

Special Education Advisory Panel

2022-23 Annual Report



June 30, 2023

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Introduction

Iowa's Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) is a collaborative resource that envisions its role as an advocate for all children with special needs and their families on issues of special education in Iowa. As such, it is committed to representing individuals with diverse and changing educational needs. SEAP shall have, and will perform, functions and duties as specified by law. Responsibilities include offering advice, consultation, and recommendations to the Iowa Department of Education regarding matters concerning special education services.

Mission Statement

The Iowa Special Education Advisory Panel serves as a resource to advise the Iowa Department of Education on behalf of all children with special needs and their families. This Panel engages in dialogue regarding philosophies and policies, including best practices and special education compliance that result in successful outcomes for persons with disabilities (2007).

Purpose

The purpose of the Iowa Special Education Advisory Panel is to provide policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities.

Duties

- a) Advise state education agency on unmet needs
- b) Comment publicly on any rules and regulations proposed by the state
- c) Advise State Education Agency (SEA) in developing evaluations and reporting data to the
- d) U.S. Department of Education Secretary under section 618 of the Act
- e) Advise SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports under Part B of this Act
- f) Advise SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services.

34 C.F.R. §300.169 (2006)

Reflection from the Chair

As we wrap up SEAP for the 2022-2023 school year, I want to take this time to express my appreciation to all of the people that make this panel such an important part of special education in Iowa. Beth Buehler-Sapp is the panel secretary who keeps us fed and organized. Nancy Hunt, our panel facilitator, is instrumental in making sure that our agenda is full of quality presenters and timely materials. She is knowledgeable, helpful, and works extremely hard to make SEAP successful. Barb Guy, the Director of Special Education for the state, consistently offers expertise and insight. However, most importantly, she intentionally makes this panel, made up of a majority of parents of students with special needs, a priority in her very busy professional schedule. This makes the panel members feel heard and valued. Our members work hard to represent and advise; they take their roles seriously. I am thrilled that Dawn Bonsall will be the chair next year; she is a strong voice in the field, and an expert in alternate assessment. Thank you for a successful and productive year! It's been an honor to chair this panel.

Jessica Iverson, Chair

2022-2023 Membership

Membership of the Panel consists of representatives from both public and private sectors who, by virtue of their position, interest, and training, can contribute to the education of children with disabilities. A majority (51%) of the members of the Panel must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities. The Director of the Iowa Department of Education (DE) appoints members to the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP).

Executive Committee

Jessica Iverson – Chair

Dawn Bonsall – Vice Chair

Barbara Guy – Director of Special Education

Nancy Hunt – Panel Facilitator

Department Staff

Beth Buehler-Sapp – Panel Secretary

Panel Members July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Members of the Panel shall be appointed by the Director of the Iowa Department of Education (Iowa Code § 256.9(14)) and serve for a term of three years. When appropriate, the Executive Committee can appoint a member to serve for more than two terms.

Jennifer Aldrich

Jennifer Anderson

Joy Barlean*

Cynthia Blackard*

Dawn Bonsall*

Johnna Deaton-Davis*

Casey Force

Lori Frieden-Janke*

Shannon Grundmeier*

Rhonda Haitz*

Genevieve Hart*

Tami Hoffman*

Jessica Iverson

Amy Knupp

Amy Llewellyn

Pam Litterer*

Lee Longmire*

Kim Neal

Bryan Paulson

Sonia Reyes

Tammy Schaapherder*

Rachel Terry*

Lisa Shaw*

Karen Thompson*

Rebecca Torres

Mary Jackson

Keri Osterhaus

Sandra Smith

Joel Weeks

Doug Wolfe

** Note: 16 of the 30 members are individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities (= 53%).*

Panel Meetings

The annual schedule of regular meetings includes at least six meetings each year and an orientation for new members. Meetings are held in accordance with the Iowa Code chapter 21, the state’s open meetings statute.

Meeting Dates

Sept. 9, 2022	Nov. 18, 2022	March 31, 2023
Oct. 14, 2022	Feb. 24, 2023	May 12, 2023

Priorities

- To ensure that all students with disabilities eligible for special education:
- Enter kindergarten ready to learn to read.
- Are proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade.
- Progress at a rate that ensures success across core content areas.
- Are self-determined.
- Are engaged in school and community.
- Graduate from high school.
- Are college and career ready?

Year in Review

Major Topic - ACHIEVE

ACHIEVE will be home to Early ACCESS and special education records for every learner in Iowa. From the date of referral through graduation, educators, service providers, and families will have real-time access to the documents generated for that specific individual. No longer will teams experience delay in accessing information for a learner who has moved to another district in Iowa; information can be shared and transferred with the click of a button.



