



ANNUAL REPORT

August 2025-July 2026

Introduction

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires each state to establish and maintain an advisory panel to provide guidance to the state education agency (SEA) on issues related to the education of children who are eligible under the Act.

The Alabama Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) includes parents, individuals with disabilities, educators, administrators, and representatives from both public and private agencies. The SEAP advises the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Special Education Services (SES), on the unmet needs related to the education of children with disabilities in the State and provides feedback on any proposed rules or regulations concerning special education. The SEAP plays a vital role in developing the State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR) for Alabama. Additionally, SEAP advises the State Director on improvement activities that can be created and implemented to enhance outcomes for children with disabilities. Each year, members review data on the improvement activities included in the SPP and APR and propose updates to these activities and targets.

Purpose

The SEAP shall provide policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state (IDEA, 34 CFR §300.167).

Duties and Responsibilities of SEAP

The following are the roles and responsibilities of the advisory panel as listed in IDEA, CFR §300.169:

- Advise the SEA of unmet needs within the State in the education of children and youth with disabilities (§300.169(a)).
- Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities (§300.169(b)).
- Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under 618 (§300.169(c)).
- Advise the SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports (§300.169(d)).
- Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities (§300.169(e)).

Meetings

The SEAP bylaws specify that the panel will meet three to four times a year (August 1, 2025, to July 31, 2026). The panel was convened in August 2025, December 2025, February 2026, and April 2026 to fulfill this requirement. The SEAP held two meetings virtually and two in a hybrid format, allowing members to participate either in person or remotely. The virtual meetings were livestreamed on the SES YouTube channel to ensure public accessibility.

SEAP Meeting Dates:

Wednesday, August 20, 2025	Tuesday, December 16, 2025
Tuesday, February 17, 2026	Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Official minutes for all SEAP meetings are posted on the ALSDE website and can be found by clicking [Alabama Achieves | Special Education Services | Special Education Advisory Panel](#).

SEAP Overview of 2025-2026

During the 2025-2026 school year, the State Program Director provided SEAP with updates on key reporting and improvement activities. In August 2025, updates focused on the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) results, including areas of state slippage. In December 2025, the panel reviewed the 2024-2025 Annual SEAP Report. At the February 2026 meeting, the Director shared Student Achievement and Data Committee recommendations for SPP/APR Indicators 3C, 3D, 5B, and 14 and requested comments on the Part B Grant. In April 2026, the Director presented additional feedback from the Student Achievement and Data Subcommittee regarding Indicators 4A and 5B and discussed the target-setting process for the upcoming FFY 2026-2031 SPP/APR package. These updates were provided to keep SEAP informed and support meaningful input throughout the reporting cycle.

The public comment process provided Alabama constituents with the opportunity to offer input regarding improvements to education and to identify best practices for students with disabilities. Public comments are requested through the media advisory for each meeting and accepted during the designated public comment period. Comments may be presented orally, read aloud, or submitted in writing by email at alseap@alsde.edu or by mail to the ALSDE. The Panel is responsible for evaluating and considering all feedback received through this process. During the 2025-2026 meetings, no public comments were submitted.

Status of Special Education in Alabama

The IDEA requires that the U.S. Secretary of Education make an annual determination as to whether each state meets the requirements of the statute based on the data submitted in the APR and other available information. The United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (ED, OSEP), makes annual determinations in implementing Part B of the IDEA according to the following categories: “Meets Requirements, Needs Assistance, Needs Intervention, or Needs Substantial Intervention.” This status determination is based on the totality of the state’s data and information, revised SPP, state-reported data, and other publicly available information, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading and math assessments and the number of students with disabilities who exited an educational program with a regular high school diploma. Each APR submission is based on the most current available data, which includes lag year data (i.e., data from the previous school year).

According to the FFY 2024 State Determinations issued in June 2026, the ED, OSEP designated ALSDE, SES as Meets Requirements under IDEA, §616(d)(2)(A)(i).

