SSEAC members and Aspiring Leaders members continued the focus group discussions for the duration of the day.

### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Christy Evanko. Ms. Jackie Fagan seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:24 p.m.

### **Friday, December 6, 2013**

**Members Present:** Mr. Adam Amick, Ms. Paula Baker, Ms. Lori Jackson Black, Ms. Jusolyn Bradshaw, Mr. Jack Brandt, Ms. Christie Evanko, Ms. Jackie Fagan, Ms. Fran Goforth, Ms. Sandra Hermann, Ms. Alison MacArthur, Ms. Jacqui Wilson

**Members Absent:** Ms. Eva Aikins, Mr. Brendan Folmar, Ms. Kathryn Hayfield, Dr. Scott Kizner, Ms. Erica Midboe, Mr. Darren Minarik, Ms. Frederique Vincent

**Ex-officio Members Present:** Ms. Suzanne Bowers (PEATC); Ms. Heidi Lawyer (VBPD)

**Virginia Department of Education Representatives Present:** Mr. John Eisenberg, Dr. Suzanne Creasey, Ms. Pat Haymes,

**Call to Order**

Ms. Lori Jackson Black, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. An announcement was made that Ms. Cynthia Bauer has a new job with a local office and, therefore, resigned her membership from the SSEAC. She represented the state foster care system, and her replacement will be asked to join the committee and be submitted to the Board of Education for appointment when the position is filled.

**Constituency Reports**

Name	Report
Ms. Eva Aikins Parent Representative, Region 6	No report
Mr. Adam Amick People with Disabilities	No report
Ms. Paula Baker Parent Representative, Region 8	No report
Ms. Lori Jackson Black Parent Representative, Region 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Foster, President of the Virginia Board of Education visited Mathews County in early November as part of his listening tour. The audience included many people from Region 3, some traveling an hour and a half to attend. Concerns expressed in Region 3 echoed many of the things that our LSEACs and the SSEAC have addressed.</li> <li>• Parents expressed frustration about the pressures of SOL testing and the fact that it took many children over eight hours to take the test, missing lunch, and having to stay as late as 6:00 p.m. to finish them. Some parents expressed the desire to opt out of having their children take the SOL tests. It was reiterated by administrators that this means that the school takes a 0 on that child's exam. This concern was repeated by several parents.</li> <li>• Special Education teaching assistants expressed concern over the pressure of having to present grade level content to the children who have significant disabilities, are non-verbal and should be learning life skills instead of academic content.</li> <li>• Teachers expressed concern that they were not given the tools needed to teach the new content contained in the SOL before the new tests were administered last year.</li> </ul>
Ms. Jusolyn Bradshaw Juvenile Justice	No report
Mr. Jack Brandt People with Disabilities	No Report
Ms. Christy Evanko Parent Representative, Region 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of the Web sites among the counties in Region 1 are still not updated, difficult to find, and not as helpful as they could be.</li> <li>• Dyslexia continues to be a hot topic for some in the region. One problem</li> </ul>

Name	Report
	<p>is that the disorder is over-categorized as a reading issue, and writing is not always addressed as needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Hanover SEAC is having an issue with transportation in that the county will not transport children to child care facilities that are located outside of the county, even if a bus passes by the facility (for instance if the school is out of the county). Perhaps counties could work together.</li> <li>• The communication among different SEACS across Region 1 is still not very strong. The best practice would be for the different LEAs to share information, but that is not happening for a multitude of reasons.</li> <li>• Colonial Heights is working on starting a Special Olympics team. The county is also seeing the benefits of inclusive gym – a prior initiative of the SEAC. Current projects for that city include parent training and transition from middle to high and out of high school (as earlier transition processes have recently been revamped).</li> <li>• Henrico is focused on better communication between the school system and the parent community via training and other initiatives. It also is piloting inclusive practices in some schools. Issues identified by surveys in that county include poor communication and lack of teacher training.</li> <li>• Goochland is having trouble with poor attendance at meetings and would welcome any ideas about cost-effective methods to educate and excite parents and others about SEAC.</li> </ul>
<p>Ms. Jackie Fagan Parent Representative, Region 7</p>	<p>Pulaski County has a new special education director.</p>
<p>Mr. Brendan Folmar Private Education</p>	<p>No report</p>
<p>Ms. Fran Goforth Local Directors of Special Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local directors of special education have been busy completing the report for the December 1 Child Count. Concerns continue to center around closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities and outcomes for student with disabilities.</li> <li>• I would like to thank the VDOE for sponsoring a meeting on October 1, 2013, for occupational and physical therapists. The meeting was reportedly well received and there is a plan is to hold future meetings for information-sharing and networking.</li> </ul>
<p>Ms. Kathryn Hayfield State Agency - Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services</p>	<p>No report</p>