Children will transition seamlessly across teams as they age from Early ACCESS services to Special Education, and teams will have the ability to see long-term progress, allowing more informed decisions on what works best for each individual learner.

Through the family portal, parents will have round-the-clock access to their learner's historical information. The family portal will allow parents the ability to view and sign documents electronically, access records for their child as well as view real-time progress on outcomes and goals.

As ACHIEVE is broadened to include accountability and support tools, users will have the ability to monitor professional progress over time and identify challenges or areas of need in order to make continuous improvement so all learners can “achieve” and succeed.

This year, much of the work the Panel did was in relation to the development of the Family Portal. Amy Alfrey, Education Program Consultant with the Iowa Department of Education, provided updates of the development of the family portal at each meeting throughout the year. Amy asked for feedback and took suggestions from the Panel regarding the function and features. The membership was also given the opportunity to be involved in a family stakeholder group and testing of the portal.

Standing Topics

Each year, presentations are provided to the Panel on the State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APP), due process decisions and any legislation being considered that impacts education and the Department’s work.

Legislative Update

In February, Bosovich, Attorney II for the Iowa Department of Education, provided an update on legislative actions and the education bills currently being tracked. Rachel discussed bills that passed in a Senate Committee or House Committee and are considered funnel proof. After the 2023 legislative session adjourned, Eric St. Clair, Legislative Liaison for the Department of Education, addressed the Panel and discussed the bills that were signed into law and their impact on education in Iowa.

Due Process Decisions

There were 19 due process complaints during the school year. Rachel Bosovich, Attorney II for the Department, provided a summary of the following decisions:

- Decision: Gilbert Community School District, Dept. Ed. Docket No. SE-537; DIA No. 22DOESE0002
- Decision: Cedar Rapids Community School District, Dept. Ed. Docket No. SE-538, DIA No. 22DOESE0003

State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report

Courtney Clement, Iowa Department of Education Consultant for Data and Federal Programs, discussed the IDEA Part B State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR). The SPP is a six-year plan. Targets set in 2021 cover the years FFY 2020-2025 and includes data from school years 2020-2021 to 2025-2026. SEAP was one of the stakeholder groups that helps set/revise the needed targets for the SPP.

The Annual Performance Report, submitted to OSEP annually in February, is comprised of 17 indicators (5 compliance indicators and 11 performance indicators). Indicator 17 is the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). Iowa State-Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) is to decrease the percentage of students with IEPs in grades kindergarten through 3rd grade identified as high risk on a literacy assessment.

Presentations to the Panel

During the year, Department staff and others involved with specific programs or projects were invited to present to the SEAP. Members are frequently asked to provide feedback or make recommendations on discussion topics. The following is a brief synopsis of the presentations and topics discussed during this past year.

Orientation and Priority Setting

John Copenhaver from TAESE (Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education) at the Mountain Plains Resource Center at Utah State University made a presentation to SEAP. TAESE works with Special Education Coordinating Councils throughout the United States to provide guidance and support. John's goal is to help SEAP be the most effective it can be.

John's presentation provided a general orientation for Special Education Advisory Panel members regarding the Panel's purpose, membership, functions, by-laws, and meeting procedures. The discussion introduced topics to consider as priority for the upcoming year. The main topics included IDEA requirements, Panel bylaws, best practices for state advisory panels.

Your Role as a SEAP Member - Advisory vs Advocacy

Karen Thompson, ASK Resource Center, presented on topic of Advocacy vs. Advisory. SEAP is an advisory group and cannot advocate policy as such. Individuals on the panel can advocate representing themselves as an individual but not as representing SEAP. The presentation and discussion served to ground members in their role as a panel member. The role of the panel members is to advise, not advocate, for an individual position. The advisory panel is to provide advice, based on facts and good judgment.

Priority Setting

Barb Guy, Director of Special Education, led the Panel in a discussion regarding the priorities in the State Performance Plan (SPP). Priorities for the SPP for 2022-2027 are as follows:

- Renew Data Driven Culture
- Enhance Personnel for Delivery of Quality Services and Supports

Differentiated Accountability – IDEA

Barb Guy, Director of Special Education, presented on Differentiated Accountability for IDEA. Barb provided background on General Supervision and the responsibility of the Department and the Differentiated Accountability process with an IDEA focus. Other topics included implementation of Support Rubric, overview of accountability model and the process for assigning support levels.

