

State Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities Minutes

The Arkansas Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities met online via Zoom, on Tuesday, January 19, 2021.

Council Members Present:

Joseph Baxter
Julie Callison
Marcella Dalla Rosa
Dana Davis
Courtney Eubanks
Leslie Faulkner
Patricia James
Shelby Knight
Christy Lamas
Lacey Monroe
Sherry Rogers
Bruce Smith
Deb Swink
Robyn Williams

Special Education Staff Present:

Jeff Adams
Crystal Bethea
Bonnie Boaz
Jody Fields
Yvonne Greene
Lisa Johnson
Danita Pitts
Rick Porter
Tanya Powell
Rhonda Saunders
Matt Sewell
Robin Stripling
Michelle Waldo

The meeting began at 9:08 a.m. with Ms. Deb Swink, Chairperson, calling the Council meeting to order. Ms. Swink welcomed the Advisory Council members and Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education Unit (DESE-SEU) staff to the meeting.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

A motion was made and then seconded to approve the minutes from the October 20, 2020, meeting. The minutes were approved by the council.

Presentation: Dr. Jody Fields, Special Education Data Manager, reviewed Arkansas' FFY 2019 (2018-2019 data) Special Education Annual Performance Report (APR) submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs, U. S. Department of Education (OSEP).

Indicator 1: Graduation

Results Indicator: Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma within a four year period. If a student remains in school more than four years, that student is not counted as a graduate in the calculation. The target was 86.72%. The reported rate was 82.58% for 2018-2019. The target was not met.

Indicator 2: Dropout

Results Indicator: Percent of youth with an IEP dropping out of high school. The target for 2018-2019 was 1.82% and the reported rate is 1.65%. The target was met.

Indicator 3: Assessment

Assessment was waived in FFY 2019 due to the Pandemic.

Indicator 4: Discipline

Indicator 4A: Suspension/Expulsion

Results Indicator: Percent of districts with a significant discrepancy in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs compared to children in general education. This calculation is based on data from the 2018-2019 school year. The target was 29.50% and the actual rate is 29.51%; 18 out of 61 districts had a significant discrepancy. The target was not met.

Indicator 4B: Suspension/Expulsion

Compliance Indicator: Percent of districts that have significant discrepancy by race or ethnicity in the rate of suspensions and expulsions.

The federal target is zero percent. The State identified one district as having a significant discrepancy. After a review of their policies, procedures, and practices via the self-assessments, the State determined one district with discrepancies resulting from inappropriate policies, procedures, and practices. The target was not met.

Indicator 5: Education Environments (Children 5-21)

Results Indicator: Percent of children ages five through twenty-one removed from regular class, served in public/private separate school, residential facility, homebound, or hospital placement not including corrections or private schools:

- A. Inside the regular class 80% or more of the day,
- B. Inside the regular class less than 40% of the day, or
- C. In separate schools, residential facilities or homebound/hospital placements.

Based on the December 2019 child count, the target for children inside the regular class 80% of the day or more is 56.94% and the actual rate was 56.94%. The target was met. The target for children inside the regular class less than 40% of the day was 12.18% and the actual rate was 12.18%. The target was met. The target for children in separate schools, residential facilities or homebound/hospital placements is 2.01% and the actual rate was 2.01%. The target was met.

Indicator 6: Preschool Environments

Results Indicator: Percent of preschool children ages three through five with IEPs attending:

- A. Regular early childhood program, receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program,
- B. Separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility.

The State did meet the target of 20.74% for regular early childhood program with an actual rate of 27.04%. The State did meet the target of 20.21% for the percent of students receiving services in a separate school or residential facility with an actual rate of 20.21%.

Indicator 7: Preschool Outcomes

Results Indicator: Percent of preschool children aged three through five with IEPs who demonstrate improved:

- A. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships),
- B. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy), and
- C. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Each outcome has two targets measuring the increased rate of growth when entering the program and then functioning within age expectations, when the child exits the program.

- A. Positive social-emotional skills
Entry: Target 91.56% - Actual rate 88.70%
Exit: Target 68.72% - Actual rate 63.66%
- B. Knowledge and skills
Entry: Target 92.38% - Actual rate 89.49%
Exit: Target 61.11% - Actual rate 48.27%
- C. Appropriate behaviors
Entry: Target 92.13% - Actual rate 90.68%
Exit: Target 78.40% - Actual rate 70.18%

The State did not meet the targets in these three categories.

