

State Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities Minutes

The Arkansas Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities met in the Conference Room at the Victory Building, Suite 445, on Tuesday, July 16, 2024.

Council Members Present:

Cindy Ball
Marcella Dalla Rosa
Sydney Dennis
Dewey Graves
Jessica Hickman
Patricia James
Shelby Knight
Dr. Suzanne Kucharczyk via Zoom
Lacey Monroe
Darlene Owens
Eric Treat
Rebecca Walker

Special Education Staff Present:

Jeff Adams
Evan Beavers
Crystal Bethea
Bonnie Boaz
Jody Fields
Yvonne Greene
Josh Hart
Becky McIver
Danita Pitts
Rick Porter
Rhonda Saunders
Stacey Tatera
Michelle Waldo

The meeting began at 10:11 a.m. with Ms. Rebecca Walker, Chairperson, calling the Council meeting to order. Ms. Walker welcomed the Advisory Council members and Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education (DESE-OSE) staff to the meeting.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Motions were made by Ms. Lacey Monroe and seconded by Mr. Eric Treat to approve the minutes from the April 16, 2024, meeting, and the minutes were approved by the council.

An election was held for this year's Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. Motions were made by Ms. Patricia James and seconded by Ms. Cindy Ball appointing Dewey Graves to Vice Chairperson. Motions were made by Ms. Lacey Monroe and seconded by Ms. Shelby Knight appointing Rebecca Walker as Chairperson.

Ms. Rebecca Walker, Chairperson, and the Council discussed the need to update or amend the bylaws, specifically Section 2, which addresses appointments and terms. The current wording states: It currently reads, "The Commissioner of Education shall appoint the members of the Advisory Council for three-year terms (A.C.A. § 6-41-211(c)(1)). Appointees may be eligible for reappointment for one additional three-year term (A.C.A. § 6-41-211(c)(2))". The Council has requested that the Office of Special Education provide some alternative options for consideration, which can be discussed at the next meeting.

Ms. Rebecca Walker, Chairperson, highlighted the need for teacher, parent, and advocate representation on the Advisory Council. Council members suggested several individuals for these roles. Please submit all written nominations via email to Rebecca, Jeff, or Michelle for consideration.

Dr. Jeff Adams, Director of Special Education for the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education, presented key highlights from the 2023-2024 Arkansas State Advisory Council for Special Education Annual Report and reviewed the focus areas for 2024-2025. Dr. Adams shared the following focus areas for the 2024-2025 year:

- Meaningful Access and Participation for Students
- School Age and Early Childhood Outcomes
- Graduation Expectations
- Family Engagement
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing Supports
- Review and Revision of Special Education Rules and Regulations to allow greater flexibility within a student-focused learning system
- Universal Design for Learning
- Executive Functioning Skills
- Instructional Practices and the Science of Reading for Students with Significant Disabilities
- SSIP SiMR (State-identified Measurable Result) refinement of the SSIP Evaluation System
- State Personnel Development Grant - Priorities from OSEP for next grant period
- Utilizing Special Education Funding to Support Inclusive Practices
- Alignment of Statewide Related Services Supports and Collaborative Goal Writing
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports for Behavior and Mental Health

Ms. Stacey Tatera, Deaf Education Specialist for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education, provided an overview of current research related to deaf education. Her presentation included insights into applying the Science of Reading for deaf and hard of hearing students, and data from global genetic research projects.

Ms. Bonnie Boaz, Arkansas State Transition Coordinator for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education, provided updates on this year's Film Camp and College Bound Arkansas. Arkansas Transition Services, in collaboration with Career and Technical Education and University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College, hosted a weeklong short film camp for 50 high school students with disabilities. Joey Travolta and his crew from Inclusion Films guided three teams of students in creating short films and public service announcements. Through the camp, students practiced a variety of employment skills and discovered strengths they hadn't realized they had. By the end of the week, they had not only produced short films, but also formed lasting memories and friendships.

The 18th year of College Bound Arkansas took place June 3-5, 2024, on the University of Central Arkansas campus. High school students had the opportunity to join teams led by current college students receiving services from the disability support services office at their college. Over the three days, the students stayed in dorms, participated in a mock college class, dined in the cafeteria, and learned about the supports available to help them succeed in college. They left with valuable strategies and a firsthand experience of post-secondary life, including support systems available to them.

Section Reports:

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

Suggested Future Agenda Items:

- Arkansas Governor's Council
- Educator Effectiveness and Licensure
- BX3 Project

Next Steps and Final Remarks:

The next Council meeting is scheduled for October 15, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. The meeting was adjourned at 2:12 p.m.