



Mississippi
Special Education
Advisory Panel

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

JULY 2016

Purpose of the Mississippi Special Education Advisory Panel

As authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and as defined in the by-laws of the Mississippi Special Education Advisory Panel, the principal purpose of this Panel is to promote the education of children and youth with disabilities.

Mission of the Mississippi Special Education Advisory Panel

The mission of the Special Education Advisory Panel shall be to promote the education of children and youth with disabilities. The Panel shall provide advice and guidance to the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Special Education, regarding the education and related services of children and youth with disabilities in local educational agencies. The advice and guidance shall include input from citizens and constituent groups.

The graphic art on the cover was designed by Mr. Antwan Clark, who is a member of the Panel.

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A Year in Review from the State Chairperson 2015 - 2016

As I write this year in review, I am amazed at how quickly a year can pass when working with a group such as the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) on issues that are vitally important to the students with disabilities in Mississippi. It has truly been a privilege and honor to serve as chairperson for the Special Education Advisory Panel for 2015-2016. Working closely with professionals, parents and various other community members was a true pleasure. I thank the 2015-2016 SEAP members for working together to effect positive change and improve the educational and lifelong outcomes of all students with disabilities.

Providing valuable information and presentations to the Panel this year were various individuals, committees, entities, and agencies, which included, but were not limited to, University of Mississippi Medical Center Hospital School and Child Life, Mississippi PTI, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services Transition and Youth Career Services, Mississippi Community College Board MI-BEST Program, Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, the SEAP sub-committee chairpersons and panel members, as well as staff from the Mississippi Department of Education, Offices of Special Education, Pupil Transportation, Compliance and Monitoring, and Instructional Support.

The Panel commends the Office of Special Education, our State Superintendent and each member of the State Board of Education for your commitment to the education of our children. The collective support and guidance you provide strengthens the outcomes for students with disabilities as they transition from school to a life of independence.

The Special Education Advisory Panel believes the recommendations contained in this report address the unmet needs for the students with disabilities in Mississippi. We encourage the Mississippi Board of Education to incorporate the SEAP's recommendations into their efforts to address the needs of Mississippi's students.

On behalf of all members of the Mississippi Special Education Advisory Panel, I present the 2016 Annual Report.

Sincerely,

Janice Dukes

Janice Dukes, Chair
Special Education Advisory Panel

Advisory Panel 2015-2016

Recommendations

For the 2015-16 School Year, the Special Education Advisory Panel formed two committees to address topics that are of concern at this time. The committees discussed alternative teacher certification and teacher-pupil staffing ratios. The following reports are the results of each committee's findings.

Recommendations for Alternative Teacher Certification

During the 2015-16 school year, a committee was formed to address the area of alternative teacher certification. Panel members felt that individuals with degrees in other fields who wish to teach, specifically in the area of special education, need particular training to enable them to be adequately prepared to work with students with disabilities. In an effort to prepare individuals to teach, committee members constructed a plan containing a specific set of course-work for individuals to complete, as outlined below.

Proposal: A two semester, university-based alternative teacher certification program. Program designed to allow individuals with bachelor's degrees (or higher), who want to transition into the teaching profession, to gain initial teaching certification by completing content and professional education course-work including a two semester (fall and spring) supervised internship experience. Total program = 24 credit hours

Overview: Accelerated (two semesters) program consisting of 6 courses (each course, 8 weeks long) PLUS a yearlong (two semesters fall and spring) Internship- *Student must obtain emergency 1 year teacher certification and become employed fulltime in desired licensure setting.* Internship supervision will be provided by a site-based mentor with at least three years of teaching experience in the area of special education and by a university supervisor.

The program includes PRAXIS testing, ongoing internship experiences, and online graduate course work. An eligible candidate may be employed as a Mississippi teacher or may complete the two semester clinical internship under the supervision of an experienced teacher.

Note: Upon program completion and initial teacher certification, individuals may continue to complete a **Master of Arts in Teaching** degree in an appropriate university.

