

Meeting Minutes

Iowa Special Education Advisory Panel

September 20, 2024

Present: Wendy Andersen, Joy Barlean, Carrie Champine, Casey Force, Rhonda Haitz, Tami Hoffman, Mary Jackson, Lori Janke, Laura Liese, Pam Litterer, Amy Llewellyn, Kim Neal, Keri Osterhaus, Stephanie Smith, Karen Thompson, Rebecca Torres, and Joel Weeks

Absent: Josh Bowar, Lee Longmire, Sonia Reyes, Sandra Smith, and Derrick Willis

Department Staff Present: Barb Guy, Nancy Hunt, Beth Buehler-Sapp.

Public Comment: None

Welcome/Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Rhonda Haitz, Chair at 9:10 a.m.

Approve Agenda

A motion was made to approve the agenda by Wendy Andersen. The motion was seconded by Kim Neal. Motion carried.

Consent Agenda

Minutes were reviewed by the panel members. Joel Weeks made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 2024 meeting. Karen Thompson seconded the motion. Motion carried. The minutes were approved with no suggested changes.

Continuous Improvement: State Processes – Barb Guy and Angelisa Fynaart, Iowa Department of Education ([Slide Deck](#))

House File 2612, which was signed into law, reinstated the Division of Special Education at the Iowa Department of Education. Barb Guy gave an update on the structure of Special Education Division. There are two branches with one being regionally-based in the 9 AEAs and one centrally-based in Des Moines. Barb has been hired as the Division Administrator of State Accountability and Student Supports (Central). Angelisa Fynardt has been hired as the Regional Special Education Director for Great Prairie Area Education Agency and as the acting Division Administrator of Special Education, Regional Continuous Improvement and Compliance (Regional). There will be a Deputy Director for the division but that position has not been filled yet.

There will be nine Regional Special Education Directors aligning with the AEAs across the state. Seven of these nine positions have been filled. We are still in the hiring process for Heartland AEA and Keystone AEA. In the regional side of the division, there will also be additional Education Program Consultants hired in each region. That effort is ongoing.

There will be three Bureaus in the central-based branch:

- Special Education Accountability, Accreditation, Finance and Data Analysis
- Student Instruction Evaluation and Services
- Early ACCESS and Childhood Education

In addition, we have an attorney, Rachel Bosovich, assigned to our Division and a newly hired Dispute Resolution Coordinator, Jen Cira. Jen previously worked for Grant Wood AEA in the Family and Educator Partnership (FEP).

Angelisa provided an overview of the priorities and work of the new Regional Special Education Directors. The team is:

- Building relationships and regional Department teams
 - Defining roles and responsibilities
 - Meeting with the AEA Chiefs and special education leaders regularly
 - Meeting with Superintendents and district leaders
 - Establishing relationships with DE staff members
- Implementing special education monitoring and continuous improvement activities
 - General supervision to support student outcomes
 - IDEA-Differentiated Accountability
- Working to ensure the provision of high-quality professional learning in special education, including professional learning for administrators
- Establishing and implementing AEA accreditation process

OSEP Site Visit Summary - Barb Guy, Iowa Department of Education

In 2016, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) began providing differentiated monitoring and support (DMS) to States as part of its Results Driven Accountability (RDA) system under Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Iowa is in Cohort 2 and received a DMS visit in September. Barb provided a reminder of the Department's General Supervision System and shared some of the slides presented to OSEP during the visit. Barb gave a recap of the site visit and thanked the Panel members who took the time to share feedback with OSEP during the meeting. Overall, it went well but we do expect to have some findings. Department staff are working on providing the follow up document requested by OSEP.

Barb talked about the next steps:

1. Emerging Niches
 - a. Add behavior to the IDEA DA process
 - b. Provide a professional learning opportunity for administrators
2. Launching Niches
 - a. ACHIEVE General Supervision tools
 - b. ACHIEVE Family Portal
3. As a result of HF2612
 - a. AEA accreditation
 - b. Nonpublic school outreach

ASK Resources: Update – Karen Thompson and Alicia Karwal, ASK Resources ([Slide Deck](#))

Karen Thompson and Alicia Karwal presented the current progress on the Family Support Services available at ASK Resources due to the new partnership with the Iowa Department of Education to expand impartial, collaborative and coordinated services to families across Iowa.

