September 18, 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, Carrie Champine (Virtual), Jennifer Dickey (Virtual), Casey Force, Tami Hoffman, Cory Johnson, Jessica Lane, Kristi Ostrander, Karen Thompson, Kristi Upah, Kimberly Van Beek (Virtual), Cathy Walz, Linda Dettman, Mary Jackson, Makayla Nemmers, Keri Osterhaus and Joel Weeks.

Absent

Wendy Andersen, Laura Cannon, Jill Johnston, Stephanie Petrillo and Rebecca Torres

Department Staff Present

Leisa Breitfelder, Betsy Lin, Nancy Hunt and Sadi Reimann.

Public Comment

None

Welcome/Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Casey Force, Chair Pro Tem, at 9:03 a.m. Wendy Andersen, the 2026-27 Chair, was not able to attend the meeting.

Approve Agenda

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

Consent Agenda

May 2026 meeting minutes were reviewed by the panel members. Keri Osterhaus made a motion to approve the minutes. Joel Weeks seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Team Building/Welcome Activity – Norm Ames, TAESE Presenter

Introductions of all members around the table occurred where members shared their name, role, strengths they bring to the panel and their expected takeaways from these meetings.

Vice Chair Election – Casey Force, Chair Pro Tem

Keri Osterhaus received 100% of the vote tallies from members, ultimately appointing her as Vice-Chair

Panel Roles & Responsibilities – Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE)

Norm Ames stated that orientation will focus on the Panel's purpose and impacts.

By-Laws have been provided to members in a folder. The folder contains IDEA requirements for the Panel, IOWA By-laws, solid practices documents, an acronyms list, and other reference documents to support panel members throughout the year.

Action Item: Mr. Ames will send the links to the digital version of the information to Nancy Hunt who will then forward on to the members via agenda and email.

Mr. Ames discussed the following information: “IDEA structure has 3 components: Part C – Infants (Birth through 2 years), Section 619 – Toddlers (3-5 years), and Part B – School-Age Children (5 through 21 years). In addition, Part B regulations relating to the Advisory Panel are CFR 300.167 for establishment, CFR 300.168 for membership, CFR 300.169 for duties/functions, 300.513 and CFR 300.514 for due process, and CFR 300.164(c)(4) for waivers. Mr. Ames also noted that this information can also be found on page 5 of the By-Laws packet provided to members.

Mr. Ames presented information pertaining to special education legislative history. Legislation was first introduced in the 1960’s which led to the development of the first ESEA program which paved the way for evolutionary opportunities, data, and documentation that continue to inform and support special education to this day. IDEA was reauthorized in 2004. At this time, it has been 52 years since the regulations were implemented for section 504 of the rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is currently being considered for updates and the panel may come across this topic during this year’s session.

Mr. Ames provided information on guidance from OSEP pertaining to the Special Rule of 51%. This rule requires that the majority of the members of the Panel must be individuals with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities.

Mr. Ames provided a reminder that the Iowa By-Laws require that the Director of the Department of Education is to appoint SEAP members to the Panel. Members serve staggered three-year terms, where each member can only serve a total of two terms unless requested by the Director of the Department of Education.

Mr. Ames discussed that the Iowa By-Laws requires an executive committee. The executive committee is composed of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and State Staff (Bureau Chief of Student Evaluation, Instruction, and Services, the Director of Special Education, and the staff acting as the Panel Facilitator). In addition, the By-Laws state that the duties of the Chairperson (on page 9) are to communicate with the state Special Education Director and Panel Facilitator, serve as the presiding officer of the Panel, work with the executive team to develop agendas, conduct meetings, assist in preparing the Annual Report (APR), appoint subcommittees within the Panel, and formally represent the Panel to the Director of the Department of Education. The By-Laws (on page 9) also require that the Vice Chair assumes the role of the Chair in their absence. Lastly, the By-Laws (on page 9) also require that the Panel Facilitator assists in organizing meetings, completes and disseminates a summary of proceedings from each meeting, notify members of upcoming meeting dates/times, conducts follow-up activities including disseminating minutes to all members, assist in development of the SEAP Annual Report for the Panel to approve, communicates panel advice and decisions to the Iowa Department of Education leadership, and organize nominating efforts to assist in filling vacancies on the panel, as well as other duties as assigned.