Standards Addressed by program (Based on CAEP and CEC Initial Preparation Standards):

- Learner and Learning (L&L)
- Content Knowledge and Professional Foundations (CK & PF)
- Instructional Pedagogy (IP)
- Professionalism and Collaboration (PC)

Required Academic Content (Based on Standards)

1. Survey of Exceptional Student Education (L&L)
2. Classroom & Behavioral Management (L&L)
3. Curriculum & Instructional Methods (CK & PF)

4. Assessment and IEP Development (CK & PF)
5. Professionalism & Collaboration (PC)
6. Assistive Technology (CK & PF)

Required Internships – two (Each internship is 16 weeks long)

7. Internship I (L&L; CK &PF; IP; PC)
8. Internship II (L&L; CK &PF; IP; PC)

PROGRAM PROPOSAL SPECIFICS (accelerated two semester program - fall & spring semesters)

Internship I (16 weeks) **the following coursework must be taken while completing Internship I:**

- 1st 8 weeks – Internship I + the following 2 courses
 - Survey of Exceptional Student Education
 - Classroom & Behavioral Management
- 2nd 8 weeks – Internship I (continued) + the following 2 courses
 - Curriculum & Instructional Methods
 - Assessment and IEP Development

Internship II (16 weeks) **the following coursework must be taken while completing Internship II:**

- 3rd 8 weeks – Internship II + the following 2 courses
 - Professionalism & Collaboration
 - Assistive Technology
- 4th 8 weeks – Internship II (continued) no additional coursework taken during this 8 weeks

Recommendations for Teacher-Pupil Staffing Ratios

Recommendation on Study to Reduce Class Size, Pupil-Teacher Ratio and Special Education Teacher's Caseload

During the 2015-2016 school year, members of the Special Education Advisory Panel formed a committee to look at the number of students with disabilities in each class, as well as how many students each teacher is working with. The Panel is aware this is a complex issue involving Teacher Unit Allocations, MAEP funding, and Accreditation Standards.

1. Teacher Unit Allocations are outlined in Rule 74.3 of the State Board Policies. (Attached)
2. MAEP funding is allocated by the State Legislature yearly. Funding for teacher positions depends upon the recommendation from MDE for all teacher positions for all categories in a school district.
3. Accreditation standards are outlined on the MDE website under Accreditation Accountability Standards 2015. These standards do not address special education teachers' caseloads.

It is recommended that the Special Education Department of the MS Department of Education (MDE) form a committee during the 2016-17 school year to study the project feasibility to reduce class size, pupil-teacher ratio, and caseload for special education teachers in MS to facilitate addressing all students' Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) in order for students to receive educational benefit.

Recommendations from Special Education Advisory Panel:

Special Education Teacher Caseload Ratio 12:1 (elementary and middle) and 15:1 (high school)

Serves students with disabilities whose academic and/or behavioral needs require specialized/specially designed instruction which can best be accomplished within the general education setting (e.g., Inclusion, Tutorial, Resource, LRE statuses of SA and SB)

Special Class Staffing Ratio 12:1:1

Serves students with disabilities whose academic and/or behavioral management needs interfere with the instructional process, to the extent that additional adult support is needed to engage in learning and who require specialized/specially designed instruction which can best be accomplished in a self-contained setting

- no more than 12 students per class
- one full-time special education teacher
- one full-time paraprofessional

Special Class Staffing Ratio 8:1:1

Serves students with disabilities whose management needs are severe and chronic requiring intensive constant supervision, a significant degree of individualized attention, intervention and intensive behavior management as well as additional adult support

- no more than eight students per class
- one full-time special education teacher
- one full-time paraprofessional

Special Class Staffing Ratio 6:1:1

Serves students with disabilities with very high needs in most or all need areas, including academic, social and/or interpersonal development, physical development and management. Student's behavior is characterized as aggressive, self-abusive or extremely withdrawn and with severe difficulties in the acquisition and generalization of language and social skill development. These students require very intense individual programming, continual adult supervision, (usually) a specific behavior management program, to engage in all tasks and a program of speech/language therapy (which may include augmentative/alternative communication)

- no more than six students per class
- one full-time special education teacher
- one full-time paraprofessional

Special Class Staffing Ratio 12:1:4

Serves students with severe and multiple disabilities with limited language, academic and independent functioning. These students require a program primarily of habilitation and treatment, including training in daily living skills and the development of communication skills, sensory stimulation and therapeutic interventions.

- no more than 12 students per class
- one full-time special education teacher
- one additional staff person (paraprofessional) for every three students

Upon application and documented educational justification to the Mississippi Department of Education, approval may be granted to exceed the special class sizes. The class size may not be exceeded unless and until the Mississippi Department of Education grants the variance.

