

**Greenwich Special Education Advisory Council Meeting Minutes  
GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**DATE:** 9-14-2021

**PLACE:** Virtual Meeting

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Greenwich SEAC Board Members:**

Dawn Zimmerman  
Dr. Michael-Joseph Mercanti-Anthony  
Genice Mark  
Patricia Minicozzi  
Audra O'Donovan  
Abby Anders  
Courtney Powers  
Danielle Jacobs  
Jennifer Kutai  
Caroline Lerum  
Virginia Plath-Kelly  
Robyn Baldwin  
Don McGuire  
Katie Biestran  
Kathy Walker

**Alternates:**

Elizabeth Forger  
Naomi Nova

**BOE Administration:**

Dr. Toni Jones  
Dr. Stacey Heiligenthaler  
Karen Hirsh

**A.) Meeting Opening/ Attendance**

The meeting was called to order by Dawn Zimmerman at 6:36PM.

**B.) Welcome and Opening Remarks from Chairperson**

Hello and welcome to 2021/2022 year for the SEAC (DZ)

### **C.) Introductions**

Each Greenwich SEAC Member introduced themselves

### **D.) Public Comment**

No comments from the public

### **E.) Approval of Meeting Minutes from 5/19/21 Meeting**

Dr. Mercanti-Anthony moved to approve the 5/19/21 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Caroline Lerum.

All in favor, none opposed.

### **F.) Remarks and Updates from the Interim Chief Officer of Special Education and Student Supports, Dr. Heiligenthaler**

A lot of our work is being centered around PCG recommendations. There has been reorganization out of central office. More support for students and staff at schools. Special Education Coordinators are in schools supporting administrators and children on site. Central office is here to help. Part of change of name and logo. (SH)

Updated our transportation procedure to make it smoother. Bumps in transportation as coordinator no longer at GPS. Work going to getting students on busses. PPTs determine whether transportation is needed as a related service. GPS streamlining process so students are on bus within five days. In the process of looking for new transportation coordinator. (SH)

Focusing on co-teaching and supporting school teams with co-teaching. There are 8 sections of co-teaching at HS (4 english and 4 math). CMS has 5 teams of co teaching. Both sites being supported by Dr. Luddy of Luddy & Associates. Providing coaching and real time supports. Dr. Luddy is working case-by-case with students across the districts. (SH)

Several of the elementary schools have participated in co-teaching training over the summer, specifically with Dr. Paula Kluth who's been working on summer seminars. Glenville specifically participating. (SH)

Can you explain diff between collab and co-teaching? (AD)

It's the same thing but another terminology (SH)

Are those classes mixed? (AD)

They are mixed. (SH)

No class is over 50% with students with disabilities. There are a few classes that might be sped classes - 100% sped b/c that class is a sped class. The goal is to get to 30-33%. Hard to make some changes by the beginning of the school year. Thanking administrators and teachers for balancing classes. (SH)

There are some classes at the high school that can't be under 50% because the percentage of students with disabilities is at about 70% in some classes. Higher number of students with disabilities enrolled in those classes to decrease class size. (SH)

Looking toward how GPS can look at what students can move up to the next level in class and the utilization of Assistive technology. (SH)

Hired 0.5 Assistive Technology (AT) Director Megan White. Need to backfill teacher of the hearing impaired. (SH)

Have a plan to support elementary, middle and high school teams; professional development; 1:1 support and small group support. (SH)

Collab and coteaching: some teachers have the training, and some don't have the training. Last year there was a sp. ed. teacher and general ed. teacher but they weren't working together. (SH)

Dr Luddy is coaching at CMS and GHS by going into the classrooms and working directly with teachers in real time. There are some individual supports she's providing but not everyone has been immersed in it. The district is starting down the path. Biggest difference is that many staff have had more of a lecture-type training in coteaching but Dr. Luddy is looking at how that works in the classroom (the actual teaching practices) and giving feedback.

