

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, October 20, 2020.

Council Members Present:

Julie Callison
Christina Clausen - for Joseph Baxter
Marcella Dalla Rosa
Dana Davis
Courtney Eubanks
Leslie Faulkner
Shelby Knight
Lacey Monroe
Candia Nicholas
Sherry Rogers
Bruce Smith
Deb Swink
Robyn Williams

Special Education Staff Present:

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

Guests Present:

Dr. Donna Smiley
Allison Hudson
Dr. Maya Lopez

The meeting began at 10:01 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. Mr. Matt Sewell introduced our newest member to DESE-SEU Audrey Forbes and our newest member to the Advisory Council Julie Callison.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

A motion was made and then seconded to approve the minutes from the July 14, 2020, meeting. The minutes were approved by the council.

Presentation: Dr. Donna Smiley, Audiology Supervisor/Audiologist for Arkansas Children's Hospital – Dr. Smiley shared her presentation, Educational Audiology/Speech Pathology Resources for Schools Program “EARS” that gave an overview of what Lakeside School District has done in the way of online learning, teletherapy, and Google Classroom for their students.

Dr. Smiley's presentation included:

- EARS Audiology Services
- EARS Speech Language Pathology Services
- Speech Pathologist to Speech Pathologist Mentoring
- Speech Pathology Services in the Classroom
- Onsite services
- EARS YouTube Playlist (<http://tinyurl.com/EARSVideosPlaylist>)

- EARS HEARSAY Newsletters (<https://tinyurl.com/EARSHearSayNewsletters>)
- Invitation for teachers to attend Beginner or Intermediate Sign Language Zoom Classes

The EARS Program @ Arkansas Children’s provides contract, school-based services to schools and early childhood programs in the state of Arkansas. This program is supported, in part, by a grant agreement through the AR Division of Elementary and Secondary Education – Special Education Unit.

Presentation: Ms. Allison E. Hudson, Research Program Manager/Project Coordinator for Arkansas Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (AR ADDM) at University of Arkansas Medical Sciences (UAMS) - Ms. Hudson shared her presentation, “Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Among Children Aged 8 Years, 2016” that covered:

- Overview of the ADDM Network and the methods they use
- The findings that were reported for 2016 – Prevalence and Characteristics of Children with ASD in Arkansas and ADDM Network
- Prevalence by Race/Ethnicity
- Special Education Eligibility

Findings from the AR-ADDM Program help increase understanding about the number of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the characteristics of those children, and the age at which they are first evaluated and diagnosed. AR-ADDM collects and analyzes data from the health and special education records of children who were 8 years old in 2016 and living in any of Arkansas’ 75 counties, totaling 40,225 children.

AR-ADDM’s latest findings can be used to:

- Promote early identification of ASD;
- Plan for the service needs of individuals with ASD and provide trainings related to ASD for healthcare providers and families;
- Guide future ASD research; and
- Inform policies promoting improved outcomes in health care and education for individuals with ASD.

Stakeholders in Arkansas might consider different ways to increase awareness of ASD among black and Hispanic families and identify and address barriers to evaluation and diagnosis in order to decrease the age at which all children are evaluated and diagnosed.

Mr. Matt Sewell, Director for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education, shared highlights from the 2019-2020 Arkansas State Advisory Council for Special Education Annual Report along with the focus areas for 2020-2021. Mr. Sewell mentioned the need for new parent/general education teacher representation from the Southern Region of Arkansas. Please submit all written nominations via email to Deb or Matt for consideration.

Mr. Sewell shared the following focus areas for the 2020-2021 year:

- Continue Inclusive Practices push across the state
- Data Points
- Graduation Expectations
- Behavior and Mental Health Supports
- Expand Deaf/Hard of Hearing Supports

- Instructional Practices for Students with Significant Disabilities
- COVID-19 and Post-COVID Supports
- Monitoring and Program Effectiveness Group to share brief, online topical professional learning opportunities
- Working on Special Education Rules and Regulations to allow greater flexibility within a student-focused learning system
- State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) Adjustments
- State Personnel Development Grant – Professional Learning Competency-based System
- Target setting (in April)

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.

Ms. Bonnie Boaz, Coordinator for Arkansas Transition Services – Ms. Boaz shared with the Council Members of how staff and students moved forward with Film Camp this year despite Covid-19.

Mr. Rick Porter, Dispute Resolution Program Coordinator for Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education - Mr. Porter gave the Council Members a brief update of how Covid-19 has impacted dispute resolution and how many cases have been filed during this pandemic.

Future Agenda Item Suggestions:

- Matt Sewell – Joan Luneau with APPEL
- Courtney Eubanks – ESVI
- Sherry Rogers – Early Childhood

Next Steps and Final Remarks:

The next Council meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.