

# SEAP

Special Education Advisory Panel  
2024-2025

## *Annual Report*



Pennsylvania  
Department of Education





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# Special Education Advisory Panel



Pennsylvania

## Department of Education

October 16, 2025

Carrie Rowe, Ed.D.  
Acting Secretary of Education  
Pennsylvania Department of Education  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Acting Secretary Rowe:

It is our pleasure to submit to you a summary of the activities and recommendations of the Pennsylvania Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) for the 2024-2025 meeting year. Based on the roles and responsibilities for state advisory panels in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (§300.169), SEAP has engaged with the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports (BEISFS) and the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) in constructive dialogue, information sharing, and data review, so that recommendations to improve the results for students with disabilities in Pennsylvania can be developed. In May 2025, each committee submitted a report with recommendations that were approved by SEAP and forwarded to the BEISFS and the BSE. The 2024-2025 Annual Report accompanies this letter. SEAP's mandated roles are outlined in the introduction section. [Link to Introduction](#)

Each year, SEAP develops a work plan and establishes committees to deeply study SEAP's priorities. As detailed in Committee Reports (included in this Annual Report), SEAP approved the following 2024-2025 committee recommendations.

- **Meaningful Family Engagement and Participation**—Recommend that both Bureaus provide guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) on increasing meaningful family engagement on their Special Education Plans; provide guidance on the use of digital documents and e-signature programs like DocuSign by ensuring that families have access to digital or hard copies; and encourage districts and Intermediate Units (IUs) to work collaboratively with the Local Task Forces (LTFs). [Link to Meaningful Family Engagement and Participation Report](#)
- **Inclusive Practices**—Recommend that both Bureaus update all materials to reflect the new name of the tool, Framework for Access and Belonging (FAB), including cyclical monitoring tools and distributed resources; that BSE add language to the Annotated Individualized Education Program (IEP) documents to point teams to the FAB toolkit, with hyperlinks and an explanation of its use; that both Bureaus develop additional training for general education teachers, including noncore subjects and targeted professional development for school and system leaders on supporting access to general education for students with disabilities. [Link to Inclusive Practices Report](#)
- **Transition**—Recommend that both Bureaus support families to actively and confidently participate and possibly lead their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP); provide guidance, training, information, and support to school teams and families regarding transition assessments and evaluations beginning in the middle school years; establish the transition from middle school to high school as a critical entry point into the transition to adulthood process; ensure social and emotional learning curriculum is appropriate and available for students with disabilities; and create and disseminate materials that align Social Emotional Learning skills with the PA Career Ready skills. [Link to Transition Report](#)

- **Mental Health**—Recommend that both Bureaus, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)/Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) and the Office of Safe Schools, finalize a reintegration plan/protocol for school-age students reentering school from any outside placement, including mental health facilities, and identify ways to disseminate the document(s) to the field; identify early intervention and school age resources in relation to mental wellness and students with disabilities and develop a repository of accessible resources; BSE establish the transition from middle school to high school as a critical entry point in the transition to adulthood process; BSE create and disseminate materials that reframe Social Emotional Learning skills and align with the PA Career Ready skills. [Link to Mental Health Report](#)
- **Crisis and Restraint Prevention**—Recommend that both Bureaus, in collaboration with PaTTAN facilitators, collect and examine School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) data for students with disabilities in order to identify any positive or negative impacts of implementing a SWPBIS program; provide access to behavior management trainings for school leaders and staff more locally; and issue guidance to LEAs regarding the importance of family and student involvement in the development of SWPBIS programs. [Link to Crisis Intervention and Restraint Report](#)
- **State Complaints**—Recommend that the both Bureaus develop a Year End Report of State Complaint Data, which includes formal and informal complaint themes and outcomes, disaggregated by region (West, Central, East); establish a consistent process for families to file state complaints for all children ages 3–21, including an easily accessible form and a family friendly handout which explains the process; train all Bureau Advisors in a consistent method for providing support and handling informal complaints, and develop unified language across both Bureaus to identify and track the use of informal complaints. [Link to Posting of State Complaints Report](#)

Per Pennsylvania's annual federal reporting on the Part B School-Age State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR), the SEAP provided recommendations on the following topics:

- Target setting for Indicator 8 on facilitated parent involvement;
- Target setting for Indicator 14 on post-school outcomes;
- Postcard for improving response rate to SPP Indicator 8, School-Facilitated Family Involvement Survey.

The SEAP also established and approved ad hoc committee reports on many internal panel practices including:

- Artificial Intelligence in SEAP meetings;
- SEAP Open Meeting Practices;
- Practices for Sponsored Conference Attendance of SEAP Members; and
- SEAP Stakeholder Engagement Practices.

Panel members provided cross-agency perspectives and information sharing through participation in other advisory bodies including:

- State Interagency Coordination Council (SICC);
- State Advisory Committee (SAC);
- State Task Force (STF);
- Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) Stakeholder Advisory Group;
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Advisory Committee;
- Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PARC);
- Transition Interagency State Leadership Team;
- Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) Information Sharing and Advisory Committee (ISAC);
- Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) Children's Committee; and
- Waiting List Campaign.

The full panel participated in updates and presentations on many topics, including:

- Artificial Intelligence in Special Education;
- Dyslexia Project Update;
- Attract, Prepare, Retain (APR) Initiative to address educational professional shortages;
- Educational Resources for Children with Hearing Loss (ERCHL) on unmet educational needs and advisory committee priorities
- PA Advisory Committee on Education of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired (PACES-BVI) on unmet educational needs and advisory committee priorities on unmet educational needs and advisory committee priorities
- PA Deaf-Blind Advisory Committee (PADBAC)
- Practices for Ensuring Authentic and Appropriate Inclusion of Students with Disabilities;
- Measurement Methodologies and Practices for Significant Discrepancies in Suspension and Expulsion Rates;
- Bureau of Special Education (BSE)/PaTTAN Conferences;
- The Disability Inclusive Curriculum;
- Restraint Information System of Collection (RISC) Annual Report;
- Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) Annual Report;
- Pennsylvania's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDGs);
- Pilot Family Ambassador role through Success for PA Early Learners (SPEL) grant;
- Youth Engagement Specialists (YES) role and youth perspective of unmet needs;
- Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment;
- Suicide Prevention for Individuals with Disabilities;
- Home and Community Based Services, Medicaid Waivers, Waiting List Campaign;
- Annual Performance Report/State Performance Plan (APR/SPP); and,
- State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP).

