



NSSEO Governing Board Brief

August 7, 2018

NSSEO Celebrates 50 Years

“Enhancing Student’s Talents and Dreams for a Promising Future”

What an extraordinarily special year for NSSEO as we celebrate our 50th year of building promising futures for students. NSSEO was formed in 1968 when families traveled to Springfield advocating strongly for public education for their children with special needs, several years before Public Law 94-142 (IDEA) became mandated. Since the Fall of 1968, NSSEO has continued to change and evolve in services, programs and strong partnerships to meet the changing needs of students across decades of growth in public education. Superintendent Hackett highlights this 50th year as the “opportunity to appreciate the lessons and growth of NSSEO’s history as we build stronger bridges to the future as an organization committed to continuous growth, innovation and progressive practices . Our ultimate measure of success is reflected in our graduates living their life plans and dreams successfully from college/careers/transition plans.” From NSSEO’s beginning as an



organization serving students with exceptional needs, it has been the incredibly talented educators and the strong partnerships with families to ensure students have the supports, experiences and skills they need in pursuit of their life plans. In our 50th year, NSSEO welcomed 38 new staff to

an outstanding team, that included a range of talent and positions from maintenance staff to therapists, teachers and administrators.

New Staff Week kicked off at Sunrise Lake Outdoor Education Center with celebrating and highlighting NSSEO's mission, vision and core values with an emphasis on the strong alignment to the goals that propel us further into future growth. New staff learned about the powerful influence which engaged school, family and community partnerships have on student outcomes. Our organization's success is predicated on the ongoing collaboration efforts that guide students to be lifelong learners as they transition to become actively engaged adults. Superintendent Judy Hackett, NSSEO Board President Janice Krinsky and PATHS/Kirk parent Nan Naranjo, mother of Jenna, addressed the roles of the Governing Board in supporting the organizational efforts, the philosophy and the key aspects of successful family partnerships. Staff engaged in collaborative team building that can be generalized to classrooms and building the mentor/mentee plans for the school year. New Staff week also included a program focus, NSSEO best practices for IEPs, Transition planning and service delivery as well as social-emotional learning supports for students at the classroom/ building levels. Specialized training focused on meeting the needs of students who have specific needs in the area of behavior. Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NVC) was also provided to all new staff. The new staff had a week of professional learning, promoting new friendships and creating special moments for our newest members of the NSSEO team.

On Monday, August 13th NSSEO held its annual Opening Day Event welcoming close to 550 staff to a morning of celebration, recognition and inspiration. Dedicated partners, families, staff and community members were recognized for their contributions to



NSSEO. The NSSEO legacy award was presented to a very special mother and son with ongoing involvement at Kirk School, Pris and Kenny Lawson (pictured left). They have been a part of Kirk for nearly 25 years. Pris has been an employee of NSSEO since 2002 and her son Kenny, a 2002 Kirk graduate, continues to sing in the Alumni choir and attend social events from Alumni

Basketball games to dances and fundraisers. Their many contributions have become a special part of the history of Kirk/NSSEO and NSSEO continues to play a very special part in their lives. Mr. Chuck Baum was recognized as a NSSEO community partner who has demonstrated extraordinary contributions to our organization. Chuck works at Mitsubishi Electric Automation, Inc. and has been an active Volunteer at SLOEC for years; his most recent contributions have been to rebuild the climbing wall and participation in the dock reconstruction process. Chuck embodies one of the most important core values of NSSEO- connecting and collaborating through partnerships to expand and advance meaningful opportunities for students. Mitsubishi Electric Automation, Inc. has made generous donations to NSSEO over the years to assist us in providing excellent opportunities for our learners.

Student speakers are always the highlight of the Opening Day Event and reflect the success of their educational experiences. Allie Lang, a Community Consolidated School District 59 student who formerly attended Timber Ridge School, shared her story of how she “found joy in the journey at Timber Ridge” where they taught her the skills she needed to be successful in her home school. She is now entering her 5th grade year at Juliette Low Elementary School in D59. Joe and James Kubiak, recent graduates of the Hersey High School Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program through NSSEO, spoke about the challenges they have overcome, the people and supports that have been most essential to their journey to success. Joe and James spoke about the hardships in their lives and how the supportive staff at NSSEO helped them through and keep their eye on the end goal of college. Joe now attends Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and he is studying biomedical sciences. James attends National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), which is located at RIT, and he is studying graphic production. Their story was another example of how dedicated staff, family engagement and a committed community work together to support Joe and James to accomplish their dreams.

After the closing of the morning events, NSSEO staff members went back to their respective programs/buildings to engage, connect and participate in professional learning to start the 2018-2019 school year. It was truly a day to honor and recognize NSSEO, its staff, students, families and the community for their contributions for the past 50 years and to kick off the start of the next 50 years which will continue to be committed to looking beyond what is, to what is possible.

NSSEO Continuous Improvement Plan and Growth Indicators

The 2018-2019 NSSEO Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) was approved at the August Governing Board Meeting. The Plan outlines the goals and objectives for the school year. The broad goals are focused on student outcomes, learning environment, transition services and collaborative partnerships. A corresponding Dashboard was shared that reflects indicators of growth for each goal area that NSSEO leadership will report on throughout the school year. This integrated approach is designed to provide a more customized way to demonstrate progress on the goals across a number of educational settings. The use of measures, aligned to the Illinois ESSA framework, will be part of the comprehensive story of the continuous improvement of the NSSEO CIP. The Plan is an inclusive, collaborative picture of the efforts across school/district/family/community.

In addition, NSSEO Leadership has been involved in recent meetings and workshops at the state level that reflect the updates of Vision 20/20 and how to ensure that the plans and updates include the requirements of Illinois’ ESSA state plan. Unique to NSSEO, a customized dashboard of indicators has been developed that will provide meaningful progress on the important areas of focus, aligned to the needs of exceptional learners. Throughout the spring and summer, NSSEO Leadership have been actively engaged in trainings and discussions at the state level regarding requirements under ESSA, site-based reporting and report card requirements. NSSEO is committed to providing a more comprehensive picture of the scope of work and depth of the efforts for students, staff,

parents and community partners. NSSEO will continue to provide the Governing Board, member districts and stakeholders with progress updates, including state requirements and most importantly the growth measures that reflect progress on the 2018-2019 NSSEO Continuous Improvement Plan.

Upcoming NSSEO Events

- Wednesday, Sept. 5 NSSEO Governing Board Meeting
Special Recognition Congresswoman Mussman
- Wednesday, Sept. 12 Kirk Safety Fair
- Friday, Sept. 28 Community Wellness: 5.0 Fun Run/Walk at
Tobler-PATHS Field (Kirk Campus)
NSSEO 50th Anniversary Bash
- Sunday, Nov. 4
- Saturday, Nov. 10 Harvest Fest at Sunrise Lake (SLOEC)