Indicator 8: Parent Involvement

Results Indicator: Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. These are based upon parent surveys which the district has given to the parents. The State did not meet the target of 94.84% for parents of preschool students; the actual rate was 91.12%. The State did meet the target of 96.45% for parents of school age students; the actual rate was 96.52%.

Indicator 9: Disproportionate Representation

Compliance Indicator: Percent of districts with disproportionality due to inappropriate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification.

No districts were identified as having disproportionate representation that was a result of inappropriate identification.

The State did meet the target in this category.

Indicator 10: Disproportionate Representation in Specific Disability Categories

Compliance Indicator: Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.

No districts were determined to have disproportionality in racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that was a result of inappropriate identification.

The State did meet the target in this category.

Indicator 11: Child Find - Evaluation Timelines

Compliance Indicator: Percent of children who were evaluated within 60 days of receiving parental consent for initial evaluation or, if the State establishes a timeframe within which the evaluation must be conducted, within that timeframe. The target percentage for 2018-2019 was 100%. The State rate was 99.71%. The target was not met.

Indicator 12: Early Childhood Transition

Compliance Indicator: Percent of children referred by Part C prior to age three, who are found eligible for Part B, and who have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthday. As a compliance indicator, the target is 100%. The actual rate was 100%. The target was met.

Indicator 13: Secondary Transition

Compliance Indicator: Percent of youth aged sixteen and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals updated annually and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition service needs. This is a compliance indicator, so the target is 100%. The State rate was 71.26%. The target was not met.

Indicator 14: Post-School Outcomes

Results Indicator: Percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:

- A. Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school,
- B. Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school,
- C. Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program, or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.

A. Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school, and enrolled in postsecondary school within one year of leaving high school. The target for students enrolled in higher education within one year is 15.80% and the actual rate was 10.90%. The target was not met.

B. Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school, and who have been enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school. The target for students enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year was 51.49% and the actual rate was 41.97%. The target was not met.

C. Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program, or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school. The target for students enrolled in higher education, or in some other postsecondary education or training program, or competitively employed or in some other employment was 63.26% and the actual rate was 48.45%. The target was not met.

Indicator 15: Resolution Sessions

Results Indicator: Percent of hearing requests that went to resolution sessions that were resolved through resolution session settlement agreements. The target for resolution sessions that were resolved through resolution session agreements was 66.76% and the actual rate 66.67%. The target was not met.

Indicator 16: Mediation

Results Indicator: Percent of mediations that resulted in mediation agreements. The target of 83.40% was met with an actual rate of 100%. The target was met.

Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan – State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR): Dr. Jeff Adams

Performance Indicator: Percent of students with disabilities (SWD) in grades 3- 5, from the targeted schools, whose value-added score (VAS) in reading is categorized as moderate or high for the same subject and grade level in the state. The target of 62.53% was not met with an actual rate of 59.45%. The target data for this performance indicator remains the same from the previous year, due to the impact of unavailable statewide assessment data related to COVID-19.

Dr. Adams presented a brief review of the two broad strategies for the Arkansas State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). Strategy one of the SSIP focuses on creating a system of support that is aligned with other Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Units and is differentiated based on LEA's needs as evidenced by data. Dr. Adams discussed ongoing cross-unit efforts to leverage agency resources to support schools identified for Additional Targeted Support (ATS) due to chronic underperformance for the subpopulation of students with disabilities. Purposeful alignment activities have occurred through monthly DESE Strategic Performance Management (SPM) meetings, DESE Division of Learning Services meetings, regional content specialists meetings, DESE-SEU LEA Monthly Calls, and with eleven grant groups comprising the Arkansas Collaborative Consultants (ACC).

Dr. Jody Fields, Special Education Data Manager shared the following major changes for the 2020-2021 year:

Indicator 1: Will no longer be the 4 year cohort data. It will use the special education exiting data.

Indicator 2: OSEP is removing Option 2 and we will begin using the special education exiting data.

Indicator 3: Assessment will begin reporting grades 4, 8, and High School only, not statewide rates. There is a total of 24 targets to be set.