It is our honor to fulfill our advisory panel's purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (34 CFR §300.167).

For additional information, the SEAP link is located at:

<https://www.pattan.net/About-Us/Partners/The-Special-Education-Advisory-Panel-SEAP>

Respectfully submitted,

**Christopher Keeler**

Chair, 2024-2025 Pennsylvania Special Education Advisory Panel

**Amy Fisher**

Vice Chair, 2024-2025 Pennsylvania Special Education Advisory Panel

**Gretchen Humble**

Secretary, 2024-2025 Pennsylvania Special Education Advisory Panel

# Introduction

Federal regulations dictate the role and responsibilities of the Pennsylvania Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) as an advisory group to the Pennsylvania Department of Education concerning the needs of students with disabilities. In this role, the Panel has engaged the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) and the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports (BEISFS), as well as representatives of various areas of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, in constructive dialogue and offered recommendations in the effort to improve the results for students with disabilities who are between the ages of 3 through 21 years of age.

## SEAP Responsibilities

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and SEAP By-Laws, the panel has ten duties:

1. Advise the State Educational Agency (The Pennsylvania Department of Education) on the unmet needs within the Commonwealth as to the education of children with disabilities. (34 CFR §300.169).
2. Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities. (34 CFR §300.169).
3. Advise the State Educational Agency in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 618 of the Act. (34 CFR §300.169).
4. Advise the State Educational Agency in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports. (34 CFR §300.169).
5. Advise the State Educational Agency in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities. (34 CFR §300.169).
6. Advise on patterns and trends that are observed through review of hearing officer decisions as provided by the State Educational Agency following the deletion of any personally identifiable information. (CFR §300.513(d) & §300.514(c)).
7. Provide consultation to the State Education Agency in determining that Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is currently available to all eligible children with disabilities in the State when the State Education Agency is determining/requesting waiver of the requirement regarding supplementing and not supplanting with Part B funds. (CFR §300.164(2)(4)).
8. Advise the State Educational Agency on other issues as deemed necessary by the Secretary of the Department of Education, the Director of the BSE, and the Director of the BEISFS, or their respective designees.
9. Advise the State Educational Agency on the education of eligible students with disabilities living in congregate care (i.e., Residential Treatment Facilities, adult prisons, youth detention facilities, psychiatric hospitals, medical facilities).
10. Undertake any other activities or actions required by its governing statutes or regulations.

### For More Information

[Pennsylvania Special Education Advisory Panel Flyer](#)

SEAP Meeting Schedule and Public Attendance:  
<https://tinyurl.com/SEAPinPA>



# Summary of SEAP Recommendations to Bureaus 2024-2025

## Meaningful Family Engagement and Participation Recommendations

1. Recommend that both Bureaus provide guidance to LEAs on increasing meaningful family engagement on their Special Education Plans.
2. Recommend that both Bureaus provide guidance on the use of digital documents and the use of e-signature programs like DocuSign with families. Include guidance on ensuring families can access digital documents, offering both electronic and hard copy response options, and giving families the option to not receive digital documents.
3. Recommend that both Bureaus encourage districts and IUs to work with Local Task Forces (LTFs) as collaborative resource hubs in increasing meaningful family engagement.

## Inclusive Practices Recommendations

4. Recommend that both Bureaus update all materials to reflect the new name of the tool, FAB: Framework for Access and Belonging, including cyclical monitoring tools and information items distributed by the Department, both Bureaus, and PaTTAN.
5. Recommend that BSE add language to the Annotated IEP resource document(s) that direct IEP teams to the FAB toolkit with hyperlinks and how the FAB might be useful for teams.
6. Recommend that both Bureaus develop additional training sessions for general education teachers, including non-core subject teachers (Art, Music, Physical Education (PE), World Language, Practical Arts, Career Technical Education (CTE), PA-Key, etc.), to better support students with disabilities, especially those with the highest support needs in their general education classrooms and with access to their general education curriculum.
7. Recommend that both Bureaus develop targeted professional development for superintendents, principals, special education administrators, curriculum directors, IU directors, and school board members on how to facilitate school teams to ensure students with disabilities' right to access

the general education environment and curriculum regardless of their support needs.

## Transition Recommendations

8. Recommend that both Bureaus support families, as they are able, to actively and confidently participate and possibly lead their child's IEP.
9. Recommend that BSE provide guidance, training, information, and support to schools and families regarding transition assessments, testing and evaluations beginning in middle school years.
10. Recommend that BSE establish the transition from middle school years to high school process/experience as the critical entry point in the transition to adulthood process.
11. Recommend that both Bureaus ensure Social and Emotional Learning curriculum is available and appropriate for students with disabilities.
12. Recommend that BSE create and disseminate materials that reframe Social Emotional Learning skills and align with the PA Career Ready skills.

## Mental Health Recommendations

13. Recommend that both Bureaus, in collaboration with PaTTAN/EITA and the Office of Safe Schools, finalize a re-integration plan/protocol for school-age students reentering school from any outside placement, including mental health facilities and identify ways to disseminate the document(s) to the field.
14. Recommend that both Bureaus identify early intervention and school age resources in relation to mental wellness and students with disabilities and. develop a repository of accessible resources.
15. Recommend that BSE establish the transition from the middle school years to high school as a critical entry point in the transition to adulthood process.
16. Recommend that both Bureaus ensure Social and Emotional Learning curriculum is available and appropriate for students with disabilities.
17. Recommend that BSE create and disseminate materials that reframe Social Emotional Learning skills and align with the PA Career Ready skills.

## Crisis and Restraint Prevention Recommendations

18. Recommend that both Bureaus, and in collaboration with PaTTAN, advise LEAs to collect SWPBIS data (such as discipline referrals, restraints, behavior incidents, etc.) in a way that collects by student ID in order to be able to disaggregate data for students with disabilities in order to recognize the unique needs of students with disabilities and the positive or negative effects of implementing a SWPBIS system. Recommend that the PaTTAN School Wide Facilitators also examine this data to identify any impacts of SWPBIS programs on outcomes for students with disabilities.
19. Recommend that both Bureaus provide more local (at IUs, central PaTTAN offices, virtual) access to proactive behavior management trainings, local “boot camps,” or training for school leaders and staff to address problematic student behavioral issues they have identified and provide support for how to individualize SWPBIS for students with disabilities.
20. Recommend that both Bureaus provide guidance to LEAs regarding the importance of family and student involvement in the development of SWPBIS programs.