Summary

Since this is a feasibility study, all issues have been addressed above. Documents for consideration are below:

Chapter 74: Special Education

Rule 74.3 Teacher Unit Allocation. Teacher Unit Allocation Methodology to Support Programs for Students with Disabilities

1. The Teacher Unit Allocation Methodology gives consideration to two factors:
 - a. Educational Placement
 - b. Levels of Support

Each student will be assigned a weighted value based on these two factors. After calculation of the total number of weighted students, teacher units are determined by the following formula:

- a. Pre-K: 18 weighted units = 1 teacher
- b. K-2: 22 weighted units = 1 teacher
- c. Gr. 3-12: 27 weighted units = 1 teacher

2. Educational Placement

The first factor in determining the teacher unit allocation is the educational placement of students with disabilities. These placements represent options along the least restrictive environment continuum.

- a. Regular Education/Early Childhood Setting
 - i. Ages 3-5: Early childhood setting designed primarily for children without disabilities
 - ii. Ages 6-20: General/regular education classes for more than 80% of the school day.(Removed from general education for no more than 20% of the school day)
- b. Resourced
 - i. Ages 3-5: Special education setting part time; remainder of time at home or in early childhood setting designed for non-disabled children ii. Ages 6-20: General/regular education placement between 40-80% of the school day (Removed from regular education for 20-60% of the school day)
- c. Self-Contained
 - i. Ages 3-5: Program designed primarily for students with disabilities

- ii. Ages 6-20: General education class less than 40% of the school day (removed from regular education for more than 60% of the day)

Chapter 74: Special Education

Rule 74.10 Special Grant Selection Criteria. If during the school year a special education class exceeds the maximum enrollment according to the regulations in the Referral to Placement Handbook, Part II, a request for an exemption will be submitted to the State Department of Education. The maximum class enrollment for each type of special education program is as follows:

Resource Program	18
Self-Contained Program	14
Home/Hospital Program	8
Language/Speech Program	60
Preschool (ages 3-5) Home-Based Program	16
Preschool Community-Based Program	16
Preschool Combination of Home-Based and Community-Based Program	16
Preschool School-Based, Full-Day Program	14
Preschool School-Based, Single Half-Day Program	14
Preschool School-Based, Two Half-Day Programs	24

1. The request will describe the situation and provide justification as to why the exemption should be approved to include at a minimum the following:
 - a. the number of special education teachers in that school who serve students with disabilities, the enrollment of each teacher; and why appropriate services cannot be provided by one of those teachers in that school,
 - b. a clear description of why an additional class cannot be added to take care of the overload,
 - c. whether there is a school reasonably close by to which the children over the maximum could be transferred, and
 - d. other emergency, hardship, or special situations which justify the exemption.
2. State Department of Education staff (Exemptions Committee) will review the request for exemption and make a recommendation to the State Board as to whether it should be granted.

3. The State Board will consider requests at its monthly meetings.
4. A school district may appeal the denial of an exemption by requesting to appear before the State Board at its next meeting.
5. The State Board's decision on an appeal is final.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 37-1-3 (Adopted 8/1993)*

References consulted:

- Tennessee State Board of Education Special Education Caseload and Class Size Standards
- Georgia Code IDDF (14) 160-4-7- .14 PERSONNEL, FACILITIES AND CASELOADS.
- Alabama State Board of Education Approved Teacher/Pupil Ratio Resolution
- Wisconsin Options for Determining Caseloads in Special Education
- Issues in Special Education Caseload/Class Size Policy in Minnesota

Special Education Advisory Panel Membership 2015-2016

- (1) **Parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26)**
 1. Ms. Deborah Giles,* — 2013-2017
 2. Ms. Nicole Boyd,* Oxford Exceptional Children's Society — 2013-2017
 3. Ms. Jacqueline Washington,* Mississippi Department of Health — 2012-2016
 4. Ms. Janice Dukes*, Pearl School District— 2015-2019
 5. Ms. Carolyn Crawford, * State Representative/Parent — 2015-2019

- (2) **Individuals with disabilities**
 6. Mr. Johnny McGinn, ♦ Director, Client Assistance Program — 2013-2017
 7. Mr. Antwan Clark, ♦ Information Technology Specialist — 2013-2017
 8. Mr. Roger Bullock, ♦ Independent Living Specialist, Living Independence for Everyone, Inc.— 2013-2017