ASK Resource Center is a family focused non-profit organization that provides supports, and technical assistance to families and is funded through federal grants, state grants, and private organizations. Staff are comprised of disabled individuals, care givers, board members, and staff. It was started in the 1980's by 2 individuals and continued to grow. In 2023 over 38,000 family support services have been provided. ASK Resources is Iowa's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI).

ASK will have family support specialists in all nine AEA regions and utilize a team-based approach to coordinate support statewide. They provide objective, impartial and collaborative Family Support Services. Karen and Alicia described their current plan to hire staff during year 1 as well as their onboarding process for new hires.

Family Support Specialists work with families and/or professionals utilizing 3 tiers of one-to-one support to provide information, resources, and advocacy efforts based on the needs of the family. ASK utilizes a cross-trained, team-oriented staffing structure to provide seamless support and a wide variety of resources covering: education health, related laws, resources, assistance, support, translation and interpretation services plus more. The presentation also covered the referral process and the resources and support available to families.

ASK requested the following feedback from Panel members:

1. How do you plan to use what you learned today?
2. What supports/resources would you like ASK to produce?
3. What training would you like ASK to produce?

Input: AEA Accreditation Standards – Barb Guy, Iowa Department of Education

This topic will be moved to October due to time constraints.

Update: ACHIEVE New Releases – Shannon Grundmeier, Iowa Department of Education

Shannon Grundmeier provided an update on the contact validation process that is currently underway to prepare for the ACHIEVE Family Portal. The AEA's and LEA's are completing family contact validation to ensure the correct e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and correct relationship type is listed within the ACHIEVE system. Eligible family members will be invited to create an account in the ACHIEVE Family Portal once launched. The contract validation process is vital to ensure only eligible family members receive an invitation. Almost 25,000 learner records have been validated to date. In the future, this will be an annual review to confirm contact information for each learner.

Shannon asked the Panel to review and add comments to the FAQ draft that will be part of the support offered to educators and families during the launch.

Secondary Transition Update – Kelsey Teeter, Iowa Department of Education ([Slide Deck](#))

Kelsey gave an update on Secondary Transition. She began by discussing [House File 2545](#) which requires the Department of Education to review the state's high school graduation requirements, core curriculum, core content standards, and the social studies standards.

There is a committee with representation from Division of Special Education in each area. Kelsey serves on the committee which requires a comprehensive review and recommendations for policy changes related to high school graduation requirements and core curriculum. Tiffany Poage will serve on the content standards and education standards committee and Mary Beilke will serve on the committee for the statewide literacy plan.

Each committee will have meetings scheduled over the course of this upcoming year to dive into the content and the requirements of the legislation and to elicit public feedback. An interim report is due to the legislature by December 2024 and a final report will be due in June of 2025. The final report will include the recommendations from the committee. There will be opportunities for feedback and input throughout the process. The committee leads will keep SEAP informed of opportunities and the progress of the work.

There are new post-secondary readiness indicators that are approved through the updated ESSA plan that focus on student's participation in work-based learning, college credit courses, and industry recognized credentials. These improve post-secondary outcomes for all students but are especially important for students with disabilities. The committee will look into the career and academic planning legislation to determine if that process can inform the work.

Kelsey also updated the Panel on the Capacity Building Institute (CBI) that Iowa's team attended this past May. The team goals:

1. Develop state interagency team that is collaborative and represents our diverse population and needs to address identified state goals, inform practice and cross-agency collaboration.
2. Increase engagement of students/youth and their families with culturally responsive policies and practices.
3. Increase capacity of workforce to provide high quality services to students with complex support needs and/or traditionally underserved or marginalized youth.

Finally, Kelsey talked about the following Secondary Transition priorities:

- Student focused planning
- Student development
- Interagency Collaboration
- Family Engagement
- Program Structure

Kelsey asked the Panel to consider the priorities and think about what to do first, what data might need to be included, stakeholder input and tools and resources that should be considered. Kelsey will be back for future meetings this year.

Announcements

None

Future Agenda Items

Recap of bills that impact Education
Truancy conversations
Sub-Committee work
Mental Health

Emerging Issues

None

Adjourn

Joel Weeks made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Karen Thompson seconded the motion.
Meeting adjourned.

2024-25 Upcoming Meeting Dates

October 18, 2024
November 22, 2024
January 10, 2025
February 28, 2025
April 11, 2025
May 16, 2025