## State Complaints Recommendations

21. Recommend that both Bureaus annually develop and share with SEAP a Year End Report of State Complaint Data which includes informal and formal complaint themes and outcomes disaggregated by Region (West, Central, East).
22. Recommend that there is a seamless and consistent process for families to file state complaints for children 3-21 which includes: an easily accessible form used by both departments; and a family friendly handout explaining the process with consistent labeling of informal complaints and contact information for questions.
23. Recommend that both Bureaus develop and ensure training for all Bureau Special Education Advisors to establish consistent information, supports and practices regarding informal complaints across the Commonwealth.
24. Across both Bureaus, develop unified language to label informal complaints.



# Recommendation Reports

## Meaningful Family Engagement and Participation Report 2024–2025 Report, Approved by SEAP on May 29, 2025

### Background

This report elevates recommendations for meaningful family engagement from the perspective of all SEAP priority committees including inclusive practices, transition into and beyond school-age services, mental health, and crisis and restraint prevention. Meaningful family<sup>1</sup> engagement in a child's education is a collaborative and strengths-based process in which early childhood professionals, educators, families, and children build positive and goal-oriented relationships. It is a shared responsibility of families and professionals that requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths that each has to offer.

The benefits of meaningful family engagement are clear. When families are involved in their child's education, many improvements are seen, including attendance, higher grades, test scores, graduation rates and decreased dropout rates. As stated in the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#), "... families are essential partners to providing a high-quality education for every student. Decades of research shows that family engagement matters for student success. Students whose families are engaged are more likely to attend school, avoid discipline problems, achieve at higher levels and graduate."

These findings fit the ABC of Attendance, Behavior, and Course work documented as key indicators of dropout prevention. As stated by the National Dropout Prevention Center, "Family engagement transforms school culture. When families are empowered to be true partners in education, school culture shifts from reactive to proactive, leading to better academic and social emotional outcomes." (Successful Practices Network, 2024, National Dropout Prevention Conference)

Family engagement is not only important for an individual child's success, but also for systemic systems improvement. "Family engagement also helps schools. Research suggests it is equally as important as school leadership or a rigorous curriculum to predict school improvement." ([National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#), 2021, National Parent Teacher Association (PTA))

During the December 2024 SEAP meeting, the Meaningful Family Engagement and Participation Committee facilitated full panel (cross committee) input on barriers to family engagement, notable training models for family engagement, best training practices, and possible Bureau recommendations. The Meaningful Family Engagement and Participation Committee facilitated panel members to think from their priority committee perspective: inclusive practices, transition, mental health, and crisis and restraint prevention.

Based on full panel (cross-committee) input, the following are notable training models for family engagement, best training practices and best training topics, and barriers to family engagement.

### Barriers to meaningful family engagement and participation include:

#### Lack of accessible and family-friendly information and resources:

- Family resources (such as Procedural Safeguards Notice) are difficult to understand or not linguistically, culturally, disability accessible.
- Families do not understand their rights. For example, families don't understand what restraints are or why their child is placed in them. Parents don't know to ask for a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) or an update in their Positive Behavior Support Plan.

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<sup>1</sup>Throughout this report we use the term "family" consistent with the broad definition of "parent" used in The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA defines "parent" as: (1) A biological or adoptive parent of a child; (2) A foster parent...; (3) A guardian...; (4) An individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare; or (5) A surrogate parent..." (§300.30)





### Limited family involvement

- In many Local Education Agencies (LEAs), family engagement is an add-on, not an embedded or elevated commitment, so families aren't involved. LEAs need to understand the great benefit of family engagement.
- Many families do not partake in family engagement opportunities.
- Families aren't always given adequate time to share their knowledge. Families must be more of a priority for decision making. Administrators need to be held accountable.

### Trust issues

- Families often lack trust in the school system.
- When students are in crises, all parties may approach teamwork confused, upset, defensive and emotional.
- Districts may perceive that empowering family awareness of rights and/or authentically engaging families in educational issues will expose them to legal vulnerabilities.

### Challenging special education processes

Families need clearly explained and understandable special education processes.

### Mental health stigma

- Families and students experience stigma around mental health needs.
- Families and students experience barriers to identification and access to resources relating to mental health.

### Notable national models for meaningful family engagement include:

- National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, 2021, National Parent Teacher Association (PTA).
- Dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships (Version 2). Mapp, K. L. & Bergman, E. (2019) [www.dualcapacity.org](http://www.dualcapacity.org).
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) Family-to-Family (F2F) Health Information Centers.



## **Notable Pennsylvania training and technical assistance models for meaningful family engagement include:**

- Parents as Partners in Professional Development (P3D).
- Competence and Confidence: Partners in Policy Making Early Intervention (C2P2 EI).
- Parent café.
- HUNE's Andy's Café.
- HUNE's BSET Training.
- FAMILIES TO THE MAX (F2MAX) Foundational Courses.
- Pennsylvania State Parent Advisory Council (SPAC) State Conference.
- Family Leadership Institutes at The PEAL Center.
- Family training by The Arc of Pennsylvania.
- Families Reimagining Inclusive Lives, Temple University Institute on Disabilities.
- PhillyFam's model.
- Local Task Force family training.

## **Across training models, example best training practices and best training topics include:**

- Assess family needs and interests and let this drive training and resources.
- Empower families and engage families as partners leading change.
- Provide safe spaces, accommodations, linguistic and cultural support for all types of learners.
- Reach families where they live including rural and urban areas.
- Offer tiered training (multiple levels from basic to more complex) plus individualized support.
- Provide funding and support for families such as travel reimbursements, childcare, and food.
- Communicate with families via text, phone calls, emails, virtual platforms, social media, etc.
- Provide training and support groups for fathers.

## **To promote collaborative and constructive decision-making at the IFSP/IEP meeting level, example best practice training topics include:**

### **For schools:**

Authentic family engagement – how schools can meaningfully engage family voice on individual and systemic educational issues:

- Authentic family engagement – how schools can meaningfully engage family voice on individual and systemic educational issues.
- Staff training on how to gather parent input, concerns, and reach agreement – See David Mandell's work on creating the physical environment and using person centered planning techniques in the IEP.

### **For families:**

- Family voice – how to tell their story, articulate their child's needs, advocate constructively for their child's needs.
- Individualized Family Support Plan/Individualized Education Program (IFSP/IEP) topics – such as procedural safeguards, rights, milestones, eligibility, evaluation, instructional practices, assessments, least restrictive environment, etc.