- (3) **Teachers**
 9. Ms. Shelley Franklin, ♦ MS School for the Blind ♦—2015 -2019
 10. Ms. McKimley Hudson, * Hinds County School District —2015 -2019
 11. Ms. Melanie Stevens, * Rankin County School District—2015 -2019

- (4) **Representatives of Institutions of Higher Education that prepare special education and related services personnel**
 12. Dr. Denise Soares, University of Mississippi — 2014-2018
 13. Dr. Vicki Hartley, Delta State University — 2014-2018
 14. Dr. Gwendolyn Williams, Jackson State University— 2015-2019

- (5) **State and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities under Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.)**
 15. Ms. Barbara Greene, McKinney-Vento Homeless Representative — 2013-2017

- (6) **Administrators of programs for children with disabilities**
 16. Ms. Doris Flettrich, Special Education Director, Pass Christian Public School — 2015-2019
 17. Ms. Laurie Heiden, * Mississippi University Hospital — 2013-2017
 18. Ms. Shelia Brown, Special Education Director, West Bolivar Public School District — 2015-2019
 19. Mr. Anthony Goins, Principal, Clinton High School — 2015-2019

- (7) **Representatives of other State agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities**
 20. Mr. Donny Frazier, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services — 2015-2019
 21. Ms. Nan Christian, Mississippi Department of Mental Health — 2014-2018
 22. Ms. Stacy Callender, Mississippi Department of Health— 2015-2019

- (8) **Representatives of private schools and public charter schools**
 23. Ms. Hope Pearson, Midtown Public Charter School— 2015-2019

- (9) **Not less than one representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities**
 24. Ms. Pam Dollar,* Mississippi Parent Training Center — 2015-2019
 25. Ms. Krystal Berry, * Curriculum Specialist for Academic and Student Affairs, State Board for Community Colleges — 2015-2019

- (10) **A representative from the State child welfare agency responsible for foster care**
 26. Ms. Sandra McClendon, Mississippi Department of Human Services — 2014-2018

- (11) **Representatives from the State juvenile and adult corrections agencies**
 27. Ms. Deborah Pittman, Oakley Training School — 2015-2019

** NOTE: Special rule. A majority of the members of the panel must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26). (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(21)(b) and (c))

*denotes parent ♦ denotes individual with a disability

Special Education Advisory Panel Federal Regulations

(Sections 300.167, 300.168, and 300.169)

What the Federal law requires:

(21) State advisory panel.--

(A) In general.--The State has established and maintains an advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the State.

(B) Membership.--Such advisory panel shall consist of members appointed by the Governor, or any other official authorized under State law to make such appointments, be representative of the State population, and be composed of individuals involved in, or concerned with, the education of children with disabilities, including--

(i) parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26);

(ii) individuals with disabilities;

(iii) teachers;

(iv) representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel;

(v) State and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities under subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.);

(vi) administrators of programs for children with disabilities;

(vii) representatives of other State agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities;

(viii) representatives of private schools and public charter schools;

(ix) not less than one representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities;

(x) a representative from the State child welfare agency responsible for foster care; and

(xi) representatives from the State juvenile and adult corrections agencies.

(C) Special rule.--A majority of the members of the panel shall be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26).

(D) Duties.--The advisory panel shall--

(i) advise the State educational agency (SEA) of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;

(ii) comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities;

(iii) advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 618;

(iv) advise the SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under this part; and

(v) advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

Mississippi Special Education Advisory Panel By-Laws

Article I: Name of Organization

The name of this self-governed organization shall be the Special Education Advisory Panel, also known as the SEAP.

Article II: Purpose of the SEAP

Section 1. The principal purpose of this Panel shall be to promote the education of children and youth with disabilities.

Section 2. The mission of the Special Education Advisory Panel shall be to promote the education of children and youth with disabilities. The Panel shall provide advice and guidance to the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Special Education, regarding the education and related services of children and youth with disabilities in local educational agencies. The advice and guidance shall include input from citizens and constituent groups.

