

Citywide Council for Special Education

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Zoom Video Conference with CCSE

Calendar Meeting

Minutes

ROLL CALL

Ahmed Aboras	Excused
Iman Ahmed	Absent
Julie Barreto	Absent
Sanayi Beckles-Canton	Present
WenMing Chen	Present
Heather Dailey	Excused
Artelia Flowers	Present
Paullette Healy	Present
Ellen McHugh	Present
Erika Newsome	Present
Xi(Joseph) Ng	Present
OPEN (CCHS)	

DOE: Jose Rios Lua, John Hammer, Jodi Sammon-Chen(OPT), Natalie Pennington

FACE: Claudette Agard, Alexis Saub

Total # participants-6 in person/

Ellen convenes meeting at 6:18pm.

Ellen asks for a moment of silence in observance of the passing of 13 people with developmental disabilities in a recent flood.

Ellen introduces Deputy Chief Executive Director John Hammer for a quick welcome statement.

Co-President Reports

Ellen goes over the deadline for the CCHS appointee post is today. Applications sent to FACE will be sent to the Council for overview. Ellen goes over that the August meeting will be our Annual meeting. As of right now, there are 2 Council members that have not attended any meetings and have not given notice that they could not attend. Rose will reach out as a courtesy to those members to remind them that 3 unexcused absences will result in vacating the seat.

Ellen goes over those elections will be done at the Annual meeting. She goes over very briefly what the Officer positions and duties are.

Ellen goes over concerns regarding continuing a livestream option to continue in our meetings. Guidance was given that members can use their own laptops which puts the burden onto the members to maintain. Another suggestion was to purchase laptops and headsets for the Council members. Pricing out the laptops through ShopDOE has them going for \$1000 and our total budget is \$25,000 for the year. Discussions are being had to have DOE supplement all Councils with the necessary equipment to support a virtual platform without it affecting the Council's individual budgets.

Ellen expresses concerns shared that students entitled to bussing was not getting picked up. Hopefully, the presentation from OPT tonight will be able to shed some light on why this is happening.

Ellen reported that the City Council releases 2 data reports on special education. A request is being made to City Council to collect data on existing ASD NEST, Horizon, ACES, AIMS and ICT classes (where they are, how many enrolled, waitlists, etc)

Ellen has gotten the final list of IEP reps on the CECs and will start sending out her weekly resource letters.

Members Reports

Erika reported continued issues with summer rising enrollment. Families are being rejected by the programs and being told the programs are closed to enrollment. Disruptions in bussing services along with students not getting to bus altogether.

Erika also reported that there is a Metro Abilities Expo. Info will be available on our CCSE website.

Sanayi asked a question about the request for data on the ASD NEST program. Ellen explained families find it very difficult navigating where these programs are. The present system makes it very difficult to determine need and to advocate for these programs. Sanayi is very concerned on how convoluted the present application process is and how mysterious the process on how applicants are accepted and there is a demographic disparity in the present process.

Paullette reported she is working with Assemblywoman Marcela Mitaynes on an Education Fair in Sunset Park on August 2 in participation with AQE, NICE, Sinergia and CEJ

Paullette participated in a press conference as part of the Healing-Centered Schools working group with Senior Director of School Culture and Climate Kenyatte Reid. The Healing Ambassador trainings started today with great feedback from the parents who are participating. We still have many schools (mainly HS) that are eligible but have not chosen a parent to participate. We are asking Superintendents to help reach out to these schools in order not to miss out on the opportunity.

Paullette reported the US Department of Education is holding a virtual Parent Town Hall on July 29th. She will put the link to register in the chat.

Paullette wanted to piggyback on Sanayi's concerns surrounding access to the Specialized programs, she proposes to form a working group

within our Council to look at the process specifically with ASD NEST, Horizon, ACES and AIMS. Michelle Netzler came to a CCSE meeting earlier in the year and provided us clarity on the process and we can reach out to her for support and start looking at the data to establish need.

Joseph, Artelia, and WenMing also shared their agreement that an expansion of the specialized programs are necessary and the process needs to be more transparent.

Ellen introduces Jodi Sammon Chen from the Office of Pupil Transportation.

TOPICS OF CONCERN FOR OPT

1. Summer Rising transportation has had disruptions because there is no bus company presently who can pick up the existing routes. Families whose bus service still hasn't started are eligible for reimbursement
2. Ellen asks why STH are being given free car service while SWD are waiting for weeks for reimbursement? Jodi says they are trying to find a solution
3. Sanayi is asking what measures are being made for families who cannot afford car service and wait for reimbursement. Jodi reports they are working on finding a solution.
4. Paullette asked if there is already a contract with CURB for STH, why can't we extend that service for our D75 students who have missed 3 weeks of Chapter 683 due to their transportation still isn't in place. There is only 3 weeks left of Chapter 683, will these students be able to get to their schools at all? Jodi reports the DOE is using CURB as an extension of Emergency Services not by OPT
5. Paullette spoke to Tom Sheppard at the PEP about the fact that OPT was still negotiating contracts with bus companies even though \$1.6 billion has already been spent. The PEP is not aware of ongoing contract negotiations