### **For both schools and families:**

- Collaboration and conflict resolution – how to constructively communicate and team.
- Dual capacity building.

At our February meeting, the committee met with Amy Pastorak who shared the process of monitoring in districts and how to utilize this information to drive some of our recommendations to the Bureau.

## **Recommendations to both Bureaus:**

- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE provide Guidance to LEAs on increasing meaningful family engagement on their Special Education Plans. Some examples can be:
  - The district must actively seek out at least one parent representative who is nonconflicting (i.e., not an employee of the district).
  - LEAs must provide proof of documentation on how they are providing training to their families. For example, provide the agendas during monitoring.

- Gain broader feedback for topics.
- Are the trainings accessible: How are they notified, in different languages, readability of information for grade level, font, color, etc.
- Provide examples of Authentic Family Engagement to LEAs. Examples can be Parent Cafes, F2MAX, Parents as Partners in Professional Development (P3D).
- Ask LEAs to train their staff on Person Centered Planning techniques at IEP meetings.
- Easily accessible to find these plans on district websites.
- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE provide guidance on the use of digital documents and the use of e-signature programs like DocuSign shared with families.
  - Guidance on specifically asking families if they can access them and continue to check in on that process and if it is working.
  - Offer response options – either electronically or by hard copy.
  - Provide guidance on ensuring the family understands how to access the digital documents, like a checklist of question, including giving the family the option to not receive digital documents.
- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE encourage districts and IUs to work with Local Task Forces (LTFs) as collaborative resource hubs in increasing meaningful family engagement. As related to recommendations #1 and #2, examples include:
  - Working with the LTF to identify parent representative for special education plan.
  - Working with LTF to outreach to parents for input on training topics, participation in district trainings, feedback on accessibility of district websites, etc.
  - Working with LTFs to advertise and/or deliver training such as Parent Cafes, F2MAX Foundational Courses, Parents as Partners in Professional Development (P3D), Person Centered Planning.
  - Working with LTFs on ensuring families understand how to access digital documents.

### **Rationale for recommendations**

On Digital Documents like DocuSign - They are not accessible to all families. They go to spam, no read receipts, they disappear after a short time, they do not allow the family to fully fill out the forms, not all families can access these documents for various reasons, such as visual limitations, font, etc.

See feedback from full panel on the barriers and recommendations.

### **Committee Members**

Wendy Kinnear, Co-Chairperson  
 Diane Perry, Co-Chairperson  
 Cynthia Alvarez  
 Naomi Galman  
 Luz Hernandez  
 Yvonne Hughes  
 Dawn Traill

# Inclusive Practices Report

2024–2024 Report, Approved by SEAP on May 29, 2025

## Background

The Inclusive Practices Committee continues to honor SEAP's commitment to ensuring that all students with disabilities are educated alongside their nondisabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate.

The focus of this committee was intentionally expanded this year from the previous focus on Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to include best practices for including students in general education environments and providing access to the general educational curriculum.

Improving the Commonwealth's practice of educating students in the LRE continues to be a foundation of the committee's work. Comparing updated Pennsylvania data to national data yields startling differences in LRE placements for both early childhood and school age programs. While the rate of enrolled children with any disability category who receive the majority of special education and services in a regular early childhood program is 46.9 percent vs. the national rate of 39.8 percent, when examined by disability categories, it is clear that inclusion in this setting is disparate. For example, 0 percent of children with deaf blindness are in a regular program in Pennsylvania vs. 27.5 percent in the nation; 18.2 percent of children with emotional disturbance are in a regular program in Pennsylvania vs. 53.5 percent in the country; and 9.6 percent of children with multiple disabilities are in a regular program in Pennsylvania vs. 23.2 percent in the nation.

School age program data raises similar concerns. While among all disability categories, PA has 62.1 percent vs. 66.0 percent nationally in a regular classroom 80 percent or more of the day, the data shows a more serious lag from national trends for specific disability categories. Comparing Pennsylvania to national data by disability for 80 percent or more of the day in a regular classroom reveals: students with deaf blindness 15.8 percent vs. 27.9 percent nationally; with intellectual disability 8.7 percent vs. 17.9 percent, and with multiple disabilities 3.8 percent vs. 15 percent. In addition, the percent of students in these same categories placed in an entirely separate school or facility is notably higher than the national data: deaf blindness 57.9 percent vs. 22.5 percent; intellectual disability 9.5 percent vs. 5.7 percent; and multiple disabilities 27.0 percent vs. 18.6 percent.

We must continue intentionally improving the number of students meaningfully included with their nondisabled peers across the Commonwealth.

In 2023-2024, SEAP approved Inclusive Practices Committee recommendations:

- Review training resources concerning:
  - How special education service minutes (i.e. the measure of special education service being delivered) and the time spent in a general education classroom (PennData) are to be calculated and reported in an IEP, including: the length of the school day, how to capture related service delivery, how to determine if an educational environment is considered the regular classroom or not, and how the information used to make those calculations is reflected in the rest of the IEP document.
  - The formal guidance on the answering of the two placement questions in Section VII of the IEP, Educational Placement.
  - The role of cyclical monitoring as a mechanism for oversight of these two calculations.
- Develop a Bureau of Special Education (BSE) work plan to implement recommendations to be discussed with the committee.

During the 2024-2025 school year, the Inclusive Practices Committee studied:

- Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) presentations by Dr. Carole Clancy, BSE Director.
- Disability Inclusive Curriculum year 1 data.
- Framework for Access and Belonging (FAB) Toolkit data.
- Drafts of "The Framework for Access and Belonging (FAB) with Supplementary Aids and Services: Guide for School Teams" and "The Framework for Access and Belonging (FAB) with Supplementary Aids and Services: Tip Sheet for Families and Family Organizations."
- PaTTAN professional development on inclusive practices.

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<sup>2</sup>OSEP Part B Data Display Pennsylvania <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/29c1595a-9d3f-4ac1-8872-cb34af4ece4a/resource/00fed084-3786-4fff-b551-d4e09eacc93f/download/pa-datadisplays-2022b.pdf>



## Recommendations to both Bureau(s)

- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE update all materials to reflect the new name of the tool, FAB: Framework for Access and Belonging. This includes updating cyclical monitoring tools and information items distributed by the Department, Bureaus, and PaTTAN.
- Recommend that BSE add language to the Annotated IEP resource document(s) to point IEP teams to the availability of the FAB toolkit with hyperlinks and why the FAB might be useful for teams.
- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE develop additional training sessions for general education teachers, including non-core subject teachers (Art, Music, Physical Education (PE), World Language, Practical Arts, Career Technical Education (CTE), PA-Key, etc.), to better support students with disabilities, especially those with the most support needs in their general education classrooms and with access to their general education curriculum.
- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE develop targeted professional development for superintendents, principals, special education administrators, curriculum directors, IU directors, and school board members on how to facilitate school teams to ensure students with disabilities' right to access the general education environment and curriculum regardless of their support needs.