Mr. Ames outlined expectations for SEAP members. SEAP members have a responsibility to maintain contact with persons, groups, or associations having an interest in the welfare of children with disabilities in order to remain knowledgeable and informed about public and private interests in special education. Individual SEAP members typically do not represent themselves as spokespersons for SEAP, the Iowa SEA, or the Department of Education; rather they focus on their respective representative (partner) group. Mr. Ames provided a reminder to members that their voice should align with and advocate for their group/partner’s voice. Disability Rights Iowa and the Iowa Teacher’s Association, are two examples of professional disability advocate organizations that members can utilize as a partner and resource.

Director of Special Education; Leisa Breitfelder, mentioned that one of the areas that the Panel may be responsible for discussing in the near future are topics and questions related to the new legislation for Senate File 2428.

Mr. Ames presented the duties of the Advisory Panel. The first Advisory Panel duty is to advise the SEA of unmet needs within the state in the education of children with disabilities. The second duty is to comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities. The third duty is to advise the State in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under Section 618 of the Act. The fourth duty is to advise the State in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Act. Advise the State in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities. The fifth duty is to advise the Iowa Department of Education on eligible students with disabilities in adult prisons.

Mr. Ames encouraged members to review open meeting procedures, public comment procedures, Iowa's Sunshine Laws and FERPA confidentiality expectations.

Annual Performance Report (APR) – Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE)

Not discussed. Agenda item to be included in the October agenda.

Facilitated Activity: Goal/Priority Setting - Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE)

Panel to utilize data sources, state and federal trends, current and emerging critical issues, past priorities, partners, and more to develop 2-3 annual priorities for the Panel that are within the advisory role, inform the State's implementation of IDEA, are important enough to warrant SEAP attention throughout the year, and reflect the voices of your represented area(s).

To help facilitate the priority setting with the Panel, Mr. Ames asked the members to discuss; "What should we continue?", "What we should change or refine?", "What might be missing?", and "What would make the greatest difference statewide?".

Casey Force provided an example of a priority to members. Her example was the focus on data received from ISASP testing (a product from ESSA).

Mr. Ames directed each member to list their highest priority area on the yellow sticky note they received. He then asked them to list their second highest priority on the blue sticky note they received.

Areas shared were: special education services for nonpublic school students, meeting the needs of those in incarcerated facilities, 10-day rule and everything that impacts it, SF 2428, continuum of services in our State, strategies for teachers/staff on behavioral needs, timely services, general supervision, state complaints, more support for building teacher PD, universal design and access for inclusion, modality for deaf or hard of hearing, access to resources and knowledge and teacher prep and administrator prep programs, FAPE, staff recruitment and retention, and school finance awareness. These were then put into larger focus areas of non-traditional placement, IEP decision making, accountability and guidance, equitable assessment activities, and ACCESS.

Members were asked to prioritize from the larger focus areas. The top priority was access. The second highest priority was non-traditional placement. The third priority was accountability and guidance.

The next step for members is to read over SF2428 and consider how it relates to these priorities in a way the Panel can impact it.

Joel Weeks motioned to set ACCESS as the Panels number 1 priority. Karen Thompson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Announcements

Nancy Hunt provided a travel reminder to members stating that those needing to submit for reimbursement to use the online link in the agenda or email. She is available to assist with any questions.

The third Teaching for Impact training event will be held June 16-18, 2027 at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines.

Future Agenda Items

Discussion around potential ability/appropriateness of dropping BIP goals for incarcerated students over 18.

Emerging Issues

SF 2428

2025-26 Meeting Dates

Next Meeting – October 16, 2026

November 20, 2026

January 8, 2026

February 26, 2026

April 9, 2026

May 14, 2026

Adjourn

Joel Weeks made a motion to adjourn. Karen Thompson seconded the motion. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned.