

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA
9 AM – Noon
February 22, 2024**

PRESENT – Lisa Balazs, Tranesia Brown, Kameron Carden, Rebecca Carroll, Alexandria Cunningham, Valencia Curry, Kristen Dial, LeAnna Feely, Tasha Harrison-Betts, Evandra Jackson, Jane Lamb, Jean Marzullo, Carin Mayo, Keren McElvy, Ashley McLeroy, Tiffany Moore, Jessica Pelt, Lisa Powell, LaDonna Rudolph, Kate Simmons, Graham Sisson, Shana Smith, Katie Stuart, Shenika Weatherly

NOT PRESENT – Volante Blackman, Felicia Carswell, Tara Cook, Shanquail Horton, Hank Poore, Kathy Poore, Alyssa Spivey

OTHERS PRESENT

- Alabama State Department of Education, Special Education Services (ALSDE, SES) Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) representatives–DaLee Chambers, Ashley Cawley, Beth Herndon
- ALSDE, SES Staff – Melissa Card, Robert Dunn, Kemeche Green, Erika Richburg, Bernice Rush-Harrison

The meeting was called to order by Chair Graham Sisson. LaDonna Rudolph motioned to approve the October 19, 2023, meeting minutes; Katie Stuart seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Sisson conducted Roll Call and briefly introduced the new members: Rebeccah Carroll (Private School Stakeholder), Allie Cunningham (Charter School Stakeholder), and Katie Stuart (Alabama Education Association Representative).

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES DATA TEAM PRESENTATION:

Data and Dispute Team Administrator, Dr. Kemeche Green, presented the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR). She provided an overview of the data for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 (school year 2022-2023). Dr. Green reviewed the indicators in which Alabama met target and showed no slippage, indicators in which Alabama did not meet target but did not show slippage, and the indicators in which Alabama did not meet target and showed slippage.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES DISPUTE RESOLUTION TEAM PRESENTATION:

Dispute Resolution Team members, Bernice Rush-Harrison and Beth Herndon, presented on the new format of the Procedural Safeguards (Parent Rights), and the new Acknowledgement Form. The Procedural Safeguards have recently been updated to a more user-friendly format which includes a table of contents, headings, and color-coded topics. The Procedural Safeguards themselves did not change. The Acknowledgement Form is to be completed in PowerSchool Special Programs by a local education agency (LEA) staff to document that the Procedural Safeguards were given to the parent(s). The SES section asks that a copy of this form be given to the parent(s). Links to the Procedural Safeguards have also been included on the Acknowledgement Form for easy access.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES FISCAL TEAM PRESENTATION: Erika Richburg, ALSDE, SES Fiscal Administrator, presented on stakeholder input for the Part B application. This presentation was a follow-up to the information presented at the October 19, 2023, SEAP meeting. The Fiscal Team will be completing the federal funding IDEA budget for the 2024-2025 school year. The stakeholder input will be used to make sure any concerns and community voice is represented in the funding for next year. Public comments from the meeting today will be taken into consideration. The window to receive public comments is open until February 29, 2024, and at that time comments will close, and the budget will be completed. Once the budget is completed it will be available for review and public comment by March 22, 2024.