## Rationale for recommendations

It is important that references to the FAB be consistent across information sources so that all individuals at an IEP table, both district personnel and families, are using common language.

The more places that the FAB toolkit can be mentioned, the better. The Annotated IEP is one additional place that the FAB can be referenced as it relates to a potential resource for IEP teams who are having challenging discussions around placement decisions.

Teachers need additional support and access to professional development to include students with disabilities in their classrooms, especially students with the most support needs.

School leaders need specific training to ensure that students, especially those with the highest support needs, have access to the general education classroom and curriculum.

### Committee Members

Rachel Schlosser, Chairperson

Christopher Keeler

Ken Oakes

Lucille Piggott-Prawl

Ned Whitehead





# Transition Report

2024–2025 Report, Approved by SEAP on May 29, 2025

## Background

The Transition Committee seeks to support improved outcomes for students, centered on crucial transition points, preschool early-intervention, middle school, high school, and adulthood. Services for students with complex support needs are a focus of this report and including lived experience continues to be a crucial area to explore.

In 2023-2024, SEAP approved Transition Committee recommendations that the BSE:

- Create a Career Technical Education (CTE) specialist position at each PATTAN location to support CTE programs and staff, provide technical assistance and guidance.
- Require Intermediate Units (IUs) to include CTE Directors in special education director meetings, IU Superintendents Advisory Committee monthly meeting (SAC) and Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings.
- Collaborate with the Bureau of CTE to develop statewide pre-apprenticeship, mini-certifications, and statewide micro credentials based on individual needs and interest.
- Collaborate with CTE programs, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and other agencies to expand services.
- Begin distributing the PA Planning for the Future Checklist and Student-Led IEP Hub to all students in middle-school grades through transition years.
- Expand Attract, Prepare, and Retain initiatives to help students with disabilities access and develop alternative pathways to enter the education field, including in positions that do not require a teaching certification (paraprofessionals, etc.).

During the 2024-2025 school year, the Transition Committee studied:

- Review of how student-led Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) approaches can be utilized in preschool early intervention.
- Study of transition from middle school years to high school process to identify challenges and successful practices.

- Review of social-emotional supports and materials that support students to have successful transition outcomes.
- Review of Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework.
- Review of RULER model (an evidence-based approach to social and emotional learning).
- Review of Attract, Prepare, Retain initiatives to include recruitment and supports for students with disabilities and other diversities.
- Review of Attract, Prepare, Retain initiatives for educators across transition points.

## Recommendations to Bureau(s):

- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE support families as they are able to actively and confidently participate and possibly lead their child's IEP.
- Recommend that BSE provide guidance, training, information, and support to schools and families regarding transition assessments, testing and evaluations, beginning in middle school years.
- Recommend that BSE establish the transition from middle school years to high school process/experience as the critical entry point in the transition to adulthood process, by implementing the following recommendations.
  - Create guidance to the field on the transition from middle school years to high school process/experience.
  - Establish a statewide middle school years to high school Successful Transition subcommittee of the Secondary Transition Community of Practice with members to include families, students, transition coordinators, teachers, therapists and paraprofessionals of diverse background and at least one SEAP transition committee member.
- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE ensure Social and Emotional Learning curriculum is available and appropriate for students with disabilities.
- Recommend that BSE create and disseminate materials that reframe Social Emotional Learning skills and align with the PA Career Ready skills.

## Detailed Recommendations to Bureau(s):

- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE support families as they are able to actively and confidently participate and possibly lead their child's IEP.
  - Recommend that BEISFS review current materials for families to identify updates, identify material gaps, and new materials needed that support family participation.
  - Review should analyze language, tone and message to ensure nonstigmatizing language, highlight presumed competence for their child, encourage family involvement and leadership.
  - Review should include understanding early intervention, their rights, and service delivery as well as tools to aid in transition to school-age, including the differences between infant-toddler early intervention (EI) and preschool EI, the differences between preschool EI and school-age and how to create a vision for their child.
  - Consider creating new materials that highlight youth with disabilities as positive examples for families.

### Rationale

In regard to Student-led IEPS, preschoolers with disabilities, this age range needs to embrace family-led IEPs. At this age the focus should be on supporting families to be an active part of the IEP team, share their concerns and make decisions that best meet their needs. Providing families with information and tools to help teams learn their child's strengths, needs, and preferences can ensure these young children and their families' perspectives are included. By further providing families information that supports presumed competence, and person-centered practices can set the foundation for future student-led IEPS by these students.

- Recommend that BSE provide guidance, training, information, and support to schools and families regarding transition assessments, testing and evaluations, beginning in middle school years.
  - Guidance should convey the importance of proper transition testing in the middle school years and starting at age 14 and continuing through high school.

- Detail differences between general and transition testing, assessments and evaluations.
- Include information on assessments for post-secondary readiness such as measures of executive function, and social communication. assistive technology and AAC.
- Include information on interest inventories, adaptive behavior scales, vocational aptitude tests, related services, including counseling, and self-determination measures.
- Detail how to put into practice repeated and appropriate assessments provided over the course of the transition years.
- Detail what types of recreation and leisure assessments.
- Investigate methods to assist schools to have sufficient time to conduct appropriate, repeated assessment/testing.
- Provide information, technical assistance and resources needed for the field on how to operationalize these methods.
- Investigate practices that bridge general and special education processes and their team, avoid duplication and overcome barriers to appropriate, coordinated assessments.
- Provide information, technical assistance and resources needed for the field on how to implement these practices.
- Create materials for families and students that are available in multiple languages, culturally competent, accessible. Use "plain language" and be free of jargon.