Is Dr. Luddy going to provide this support to the other schools in the district? (AD)

She's been working with the district for several years and with Glenville (SH)

EMS hasn't had training and just has 2 teachers in the classroom. What's happening at EMS and WMS? (AD)

EMS is running a different model and doesn't have coteaching so I can't answer that right now. (SH)

Happy we're having an open discussion about all of this. (AD)

We're looking at PD and how are we helping our teachers in the classroom. A lot of staff are participating in trainings and looking to see how that translates. UDL working with our curriculum team and how they are putting that in the curriculum in gen. education.

Looking at MTSS and how are we helping our teams in interventions. This is a change in mindset. We are here as a resource and support in the classrooms. All coordinators' assignments have shifted so they are in the classrooms. (SH)

### **G.) Remarks and Updates from Superintendent**

Grateful to have Dr. Heiligenthaler leading GPS with PCG recommendations. She's helping the staff understand procedures to update district and stay current. She's very positive, bold and student and child first. Working on community input on procedure manual and PD. Connection between sped, gen ed and entire curriculum team. We were a culture of no and that's not how we want to be seen by our families. We have an opportunity to create world class sped program. Phenomenal start to the year. (TJ)

Thrilled with work taken place over the summer. Happy to help and support the SEAC. (KH)

### **H.) Discuss Open Positions**

Discussion of open Voting Member and Alternate positions (DZ)

In need of a Recording Secretary. (CL)

Would alternates be eligible to step into vacancies? (CL)

Stated child is currently in elementary. No longer in prek. (RB)

Stated child is currently in pre-K (NN)

Caroline Lerum moved to nominate Naomi Nova (alternate) as a Voting Member of a Pre-K student. The motion seconded by Dawn Zimmerman.

All in favor, none opposed.

Middle School and Elementary School Vacancy remain (CL)

Caroline Lerum moved to nominate Andrea Cosby (alternate) as a Voting Member of a middle school student and Kim O'Donnell as a Voting Member of an elementary school student. The motion was seconded by Naomi Nova.

All in favor. None opposed.

We have one open administrator and two alternate roles open. How do we fill those going forward? (CL)

Looking into nominating procedures. (KW)

Suggested administrator be from the middle or high school (CP)

Special Education Teacher position remains open. (DZ)

Caroline Lerum moved to nominate Beth Forger (alternate) to a Voting Member as a Special Education teacher. Motion seconded by Katie Bistran.

All in favor. None opposed.

Open positions: GPS Admin, Alternate sped teacher, 2 alternate parents (CL)

Suggested a lottery every year as new families join every year. (AD)

Agreed lottery is a good option for new parents but wanted to also consider parents who have children who continue to on in the system. (NN)

Recommended adding nominating procedures with nominating committee. (KH)

Plans for the Nominating Committee to meet to put procedures in place. Will addressing open position at beg of year. (KW)

Can communications department post link to meeting on website? (CL)

Yes. (SH)

Would it be easier for chair to email communications director? (CL)

Jonathan is new so send to Chief of Special Education and Student Supports. (SH)

Will discuss the SEAC at BOE meetings. (KH)

Will include SEAC information in newsletters. (SH)

Is there a way for communications to be translated to Spanish? (DP- member of public)

SMORES Newsletters have availability to translate to Spanish. (LE – member of public)

### **I.) PCG Report and Progress**

### **J.) Subcommittees and Plans Going Forward**

Chair and co-chairs to send out email about subcommittees to get work started for the year (DZ).

Working on updating parent resource section on website. Would like to know what parents find helpful to update that portion of the website. (SH)

IEP/504 committee chair open. Beth happy to chair IEP/504 committee. (EF)

Recording Secretary position remains open (DZ).

Naomi Nova moved to nominate Andrea Cosby as the Recording Secretary. Motion seconded by Genice Mark.

All in favor. None opposed.

### **K. Adjournment**

Meeting ended at 8:12PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Caroline Lerum