Name	Report
<p>Ms. Sandra Hermann Parent Representative, Region 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Virginia Beach, a regional Community Resource Fair was held on November 18, 2013. Approximately 90 vendors provided information on disability services and resources for individuals with special needs available in the region and statewide. Many attendees were present. The SEAC administered a questionnaire, gathering information identifying their needs, concerns, and satisfaction with special education services received.</li> <li>• The Virginia Beach Director of Special Education is back in full swing after an extended medical leave. New SEAC membership has been submitted and approved by the School Board.</li> <li>• Concerns were received by a variety of localities in the region about obtaining and sustaining SEAC membership, meetings run or spearheaded by the LEA instead of SEAC, by-law development, differentiation of self-contained classes in terms of curriculum and make-up, and poor SOL passage rate of students with disabilities.</li> <li>• Concerns were also heard about accountability and success of students with disabilities receiving services within a local regional program, Southeastern Cooperative Educational Program (SECEP). In particular, a way of identifying the success or failure of the regional program was a concern expressed.</li> <li>• I personally attended the Data Committee meeting that was held by the VDOE. It did not appear to focus only on special education data but all educational data in the regions. In the meeting held in Region 2, it appeared that I was the only parent present. Concerns surfaced about data not identifying the success or failure of the SECEP regional program and being disbursed specifically to the localities where students were assigned.</li> </ul>
<p>Dr. Scott Kizner Local Education Officials</p>	<p>No report</p>
<p>Ms. Alison MacArthur Teachers</p>	<p>No report</p>
<p>Ms. Erica Midboe Transition and Vocational Services</p>	<p>The ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia (ECNV) has a new Executive Director. He has been on the job for approximately three months and is bringing new ideas and energy to ECVN as it continues its mission to help individuals with disabilities live independently in the community.</p>
<p>Mr. Darren Minarik Higher Education</p>	<p>No report</p>
<p>Ms. Frederique Vincent Parent Representative, Region 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fauquier County: The SEAC received updates on three programs used by the school system to improve student performance, which have had an impact on special education: (1) Voyager, a reading program targeting students grades 3 and up, which includes a writing component, is in its second year of piloting with 92 students served, including several in a high school ID program; (2) Premier’s School Specialty, a recently acquired web-based program (with teachers’ manuals and students’ workbooks) aimed at “training the brain for academic performance” via executive functioning is currently piloted with 75 students at each level, grade 3 and up; (3) a program (fully rolled out now that it is accessible via the intranet) allows for transition assessments via an interest inventory tool, a life skill component, etc.</li> <li>• Fauquier will restart billing Medicaid for therapeutic services via a blanket authorization from parents. In addition to the letter issued by the State, the SEAC is seeking more “reassuring” information on the carved out nature</li> </ul>