### Rationale

Effective transition planning includes the use of varied and validated assessments. Transition planning includes making a plan that guides students towards successful adult outcomes. To do that, it requires multiple, research supported tools such as interest inventories, adaptive behavior scales, vocational aptitude tests, and self-determination measures to name a few general examples. Identifying what motivates students as well as specific skill set strengths can be used to then make individualized plans for course selection, job exploration and work-based learning activities and opportunities. Post-secondary readiness may include measures





of executive function, and social communication. The consideration of assistive technology, peer mentoring, or counseling might very well increase the chances of success at a college or technical school where the student is expected to be much more independent. Effective transition assessments and the corresponding IEP planning leads to empowered students and families. Community participation and meaningful employment starts with both formal and informal assessments with results used to determine the appropriate next steps. Often, teachers and educators don't have the necessary time allotted or knowledge it takes to find and complete appropriate testing that will provide useful information to include for the Independent Living, Post-Secondary, and the Career Planning section of the IEP. All too often it is a last-minute teacher interview with the student asking what they would like to do for a career. Often, there is not a coordinated plan between the general education and special education process and teams, creating duplication, gaps and lost opportunities.

- Recommend that BSE establish the transition from middle school years to high school process/experience as the critical entry point in the transition to adulthood process, by implementing the following recommendations.
  - Create guidance to the field on the transition from middle school years to high school process/experience.
    - Define the roles and responsibility of the student, parent/family.
    - Define the roles and responsibility of the middle school staff and the high school staff.
    - Convey the importance of proper transition testing in the middle school years and starting at age 14 and continuing through high school.
    - Detail differences between general and transition testing, assessments and evaluations.
    - Detail how to put into practice repeated and appropriate assessments provided over the course of the transition years.

- Detail how students can explore high school options, career and educational paths prior to the high school transition (i.e., shadowing in school programs, with and without support, attending preview classes, auditing classes, developing their post-secondary goals, exploring different school settings and graduation pathways).
- Detail best practices for all students in preparing for the physical and social transition (visiting new school, meeting teachers, peer tour guides, establishing relationships) and specialized activities (AAC and AT demonstration to school teams, shadowing the high school setting with parasport, practice navigating hallways).
- Detail how to incorporate recreation and leisure skills and activities to foster the development of socialization, skills, time management, money management, self-determined, and other independent living skills.
- Include specifics for students with complex support needs, including health and behavior.
- Emphasize that special education in the high school setting continues to be a service, not a place.
- Consider guidance in multiple formats including Penn Links, Basic Education Circulars (BEC), and Pattan materials such as one-pagers, roles/person grids, videos, and info graphs.
- Ensure materials are available in multiple languages, culturally competent, and accessible.
- Ensure materials use “plain language” and be free of jargon so students, families, and educators can use and understand.
- Disseminate guidance and materials widely, highlight at conferences and share with partners.

- Establish a state-wide middle school years to high school Successful Transition subcommittee of the Secondary Transition Community of Practice with members to include families, students, transition coordinators, teachers, therapists and paraprofessionals of diverse background and at least one SEAP transition committee member.

#### **Initially, the committee should:**

- Review current LEA and IU practices across the Commonwealth that have established successful transitions from middle school years to high school.
- Define “successful transition” from middle school years to high school.
  - Define what successful transition from middle school years to high school looks like in discrete areas (academic, social, behavior supports, belonging, inclusion, extracurricular, family supports, AT/AAC/communication).
  - Define what successful transition from middle school years to high school looks like students with different types of disability, including complex support needs and behavioral challenges.
- Determine what typical and unconventional practices and environments support students with disabilities in middle school years for the transition to high school and that support those students once transitioned to high school. Examples include but are not limited to, not changing classes instead having teachers rotate, students in same homeroom grouping throughout high school years, or grouped based on interests, attending CTE programs on a trial basis, flexible scheduling, shortened days, access to same curriculum but in different setting, grouping students with similar academic, social and/or learning styles.
- Identify obstacles to implementation and potential solutions for these practices.
- Research the reasons some students are placed outside the general education classroom when they transition to high school (i.e., lack of individualized services, need to one-on-one support, not accessible, choice, class size, appropriateness,) to recommend solutions.



### **Ongoing, the committee should:**

- Provide advisement on the transition testing, assessment and evaluations in the middle school years and starting at age 14 and continuing through high school.
- Provide advisement on development of guidance on the transition from middle school years to high school process/ experience.
- Provide advisement on the development of materials on the transition from middle school years to high school process/ experience.
- Advise the Bureau of Special Education to consider incentives, grants and other methods to install promising practices across the Commonwealth.
- Review Career and College Framework.
- Provide expertise to build a bridge between the middle school years and high school years.
- Ensure the needs of students with disabilities and their families who are transitioning from middle school to high school process/ experience are considered across statewide initiatives and planning.

### **Rationale**

The transition from the middle school years to high school period is critical in paving a student path to the future. It is a period where crucial decisions are made that can affect the trajectory of students' education and adult life. It is also a period when transition planning is first introduced to families and students, so the importance of receiving accurate information to making informed decisions, understanding access and supports is necessary. Educators in middle school years often do not have the extensive experience nor expertise in the high school setting to provide guidance, and the coordination of services and responsibilities may be unclear. The academic and social skill expectations from middle school years into high school environments became more demanding on students, while curriculum requirements and scheduling logistics become barriers. By acknowledging the transition from middle school years to high school process/ experience as the critical entry point to transition to adulthood, the strategies recommended can embed this phase within the secondary transition initiatives

across the commonwealth, provide guidance, continuity and investigate improvements that can benefit the entire Commonwealth.

- Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE ensure Social and Emotional Learning curriculum is available and appropriate for students with disabilities.
  - Review social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum utilized in LEAs and ensure they are appropriate for learners with disabilities, including complex support needs. Provide guidance and resources for necessary adaptations and/or identify alternatives for different needs.
  - Provide training to educators to understand their emotional intelligence, relationship skills, developing social emotional languages and strategies.
  - Provide training to educators to understand social emotional intelligence, relationship skills, developing social emotional languages and strategies of their students, how it differs by age, how it can change based on disability.
  - Develop materials for families to understand the concept of SEL, what it looks like in the home and community.
  - Develop a mechanism to share systemic work in SEL between Preschool Early Intervention and school age programming for continuity, shared language and to facilitate a smooth transition to school age.
- Recommend that BSE create and disseminate materials that reframe Social Emotional Learning skills and align with the PA Career Ready skills.
  - Present Career Ready Skills as a transition planning tool.
  - Highlight how these skills are necessary for job, work, and community success.
  - Distribute the Career Ready continuum, connecting it to transition planning.
  - Adapt the PA Career Ready framework for students with disabilities.
  - Provide information on how the Career Ready Skills can be utilized for students with complex support needs, including behavior and health.

