

## April 10, 2026 Meeting Minutes

### Iowa Special Education Advisory Panel

Location: Grimes State Office Building or Zoom

Time: 9 a.m.– 3 p.m.

### Present

Joy Barlean, Jennifer Dickey, Carrie Champine, Linda Dettman, Casey Force, Tami Hoffman, Sarah Norvell, Kristie Ostrander, Stephanie Petrillo, Karen Thompson, Rebecca Torres, Kristi Upah, Kimberly Van Beek and Joel Weeks

### Absent

Wendy Andersen, Josh Bowar, Jill Johnston, Lee Longmire, Mary Jackson, Alissa Mayer, Keri Osterhaus, Ashley Reedy, Rohey Sallah, and Katie Sharp

### Department Staff Present

Leisa Breifelder, Betsy Lin, Barbara Lacina, Nancy Hunt, Beth Buehler-Sapp

### Public Comment

None

### Welcome/Introductions

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

### Approve Agenda

A motion was made to approve the agenda by Sarah Norvell. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Dickey. Motion carried.

### Consent Agenda

Minutes were reviewed by the panel members. Joel Weeks made a motion to approve the minutes. Sarah Norvell seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### Accredited Nonpublic Schools – Janelle Danner, Iowa Department of Education

Janelle Danner, nonpublic school liaison, provided information on her work. The state liaison role was created through House File 2612 and is a brand-new position. Students with disabilities parentally placed in accredited nonpublic schools are entitled to special education provided by public agencies. That means public agencies, districts and AEA's, are responsible for Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Iowa Code guarantees full FAPE for these students.

Janelle spoke about some challenges in public/non-public school coordination. While code hasn't changed, more accredited nonpublic schools have started admitting students with disabilities. Although the numbers overall are still relatively small, parents are unsure of how special education works in accredited nonpublic schools. Parents often don't understand special education services are available from the public school to students attending accredited nonpublic schools. Success requires comprehensive planning between schools including detailed role definitions and processes, clear escalation procedures for service issues and a shared understanding of complexities.

Janelle’s role as liaison includes: providing guidance and technical assistance, supporting collaboration and shared understanding across stakeholders, clarifying policy and problem solve emerging issues, building strong foundational systems to support increased participation, listening, learning and educating.

A new webinar series to support learning and shared understanding for accredited nonpublic school administrators and staff, as well as district and AEA administrators who work with accredited nonpublic schools is available. Janelle also created a webpage for accredited nonpublic schools and special education.

## **SPP/APR Information Collection - Leisa Breitfelder, Iowa Department of Education**

A new six-year cycle for State Performance Plans/Annual Performance Reports (SPP/APRs) covering FFY 2026 through FFY 2031 has been written and is open for public comment. Leisa Breitfelder, director of special education, covered proposed changes to the information collection. The changes proposed to the present ICRs are aimed at more closely aligning Federal monitoring mechanisms (such as the SPP/APR) to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act’s (IDEA’s) statutory requirements and increasing transparency. The proposed changes also reflect priorities to collect and disseminate meaningful data, improve outcomes and increase parent choice.

Discussion was had around needed input on the family survey. Iowa would like to add more questions. This will be brought back to a future SEAP meeting.

Iowa has historically opted out of pre-finding correction options due to capacity. Iowa issues citations for any identified IDEA noncompliance. Other states provide districts the ability to correct before the noncompliance letter is submitted. More discussion on this topic will be had at a future SEAP meeting.

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, which includes the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), invites public comment on the proposed revisions and the directed questions by May 22, 2026.

## **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Special Education– Thomas Mayes, Iowa Department of Education**

Thomas Mayes, general counsel, presented information from an article that he published *Artificial Intelligence, Special Education, and the Law: Risks, Rewards, and Opportunities for Leadership* (20 J. Bus. & Tech. L. (2025)), which discusses how AI may be used or misused in special education practice. Note that this article was written by Mr. Mayes in his personal capacity, and not as a Department of Education employee. All opinions expressed in it are solely his.

There are acceptable uses for AI such as predictive AI (spell check, sentence completion) but there are also circumstances when it is not appropriate for use in special education. AI becomes unstable with rapidly changing circumstances, novel situations (every disabled child has unique needs) and complex co-occurring conditions. In addition, it cannot evaluate research quality or distinguish peer-reviewed from fabricated studies.

Thomas offered the following recommendations:

- Acceptable uses: drafting de-identified rough drafts, pattern analysis in large datasets (closed systems only), general goal templates without specific student data.
- Prohibited uses: any PII in commercial AI systems (FERPA violation), making final decisions without human review, relying on output without verification.
- Policy needs: staff training on risks/appropriate use, clear guidelines on when AI cannot be used, centralized purchasing decisions for AI tools.

## Health Plan and Medicaid Changes –Melissa Walker, Iowa Department of Education

Melissa Walker, administrative consultant, provided an overview of health services and Medicaid updates. A school nurse toolkit was launched in December 2026. The toolkit is a comprehensive guide covering emergency/non-emergency care, ADLs, medical procedures and includes standardized forms for delegation to unlicensed staff.

Melissa also covered the parent role health service delivery which requires parents provide approved screening records, consent for ongoing health services (except emergencies), medication administration consent and any required documentation.

There is a five-step nurse delegation process which includes: 1. Nurse comfort/competency with task. 2. Student assessment and task evaluation, 3. Circumstance review (relationship, continuity, standards), 4. Personnel selection and consent (Iowa Code 280.23), 5. Individual health plan creation with emergency planning. Iowa Administrative Code 481.620 (Nurse Practice Act) must be followed. There is an annual hands-on skills check required for all delegated personnel, and two-way communication and ongoing supervision is mandatory.

Medicaid Update: There is a new one-page consent form in plain language that addresses common parental concerns about benefit impacts.

## Department Update - Iowa Department of Education staff

New Staff:

- Jonathan Neas, School-Based Medicaid Consultant
- Tiffany Poage and Jana Lomax, Full-Time State Complaint Investigators

ACHIEVE Family Portal Update: 8,364 active (7.679% of possible contacts)

## Announcements

- Together We Can conference is May 2. Registration is still open.
- Vice Chair election will be held in May. Nominate yourself or a fellow panel member.
- Review the proposed 2026-27 meeting dates for conflicts.

## Future Agenda Items

None

## Emerging Issues

None

## 2025-26 Meeting Dates

May 15, 2026

## Adjourn

Joel Weeks made a motion to adjourn. Sarah Norvell seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.