Indicator 5: School age environment data. Actually changed in 2019-2020. K-12 reporting instead of 6-21.

Indicator 6: Early Childhood environment data. Actually changed in 2019-2020 reporting 3-5 preschool and does not include 5 year old kindergarten students.

Indicator 8 and 14; Has more explanation around representativeness of responding families/students.

Mr. Matt Sewell, Director for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education, gave a brief monitoring announcement from OSEP. Arkansas is in the first cohort for OSEPs new monitoring protocol; this is a three-year process. At some point, they will be onsite. We are currently in phase one, the fiscal monitoring phase. Phase two is compliance monitoring procedures. We will still keep our focus on results; focusing on the best outcomes for kids. The annual budget meeting has been scheduled for February 3, 2021 at 3:30 p.m.

Mr. Jeff Adams, State Systemic Plan Coordinator for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education - Dr. Adams gave the Council Members a brief description of the SPDG grant that was recently awarded. The DESE-SEU was awarded a new State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) for a five-year cycle that runs from 2020-2025. The grant focuses on competency-based professional learning for educators who serve students with disabilities, with emphasis on high-leverage and other evidence-based practices. The goal is to support educators in building self-efficacy towards those practices that have the greatest impact on student achievement. SPDG will partner with the DESE Educator Effectiveness Unit to develop micro-credentials for professional learning pathways with support for stipends for a limited number of participating educators.

Section Reports:

Section Reports were presented and are available to view on the Special Education website.

Future Agenda Item Suggestions:

- Courtney Eubanks – ESVI
- Dr. Jody Fields – New APR Package and getting input on target setting

Ms. Crystal Bethea, State Personnel Development Grant Director for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education - Crystal Bethea shared the State Personnel Development (SPDG) was recently awarded a new 5 year grant. SPDG provides grants to help state educational agencies (SEAs) reform and improve their systems for personnel preparation and professional development of individuals providing early intervention, educational, and transition services to improve results for children with disabilities.

The SPDG program focuses specifically on professional development needs and must spend at least 90 percent of our funds on professional development activities, including the recruitment and retention of qualified special education teachers.

As part of the new grant, SPDG has 3 overarching goals.

1. Transform and expand Arkansas' statewide coherent system of supports through competency-based professional learning and coaching that will increase the implementation of high-leverage and other evidence-based practices, which will result in improved outcomes for SWD
2. Through personnel development and ongoing assistance, increase the capacity of regional and LEA teams to offer high-quality professional learning with a focus on implementing

and sustaining integrated high-leverage and other evidence-based practices within a coherent system of support

3. Increase the knowledge, skill, and implementation of high-leverage and other evidence-based practices by offering general and special educators choice in competency-based professional learning with the added goal of certification and/or badge-recognition as well as an educator stipend

The past SPDG focused on response to intervention (RTI) and working with regional and district leadership to develop, support, and sustain a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) for ALL students. Building on the current work of coherent systems of support, SPDG will now offer competency-based professional learning specific to high-leverage and other evidence based practices and how that fits in a MTSS.

SPDG will work with partnered educational service cooperatives and LEAs to focus on coaching content specialists/district personnel as they build capacity to support general and special educators on high-leverage practice and the implementation of evidence-based practices into core instruction and interventions.

SPDG will be working to create competency-based micro-credentials for professional learning for educators who are part of SPDG partnered districts. As part of our original proposal and newly awarded grant, we will be able to offer stipends to teachers who choose to participate in the professional learning.

SPDG is currently partnering with the Office of Innovation for Education from the University of Arkansas. They will work with us to create communities of practices to support educators on topics around HLP, PLCs, and professional learning. They will also work and provide professional learning to SPDG and our partnered districts and cooperatives on Cognitive Coaching.

American Institutes for Research will collaborate to create content and competency based micro-credentials on high-leverage practices and universal design for learning.

The Center for Exceptional Families is our partnered parent training and information center. We have a parent liaison who provides training to parents and districts on high-quality instruction and RTI.

Educator Effectiveness will be working with SPDG to align professional learning standards to all micro-credentials as well as create educator pathways for micro-credential badges.

Next Steps and Final Remarks:

The next Council meeting is scheduled for April 20, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 a.m.