

Meeting Minutes

Iowa Special Education Advisory Panel

April 5, 2024

Present: Wendy Andersen, Joy Barlean, Dawn Bonsall, Shawn Datchuk, Casey Force, Rhonda Haitz, Tami Hoffman, Jessica Iverson, Mary Jackson, Lori Janke, Amy Knupp, Laura Liese, Sarah Norvell, Keri Osterhaus, Stephanie Smith, Karen Thompson, Rebecca Torres, and Joel Weeks.

Absent: Jennifer Anderson, Carrie Champine, Carol Cherne, Nancy Hunt, Pam Litterer, Amy Llewellyn, Kim Neal, Sonia Reyes, Sandra Smith, and Rachel Terry.

Department Staff Present: Barb Guy, MeLissa Lawson, Beth Buehler-Sapp.

Public Comment: None

Welcome/Introductions

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

Approve Agenda

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

Consent Agenda

Minutes were reviewed by the panel members. Karen Thompson made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 2024 meeting. Joel Weeks seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.

MeLissa Lawson will email the proposed meeting dates for 2024-2025 out to the members along with paraprofessional support resources and a link to the special education decisions from the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensure.

Secondary Transition – Kelsey Teeter, Iowa Department of Education ([Slide Deck](#))

Kelsey shared that Iowa is sending a team to NTACTION, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative, to engage in professional learning and participate in planning sessions around secondary transition in May 2024. Kelsey, Mary Jackson (Voc. Rehab.), Dr. James Williams (Voc. Rehab.), Tiffany Poage (Department of Education), and Mari Reynolds (ASK Resource Center) will be members of the delegation from Iowa.

Kelsey obtained input from the group that would be used to guide strategic planning as well as inform development related to IDEA-DA and other professional learning needs. SEAP provided feedback on the following domains and

1. Student-Focused Planning
 - a. IEP Development
 - b. Planning Strategies
 - c. Student Participation

2. Student Development
 - a. Assessment
 - b. Academic Skills
 - c. Life, Social, and Emotional Skills
 - d. Employment and Occupational Skills
 - e. Student Supports
 - f. Instructional Context
3. Interagency Collaboration
 - a. Collaborative Framework
 - b. Collaborative Service Delivery

Continuous Improvement – Barb Guy, Iowa Department of Education and Karen Thompson, ASK Resources

Barb Guy provided background regarding the transition from FEP services to ASK Resources providing support to families. There have been increases in state complaints and increases in use of attorneys. In addition, there have been concerns about parents having knowledge and support to exercise their due process rights. Barb and Karen Thompson explored what other states are doing and it was determined that the advocacy piece of this work would transition to ASK Resources. A year-to-year contract was developed for a total of 6 years. Karen described that the coordinators would be spread across the state. Outreach, Communications, Post-Secondary Transition, and Transition Advocacy Services will all be addressed within this work. The new family support staff will have a focus on advocacy which is different from the work that the FEPs had done in the past.

There are new positions as part of this contract:

1. Alicia Karwal has been promoted and will serve as the Family Support Supervisor. In this role she will oversee the onboarding and expansion of the family support staff.
2. Lead Family Support person is a new role. This person will help ensure that the content and role is universally understood by the family support staff to ensure continuity across the state.
3. The Training Coordinator will oversee the delivery of training that is provided by ASK Resources. This coordinator will be responsible for updating, writing, and training the content, so that the activity-based training is delivered similarly across the state.
4. Mari Brown has been promoted to Data and Evaluation Manager in a full-time role.

There are plan-do-study-act cycles that will be completed. There are job postings on the ASK Resource website and can find them on the social media pages. There are 9 new family support roles that are being hired as part of this contract. There is one, full-time person that will be hired for each of the AEAs. Part-time positions will be considered. ASK will onboard staff in phases. Dispute resolution and legal obligations will be a part of the onboarding process. There has been an increase in cases with the FEPs transitioning out of their positions. There will be a tiered approach to the advocacy work.