Range of Districts Scores Associated with Support Levels Assignments

Score Range	Tier	Number of Districts
53.60 - 62.51	Tier 3	N = 33 (lowest 10%)
62.52 – 65.00	Tier 2	N = 65
65.01 – 81.46	Tier 1	N = 229

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

Allison Levine from the Scanlon Center of School Mental Health conducted the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The assessment looked at the number of special education students being served, how services were available, and how accessible they are in order to determine if current IVRS services available for students sufficient. Allison asked members to provide comments on the barriers to services that they see in Iowa and what significant changes IVRS could make. Later in the year, Allison returned to SEAP to share the results of Iowa’s Comprehensive Needs Assessment with the Panel members and to talk about next steps.

Section 504

Thomas Mayes, General Counsel for the Iowa Department of Education, offered an overview on Section 504 and the interrelationship of IDEA and Section 504. Section 504 covers qualified students with disabilities who attend schools receiving Federal financial assistance. To be protected under Section 504, a student must be determined to: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or (2) have a record of such an impairment; or (3) be regarded as having such an impairment. Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Therapeutic Classrooms

Barb Anderson, Administrative Consultant, provided an update on therapeutic classrooms. In her presentation, Barb described a therapeutic classroom and its characteristics. She also included information about the classroom incentive grants, legislative requirements, district grantees and the number of students served.

Current and Future Opportunities with IVRS and Statewide Services for Students with Disabilities

Mary Jackson, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) and Allison Levine, Scanlon Center for School Mental Health, gave a presentation regarding the opportunities through IVRS. The session covered IVRS services in Iowa, the impact of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), services provided through Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services) and the Local School Plans.

Panel Actions

The Panel's guiding principles, the By-Laws have not been reviewed since 2014. Panel members divided into groups and reviewed and discussed portions of the By-Laws and suggested changes. A subcommittee of members worked on the By-Law updates and reported back to the full membership. The suggested changes to the By Laws were approved at the February 24 meeting.

Related Activities

This section outlines ongoing professional development opportunities for panel members related to special education issues and the work members are asked to do as part of their duties.

Conference/Workshop Attendance

Panel members were invited to attend conferences and workshops that offered opportunities for them to learn about specific topics related to special education. Expenses for travel, lodging and registrations are reimbursed. These opportunities included the following events:

- Tri-State Regional Special Education Law Conference – November 2022
- Iowa BEST Summit – October 2022
- Teaching for Impact – June 2023

Student Results and State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators

Result 1: Enter Kindergarten ready to learn to read

- SPP Indicator 6: Least Restrictive Environment Ages 3 to 5
- SPP Indicator 7: Early Childhood Outcomes
- SPP Indicator 12: Transition C to B

Result 2: Are proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade

- SPP Indicator 5: Least Restrictive Environment ages 6 to 21
- SPP Indicator 9: Disproportionate Representation Due to Inappropriate Identification

Result 3: Progress at a rate that ensures success across core content areas

- SPP Indicator 3: Participation/Performance on Assessments
- SPP Indicator 11: Timely Initial Evaluations

Result 4: Are self-determined

- SPP Indicator13: Secondary Transition

Result 5: Are engaged in school and community

- SPP Indicator 4: Suspension and Expulsion]
- SPP Indicator 8: Parent Involvement

Result 6: Graduate from high school

- SPP Indicator 1: Graduation
- SPP Indicator 2: Dropout

Result 7: College and Career Ready

- Indicator 14: Post-School Outcomes

Acronyms/Terms

AEA – Area Education Agency

ALJ – Administrative Law Judge

APR – Annual Performance Report (as related to a state’s “State Performance Plan”)

AYP – Adequate Yearly Progress

CIE – Competitive Integrated Employment

DA – Differentiated Accountability

DE – Iowa Department of Education

District – School District (also referred to as Local Educational Agency or LEA)

ESSA – Every Student Succeeds Act

FFY – Federal Fiscal Year

HQT – Highly Qualified Teacher

IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP – Individualized Educational Program

IHE – Institutions of Higher Education

IEP – Individualized Education Program

IVRS – Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

LEA – Local Educational Agency (also referred to as school district or district)

LRE – Least Restrictive Environment

MTSS – Multi-Tiered System of Support

NAEP – National Assessment of Education Progress (national standardized assessment)

OSEP – Office of Special Education Programs (Washington, D.C.)

Panel – Special Education Advisory Panel (also referred to as SEAP)

Part B – Special Education Services for Children with Disabilities Ages 3 to 21

Part C – Services for Children Birth through Two Years

Pre-ETS – Pre-Employment Transition Services

SEA – State Education Agency

SEAP – Special Education Advisory Panel (also referred to as the Panel)

SDI – Specially Designed Instruction

SLP – Speech and Language Pathologist

SPP – State Performance Plan (sometimes called the “Six-Year Performance Plan”)

SSIP – State Systemic Improvement Plan

WIOA – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

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