

**Greenwich Special Education Advisory Council**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**January 16, 2024**  
**Zoom meeting, 6:30pm**

- A. Attendance- Jenni Reynolds, Dr. Stacey Heiligenthaler, Andi Cosby, Abby Anders, Karen Hirsch, Alexandra Saltis, Audra O'Donovan, Beth Fogel, Daniel Katz, Dawn Zimmerman, Eugene Matejek, Kiera Lewis, Leah Zilich, Liz Kitselman, Mary Callison, Sandra Sosa, Robin Leader, Joe Baynes, Alexis Antonecchia, Theresa Fox, Don McGuire, Kathy Walker, David Pepitone, Jennifer Dunn
- B. Welcome and Opening Remarks from Chairperson
- C. Public Comment – no comment
- D. Approval of Minutes from 11/14/23 – Dawn Zimmerman motioned approval and Audra O'Donovan seconded their approval. All in favor, none opposed.
- E. Updates from Dr. Heiligenthaler
1. GPS Special Education is being highlighted for their Community Connections program on Good Morning America with a piece filmed at Mike's Organic.
  2. The 2E committee is moving along with their manual. Smaller committees are now getting together each with a Special Ed teacher, ALP teacher, Parent, Administrator, and General Ed teacher. Looking to be complete in April or May.
  3. BOE SpEd Department update on student progress data will be on February 8<sup>th</sup>.
  4. Looking at staffing caseloads
    1. Caseload guidelines are as follows: Elementary caseload should be under 15, Middle School caseload should be under 18, and High School caseload should be under 25. These are guidelines predicting for later in the year with assumptions that caseloads can grow throughout the school year. There is no cap for caseloads, but most schools are falling below the numbers above.
    2. Looking to fill positions for psychologist at ISD, Central and GHS. Social workers are picking up cases to help cover right now.
    3. Open position for a bilingual SLP on the evaluation team, as well as a long-term sub position and long-term speech and language position. Positions are posted and these positions in general are in high demand in the surrounding area.
    4. Having to do rearranging to keep IEP hours met.
  5. Who's Who for Special Education Oversight
    1. Leah Zilich – High School and Community Connections

2. Dan Katz – Outplacement
3. Theresa Fox – Middle School
4. Eugene Matejek – Elementary School
5. Joe Baynes – Pre-School and assist with Elementary School
6. Received recognition from the state for getting out of being considered severely disproportionate for services within one year.
  1. One of the ways this was able to happen quickly is evaluation teams switched. Home building teams now do initial evaluations for qualifying and then district team does triennial assessments.
    1. Staff survey last week had mixed results about the switch. Survey went to over 200 staff and about 30 people filled it out.
  2. Another way was increasing Special Education staff.
    1. Caseload was mid 30s for the High School when Mary Forde left the position.
    2. Added a teacher to each house of the High School.
    3. Glenville and Old Greenwich Elementary Schools added a teacher because of an increase in evaluations.
    4. OT and PT are contracted through Constellation.
    5. Paras added more across the district, currently have one of those positions open.
      1. Hard to track para hours in CTSEDs new system. It can be listed in three different places. In the past it was on the grid of services and it should not have been there, but there was not a good place to record it.
      2. Should be listed in supplementary aids and services associated with a goal or indirect supports. Service hours are only Special Education Hours and should not include para hours because paras do not provide Special Education instruction.

F. SEAC Spotlight: David Pepitone from Community Connections

1. Student
  1. Meet all academic requirements for graduation
  2. PPT for transition only services
2. Program
  1. Spend at least 80% with non-disabled peers
  2. Individualized activities
  3. Diploma is earned by senior year and then held onto until they exit the program at 22
  4. Goals for
    1. Independent Living Skills
    2. Social Abilities
    3. Employment Readiness

4. Self-Advocacy
  5. Post Secondary Training
  5. Related services providers- 1 Special Ed Teacher, 1 OT, 1 Psychologist, and Job Coaches.
  6. PAES Lab – vocational instruction within the building. Hands on prep for a job site or supplemental to existing job. Work options based on student interest and levels of independence. They can be given a stipend for internship based on hours.
  7. Partners with ABILIS, Manhattanville College, Kennedy Center
  8. Trips commuting to generalize travel training, practice shopping and budgeting
  9. 20-21 students in the program and 12-15 students are in the building.
- G. Committee Updates
1. Save the Date: Tuesday, April 30<sup>th</sup> - Autism & Transition Resource Fair 4-6pm at GHS – Guest Speaker Dr. Stephen Shore, professor
    1. Agencies like DDS, BRS, ABILIS, ABA providers and more
    2. Parent mingling
    3. Come hear Dr. Stephen Shore share his own experiences as an Autistic individual, who is a successful professor at 4:45pm
- H. Adjournment - Next meeting March 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm on Zoom