6. Joseph asked for a timeline on when solutions will be provided since there is only 3 weeks left of Summer Session. Sanayi also reiterated that something must be done quickly and how will services and loss of sessions be made up for these children who have waited 3 weeks and will have to wait and lose more until they find a solution? Jodi said she will work with John Hammer to find a solution. Jose elaborated that student who are still waiting for bussing can be transitioned to remote until the bussing is resolved. He would appreciate OPT sending over the list of students affected so they can start providing alternative services.
7. Erika asked what the reimbursement process looks like and what services are available for reimbursement. Jodi provided the link to the transportation page on the DOE in the chat. The travel reimbursement form is available to download from there.
8. Carolyn Castro asked for information on how some principals can pay for car service for students waiting for transportation. Jodi said when she gets more information about alternative transportation options she will share with the group.
9. Paullette asked for an update on the GPS rollout. Jodi differs to Natalie Pennington (Director of Communications within OPT) OPT has been working with bus companies to pilot the drivers app in the Spring and will test out with a small controlled group of schools before rolling out more broadly.
10. Paullette asked if the vendor for the GPS the same vendor and how many busses is still are in the pilot program. Natalie confirmed that Via is the GPS vendor, and no roll piloting is happening now during Summer Rising.
11. Pat Jewett spoke about her disgust that OPT has failed our children this poorly.
12. Jodi explains that OPT is preparing for fall. There is an August 3rd deadline to guarantee bussing for students who need it for the first day of school.
13. Ellen asked when letters will go out with bussing information. Jodi said the bussing info is available on the NYCSA accounts. Schools are supposed to be contacting families. Info on

bussing is supposed to be available to the families 2 weeks prior to school starting.

14. Paullette asked who approves the request for limited travel time. Families are being rejected even with the medical form from their pediatrician. Jodi said OPT has nothing to do with limited travel time. Those requests are approved by the CSE and once they are on the IEPs, OPT will comply
15. WenMing asked where the parents can look to make sure the travel accommodations on their IEPs are in the system before school starts. Jodi said the information on the NYCSA account should be reflective of what is entered into the system.
16. Paullette asked about bus paras. Jodi said OPT does not hire the bus paras and we will need to confer with the Special Education office on the staffing.
17. Erika asked what is the likelihood that busses will be in place for all the necessary routes by the first day of school. Jodi said if the schools enter the students into the system by the August 3rd deadline, they should be able to provide bussing.

Ellen makes a proposal for our Bylaws to be amended on page 17 to reflect the Open Meeting Law at the next meeting.

Ellen speaks briefly on best practices on the upcoming elections. A nominating committee will not be able to be formed at this point, so Ellen is asking for those who want to run for a position, to submit a statement on why he/she is running for consideration.

Ellen moved onto the meeting calendar. She asked if members would be opened to asking their schools to host the CCSE in their borough. Erika volunteered District 8. Joseph offered District 1.

Ellen moves onto the Council budget. \$25,000 is allocated to the Council. Most of it goes to member reimbursement. Rose suggested that we adjust meeting expenses since we may not need to all of it for

refreshments for our meetings. Ellen suggested that we move some money into trainings since we have so many new members who can benefit from additional professional development. Paullette asked if we need to purchase equipment to support a virtual platform, does that come out of our supplies line. Ellen reported that Nequan McLean from the CEC16 has been advocating for the DOE to increase the existing budgets specifically for equipment. Paullette also asked if we received clarity whether members were still allowed to submit for wifi and data. Rose reported our Councils till hasn't been assigned an SGO. Ellen also shared that if taxes were charged on your purchase for reimbursement, you are eligible to get that tax back.

Ellen makes a motion to accept the budget as written, Erika 2nds the motion. Rose does the rollcall vote. Motion passes unanimously.

A parent asked who they contact to extend services for their child if he/she is turning 21. Ellen instructed to send an email to the special education inbox or contact Ashley Grant who heads the Diploma Coalition. Paullette asked Jose whether there is someone specific to contact for transition. Jose informed the special education office can connect the families with their borough specific supports.

Ellen revisits the discussion last meeting to write a letter to the Governor on his promise to appoint a person to his staff that focuses specifically on people with disabilities. She asks if anyone would co-write the letter with her. Joseph volunteers.

Ellen asks Paullette to repeat her previous proposal. Paullette makes a motion to form a working group within the council to work on Specialized Programs such as ASD NEST, Horizon, ACES and AIMS. Artelia 2nds the motion. Rose does the roll call vote. Motion passes unanimously.

Paullette proposes to write a resolution to add a student with disabilities to the PEP. Sanayi 2nds the proposal for discussion. Discussion is had with concerns about managing expectations, length of meeting,

accommodations having to be provided, parameters of safety, how will this student be selected, the environment of the arena itself. Ellen asks Rose for a roll call vote. 6 votes of yes, Ellen abstains. Motion passes

Erika proposes an event to recognize Special Education student or teacher (like a spotlight). Erika makes a motion to create a group to form this action. Ellen 2nds the motion. Discussion is had where concerns about budgeting, level of commitment needed, the vetting process, communication, selection process, the frequency of it and the scope and scale. Erika asks for a vote to create a recognition event quarterly to spotlight students in Special Education. 5 votes yes, Artelia and Sanayi abstain. Motion does not pass.

Rose will send out reimbursement forms to all the members. Start submitting the forms after the Executive Board is elected.

Paullette asks a clarifying meeting whether our next meeting included the calendar meeting as well as the Business and Annual. Discussion was had. Paullette makes a motion to hold the calendar, business and annual meeting all on August 5th. Sanayi 2nds. Rose does the roll call vote. 6 votes for yes, Ellen votes no. Motion passes.

Ellen makes a motion to adjourn the meeting. Paullette 2nds. Rose does the roll call vote. Motion passes. Meeting adjourns at 8:41pm.