

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Meeting
Elmore County, Alabama – Elmore County Board of Education

MINUTES: July 18, 2018

9:30 am - 3:00 pm

Panel Members in attendance: 14

Jeana Winter- Chairperson
Broderick Leonard
Lisa Olenik Dorman
Dustin Chandler
James Williams

Todd Tomerlin-Vice Chairperson
Corrie Merchant
Amy Blakeney
Ladonna Rudolph
Adriana Creel

Jason Martin
Temeyra T. McElrath
Gwendolyn Baker
Lisa Clayton

Panel Members attending via webcast: 00

Panel Members NOT in attendance: 14

Individuals from the public: 15

Invited guests: 02

Participating by webcast: 01

ALSDE staff: 04

Interpreters: 04

CALL TO ORDER

Jeana Winter, SEAP Chairperson

- Welcome to the panel and the public; Welcome to new panel members who introduced themselves; Interpreters available if there is anyone in attendance who needs an interpreter.
- Roll Call- Quorum established.
- Review of April 17, 2018, Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) minutes; two corrections were noted and motion to approve the April 17, 2018, minutes were made, seconded, and approved without objection.

Public Comments—This time is set aside for the panel to hear comments from the public on unmet needs in our state. Commenters were provided with the format and the process for submitting public comment. Each person wanting to make a comment must sign in with the registration table.

Comment 1: Representative with Lakeshore in Birmingham- Invited to talk about the All of Us research project. It is a national initiative to provide precision medicine. Everyone is invited to, joinallofus.org, if interested. It is open to anyone in the state who has a disability and/or knows someone with a disability. Please help promote this initiative.

Comment 2: Parent of a child with a disability - The child is on the ASD spectrum and wants to know why there is not a sensory room in every school in Alabama. She made a plea on behalf of all students with a disability to have a place in every school reserved for them to address sensory issues through a variety of equipment, sensory soothers and various resources for students who need that type of setting available. Someone from the floor suggested looking into grants.

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

SEAP Chairperson: Asked committees to make reports.

Bylaws—No report.

Membership—No report.

Public Relations—Need information from Membership and some clarification. “Do panel members have dual roles and/or what is their primary role?” Need to know how many members fall under self-advocacy.

The chairperson explained that no one has dual roles, per the applications for each member. Public Relations can gather general information from those members. However, old member applications need to be updated. It was then asked if they were close to setting guidelines and the chairperson stated yes. The public relations chairperson will get with the SEAP chairperson.

The public relations chairperson stated the committee’s goal is to get information to parents, including having a contact person and various resources. The committee will begin working to decide what standard information will be provided on the website about each panel member. The goal is to address these items before the next meeting.

SEAP Chairperson—Looking for additional panel members to represent any groups that are not currently represented. For example, virtual and charter schools. Panel members are not currently posted on the website because we need to finalize the panel first. The overall goal is to plan for the future, keep SEAP moving forward, note the progress that has been made in various areas while keeping FERPA in mind. It was discussed if the WebEx link could be provided through a mass email. The current process was discussed and options for the future were given. The final decision was that the contact at Alabama Department of Education (ALSDE), Special Education Services (SES) Section, will provide the WebEx link 30 days prior to the meeting to the panel members. The Public relations committee will investigate other web platforms including accessibility. A format is needed that simplifies public participation so public can comment during the meeting including participants technological resources. Discussed schools and school systems posting the meeting dates and information on their websites.

Comments and input: Provide parents with resources at IEP meetings; produce a “one pager” about SEAP; hold SEAP meetings in various locations around the state; notify local school boards and state board members when there is a meeting in their location; provide resources to special education coordinators for distribution to parents so they can know if they have an issue, and if so how to address it; public relations committee requested that any ideas be emailed to the chairperson and the SEAP chairperson asked the panel members to think beyond “their” roles and consider all stakeholders.

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PRIORITY COMMITTEE REPORTS

Leadership—Proposed three motions to be voted on by the panel. A motion was made to add it to the agenda for a vote and was seconded. The motions are in response to the line item appropriation by the legislature to educate stakeholders about special education.

Motion 1: SEAP recommends the ALSDE collaborate with a wide range of state education associations to provide special education training/professional development to assist policy makers, including school board members and educators to understand the basics of special education services/programs and build capacity to interpret local and state special education reports.

Motion 2: SEAP recommends the Alabama State Department of Education request an opportunity to participate annually at the Alabama Association of School Board’s workshops and/or conferences and also seek an opportunity for AASB to include special education topics as part of their core content.

Motion 3: SEAP recommends the ALSDE consider amendments to Alabama’s ESSA plan related to Students with Disabilities (SWD). The amendments are noted in the U. S. Department of Education’s (USDOE) report and the peer reviews of Alabama’s ESSA plan.

A motion was made to approve the three motions and seconded. The panel voted to adopt the three motions and passed unanimously.

Mental Health—The committee noted that they have not met since the last meeting. Mental health in schools has been reassigned under school safety and the committee will give more information in the future.

Preschool—A motion was made to move the item on the agenda to discuss before the work session. The motion was seconded and passed.

Transition—The committee will report at the next meeting.

Report regarding meeting with ALSDE superintendent and the deputy state superintendent—Reported that the meeting was productive. The goal was to address the concerns of parents and advocates of students with disabilities. The achievement gap between students with a disability and their typical peer was discussed. The state superintendent stated that settling on a good assessment system is key. The discussion included the delay of the disproportionality rule and mentioned the benchmark that triggers being considered disproportionate based on discipline. Clarification was given as to how it is measured and if it was measured correctly. Discussed ways to spend the line item that was appropriated by the legislature. A survey was advised and one has already been sent to special education coordinators. It was suggested to produce a special education boardsmanship through AASB. It was suggested to go to school systems to discuss something that is relevant to them such as the achievement gap.

BREAK FOR LUNCH

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Preschool—A special education coordinator shared a handout that explained the federal funding for preschool services for students with a disability. The panel discussed using the information to educate others about preschool funding and how to share the information with legislative contacts. Research that supports the importance of preschool services was discussed and the group collectively agreed that the one statement to focus on is the \$23 million being spent on preschool from IDEA Part B funds. The SEAP chairperson stressed that this group are not lobbyist but as a panel they can express their opinions. The committee is going to move forward with finalizing the preschool handout. The handout has been sent to the special education coordinators and the LEAs have their preschool allocation information. The advocacy effort should be global. ALA-CASE will present the information, the ALSDE sent out the information to the coordinators, need lobbyists meeting with legislators, need to invite legislators to schools. The committee will provide information in the future that focuses on specifics. For example, need funding to provide FAPE to preschoolers with a disability and need all stakeholders to understand preschool funding. The committee will work to construct a final plan for the preschool handout.

Announcements and Discussion

The panel will begin to prioritize items to address and are encouraged to respond to surveys and all emails. The ALSDE representative did not get to present the information about the definition of a student with a significant cognitive disability. A handout was provided and the information will either be emailed or placed on the next agenda.

Final Comments & Wrap Up—Todd Tomerlin, Vice Chairperson

Thank you. We have had a productive day and are moving in the right direction. The next meeting will be held in October.