

May 16, 2025 Special Education Advisory Panel Minutes

Location: Grimes State Office Building & Zoom

Time: 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Present

Wendy Andersen, Joy Barlean, Josh Bowar, Carrie Champine, Linda Dettman, Casey Force, Rhonda Haitz, Tami Hoffman, Mary Jackson, Lori Janke, Pam Litterer, Amy Llewellyn, Lee Longmire, Kim Neal, Sarah Norvell, Keri Osterhaus, Sonia Reyes, Karen Thompson, Rebecca Torres, Stephanie Petrillo, and Joel Weeks.

Absent

Nancy Hunt

Department Staff Present

Betsy Lin, 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 Karen Thompson. The motion was seconded by Lori Janke. Motion carried.

Consent Agenda

Minutes were reviewed by the panel members. Joel Weeks made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 2025 meeting. Keri Osterhaus seconded the motion. Motion carried. The minutes were approved with no suggested changes.

Vice-Chair Election

Wendy Anderson was the nominee for the office of Vice-Chair. Wendy gave a brief statement. No other nominations were brought forward.

Family Support Services – Karen Thompson, ASK Resource Center

A year-end review of the Family Support Services project was provided by Karen Thompson and a team from ASK Resource Center. Karen spoke about the available services and the pivotal projector coordination that happens across the project. Karen update the Panel on new staff members that have been recently hired.

Cohort 3 staff members have been hired and are about to begin their training June 2025. Staff has a variety have professional backgrounds and are spread across the state.

Clarification was provided that ASK Resource Center doesn't typically speak for anyone at a meeting but can attend with a family to provide support and training. The goal is to continually help families to be their own best advocate.

Legislative Updates – Thomas Mayes, Iowa Department of Education

Thomas Mayes provide an update on the current state of legislation that impacts education and the work of the Department. He discussed the following:

- HF782 – Student access to personal electronic devices during Instructional time
 - Requires the board of directors of a school district to adopt policies restricting student use of personal electronic devices during classroom instructional time.
 - Allows a student who has an individualized education program, or a plan under section 504 to maintain access to the student's personal electronic device during instructional time if the student's individualized education program, or plan under section 504 requires the student to maintain such access.
- HF784 Math Counts Act
 - Requires each school district to assess all students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 6 to determine a student's level of proficiency in mathematics.
- HF787 Department technical improvements
 - Modifies the process for the calculation of teacher salary supplement district cost per pupil by specifying the Department of Management is to calculate an amount necessary to meet the teacher minimum salary requirements.
 - Will restore Teach Iowa as the required job teaching posting format for schools to apply for available teaching positions within the state.
- HF316 Career education, middle school career exploration, industry-recognized credential diploma seal
 - Establishes a diploma seal for completion of bi-literacy seal requirements. There are also options for students completing coursework to obtain an OSHA 10-hour card, a CNA certificate, and one for CTE instruction. The goal is to embed CTE as an industry recognized credential obtainable within the school year.
- SF277 Compulsory education, truancy and chronic absenteeism
 - Adds exemptions for attendance of a wedding, funeral, military induction or military training.
- HF392 Year-round school
 - This act modifies the law to also allow year-round school for grades 9-12.
- SF369 Civics examination, graduation requirement
 - A bill for students to be required to pass a citizenship test to graduate. There will be an option to modify the exam as needed for students with an individualized education plan (IEP) or 504 plan, who has a severe intellectual disability, or is an English learner.

ACHIEVE Family Portal – Lisa Lohman, Iowa Department of Education

The ACHIEVE Family Portal launched on Feb. 26, 2025. Lisa Lohman provided the following updates:

Family Contact Validation: If a parent or guardian doesn't have an email address we ask for validation of receipt of information. Once a student reaches the Age of Majority, they are required to validate their personal e-mail address for correspondence within the ACHIEVE portal.

Current Account Data: 96,000 invitations were sent and 6,483 unique ACHIEVE Special Education Family Portal accounts have been created (7% of invited IDEA Parent contacts). All nine AEAs have at least one Early ACCESS family member with an active account. Current, 8.3% of invited Early ACCESS contacts have created an account.

Support for Users: There is an ACHIEVE Family Portal help desk that users can access to get assistance when needed. The help desk includes seven contracted, part-time staff in addition to the internal team which includes Nancy Hunt, Shannon Grundmeier and Lisa Lohman. To date, 1000 calls requesting support were received along with 1500 email support requests.

Age of Majority Transfer of Rights: Learners who have reached the age of majority are automatically invited to create an account if a valid email address is stored in ACHIEVE. Prior to the age of majority, learners may be invited to create an account by an IDEA parent.

Year in Review – Reflection on Accomplishments

Betsy Lin led the Panel in a reflection activity that asked member to think about the highlights of the past year and hopes for the upcoming year.

Announcements

- Department Staffing Updates:
 - Division Administrator/Director of Special Education: Leisa Breitfelder
 - Seth Piro is leaving his role as Regional Special Education Director to be the new Chief at Northwest AEA.
 - New position that will support the public-nonpublic school collaboration
 - Multiple regional staff are in the process of being hired
- Outgoing Member Recognition: Rhonda Haitz, Lori Janke, and Pam Litterer terms on SEAP are ending.
- Wendy Andersen has been selected as the new Vice Chair by Panel vote.

Future Agenda Items/Emerging Issues

Email Nancy Hunt with agenda items.

2025-26 Meeting Dates

September 18, 2025 - New Member Orientation

September 19, 2025

October 17, 2025

November 21, 2025

January 9, 2026

February 27, 2026

April 10, 2026

May 15, 2026

Adjourn

Lori Janke made a motion to adjourn. Keri Osterhaus seconded the motion. Motion carried.