

Iowa Special Education Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes - May 12, 2023

Present: Jennifer Aldrich, Jennifer Anderson, Joy Barlean, Cynthia Blackard, Dawn Bonsall, Casey Force, Shannon Grundmeier Tami Hoffman, Jessica Iverson, Mary Jackson, Lori Janke, Amy Knupp, Lee Longmire, Kim Neal, Keri Osterhaus, Tammy Schaapherder, Sandra Smith, Rachel Terry, Rebecca Torres, Joel Weeks, and Doug Wolfe.

Zoom: Lisa Shaw

Absent: Johnna Deaton-Davis, Rhonda Haitz, Genevieve Hart, Pam Litterer, Amy Llewelyn, Bryan Paulson, Sonia Reyes, and Karen Thompson.

Department Staff Present: Barb Guy, Nancy Hunt and Beth Buehler-Sapp

Public Comment: None

Welcome/Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Jessica Iverson, Chair at 9:05 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.

A request was made for nominations for vice-chair. Dawn Bonsall nominated Rhonda Haitz. Rhonda accepted the nomination.

ACHIEVE - Amy Alfrey

Amy Alfrey, Education Program Consultant with the Department of Education, provided a recap of the recent testing sessions and the feedback that was provided by testers. Several suggestions for onscreen help text were shared and will be implemented before the next round of testing. SEAP members were again offered the opportunity to participate in the testing to occur at the beginning of June. Interested members should email Amy at amy.alfrey@iowa.gov if they have not already asked to be added to the testing group.

Amy provided a demo of the Family Portal highlighting areas where improvements are still being made. There was a request to rearrange the Dashboard page to have the My Family section appear before the Recent Documents section. There was also a request to have the Recent Documents section be able to be collapsed for families so they don't have to scroll so far down the page. Amy is checking on these requests. Barb indicated that a lot of the development is already complete so if the requests are costly, they may not be able to happen right now.

The panel was asked to provide input on the age at which families should have the option to invite their child to the portal. It was decided that the button would be available for all Special Education Learners (pk-12) but not for Early ACCESS (birth-3) Families will ultimately decide when and if it's appropriate to invite their child to join the portal. There was discussion around how the system

will verify it is actually the learner who is being added, Amy will follow up with the Vendor to be sure there is a process in place.

There was also discussion about the "email facilitator" button and it was decided to remove this button and the functionality since it may be confusing to families. The name and email address will still show on the screen but the button will be hidden.

In general, the panel seemed pleased with the basic functionality and the opportunities the Family Portal will provide for increased family engagement in the IFSP/IEP process.

Legislation Update - Eric St. Clair

Legislators completed work on several policy and appropriations bills, including:

- [HF430](#): relating to education, including requirements related to mandatory reporters, a process for investigating complaints against school employees, and the responsibilities of the department of education, school districts, charter schools, accredited nonpublic schools, and the board of educational examiners.
- [HF602](#): relating to the inclusion of the crisis hotline telephone and text numbers and internet address for the Your Life Iowa program or successor program on public school student identification cards and including applicability provisions.
- [HF604](#): relating to education, including authorizing the ombudsman to investigate complaints received by individuals who hold a license, certificate, authorization, or statement of recognition issued by the board of educational examiners, modifying the responsibilities of school districts and charter schools, and authorizing teachers employed by school districts or charter schools to remove disruptive students from the classroom.
- [HF672](#): relating to certain specified employees of school districts, accredited nonpublic schools, and charter schools, including renewal requirements associated with licenses issued by the board of educational examiners to practitioners with master's or doctoral degrees, fees associated with the review of certain specified records, and background checks for employees of school districts, accredited nonpublic schools, and charter schools.
- [SF560](#): relating to and making appropriations to the education system.

The Governor also signed several bills into law this week:

- [HF256](#): relating to the minimum age of applicants for licenses from the board of educational examiners.
- [SF250](#): relating to disbursements from the computer science professional development incentive fund and including applicability provisions.

Current and Future Opportunities with IVRS and Statewide Services for Students with Disabilities - Mary Jackson and Allison Levine

Mary Jackson, IVRS, provided an overview of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services in Iowa. This included an explanation of WIOA, Pre-ETS and local school plans.

The Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) supports individuals that are blind or have low vision and get set aside dollars for that specific population so regardless if that student has any other disabling condition or any other barrier, if they have low vision or blindness IDB is the entity to serve that student in Iowa. All other disabling conditions or students with disabilities would be served under IVRS.

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA)

WIOA was signed into law in 2014. Prior to WIOA a student would have to apply for services, be determined eligible, and come off the waiting list before we could work with them. What WIOA changed was who we could work with and when we could work with them as well as the services that we are able to provide. WIOA created a system that will lead to Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and improved collaboration between IVRS, LEAs and other partners. IVRS will work with schools to create a continuum of services.

Any student with a disability who is currently on an IEP or covered under the provisions of 504 (regardless of whether the student has applied or has been determined eligible for IVRS) is considered potentially eligible. Potentially eligible students can participate in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services)

Pre-ETS activities include:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Work Based Experiences
- Counseling on Opportunities
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Self-Advocacy Instruction

A [flowchart](#) was shared to show the flow of services for a potentially eligible student versus an IVRS eligible student.

