

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES
Jefferson County School Board
Birmingham, AL
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
June 29, 2023

IN PERSON

Tranesia Brown, Kameron Carden, LeAnna Feely, Shanquail Horton, Temeyra McElrath, Ashley McLeroy, Hank Poore, Kathy Poore, LaDonna Rudolph, Graham Sission

WEBEX

Lisa Balazs, Valencia Curry, Pamela Fossett, Evandra Jackson, Tiffany Moore, Lisa Powell, Christi Rubin, Shana Smith

NOT PRESENT

Volante' Blackman, Felicia Carswell, Tara Cook, Kristen Dial, Tasha Harrison-Betts, Jean Marzullo, Carin Mayo, Keren McElvy, Jessica Pelt, 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 – Gwen Preston and Bernice Rush-Harrison

The meeting was called to order by Chair Graham Sisson. LaDonna Rudolph motioned to approve the April 12, 2023, meeting minutes; Tranesia Brown seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Graham Sisson called roll. He briefly introduced new members: Kameron Carden, Shanquail Horton, Evandra Jackson, Keren McElvy, Ashley McLeroy, Christi Rubin, and LaDonna Rudolph.

Chair Sisson reviewed the purpose of the meeting and the duties of the Panel.

ALSDE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TEAM:

- Beth Herndon, Gwen Preston, and Bernice Rush-Harrison presented ways for parents to improve communication with their child's special education team and how to decrease conflict. The team also reviewed dispute resolution options and provided visuals of the updated dispute resolution forms.

SEAP STATE LIAISON REPORT

- Membership Compliance: Membership requirements were reviewed. The Panel currently has 29 members, 15 are a parent of a child with a disability (age 3-26) or an individual with a disability. All membership requirements are currently fulfilled, with one resignation forthcoming (Charter School member).
- Annual State Report: An overview of the annual SEAP state report requirements was provided.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comments were received at the ALSDE-SES prior to the meeting nor requested at the meeting.

SES DIRECTOR'S REPORT: DaLee Chambers

- Dr. Chambers discussed Part B applications.

- The ALSDE is working on a magazine to highlight special education. The target audience for the first edition is school board members and school administrators.
- The U.S. Department of Education issued its 2023 determinations for states on their implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for Part B and Part C. Alabama's 2023 determination letter indicates *Meets the requirements and purposes of IDEA*, which is an improvement from *Needs assistance in implementing the requirements of IDEA* in 2022. This is a celebratory accomplishment by the ALSDE-SES.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **MEMBERSHIP** (Committee Chair: Lisa Balazs)
 - New member orientation: several sessions were held over a 2-week period to accommodate member schedules.
 - A Membership Committee orientation was held for all committee members in June.
 - The new member application review process was explained.
 - New member recommendations to the SEAP: *Shenika Weatherly* (Alabama Department of Youth Services: Special Education and Federal Programs Coordinator) and *Jane Lamb* (parent, and program director at The Bell Center Early Intervention Programs)
- **BYLAWS** (Committee Chair: Carin Mayo)
 - The committee is currently conducting the annual bylaws review, but all members of the SEAP are invited to review and make recommendations for revisions. Proposed changes will be presented to the Panel for review and approval.
 - A Bylaws Committee work session was held in June.
- **STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT** (Committee Chair: **OPEN**)
 - The committee is in need of a chair. The current chair is no longer able to fulfill the responsibilities.
 - Stakeholder and Public Engagement Committee work session TBD
- **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND DATA** (Committee Chair: Alyssa Spivey)
 - A Student Achievement and Data Committee work session was held in June.
 - New co-chair: Kameron Carden

COMMITTEE REVIEW

- The definition of Ad hoc committees from the bylaws was provided. Panel members were reminded that the Chairman may establish ad hoc committees, or the Panel, by a majority vote, may also establish ad hoc committees to address the needs of children with disabilities, or a committee may be formed to address a general need that arises.

OLD BUSINESS

- Hands and Voices – A proposal to provide travel reimbursement for all participants and substitute reimbursement for teachers who serve on the focus group has been written and is currently awaiting approval. Once the proposal is approved, potential participants will be invited to serve.

NEW BUSINESS

- New member vote – The Panel voted, and two new members were approved.
- Annual Report work session - dates to be set for the annual report work session.
- Resignation of member: Beth Joseph (Charter School representative); Recruitment for a Charter School and/or Private School member.

PANEL MEMBER NEWS

- Ashley McLeroy: Discussed the upcoming Assistive Technology conference in Homewood, AL.
- Kameron Carden: Shared a tool called *Alabama Hearing Loss Options* to help families make decisions regarding which mode of communication to use with their child who is deaf or hard of hearing. She also shared information on a position paper from the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities about High School to Post-Secondary Education.
- Links to all the resources will be emailed to Panel members.

Questions or comments from Panel members:

- Kameron Carden asked about the current deaf and hard of hearing funding and what kind of interpreters or instructors are considered. Dr. Chambers clarified that there is one fund to assist with interpreters and teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing and another fund that can assist with communication/language services by other types of providers in high-need situations.
- LaDonna Rudolph shared about the Alabama Special Olympics. She also asked if there were any additional credentials that PE teachers could earn to help them better serve children with disabilities in Alabama public schools. Dr. Chambers said the ALSDE-SES will look into this and get back to her.
- Shanquail Horton shared that certain elementary schools are considered dyslexia lab schools and utilize the Soliday system. Due to the Alabama Literacy Act, she would like to see it available for all schools.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

NEXT MEETING:

Montgomery, AL

October 19, 2023

9:00 am – 12:00 pm