Name	Report
	<p>of this billing, notably in relations to private services thought by many parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>Loudoun County: This SEAC's annual report presented the high priority needs as consistency in the delivery of programs and services from class to class and school to school, inclusive practice and transition (both leveled transition and postsecondary).</p> <p>Its near-term goals are the school budget (Loudoun's Board of Supervisors has set a preliminary equalized tax rate that is the fourth consecutive year of reductions) and the hiring of a new superintendent.</p> <p>The Loudoun SEAC is advocating for a superintendent that has a demonstrated track record of supporting special education and inclusive practices.</p> <p>Loudoun SEAC has been averaging 100 attendees at its meetings this year. Although attendance is high, it continues to struggle to encourage participants to get involved in leadership positions.</p> </li> <li> <p>Warren County: This SEAC has held meetings monthly since August and had a guest speaker in November who spoke about credit accommodations for students with disabilities. It also has begun having committee members address "hot topics" (subject of interest to the committee) over 15-minute presentations such as "The History of Education for Students with Visual Disability" and "Transition out of Secondary Education for Students on the Autism Spectrum." These presentations are also a good opportunity for committee members to develop public speaking skills.</p> <p>The committee is also in the planning stages of starting a Parent Mentoring Program and has been looking at resources that will assist in training mentors. Mentoring will be for families of students with disabilities. A forum is scheduled to occur in March to gather information and, along with input received via other venues (mainly public input at monthly meetings), prepare recommendations to the School Board.</p> </li> <li> <p>Additional questions from the field:</p> <p>Regarding the announcement about the Virginia Center for Excellence in Teaching, what will this mean for the Special Education sector? Concerns were raised that this important segment of education was not mentioned. Regarding the announcement for appointments to the Opportunity Educational Institution Board (OEI), does the OEI have specific goals in the specific field of Special Education?</p> </li> </ul>
<p>Ms. Jacqui Wilson Parent Representative, Region 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>Amherst County SEAC had a meeting in September where Mr. Hank Millward from VDOE spoke about the importance of parent involvement. One of the lead high school special education teachers discussed some of the changes in diploma/credit accommodations. We had our largest group of parents/educators there and had a lot of participation from parents, especially regarding the diploma/credit accommodations. There is still a lot of confusion among parents as well as teachers.</p> </li> <li> <p>Other counties continue to have difficulty with attendance and several have tried to change the times of their meetings to accommodate parents, with no success.</p> </li> </ul>
<p>Ms. Suzanne Bowers Ex-officio member, PEATC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>Bullying Awareness: PEATC (Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center) is proud to announce its new Bullying Prevention initiative. All staff are now certified trainers from the National Bullying Prevention Center. PEATC is currently offering workshops and trainings to schools and families with new innovative ideas to help schools, parents, and students address and prevent bullying. Feel free to contact PEATC to schedule training in your area.</p> </li> </ul>

Name	Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Education: Some of the trends that have been identified from calls this quarter include eligibility, disability employment, and dispute resolution. PEATC has distributed many informative resources from VDOE as well as from National Dissemination Centers. Through the grant, we provided individual assistance to 1,721 persons from September-October 2013.</li> <li>• Latino Outreach: Outreach in Virginia to Latino families continues through PEATC's Virginia Latino Outreach Program in the form of phone calls, meetings, workshops, trainings, fairs, and reaching out to other organizations. All of this is done with the same vision: to promote parent involvement, parent and school partnerships, and the understanding of families' rights and responsibilities. In the last quarter, the Outreach staff reached 502 Spanish speaking families and individuals through phone calls, meetings, and trainings. We continue to update and translate Special Education resources for families and professionals.</li> <li>• Training: We are currently scheduling our spring 2014 training. We have updated all of our workshops including Puberty and Sexuality, The ABCs of Behavior, Measurable IEP Goals, and many others. Please visit our Web site for descriptions of the workshops and upcoming events (<a href="http://www.peatc.org">www.peatc.org</a>).</li> </ul>
<p>Ms. Heidi Lawyer  Ex-officio member, Virginia Board for  People with Disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities will begin recruiting for the 2014 Youth Leadership Forum very soon. This one-week leadership training program on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University in July is for rising high school juniors and seniors with all types and levels of disabilities. The Board pays for all expenses and accommodations, including nursing, personal care, interpreters, etc. If you know of a student who may be interested, please encourage him or her to consider applying. Information will be available on the Board's webpage at <a href="http://www.vaboard.org">www.vaboard.org</a>, on our Facebook page at <a href="http://www.facebook.com/VABOARD">www.facebook.com/VABOARD</a> and will be widely disseminated.</li> <li>• The Board is also focusing significant time and effort on its code-mandated Triennial Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia. The 2014 edition will be published in the summer.</li> <li>• The Board continues its work to support the implementation of the Department of Justice Settlement Agreement. We have funded a number of grants and are engaged in a number of policy initiatives, key of which are in the housing and employment arenas. We premiered a short documentary style film in late September called Place Matters that followed a number of people who have left training centers.</li> <li>• We've also focused efforts on providing input on the redesign of the ID and DD Medicaid waivers.</li> <li>• The Education committee of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities is doing some focused work on universal design in learning and secondary transition.</li> </ul>