Article III: Functions

(a) **General.** The SEAP shall:

1. Advise the SEA of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;
2. Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities;
3. Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 618 of the Act;
4. Advise the SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and

5. Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.
- (b) Advising on eligible students with disabilities in adult prisons. The Advisory Panel also shall advise on the education of eligible students with disabilities who have been convicted as adults and incarcerated in adult prisons, even if, consistent with § 300.600
- (d), a state assigns general supervision responsibility for those students to a public agency other than an SEA. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(21)(D))

Article IV: Procedures

Specific procedures will include the following:

1. The Advisory Panel shall meet bi-monthly to conduct its business.
2. By July 1 of each year, the Advisory Panel shall submit an annual report of Panel activities and suggestions to the State Board of Education. This report must be made available to the public in a manner consistent with other public reporting requirements of Part B of the Act.
3. Official minutes must be kept on all Panel meetings and must be made available to the public on request.
4. All Advisory Panel meetings and agenda items must be announced enough in advance of the meeting to afford interested parties a reasonable opportunity to attend. Meetings must be open to the public.
5. Interpreters and other necessary services must be provided at Panel meetings for Panel members or participants. The State may pay for these services from funds under §300.620.
6. The Advisory Panel shall serve without compensation but the State must reimburse the Panel for reasonable and necessary expenses for attending meetings and performing duties. The State may use funds under §300.620 for this purpose. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(21))

Article V: Administrative Year

The administrative year shall be July 1 through June 30.

Article VI: Terms of Membership

Section 1. The membership shall be composed of persons concerned with the education of children and youth with disabilities as required by State and Federal regulations. Membership shall include, but not be limited to:

- parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26);
- individuals with disabilities;
- teachers;
- representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel;
- State and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities under subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.);
- administrators of programs for children with disabilities;
- representatives of other State agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities;
- representatives of private schools and public charter schools;
- not less than one representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities;
- a representative from the State child welfare agency responsible for foster care; and
- representatives from the State juvenile and adult corrections agencies.

Special rule--A majority of the members of the panel shall be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26).

Section 2. A majority of the members of the Panel shall be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities.

Section 3. A term of office shall be for four (4) years, with eligibility for re-appointment. The State Superintendent of Education shall have the authority to remove a member before the appointment has expired due to noncompliance with attendance requirements.

Section 4. The following procedures are followed to fill vacancies on the SEAP:

- a) The SEA will distribute nomination forms to all interested parties.
- b) All nomination forms will be received by the SEA.
- c) The State Superintendent will make final recommendations to fill vacancies on the SEAP to the State Board of Education for approval.

Section 5. Recommendations for appointments to the Advisory Panel should be made by June 30 of each year. Prospective members should be appointed in July.

Section 6. Membership on the Panel requires consistent attendance at regular meetings. An attendance report will be generated during May of each year. When a member has missed more than 50% of the meetings, a recommendation will be made to the State Superintendent to replace the member. If the member has had an extenuating circumstance which justifies absences from the meetings, he/she may petition the State Superintendent in writing to remain on the Panel.

Article VII: Officers of the Special Education Advisory Panel

Special Education Advisory Panel officers shall include a chairperson, a co-chairperson-elect and a past-chairperson.

Article VIII: Nominations and Elections

To be elected to an office, one must be an Advisory Panel member for at least one year.

The chairperson-elect shall be elected by a simple majority of the full Panel.

Article IX: Meetings

Section 1. Regular meetings of the Panel shall be held bi-monthly. The co-chairperson-elect will serve a term of one year. After serving in this capacity for one year, the co-chairperson-elect automatically assumes the position of chairperson.

The chairperson will serve a term of one year. After serving in this capacity for one year, the chairperson automatically assumes the position of past-chairperson.

The past-chairperson will serve a term of one year.

The election will be held annually in June. New officers will begin service in August of each year.

Section 2. Dates for the regular meetings of the administrative year shall be established during the last meeting of the previous year.

The chairperson, with input from the entire Panel and the facilitation of the SEA, shall set the agenda for each meeting. The chairperson may request the SEA to provide information based upon agenda items.

Section 3. A simple majority (1 more than half) of the Panel membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business in any meeting of the Panel. Meetings can be held even if a quorum is not present.

Article X: Committees

The Panel may establish committees to carry out the responsibilities of the Panel and to accomplish its purpose as stated in the Federal law.

Duties and responsibilities of each committee shall be adopted by the Panel in the form of a resolution, which shall be entered into the minutes of the Panel meeting. Persons other than members of the Advisory Panel may serve on its committees. Each committee shall be chaired by a member of the Advisory Panel. Membership on each committee shall include parents of individuals with disabilities or individuals with disabilities.

Article XI: Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order are the meeting procedures for this organization.