Special Education Advisory Panel Membership

The 2025-2026 SEAP members represented various knowledge, backgrounds, and insights. The SEAP had an average of thirty-five members throughout the reporting year. The majority of the SEAP membership was comprised of parents of children with disabilities and individuals with disabilities. The remaining members of the SEAP included representatives who are administrators of programs for children with disabilities, local or state juvenile and adult corrections agencies, the State Director of Foster Care, representatives from institutes of higher education that prepare special education or related service personnel, state agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities, the State Director of McKinney-Vento, other state or LEA members, individuals who provided transition services, teachers, and a representative from a charter school. Five new members were appointed to SEAP this past year. The panel continues to prioritize active recruitment.

SEAP Subcommittees

The standing subcommittees of SEAP met continuously in conjunction with each quarterly meeting of the entire panel. The subcommittees are as follows:

Membership

- Purpose: To serve as the nominating committee for the Panel by identifying potential members for the Panel vacancies and submitting names along with resumes/bios to the State Superintendent of Education for his/her consideration.

Stakeholder and Public Engagement

- Purpose: To share, communicate, disseminate, and oversee information about operations, membership, student unmet needs, panel priorities, and other applicable areas in accessible formats through the website; annual report, dissemination networks, or other platforms; seek public comment for consideration; and develop communication tools for stakeholders.

Bylaws

- Purpose: To review the bylaws annually and recommend necessary changes to the Panel.

Student Achievement and Performance Data

- Purpose: To identify needed data; what is available, report review of student achievement and outcome data; and provide this data to the Panel on an ongoing and consistent basis.

SEAP Recommendations and Feedback

The Student Achievement and Performance Data Committee submitted recommendations to ALSDE, SES based on Alabama's FFY 2024 SPP/APR data, with emphasis on indicators showing slippage or declining performance. The committee recognized the importance of addressing these concerns to improve outcomes for students with disabilities in Alabama and proposed the following recommendations:

Specific Recommendations by Indicator:

Indicator 4: Suspension and Expulsion: (A) Percent of local educational agencies (LEA) with significant discrepancy, as defined by the State, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs.

Recommendation: Provide feedback regarding slippage reasons: The Data Committee feels that there is not enough data to determine the root cause of the issue or to develop targeted strategies. The committee requests clarification on how many LEAs are represented by the reported 8%. The recommendation is for the SEA to audit those districts' documentation related to behavior management practices, specifically verifying whether students who were suspended or expelled had previously received a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and had appropriate behavior intervention plans in place. Additionally, the committee suggests providing enhanced behavior management training for the identified LEAs.

Indicator 5: Educational Environments: Percent of children with IEPs, age 5 and enrolled in kindergarten and ages 6–21, served: (B) Inside the regular class less than 40% of the day.

Recommendation: Provide feedback regarding slippage reasons: The Data Committee feels that there is insufficient data to determine the cause of the issue or to guide strategy development. However, one possible recommendation, upon additional data review, would be revising the target to a more realistic percentage. As we know, the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) does not necessarily mean placement in the general education setting for all children.

Indicators 9 and 10: Disproportionate Representation: Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial/ethnic groups in special education and related services due to inappropriate identification. Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial/ethnic groups in specific disability categories due to inappropriate identification.

Recommendation: Provide feedback regarding slippage reasons: The Data Committee recommends further analysis before developing targeted strategies, as current data is insufficient to determine root causes. Specifically, the committee recommends disaggregating the data by disability category to identify which groups of children are most frequently represented. If students identified with Speech or Language Impairment (SLI) comprise a significant portion of the group, the committee recommends providing additional professional development focused on culturally and linguistically responsive speech and language assessment practices, including appropriate testing considerations for children with dialectal variations.

Indicator 15: Resolution Sessions: Percent of hearing requests that went to resolution sessions that were resolved through resolution session settlement agreements.

Recommendation: Provide feedback regarding slippage reasons: Is this because they are resolved in mediation, a Due Process Hearing (DPH) request was withdrawn, a settlement agreement, or something else? There is insufficient data to identify the cause or to provide strategies to address it.

Indicator 16: Mediation: Percent of mediations held that resulted in mediation agreements.