## Presentations

### **Annual Report from the Office of Dispute Resolution and Administrative Services**

Ms. Pat Haymes, director of the office of dispute resolution and administrative services, presented information on data reflecting the number of mediations, complaints, and due process hearings over the past year. Although complaints and due process hearings have a large impact on resources, as a percentage of the statewide child count, they are very small. The department is working on proactive measures (such as facilitated IEPs) to increase positive outcomes, and decrease complaints, mediation, and due process.

### **Assistant Superintendent's Report**

Mr. John Eisenberg, assistant superintendent for special education and student services, provided updates on VDOE activities in the following areas:

- The Virginia Board of Education (BOE) released its annual report to the General Assembly on the condition and needs of public schools in Virginia. It can be found at: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/reports/annual\\_reports/2013.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/reports/annual_reports/2013.pdf)
- A summary of the last Board of Education (BOE) meeting can be found at: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/11\\_nov/summary.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/11_nov/summary.pdf)  
Highlights include:
  - A-F school grading formula approved.
  - State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC) submitted its annual report to the BOE.
    - [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/10\\_oct/agenda\\_items/item\\_t.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/10_oct/agenda_items/item_t.pdf), and
    - [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/10\\_oct/agenda\\_items/item\\_t\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/10_oct/agenda_items/item_t_presentation.pdf).
  - The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or No Child Left Behind: Renewal of Waivers is being discussed with US Department of Education. Stakeholder Teams are focused on SSEAC parent participation and local directors of special education participation.
  - Model Policies for Anti Bullying were adopted by the BOE:
    - [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/10\\_oct/agenda\\_items/item\\_1.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/10_oct/agenda_items/item_1.pdf).
- Students from the VDOE I'm Determined Project developed an Anti-Bullying video for disability history and awareness months: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/prevention/bullying/index.shtml>.
- The first stakeholder meetings were held on the reform of the Special Diploma. Work will continue on developing the competencies necessary to obtain this diploma. This development

will take multiple years. More information will be shared as it is developed by stakeholders.

- VDOE is exploring the possibility of developing a statewide online IEP system. Initial stakeholder meetings to explore this option will begin in 2014.

### **Public Comment Review**

Public comments were all related to needs of students with dyslexia and reading difficulties. Public comments were discussed by the SSEAC, and letters on behalf of VDOE will be sent to each who submitted or provided public comments. Issues addressed included accessible materials, eligibility, and services related to reading instruction. Mr. Eisenberg suggested having representatives from this group visit the VDOE to present issues to staff and to identify which students are not getting materials who need them. This is related to the Chafee Amendment and the requirements related to publication and copyright requirements.

It was suggested that a flyer be developed by VDOE that explains what is available to localities since lack of knowledge by IEP teams may be a factor in requesting accessible materials.

### **Suggested Agenda Topics for Upcoming Meetings**

The topics requested to be addressed for future meetings are as follows:

- ***I'm Determined Youth presentation on anti-bullying***
- New Transition Center
- IEP/Special Education Diploma revisions
- Charter School Update
- ***Legislative Update***
- Credit Accommodations
- ***OT/PT***

Those items listed in bold were suggested to be included in the April meeting, if possible.

Ms. Lori Black made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Adam Amick seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the committee adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

#### *Future meeting dates:*

April 3-4, 2014

July 17-18, 2014

September 18-19, 2014

December 11-12, 2014