

Meeting Minutes

Iowa Special Education Advisory Panel

November 22, 2024

Present (In-Person): Joy Barlean, Casey Force, Lori Janke, Rhonda Haitz, , Mary Jackson, Pam Litterer, Kim Neal, Keri Osterhaus, Rhonda Rairden-Nelson (proxy for Laura Liese) Stephanie Smith, Karen Thompson, Rebecca Torres and Joel Weeks

Present (Zoom): Wendy Andersen (partial), Tami Hoffman, Lee Longmire,

Absent: Josh Bowar, Carrie Campine, Laura Liese, Amy Llewellyn, Sarah Norvell, 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 9:02 a.m.

Approve Agenda

A motion was made to approve the agenda by Rebecca Torres. The motion was seconded by Keri Osterhaus. Motion carried.

Consent Agenda

Minutes were reviewed by the panel members. Rebecca Torres made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 2024 meeting. Keri Osterhaus seconded the motion. Motion carried. The minutes were approved with no suggested changes.

IDEA Equity Requirements – Melissa Schnurr & Nancy Hunt, Iowa Department of Education ([Slide Deck](#))

Melissa Schnurr and Nancy Hunt shared three IDEA Equity Requirements with the Panel. The presentation described the definitions of each requirement, the differences in calculations, the district identification processes and Iowa data for the last three years.

Disproportionate Representation - SPP/APR Indicator 9 is required by IDEA and measure whether students from certain racial and ethnic groups are disproportionately receiving special education services because they were inappropriately determined eligible for special education services. If a district is identified, the district must conduct a review of policies, procedures, and practices to determine whether disproportionate representation is the result of inappropriate identification practices. The district must correct any noncompliance identified through the review.

Iowa Data for Disproportionate Representation

District	21-22	22-23	23-24
North Polk	Multirace	Multirace	
Sioux Center	Multirace	Multirace	
Pella		Black	

Significant Discrepancy - SPP/APR Indicator 4A and 4B are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and measure whether students with IEPs, overall, and from certain racial and ethnic groups, receive out of school suspensions or expulsions in districts more than students with IEPs statewide.

If a district is identified, the district must conduct a review of policies, procedures, and practices to determine the factors contributing to the disproportionate representation. The district must correct any noncompliance identified through the review.

Iowa Data for Significant Discrepancy

District	21-22	22-23	23-24
Lewis Central	B4A		
Burlington	B4A	B4A; Black	B4A; White
Bettendorf		B4A; Black, White	
Clinton		B4A; White	
College Comm.		B4A	B4A; Black
Fort Dodge		B4A	
Marion		B4A	
Ottumwa		B4A	
Davenport		Black	
Iowa City		Black	
Cedar Rapids			Black

Significant Disproportionality - IDEA requires states to measure whether students from certain racial and ethnic groups are disproportionately receiving special education services, whether they are disproportionately placed in certain settings, and whether they are disproportionately receiving certain kinds of disciplinary removals. IDEA requires different calculations for this measurement than it requires for Indicators 9, 4A, and 4B.

When a district is identified as having significant disproportionality, they must:

- Set aside 15% of their IDEA funds for CCEIS and
 - May use CCEIS funds to serve children age 3 through grade 12, particularly, but not exclusively, children in those groups that were significantly over-identified;
 - May include children not currently identified as needing special education or related services;
 - May not limit CCEIS only to children with disabilities;
 - Must identify and address the factors contributing to significant disproportionality; and
 - Must address a policy, practice, or procedure identified as contributing to the significant disproportionality; and
- Publicly report on any revisions to policy, procedure, or practice.

Iowa Data for Significant Disproportionality

District	21-22	22-23	23-24
North Polk	Multirace Identification	Multirace Identification	
Sioux Center	Multirace Identification	Multirace Identification	
Cedar Falls	White SSRF		
Davenport	Black OOS > 10 days	Black OOS > 10 days	
Waterloo	Black OOS > 10 days		
Bettendorf		Black OOS > 10 days	
Iowa City		Black OOS > 10 days	Black OOS > 10 days
Lewis Central		White SSRF	
Pella		Black identification	
Burlington			White OOS > 10 days
College Comm.			Black OOS > 10 days

Districts will conduct the policy, procedures and practices review through the new equity tool just released in ACHIEVE. Districts also have access to the new IDEA Equity Data Dashboard, also newly released in ACHIEVE.

The Panel encouraged the Department to conduct an audit on the coding that might be used in some Student Information Systems around removals. Some removals are being coded as “parent choice.” In a future meeting, we will revisit this topic and ask for recommendations.

Legislative Guidance and Implementation – Thomas Mayes, Iowa Department of Education

Thomas provided an update on a recent special education case and legislation that was passed in the last session. Thomas listened to questions and gathered feedback.

Kass vs Western Dubuque

Iowa school district case that involved transition services for a student on an IEP and his placement. The parents alleged that the district violated IDEA when it developed the IEP for their son. Although he had enough credits to graduate, the IEP team determined he had unmet transition needs. The family objected to the proposed IEP and filed a complaint with the Iowa Department of Education. The administrative law judge ruled in favor of the district, and determined there was not a denial of FAPE. The Eighth Circuit affirmed the court’s decision.

