

Greenwich Special Education Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes
November 11, 2025
Zoom meeting, 7:00pm

I. Attendance

a. SEAC Members: Andi Cosby, Alex Saltis, Kiera Lewis, Alexis Antonecchia, Jenn Donat, Julia Reisch, Lisa Berluti, Mariana Moreno, Victoria Bee, Anchal Nigam, Jillian Fox, Pedro Campos, Julie Jones, Shelly Cryer, Maryana Geller, Christine Zilbich, Lucy Conrad, Raquel Sosa

b. Ex Officio Members: Dr. Stacey Heiligenthaler

c. 8 Community Members

B. Welcome and Opening Remarks from Chairperson

SEAC is currently without a secretary and seeking volunteers for this role. Additional voting member positions are available for both parent and educator representatives. Interested parties should contact SEAC via Gmail or reach out to current members.

Minutes from the previous meeting will be distributed via email this week. Due to the close proximity of meetings, minutes were not completed in time. Members will be asked to approve minutes via email vote, after which they will be posted publicly.

C. Approval of [Previous Date] Meeting Minutes

Minutes to be distributed and approved via email vote.

D. Public Comment

No public comments were submitted.

E. Updates from Dr. Heiligenthaler

Questions were submitted in advance by SEAC members.

a. Behavioral Support Programs: The district operates different behavioral support programs at each level. Elementary: Positive Pathways at Old Greenwich only. Middle Schools: Supported Resource program at all three schools (Eastern, Central, Western). Western also partners with ESS (Effective School Solutions) for wraparound services including home support. High School: Wellness Center at Greenwich High School. Deborah Whitman (BCBA) works across all middle schools and high schools to ensure consistency.

b. IEP Goals Oversight: The district provides ongoing training to staff on goals and objectives. All administrators have been trained either through **SK training** or CTSDE training for newer administrators. Goals are discussed and developed at PPT meetings with parent and staff collaboration. Oversight relies on administrator training and supervision, staff professional development, parent input at PPT meetings, and team-based decision making rather than random audits of the nearly 1,300 IEPs.

c. Paraprofessionals and Budget: No paraprofessional positions have been eliminated due to budget cuts. If a child has a shared para on their IEP but no other child to share with, para support would still be provided. Current staffing challenges exist due to resignations after the school year began and new students with additional needs. Most schools are fully staffed or down one para. High school remains most challenging to staff. Parents experiencing gaps should contact building administration first.

d. Positive Pathways Program: Program was listed as a possible cut last year because it hadn't started yet. The board moved forward with the program, which is now operational and not proposed for cuts. The Special Education Department is growing with plans to add Pre-K positions, additional Speech and Language Pathologist, and 5th grade Co-Taught class at Cos Cob. The program only started in September, too early to measure outcomes after one marking period. Similar to the Unique Learner Program, it will likely take 2-3 years to show positive outcomes. Experiencing growing pains including departure of BCBA hired at the beginning of year. District actively recruiting for this position. The program anticipated to grow but want to address current challenges first.

e. Out-of-District Placements: Referenced Dr. Jones' presentation showing reduction from approximately 90 to 68 students. Multiple factors contributed: some students returned to district (particularly at high school), many students not being placed out-of-district due to improved programming including co-teaching model, and natural attrition from students graduating. The district has brought in resources such as Inclusion Specialist and specialized reading support. Numbers tracked in detail and shared with the Board in Executive Session to protect confidentiality.

f. Action Plan Updates: Updated action plan from original PCG audit available for review showing progress on recommendations. Coordinators and staff involved in continuing this work.

F. SEAC Spotlight: Rachel Rubin, District Inclusion Specialist - Using AI to Create Access

Rachel emphasized that AI is a tool, not a replacement for teachers or parents. Best results come from combining human expertise with AI's ability to generate ideas quickly. Never include personally identifiable information when using these tools. **LINK PRESENTATION**

a. Magic School (<https://magicschool.ai>): Teacher-specific AI platform accessible to parents through Google account. Offers multiple tools including image generators, worksheet creators, and text levelers. Focused on social stories feature which allows users to select grade level, describe social situations, and generate detailed social stories with images. Results sometimes vary from requested specifications.

b. ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com>): Preferred tool for image generation due to consistent results. Effective prompting crucial—include topic, character descriptions, setting details, style preferences, and grade level. Demonstrated personal example creating social story in four minutes to help daughter prepare for farm visit. Also excels

at reading comprehension support, generating summaries, defining vocabulary, providing historical context, and simplifying text to different reading levels in approximately 30 seconds.

c. Diffit (<https://diffit.me>): Text modification tool that adjusts reading complexity, creates graphic organizers, chunks text into manageable sections, and translates into multiple languages. Users upload PDFs, paste text, or insert YouTube links, then choose target reading level and language. Offers multiple format options including RACE and CER structures used in Greenwich middle schools. Features Diffit Books library with chapter summaries, comprehension questions, and graphic organizers for well-known literature. Differentiating text levels is always free; some premium features require subscription. Clarified that Diffit is not assistive technology requiring IEP listing—it's a tool teachers use to accommodate or modify curriculum.

d. Notebook LM (<https://notebooklm.google.com>): Requires personal Gmail account (@gmail.com only); will not work with school or organizational emails. Users upload materials and tool summarizes content, answers questions, and creates study tools including quizzes, flashcards, study guides, and mind maps. Most remarkable feature: generates AI-powered podcasts and videos where two realistic AI voices discuss uploaded content conversationally with analysis and examples. Particularly useful for students needing reinforcement, multiple exposures, or auditory learning. High school students might use parent with supervision for studying; generally intended for teachers and parents to create resources presented to students.

Rachel contact information (rachel_rubin@greenwich.k12.ct.us) and offered one-on-one tutorials. *Emphasized that detailed prompts yield better outputs.*

G. Committee Updates

a. Committee Sign-Ups: Form shared for approximately four to five members who haven't completed it. Committees being organized based on responses. Link: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSettKziVVGb0xtVAcXUTxxxBnuDQUaylX0qJAMmEm947K0Gkg/viewform>

b. Program Review Committee (John Hammel): Working on scheduling January presentation with Jen Libby from GBY. Will share the date once finalized.

H. Action Items

- SEAC will distribute previous meeting minutes via email for approval vote and share Rachel's presentation slides and AI prompting examples
- All members should complete committee sign-up form, review action plan and budget information, and vote on minutes when received
- Continue recruiting for secretary position and voting member positions
- Program Review Committee to finalize January date with Jen Libby

I. Adjournment

Next Meeting: January 13, 2026