Recommendation: Provide feedback regarding slippage reasons: Is this because they are resolved in mediation, a DPH request was withdrawn, a settlement agreement, or something else? There is insufficient data to identify the cause or provide strategies to address it.

The above recommendations remain under consideration by ALSDE, SES. Next steps, including any proposed actions or follow-up activities, will be discussed with the Panel during upcoming meetings.

SEAP Composition and Membership Updates

During this reporting period, two panel members resigned and one member's term ended. Several new members were appointed, and the panel, in collaboration with ALSDE, SES, continues to actively recruit and accept applications for future membership.

Conclusion

The Alabama SEAP remains committed to addressing the needs of children with disabilities and supporting continuous improvement in special education statewide. Through collaboration, data-informed recommendations, and ongoing stakeholder engagement, SEAP has provided meaningful guidance to ALSDE and supported efforts to improve outcomes for students. In the coming year, the Panel will continue to promote inclusive practices, support professional development, and encourage effective strategies that expand opportunities for students with disabilities to succeed.

Appendix A: Membership

New SEAP Members Appointed 2025-2026:

The following new members were appointed by the ALSDE during the 2025-2026 reporting period:

- Paula Bedran
- Angela Counts
- JaLicia Maddox-Jones
- Kimberly Moon
- Aleshia Paige

SEAP Members 2025-2026:

Name	Representative Group	Status
Bedran, Paula	Parent	
Blakely, Jennifer	Self-Advocate	
Carden, Kameron	Parent	
Counts, Angela	Parent	
Cunningham, Alexandria	Charter Schools	
Curry, Valencia	State Child Welfare Agency/Alabama Department of Human Resources	
Dial, Wanda	State Agency Involved in Financing or Delivering Related Services/Fairfield City Schools	
Feely, LeAnna	Transition Services/United Cerebral Palsy of West Alabama	
Fisher, Jason	Parent	
Horton, Shanquail	Parent	
Jackson, Evandra	Parent	
Knott, Holly	State Agency Involved in Financing or Delivering Related Services/Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services	
Lamb, Jane	Parent	Resigned January 2026

Name	Representative Group	Status
Maddox-Jones, JaLicia	Parent	
Marzullo, Jean	Teacher	
Mayo, Carin Chair	Parent	
McElvy, Karen	Parent	
McLeroy, Ashley	Self-Advocate	
Moon, Kimberly	Self-Advocate	
Moore, Tiffany	State Juvenile and Adult Corrections Agencies/Lee County Youth Development Center	
Moore, Tiffany C	Parent Transition Services/Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services	
Paige, Aleshia	Parent	
Pelt, Jessica	Teacher	
Pilkington, Mercy Vice Chair	Parent	
Poore, Hank	Self-Advocate	Resigned December 2025
Poore, Kathy	Parent	Term ended January 2026
Powell, Lisa	Parent	
Rudolph, LaDonna	State Education Official/McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act	
Simmons, Kate	Higher Education that Prepares Special Education and Related Services Personnel/Auburn University Montgomery (AUM)	
Smith, Shana	Higher Education that Prepares Special Education and Related Services Personnel /Jacksonville State University (JSU)	
Stuart, Katie	Other	

Name	Representative Group	Status
Sylvester, Danielle	Parent	
Templeton, Richard	Administrator of Programs for Children with Disabilities/Muscle Shoals City Schools	
Weatherly, Shanika	State Juvenile and Adult Corrections Agencies/Alabama Department of Youth Services	
Zanotti, Rebekkah	Private School	

Appendix B: SEAP Contacts

Carin Mayo
2025-2026 Chair
carinmayo2018@gmail.com

Mercy Pilkington
2025-2026 Vice Chair
mercy.pilkington@alaedu.org

DaLee Chambers, Ph.D., J.D
Program Director
Alabama State Department of Education
Special Education Services
daleec@alsde.edu

Latasha Kendrick
2025-2026 Liaison
latasha.kendrick@alsde.edu

Michelle Zeigler
2025-2026 Secretary/Notetaker
michelle.zeigler@alsde.edu

For more information about SEAP, visit [Alabama Achieves | Special Education Services | Special Education Advisory Panel](#)