- Tier 1 – Informational, navigational, and emotional support
- Tier 2 – Preparation, Information, and Debrief for advocacy
- Tier 3 - Walk hand-in-hand with family

The entire team will address cases across the state. If families need someone to attend a meeting with them, then the person in that area of the state will be the staff who will attend the meeting. In addition, the trainings, resource fairs, and 1:1 support will be handled by the regional family support staff. Karen noted that they have a good plan in place and know that there will be changes that need

to made and they are prepared to do so. There was a concern brought forth regarding conflict with or influence from the Department, since the Department is issuing the contract. Karen noted that the contract is written, so that there is no conflict between ASK Resources and the decisions that are being made. The Department will be looking at specific performance criteria rather than the typical grant management approach and looking at outcomes and deliverables. Some questions the Department will be answering include:

- Are we seeing statewide connections?
- Are we seeing underserved populations being served?
- What is the response time?
-

The Department will not be looking at whether families or districts are winning more. The FEPs have had strong relationships with schools and administrators and high levels of trust. We have to provide resources to develop trust and partner with one another.

The Department staff will continue to take calls from families.

Barb Guy sought feedback from the group related to how we make sure that there is a smooth transition from FEP to ASK Resources with an emphasis on advocacy.

Feedback:

- Develop a resource that could be given to families at IEP meetings. It would be helpful to have descriptions of the 3 tiers of support and the services and trainings that are available to families
- I would like to see the family partners in front of the community they serve, providing training, such as IEP 101. I would like to see it in a place that they can have access to support and personal exposure in front of families where they can ask questions together.
- Trainings for families such as extended school year could be put in place in different regions.
- There are a lot of webinars. The human element is important to have meaningful conversation and know there is a person that I can contact.

In May, SEAP will discuss the evaluation of the services to ensure the success of these efforts.

Teacher Preparation and Pipeline in Iowa: Mike Cavin, Jay Pennington, and Maryam Rod Szabo

Over the past decade:

- Teacher workforce has increased 9%
- Created 10,511 teacher leader roles (such as instructional coaches) taking staff out of the classroom
- New pathways for attracting and retaining teachers in the profession have been created
- 1% increase in students
- Rate of increase of educators is 9 times higher than the increase in student enrollment

There has been a slight increase in the number of teaching licenses issued to out-of-state applicants (707 in 2020-2021 and 742 in 2022-2023) as well as licenses issued to individuals who completed a teacher preparation program in Iowa (2,126 in 2020-2021 and 2,408 in 2022-2023).

A conditional license may be issued to teachers who are fully licensed as teachers, but need to obtain the special education license to work within special education.

There is a new K-12 Special Education All Endorsements license which includes the Strategist I and II BD/LD and ID with programs at Northwestern, Upper Iowa, Grandview, Dort, Drake, and Clarke.

The last couple of years we have seen an increase in the number of teachers prepared from 1,768 in 2019-2020 and 2,237 in 2021-2022 in Iowa approved programs.

Other data including the number of teachers in Iowa, licenses issued within special education, enrollment trends and teaching program completers trend were shared and are included in the slide deck.

ACHIEVE: General Supervision and Dispute Resolution – Betsy Lin and Rachel Bosovich, Iowa Department of Education ([Slide Deck](#))

Betsy Lin reviewed General Supervision and Iowa Administrative Code aligning to IDEA, part B. It is the state's responsibility to prevent, inform, detect, inspect and correct non-compliance of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The state's monitoring activities focus on procedures and outcomes. It was stressed that the state's activities must be based upon:

1. Improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities; and
2. Ensuring that public agencies meet the program requirements under Part B of the Act, with particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities.

A State Education Agency's system of general supervision must:

- Be reasonably designed to identify noncompliance and address improved results and functional outcomes, and
- Include monitoring, technical assistance, and enforcement.

The Inquiry Log used for Special Education Call Cadre will be integrated into ACHIEVE. The data that we will collect will be used to identify patterns, consider topics or areas that need additional technical assistance, or as part of a more systematic review within our general supervision activities.