- Educate the field that these skills develop over time and can begin to develop in earlier grades. Use the Career Ready continuum or an adaption to provide infographics.
- Provide guidance for schools to consider how students in general education are addressing these skills, provide opportunities, goals and related services (when appropriate) to ensure gaps do not widen due to placement.

### **Rationale**

With regard to transition, Social Emotional Learning curriculum and skills can be better understood in terms of building the career and life skills necessary for student's post-school outcomes to be achieved. The Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills address social and emotional skills students need to "empower themselves to successfully navigate relationships within their family, school, college, and/or career as well as within the global marketplace." Those skills identified are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These are the same types of skills identified by SEL curriculum and that clearly impact students with disabilities as well as their neurotypical peers. Students with disabilities can make use of the resources and materials available for all students to support increasing their skills. However, those tools and new ones can be even more useful

in transition planning by looking at skills gaps, planning transition activities and goals, targeting interventions or supports, environmental changes and providing accommodations. The committee's study also noted that these essential skills often begin to be addressed starting at 14 or later, when the skills can be taught as early as Kindergarten age, a missed opportunity. The SEL curriculum Ruler and CASEL provide examples of how social-emotional skills can be embedded in everyday learning, and that teaching educators about their own emotional intelligence, relationships, developing SE languages and strategies increased teacher effectiveness, and reduced stress. The programs reviewed indicated that teaching educators was an essential component in a project's success. These programs also have data supporting their usage, for example in one county where RULER was utilized, they reported a substantial decrease in major behavior incidences, and increased proficiency in both math and reading.

### **Committee Members**

Cathy Roccia-Meier, Co-Chairperson  
 Cecelia Thompson, Co-Chairperson  
 Gary Decker  
 Lisa Fulton  
 Aaron loos  
 Krista Sloan  
 Robert Savakinus  
 Klarissa Spencer

# Mental Health Report

2024–2025 Report, Approved by SEAP on May 29, 2025

## Background

Since 2008-2009, the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) has focused on the importance of supporting smooth transitions of youth between educational settings and out of district placements – including residential treatment facilities (RTFs) and partial hospitalization placements. Early focus on RTFs emerged from SEAP’s attention to restraint reduction. The Mental Health (MH) Committee made many recommendations to the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) regarding evidence-based practices in schools including dissemination of positive behavior support practices and continuation of Rehabilitation for Empowerment, Natural Supports, Education and Work (RENEW). The MH Committee also recommended that the BSE scale up the three-tiered model of integrated academic and behavioral supports. The BSE reported that these education-specific recommendations were being implemented.

In 2023-2024, SEAP approved MH Committee recommendations:

- Assist the MH Committee to identify resources in relation to mental wellness and students with disabilities that are available.
- Develop a repository of resources that are accessible in relation to mental health and disabilities.
- Identify the responsibility for materials to be modified to meet the unique needs of the students with disabilities.

During the 2024-2025 advisory year, the MH Committee studied:

- Suicide Prevention and Individuals with Disabilities presentation by Perri Rosen, PhD, NCSP, Consulting Psychologist, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Bureau of Children’s Behavioral Health Services,
- Youth Engagement Specialists (YES) input on mental health depository.

## Recommendations to Bureau(s)

Recommend that both BEISFS and BSE work with the MH Committee on review and implementation of prior SEAP recommendations:

- Collaborate with key partners (including PaTTAN/ EITA and PDE/BSE/BEISFS) to identify avenues to distribute model reentry procedures/protocols once re-entry plan protocol documents are finalized and identify methods for dissemination to the field. (2021-2022 Recommendation)
  - Update on the development of a re-integration plan protocol for school-age students reentering school from any outside placement, including mental health facilities.
  - Work with members of the MH committee on input and feedback in the future development with emphasis on supports for students with disabilities.
  - Collaborate with Office for Safe Schools.
- Assist the MH Committee to identify early intervention and school age resources in relation to mental wellness and students with disabilities that are available. (2023-2024 Recommendation)
  - Develop a repository of resources that are accessible in relation to mental health and disabilities.
  - Identify the responsibility for materials to be modified to meet the unique needs of the students with disabilities.

## Rationale for Recommendations

To build a toolkit for students with disabilities that have an increased risk for mental health needs and risk of suicide.

## Committee Members

Gina Scala, Chairperson  
Amy Fisher  
Michele Jennings  
Joseph Kleppick  
Sarah Ronosky  
Perri Rosen



# Crisis and Restraint Prevention Report

2024–2025 Report, Approved by SEAP on May 29, 2025

## Background

For over a decade, it has been a priority of the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) to promote positive crisis intervention and strategies to prevent and/or eliminate the use of restraint of children in educational settings. Historically, SEAP recommendations have included fidelity of training and implementation of evidence-based Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) by both the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports (BEISFS) and the Bureau of Special Education (BSE). SEAP has actively recommended improvements to the collection and use of meaningful data in the Restraint Information System of Collection (RISC).

Evidence based practices have shown that restraints of a child in school can be devastating. Pennsylvania has embraced the best practice of School Wide Positive Behavior Support that has greatly reduced the need for such behavior shaping. Further, Pennsylvania has become a leader in the collection of restraint data and its use in identifying trends. Schools are then able to make decisions on how to develop better Positive Behavior Support Plans (PBSPs) leading to the reduction of restraints. Moreover, parents are receiving timely information about the use of restraint on their children in the school setting, allowing for better home-school communication and parent participation in the behavior support provided in school. This reporting to parents is especially vital when the restraint is used on a nonverbal child who has limited communication means as it lets their families know what happened in school.



In 2023-2024, SEAP approved Crisis and Restraint Prevention Committee recommendations:

- Based on the updated guidance from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) July 2023, recommend that BSE evaluate the possible need to update the last Basic Education Circular (BEC) on use of restraints for students with disabilities to align with current laws and best practices. (<https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/PACode/Pages/UseofRestraints.aspx>)
- Recommend that BSE provide guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), under child find and IDEA, for referral of any students, who have had numerous restraints, for an evaluation to see if they qualify for IDEA eligibility.
- Recommend that both bureaus (BSE and BEISFS) provide guidance to schools consistent with best practice, on alternative restraint methods (like Ukeru\*).
- Recommend that BSE continue to provide Safe and Supportive Schools Conference annually.

During the 2024-2025 advisory year, the Crisis and Restraint Prevention Committee studied:

- BSE draft family friendly one-pagers to explain the restraint process.
- Training materials on PBIS, data on implementation and any associated data on its effect on crisis, restraint, and discipline.
- Restraint Information System of Collection (RISC) Annual Report and revisions.
- Emotional Support Boot Camp.