Chronic Absenteeism Bill

Senate File 2435 was signed into law on May 9 2024 with an effective date of July 1, 2024. The statute no longer uses excused or unexcused absences. Chronic Absenteeism data will be collected by the SRI collections similar to previous years. Local truancy determinations and required actions are not applied to a student, who based on local discretion, meets one of the six exemptions:

1. Completed requirements for graduation or obtained a high school equivalency diploma.
2. Excused for sufficient reason by any court of record or judge.
3. Attending religious services or receiving religious instructions.
4. Unable to attend school due to legitimate medical reason(s).
5. Individualized Education Program (IEP) that affects attendance.
6. Section 504 plan under the Federal Rehabilitation Act that affects attendance.

If, in the course of serving a child with a disability under 504 or IDEA, if the legitimate medical excuse is not given its due weight, the Department could exercise monitoring or supervision from an IDEA lens.

AEA Bill

This bill does not change any entitlement or core principals of IDEA. Nor does it take any dollars out of the system, but it may change the way the dollars flow. The bill has forced AEAs to analyze the services that were being provided and determine the correct alignment of the work. The AEA chiefs are going through the exercises of looking at salaries, services and costs now.

Special Education Task Force

Members are currently being named but the information is not yet public. This task force is being run by the legislature. The Department is not staffing the task force but has a sitting member.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Database – Tori Carsrud, Iowa Department of Education

Tori Carsrud, Education Program Consultant for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, shared information about the newest tool added to the ACHIEVE system. This tool is called the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Database.

In her presentation she shared data from the 2023-2024 school year. There were approximately 3183 learners who are deaf or hard of hearing between the ages of 0-21 years. Of those learners, 1449 were eligible learners on an IEP and 111 were eligible learners on an IFSP. Additionally, of those 3183 learners, approximately 983 were in 9th grade or older.

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Database was developed to gather medical testing and academic testing information about the learners who are deaf or hard of hearing. It was also developed as a tool for the audiometrists and audiologists to use to gather screening data which is collected during a school hearing screening or at a sound booth.

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Database was also developed to support collaboration between AEAs and LEAs. The database is accessible to most users of ACHIEVE and allows the users to see information related to the area of Hearing as they are evaluating a learner or progress monitoring goals for a learner. There is a red banner that appears on a learner's home page if they have been identified as deaf or hard of hearing. This red banner is a quick indicator for team members to be notified that they should be considering the impact of a learner being deaf or hard of hearing on their development.

Finally, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing database was developed to meet the requirements of legislation signed into law in May 2022. This legislation requires the Department of Education to gather language achievement data on learners between the ages of 0-8 years who are deaf or hard of hearing and who were administered a particular language assessment. The list of language assessments was determined by a team of professionals familiar with language development and the education of learners who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Updates – Chris Kaftan & Anne-Michelle Pedersen, Iowa School for the Deaf

Chris Kaftan, the Superintendent of the Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD) provided information on his personal background and history. He worked directly in the classroom as an educator for several years, teaching deaf and hard of hearing students before becoming an administrator. He has had various roles working in the administrative field ranging from principal to director of curriculum/instruction, and director of student services before coming to Iowa.

Iowa School for the Deaf was founded 169 years ago. The school was first founded in Iowa City in 1855 and then in 1870 we moved to Council Bluffs because the state gave us free land. All of the school's teachers are licensed by the State of Iowa and instruct using a duality of modes, primarily

but also English. Mr. Kaftan's goal is to be sure that every child in Iowa has access to language because without language they cannot learn.

ISD currently has 98 students with some referrals being processed so it is anticipated that enrollments will reach over 100 students by January. Enrollment continues to go up thanks to outreach efforts. IDS has reached out to more families to spread the awareness of the importance of signed language and has a wonderful coaching program that provides services in school districts across the state.

Anne-Michelle Pedersen, Statewide Family Support Mentor Coordinator, spoke about Family Support Mentors. The program was created by the LEAD-K (Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids) bill that was signed May 2022. This bill is designed to ensure deaf and hard of hearing children have access to ASL, can read and write in English and receive the education and services they need to be independent and successful in life.

Family Support Mentors serve families of children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing (birth-21). The mentors give parent resources to provide families with information and guidance on language, communication, and social-emotional development of their child. The services are available to families based on their specific needs, experiences, and wants. The program provides parents with an understanding of ASL and English, including instructional philosophies for both (such as bilingual bimodal, listen and spoken language, total communication, and other philosophies as well as other forms of communication, deaf culture, deaf community and self-identity).

Anne-Michelle will continue to share progress on the mentoring program as it develops.

Announcements

Karen Thompson: Monday, November 25th there is part 2 of an IEP webinar series over the lunch hour. You can sign up on the events tab at ASK. The presenters will be training coordinators Susie Lund and Kelly Carnahan. Families are encouraged to bring their IEPs with them. The webinar will go over the meaning of the IEP sections and the kinds of open-ended questions can you ask, etc.

Nancy Hunt: In preparation for the ACHIEVE family portal launch, we are planning a soft launch in January. We are looking for a limited number of family members who are willing to participate. Those that are interested should complete the Google Form.

Stephanie Smith: The Work Incentive Planning Assistance Program is a grant-funded program from the Social Security Administration that provides individualized benefits counseling to individuals. If interested you can talk to your benefits counselor to get connected with this program. Angela Young our Benefits Resource manager may be able to come to a future meeting and present.

The next SEAP meeting on January 10th will be a short virtual meeting with the time yet to be determined.

Future Agenda Items

Truancy Conversations
Sub-Committee Work

Mental Health

Emerging Issues

None

Adjourn

Joel Weeks made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Casey Force seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.

2024-25 Upcoming Meeting Dates

January 10, 2025

February 28, 2025

April 11, 2025

May 16, 2025