ALSDE, SES DIRECTOR'S REPORT: DaLee Chambers

- Dr. Chambers provided a broad overview of each team working in the SES and shared important projects that each team has worked on over the past year. The SEAP was encouraged to request more information on any of these subjects or about the SES teams when the SEAP State Liaison asks for agenda item recommendations.
- The Integrated Monitoring Team has been working with an outside group to develop a new comprehensive monitoring process. They are using a tiered approach as follows:
 - Tier 1: Universal – everyone, every year
 - Tier 2: Targeted – 5-year cyclical schedule
 - Tier 3: Intensive – If the state becomes aware of a systemic issue.
 - Focused: credible allegations, problem in one certain area, something that needs to be addressed but not currently in the monitoring schedule
- The Fiscal Monitoring Team has also been working with an outside group. They are working together to build the capacity of SES staff and LEA staff to plan for the future, develop guides and manuals, and recipient monitoring.
- The Technical Assistance (TA) Team has been working on several new projects. They have developed a series of training, or informational videos on the SES YouTube Channel. The Mastering the Maze document has been updated and is now more interactive and easier to access online. The TA Team also continues to analyze data and trends (parent phone calls, complaints, LEA Requests, and outcomes). They have worked with the Public Consulting Group (PCG) to develop and deliver professional development. There was limited dissemination of materials, but some modules are currently available. More information on how it will be disseminated more broadly will be provided later.
- The Dispute Resolution Team discussed the new Procedural Safeguards/Special Education Rights earlier in the meeting. The Procedural Safeguards are legally compliant and more parent/user friendly. The Dispute Resolution Team is also hosting a case law update seminar at different locations around the state during the first week of March. The speaker is a neutral party and has expertise from both the parent and district perspectives. The seminar is open to families and educators.
- The Data Team works with the SEAP holding workgroups to better understand the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) indicators and to set targets. A PowerSchool coach was recently hired as part of the Data Team to support teachers and LEAs with the Special Programs platform in PowerSchool. The new coach has already begun to host virtual meetings and training throughout the state. The Data Team also oversees the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). The current SPDG, awarded in Fall 2022, focuses on support and instructional coaching to help increase reading achievement for students with disabilities in grades 4-8 within a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework, and transition outcomes for students with disabilities across the lifespan.
- Members of the SES team, led by Dr. Kemeche Green, are partnering with the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center. The mission of the CEEDAR Center is to support students with disabilities in achieving college- and career-ready standards by building the capacity of state personnel preparation systems to prepare teachers and leaders to implement evidence-based practices within multi-tiered systems of support. A planning meeting was held in February with CEEDAR staff and other sections from the ALSDE such as Educator Preparation and Teacher Certification and Alabama MTSS in February to discuss how the ALSDE can partner with CEEDAR to address topics such as teacher recruitment, preparations, and retention; caseload vs. workload; and the implementation of evidence-based teaching strategies such as High Leverage Practices. Small stakeholder groups will be formed to hold these discussions and those will be expanded to larger group discussions over time.
- Dr. Ashley Cawley leads the SEAP. She is doing a great job of helping to keep the SEAP in compliance with required membership, selecting officers, recruiting new members, and scheduling and organizing meetings.
- The Instructional Support Team oversees special education curriculum and instruction. The team provides training and develops materials and resources on topics such as Alternate Achievement Standards (AAS), behavior, high leverage practices (HLPs), and standards for the Essentials Pathway.
- A Deaf and Hard of Hearing Focus group was also developed this year and led by SES staff member Ms. Tara Jackson. Members of the group represent different stakeholders in the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. This focus group was formed in collaboration with the SEAP.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Three written public comments were received by email or letter at the ALSDE, SES. Dr. Cawley read the comments aloud during the meeting.
- A university program wants to start an online special education program but voiced concerns about candidates for the temporary certificate needing a bachelor's degree to complete their proposed program.
- A concerned parent shared concerns regarding schools using "Temp" services for vacancies in special education. She stated that our most vulnerable students deserve quality care, well-trained staff, and consistency.
- The last public comment received was also from a parent stating concern about her district's Life Skills Class being located off the student's school campus, which was not a good option for his or her child. The parent felt that his or her only option is to home-school the child.

BREAK

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP (Committee Chair: Lisa Balazs)

- Two members of the SEAP are at the end of their term, and one member requested to resign.
 - Kristen Dial; Federal Programs Coordinator
 - Felicia Carswell; Early Intervention- Alabama Department of Rehabilitative Services
 - Christi Rubin; parent
- Current vacancies: Special Education Coordinator, parents, or individuals with disabilities.
- The SEAP is encouraged to help with recruitment.

BYLAWS (Committee Chair: Carin Mayo)

No updates at this time.

STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (Committee Chair: **OPEN**)

- The former committee chair was no longer able to fulfill the responsibilities. The position remains open to any SEAP member who would like to serve.
- Dr. Cawley described the importance of this committee and the committee's potential tasks. She encouraged members to consider the role.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND DATA (Committee Chair: Kameron Carden and Alyssa Spivey)

- An SPP/APR data preview meeting was held by the ALSDE, SES Data Team, with the committee in January. The SEAP members not on the Student Achievement and Data Committee were invited to attend.

OLD BUSINESS

- Annual Report: The approved report was published on the ALSDE, Special Education Services section of the website in November. A copy was sent to all SEAP members before the end of the year 2023.
- Proposed 2024 meeting schedule and locations:
 - April 23: Tuscaloosa, AL
 - September 19: Virtual and live streamed through the SES YouTube Channel
 - November 14: Montgomery, AL
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing Focus Group update from SEAP and focus group member Kameron Carden: This newly formed stakeholder group consists of stakeholders from the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, sign-language representatives, and spoken-language representatives. The group has been meeting to discuss the implementation of a Communication Plan with local individualized education program (IEP) teams. Alabama Hands and Voices has drafted a plan to address:
 - Appropriate categorization at eligibility
 - Using a rubric aligned with IDEEA regulations
 - Optimizing outcomes for deaf and hard-of-hearing students

NEW BUSINESS

- Dr. Cawley reminded the SEAP about the upcoming IDEA case law update seminar. Sessions are being offered in four different regions across the state during the week of March 4-8, 2024. She encouraged members to attend and to publicize the event to any educator or stakeholder who might be interested.
- The MEGA Conference: This is the annual Alabama education conference held in Mobile, AL July 8-12. The SEAP members can attend and receive travel reimbursement through SEAP. If interested, please contact Dr. Cawley for details on registration.

SEAP MEMBER NEWS

- Chair Sisson asked for any comments or questions from SEAP members. No additional comments were received.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 AM.

NEXT MEETING:

Tuscaloosa, AL
April 23, 2024
9 AM – Noon