Examples of Iowa's General Supervision

1. Annual Determination (SPP/APR)
2. IDEA-DA, 3-year cycle with annual activities for districts who are identified
3. Focused Monitoring, designed to dig deeper into concerns at the Area Education Agency or the Local Education Agency level. An investigation is conducted to identify patterns of noncompliance, concerns regarding performance on specific priority areas or concerns identifies through a triangulation of data. Corrective action may be an outcome of this activity.
 - a. Content areas for Part B, 3-21, SEAP previously provided feedback for these content areas and questions within each of them.
 - i. Appropriate Evaluation
 - ii. Individualized IEP
 - iii. Least Restrictive Environment
 - iv. Meaningful Participation
 - v. System of Transition Services (Early Childhood and Secondary Transition
 - vi. Other
 - b. Processes
 - i. Document Review

- ii. Data Review
 - iii. Observations
 - iv. Interviews
4. Corrective Action, assigned when individual and/or systemic citation(s) is issued. These plans include the citation detail, required actions and a due date.

The final three general supervision activities are Dispute Resolution options and are part of the Procedural Safeguards that families can use if they do not agree with what the IEP team is proposing or doing.

- 5. State Complaint – A signed, written complaint that may be filed by an organization or an individual and alleges that a district, AEA, or the Department violated a requirement of IDEA. Procedural and/or substantive violations are investigated within special education and Early ACCESS. Timelines and remedies were discussed and included in the slide deck.
- 6. Mediation – A voluntary process available to parties involved in disputes concerning any matter arising under IDEA. The process is confidential and facilitated by an impartial, qualified trainer. The goal is to find a mutually agreeable resolution and execute a legally binding agreement that reflects that resolution. The Department ensures that the agreements are completed. Timelines were discussed and included in the slide deck.
- 7. Due Process – A parent or public agency may file a due process complaint. This is a request for a hearing on any matter relating to the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the provision of FAPE to the child with a disability. The process and timelines were reviewed and included in the slide deck. This process is through the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing (DIAL), so it is not able to be moved into ACHIEVE. Redacted decisions are posted on the DIAL webpage.

State complaint decisions, due process complaint decisions, and expedited due process complaint decisions may be appealed in a State county competent jurisdiction or in a district court of the United States. A Complainant may use the state complaint process to allege a public agency has failed to comply with due process hearing decision, media agreement, or resolution meeting agreement.

The following observations were noted:

- There is an increase in the number of complaints, attorneys representing families and complexity of cases
- Increase in substantive (FAPE) vs. procedural violations
- Corrective action, individual and systemic, may lead back to focused monitoring

Statistics:

State Complaints: 24 new complaints, 7 involving attorney for parents, 5 dismissed, 1 withdrawn, 7 decisions (4 confirmed, 3 not confirmed, 11 open)

Due Process Complaints: 14 new complaints, 7 open, 1 dismissed/withdrawn, 6 settled

Announcements

- The ACHIEVE family portal is finished with one minor need relating to individuals who reach the age of majority and do not want their parent to have access. The system can launch without this being completed. The ACHIEVE governance council is recommending we launch in the fall. Shannon is coming next month to talk about some of the supports that we'll be building to have access to it.
- By rule, the Director of the Department of Education has the responsibility to appoint members to the Panel. Director Snow is very engaged in special education and would like to be more involved in this process. Rhonda, Dawn, and Barb will be reviewing the applications and taking that slate of recommendations forward to the director to make decisions about appointments. SEAP will still vote for vice-chair.

- We are currently accepting nominations for vice chair. The vice chair then becomes the chair the following year. Send any nominations to MeLissa Lawson.

Future Agenda Items

Feedback from SEAP – What should the Department look at and evaluate to ensure the success of the work through ASK Resources?

Emerging Issues

None

Adjourn

Karen Thompson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sarah Norvell seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.

2024 Upcoming Meeting Dates

May 10, 2024