Local School Plans:

The purpose of the local school plan is to outline the responsibilities of the LEA, AEA, IVRS/IDB and other partners involved in providing Pre-ETS and other transition services within the district.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

Allison Levine from the University of Iowa, provided a follow up to the CSNA.

IVRS Staff Perspectives

- Most agree needs of TAY are different than those of general consumers
- Most prevalent barriers to work/outcomes include:
 - Poor social skills –Not enough jobs available
 - Little or no work experience
 - Transportation issues were a distant fourth; most likely more significant when considering intersection of rural x TAY

Consumer Responses

- Approximately 22% of all consumers who completed the survey identified receiving pre-ets services
- Overall, most commonly identified barrier to employment goals was symptoms of a mental health disorder. Second most common was employer's perspectives of people with disabilities
- Fewer than half of all consumers identified as using One-Stop/IowaWORKS Centers (36.6%)

This data was compiled from a 6-month survey process completed by Allison Levine. Allison has contracted to do a two-year survey next which she hopes to get deeper and more comprehensive data and more of a presence of consumers of students being involved in the data/survey process.

Therapeutic Classrooms- Barb Anderson

Barb Anderson, Administrative Consultant with the Iowa Department of Education, provided an update on Therapeutic Classrooms. She discussed the definition, legislation, the components of a classroom and the grants.

Definition

“Therapeutic classroom” means a classroom designed for the purpose of providing support for any student, with or without an Individualized Education Program (IEP), whose emotional, social, or behavioral needs interfere with the student’s ability to be successful in the current educational environment, with or without supports, until the student is able to successfully return to the student’s current education environment, with or without supports, including but not limited to the general education classroom.

- Part of a school/districts tiered Social Emotional Behavioral supports
- The therapeutic programming students need to support them across a range of educational settings and/or learning spaces
- A set of services - not necessarily a separate physical setting from other students or stand-alone classroom
- Aimed to transition students back to their classroom through reduction in therapeutic supports and planned opportunities to practice skills in natural contexts (not permanent)

Legislation

Competitive Therapeutic Classroom Incentive Grant required the Department of Education to create a competitive incentive grant for public school districts to establish therapeutic classrooms.

Components

1. A multidisciplinary team who collaborates regularly to support design, implementation and decision-making regarding therapeutic program supports including but not limited to an individual qualified to conduct diagnostic assessments and support SEBH programming for individuals with social-emotional concerns;
2. Practices that enhance positive childhood experiences;
3. Clearly articulated and taught behavioral expectations and routines;
4. Regular assessment of social-emotional behavioral skills with targeted individualized instruction, small group instruction, or both;
5. Individualized BIPs developed based on FBAs and trauma-informed practice; and comprehensive education programming.
6. Regular engagement of family to review progress and make decisions for more or less restrictive programming;
7. Supports for generalization and transition to less restrictive supports/settings since a therapeutic classroom is a temporary intervention.
8. Supports include opportunities to practice social-emotional skills in natural contexts with similar age/grade peers.

Therapeutic Classrooms must:

- Be operated and housed in the school district seeking reimbursement
- Have appropriately licensed and certified teacher(s)
- Follow program standards for the age(s) served

Assurances and Reporting:

- Districts are required to report within Consolidated Accountability and Support Application (CASA) the number of therapeutic classrooms they operate and sign assurances that they meet the required criteria.
- Districts must report transfers and referrals to the therapeutic classroom using their student information system.
- By November of each year, the Department must provide an annual report to the legislators Regarding therapeutic classroom referrals and transfers.
- In 2022-2023, thirty-six districts signed assurances that they would meet the required components for Therapeutic Classrooms.

Districts are not required to have a therapeutic classroom but if they do they are required to follow the criteria. If a district has a therapeutic classroom they are eligible to be reimbursed for services and transportation. A district may include the therapeutic classroom as part of their services for students with or without IEPs.

They must report within CASA how many students are served and all transfers and referrals. There is an annual report due to the legislature. Thirty-Six districts signed assurances.

For more information on Therapeutic Classrooms, see the Department [webpage](#).

Reflections & Future Priorities – Barb Guy

Barb Guy, Director of Special Education, led a reflection activity.

The Panel was asked:

1. What are the things you have gained?
 - Parent Perspective
 - Increased Mental Health Issues and Needs
 - Feedback from SEAP
 - Building ACHIEVE
 - Transition and Contacts
 - Broader Representation
 - Bigger group
2. What would you like to see us doing or incorporate into future meetings?
 - Student Outcome Data (student data wanted vs. generic)
 - What postsecondary goal was identified in the IEP and where did they end up?
 - State Complaints, Due Process Mediation – look at progress over the years.
 - Are we really identifying FAPE and providing what's needed?
 - Shortage of musical staff.
 - Speech Language Data
 - Increasing parent engagement and satisfaction

Announcements

- Rhonda Haitz won the election for Vice Chair.
- Certificates were presented to outgoing SEAP Members.
- The Teaching for Impact Training is June 13th, 14th, and 15th at the Iowa Event Center in Des Moines. SEAP members can attend and submit for travel reimbursement.

Future Agenda Items

If you have future agenda items, email them to Nancy at nancy.hunt@iowa.gov

Adjourn

Joel Weeks made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Dawn Bonsall seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

2023-24 Meeting Dates

September 7, 2023 - New Member Orientation

September 8, 2023

October 13, 2023

November 17, 2023

January 12, 2024

February 23, 2024

April 5, 2024

May 10, 2024