SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING
9 a.m.–Noon
April 21, 2026

ZOOM
Paula Bedran, Kameron Carden, Valencia Curry, Wanda Dial, Shanquail Horton, Evandra Jackson, Holly Knott, JaLicia Maddox-Jones, Jean Marzullo, Keren McElvy, Ashley McLeroy, Kimberly Moon, Aleshia Paige, Mercy Pilkington, LaDonna Rudolph, Kate Simmons, Danielle Sylvester, Katie Stuart

NOT PRESENT
Jennifer Blakely, LeAnna Feely, Jason Fisher, Carin Mayo, Tiffany Moore, Tiffany C. Moore, Jessica Pelt, Kathy Poore, Lisa Powell, Shana Smith, Richard Templeton, Shenika Weatherly, Rebeccah Zanotti

ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (ALSDE) SUPPORT
Kimberly Baker, Brian Dunn, Latasha Kendrick, Michelle Zeigler

Vice Chair Mercy Pilkington called the meeting to order and provided an overview of the advisory panel's purpose and responsibilities.

Vice Chair Pilkington conducted roll call. Katie Stuart moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 17, 2026; Wanda Dial seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES (SES) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM PRESENTATION:
Mr. Tyler Merrell, ALSDE, SES, Education Administrator, presented Leveraging State Technical Assistance (TA) for Local Education Agency (LEA) Success:

- SES provides differentiated TA to LEAs through a tiered, data-driven system to support the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) implementation and a free appropriate public education (FAPE).
- TA priorities are set annually using the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR), LEA determinations, risk assessments, monitoring findings, and stakeholder input.
- Three support tiers: Tier 1 (universal), Tier II (targeted), Tier III (intensive).
- Updated LEA Special Education Policies document coming soon.
- SES will host virtual learning events to support districts in understanding and implementing the new policies document.

PUBLIC COMMENT
No public comments received.

ALSDE, SES DIRECTOR'S REPORT:
Dr. DaLee Chambers, ALSDE, SES Program Director, provided an overview/update on the following:

- Part B Grant public comment period closed April 20, 2026.
- Student Achievement & Data subcommittee feedback for Indicators 4A and 5B.
- SPP/APR target setting underway for FFY 2026-2031; OSEP submission due February 1, 2028.
- Interagency Spotlight – ALSDE & the Alabama Department of Human Resources (ADHR).

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES DATA TEAM PRESENTATION:
The ALSDE Education Administrator, Dr. Kemeche Green, and Data Manager, Dr. Melissa Card presented on Significant Disproportionality and Reasonable Progress:

- IDEA significant disproportionality requirements.
- Alabama's current risk ratio thresholds.
- Standard methodology flexibilities.
- Reasonable progress.
- Alabama's consideration of adding reasonable progress flexibility to state methodology.
- Solicit feedback on reasonable progress threshold options.
- Stakeholder feedback due April 28, 2026.

BREAK

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP (Committee Chair: Mercy Pilkington)

- Panel members were provided with the application of a potential new member to review in advance.
- The panel voted unanimously to recommend the new member to Dr. Eric Mackey, Alabama State Superintendent of Education, for appointment.

BYLAWS (Committee Chair: Wanda Dial)

- No changes or comments to report.

STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (Committee Chair: Katie Stuart)

- The committee reviewed the proposed 2027 budget.
- The primary recommendation from the committee was that the ALSDE should aim to direct as much IDEA Part B funding as possible to individual schools rather than the district level.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND DATA (Committee Chair: Kameron Carden)

- No additional report.

OLD BUSINESS: (Vice Chair: Mercy Pilkington)

- No old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS: (Vice Chair: Mercy Pilkington)

- Panel members raised concerns regarding testing requirements, specifically ACAP alternate assessment requirements and testing requirements more broadly.

PANEL MEMBER or STAKEHOLDER NEWS (Ashley McLeroy)

- The Assistive Technology Alabama Conference, scheduled for September 1–2, 2026, in Birmingham, Alabama, is currently accepting proposals through April 30, 2026. Conference registration will open shortly thereafter.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL:
No additional questions or comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:13 a.m.

NEXT MEETING:
August 17, 2026
Location: TBA