

# **State Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Tuesday, July 22, 2025

**Location:** Victory Building, Suite 445, Conference Room

## **Council Members Present:**

Joseph Baxter via Zoom  
Candie Corona  
Sydney Dennis  
Ruth Eyres  
Dewey Graves  
Shelby Knight  
Dr. Suzanne Kucharczyk via Zoom  
Kimberly Morrison  
Sara Squires  
Rebecca Walker  
Jolie Whitley  
Cindy Willis

## **Special Education Staff Present:**

Dr. Jeff Adams  
Becky Bell  
Bonnie Boaz  
Dr. Laura Goadrich  
Yvonne Greene  
Josh Hart  
Becky McIver  
Melissa McLendon  
Danita Pitts  
Rick Porter  
Rhonda Saunders  
Michelle Waldo

## **Guest:**

Angalec Hogan (DCFS)

## **Meeting Proceedings**

### **Call to Order:**

The meeting began at 10:03 a.m., led by Mr. Dewey Graves, Co-chairperson. Mr. Graves welcomed all Advisory Council members and Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education (DESE-OSE) staff.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

A motion to approve the minutes from the April 15, 2025, meeting made by Ms. Jolie Whitley and seconded by Dr. Ruth Eyres. The council approved the minutes.

### **Advisory Council Elections:**

An election was held for this year's Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. Motions were made by Ms. Rebecca Walker and seconded by Ms. Kimberly Morrison appointing Ms. Jolie Whitley as Chairperson. Motions were made by Ms. Jolie Whitley and seconded by Ms. Rebecca Walker on appointing Ms. Kimberly Morrison to Vice Chairperson.

### **Nominations for Parents, People with Disabilities and Advocates:**

Dr. Ruth Eyres gave a nomination for person with a disability, Ms. Jolie Whitley gave a nomination for a public charter school member and Mr. Dewey Graves gave a nomination for an advocate. Dr. Jeff Adams, Director of Special Programs for the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education (DESE-OSE), reminded the council that nominations are forwarded to the Secretary of Education for final approval.

### **New Student Member(s):**

Ms. Rebecca Walker lead the discussion of adding two new student members. Ms. Jolie Whitley made the motion for one post-secondary program member and one secondary education member grades 10-12 and seconded by Ms. Cindy Willis. Dr. Suzanne Kucharczyk suggested that it is

the role of the chair, co-chair to support their full participation so that's an expectation for sustainability of their success.

### **5-year Target Setting for the SPP/APR Indicators:**

Dr. Laura Goadrich, Director of IDEA Data & Research, outlined the critical process of establishing new 5-year targets for the SPP/APR performance indicators to prepare for the new IDEA reporting package in February 2026. The presentation provided the Advisory Council with a deep data analysis for each relevant indicator, incorporating a **historical trend** and discussions from the Office of Special Education staff to clarify events around the trend data to assess prior performance, determine achievable baseline numbers, and inform future goals. Each indicator's compliance requirements, calculation methodology, and national context were reviewed. The ultimate goal of the review is to ensure that proposed targets are both **rigorous and achievable**, demonstrating continuous improvement in results for children with disabilities across the state. Following the data review, Dr. Goadrich requested direct input from the Advisory Council to ensure a consensus-driven approach to target setting. Council members participated in a structured voting process to express their preferences regarding the proposed target for each indicator. This feedback is essential and will be synthesized to draft the final recommended targets for state-level submission. The results of the Council's input, along with the spring public meetings, will be aggregated, finalized by the Office of Special Education, and shared with the Council.

### **New Guidance Resource for Students with Complex Needs:**

Ms. Charity Avery, Related Service Coordinator, and Dr. Amy Goddard, Related Service Coordinator and Brain Injury Specialist, presented on Pediatric Feeding Disorders and shared the new Guide for Supporting Pediatric Feeding Disorders in Arkansas Schools. Their presentation illustrated the swallowing process and emphasized that ensuring a child's safety during feeding is a coordinated, team-based effort among educators, service providers, and families.

### **Assistive Tech Demo:**

Mr. Evan Beavers, Accessible Education Materials Coordinator, provided a hands-on demonstration using iPads to showcase various augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) apps available through the ESRSS's loan program. He highlighted the purpose of the loan program, its role in supporting access to assistive technology, and provided a live demo of the loan program website to show how items can be checked out by schools.

### **Section Highlights:**

Section Highlights were presented and are available on the Special Education website.

### **2025 Determinations:**

Dr. Jeff Adams shared with the Advisory Council that the U.S. Department of Education issued its 2025 determinations for States on their implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for Part B. The IDEA requires the U.S. Department of Education to issue an annual determination, based on the State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR), which evaluates the State's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of the IDEA, and describes how the State will improve its implementation. IDEA details four categories for the Secretary's determinations, which include Meets Requirements, Needs Assistance, Needs Intervention and Needs Substantial Intervention. Arkansas received the determination of Needs Assistance based on the data included in the SPP/APR.

**Future Meeting Topics:**

- Legislation Specific Discussion
- Behavior Specialists Update
- Invite Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders
- ATLAS Scores for SPED/Assessment Team

Ms. Jolie Whitley made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Cindy Willis seconded the motion.

**Next Steps and Final Remarks:**

The next Council meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 p.m.