### **Recommendations to Both Bureaus (BEISFS and BSE)**

- Recommend that both bureaus (BSE and BEISFS) require or issue guidance on the use of reliable data collection systems (based on unique Pennsylvania Information Management System Identification (PIMS ID)) based on currently collected PBIS data (such as discipline referrals, restraints, and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) before and after implementation of PBIS, etc.). While there is data on PBIS from existing initiatives, the initiatives and data are not specific to, or necessarily inclusive of, the unique needs of students with disabilities.

- Recommend that both bureaus (BSE and BEISFS) provide access to local “boot camps” or trainings for school leaders and staff to address problematic issues identified, such as:
  - Ensuring expectations are culturally competent and appropriate for students with disabilities
- Experienced by students with disabilities as positive,
- Effectively addressing the needs of students with the most disciplinary referrals or behavioral incidents.
- Examining how personnel can alter the environment to better meet the needs of individual students.
- Recommend that both bureaus (BSE and BEISFS) issue guidance on the facilitation of more family and where appropriate, student involvement, in the development of a PBIS.

### **Rationale for Recommendations**

- Based on information provided to this committee, the committee identified the following concerns:
  - Specialized classrooms are not always included in school-wide systems.
  - Not all schools have the background knowledge and understanding of PBIS prior to implementing their school-wide system, especially how to individualize the school-wide expectations for students with disabilities.
  - Data is not currently available by PIMS ID, there isn't Pennsylvania specific evidence of PBIS's effectiveness for students with disabilities and the reduction of behavioral incidents, episodes of restraint, and its effect on educational placement.
- Not all schools express an understanding of the value in including student and family engagement in their PBIS planning. It's important that PBIS is being done “with” the student and family rather than “to” them. This provides an opportunity for schools and families to work together to reduce behaviors and crisis situations.

### **Committee Members**

Gretchen Daugherty, Co-Chairperson  
TaWanda Jackson, Co-Chairperson  
Heidi Allen  
Sharon Janosik  
Jennifer McEvoy  
Edward Titterton



# Posting of State Complaints Report

## 2024–2025 Report, Approved by SEAP on April 23, 2025

### Background

In September 2023, SEAP established an Ad Hoc Committee to explore whether to advise the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to publicly post redacted state complaints to the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) and the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports (BEISFS) websites. SEAP charged the Ad Hoc Committee to review other state practices, identify pros and cons of public posting, explore the issue with Bureau staff, and identify possible recommendations.

On February 28, 2024, the Ad Hoc Committee presented preliminary findings and recommendations to SEAP. During that meeting, Lisa Parker, BEISFS Director, said that recent data for early intervention was less than ten complaints statewide and that it would be difficult to protect confidentiality of publicly posted complaints. For early intervention, many issues are resolved by Dr. Ellen Castagneto, Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Early Intervention Advisor, before escalating to formal complaints. Ms. Parker said that a summary report might be possible and invited SEAP input on recommendations. Ms. Parker said that OCDEL was developing a family-friendly guide on how to file state complaints. Ms. Parker said that she would bring the draft guide to SEAP for review.

In April 2024, the SEAP panel approved the recommendations from the Committee to the BSE and the BEISFS to annually develop and share with SEAP Year End Report(s) of State Complaint Data. The panel approved a list of recommended reporting elements for the BSE and charged the Ad Hoc Committee to further investigate reporting elements for BEISFS.

The Ad Hoc committee met on January 8, 2025, with Emily Hackleman, Division Chief for the BEISFS. The committee shared some background information about the committee's work with Ms. Hackleman.

Ms. Hackleman shared a handout entitled "Problem Solving in Early Intervention" with the committee. This handout provides families with information about who to contact at the BEISFS, and the Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) when they have concerns about early intervention programs and services.

Ms. Hackleman shared that all calls are categorized by Topics or Themes and the Bureau can act on this data as they track it.

She shared how and what data the Bureau needs to provide to the Federal Government.

She explained a Determination Process where BEISFS works with the providers on resolving what the provider is doing to cause the families to call BEISFS in the first place, essentially helping providers improve their services to resolve issues systematically so that families don't have to informally or formally file complaints.

The Ad Hoc Committee met again on January 21, 2025, to review the information shared and develop recommendations for the whole SEAP.

The committee's discussion involved how knowing areas of parent concerns is helpful for the panel to address unmet needs and systemic issues. The committee then discussed the usefulness of separating out the information by regions in the state like East, Central and West. It would be beneficial to receive a summary of the informal phone calls that are resolved, and the formal topics of complaints that are filed, with their outcomes, in an annual report. The committee recognized that Bureau Advisors' roles are not consistent across the state when assisting families, which brought up a recommendation of consistent training for advisors across the state for both Bureaus.

The ODR annual report includes data on mediation and due process complaints between the ages 3-22 and the committee discussed if the state complaint process should be the same 3-22.

Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides federal funding to states to educate children with disabilities ages 3-21, not just school age.

OCDEL is a dual oversight of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Education (PDE).

The process for State Complaints should be a seamless process for families. Families receive services from early intervention for only 1 to 3 years, some just finding out their child has a disability and navigating that information. For families to have to learn two different processes to file a state complaint is not seamless and adds an additional burden on families.

The committee formulated their recommendations based on having a seamless process for families to provide consistent information on dispute processes to families across the state and collect consistent data across 3-21.



## Recommendations to Bureau(s):

- Recommend that the BSE and BEISFS annually develop and share with SEAP a Year End Report of State Complaint Data which includes informal and formal complaint themes and outcomes disaggregated by Region (West, Central, East).
- Recommend that there is a seamless and consistent process for families in filing state complaints for children 3-21 which includes:
  - An easily accessible form used by both departments.
  - A family friendly handout explaining the process with consistent labeling of informal complaints and contact information for questions.
- Recommend that BSE and BEISFS develop and ensure training for all Bureau Special Education Advisors to establish consistent information, supports and practices regarding informal complaints across the state.
- Across BEISFS and BSE, develop unified language to label informal complaints.

## Rationale for Recommendations

- Help to identify systemic issues across the state, which would be beneficial to the panel.
- Help families to see what a state complaint is; what corrective actions look like to see benefits of filing state complaints instead of due process.
- Use of state complaints might decrease the number of due process claims filed.

## Ad Hoc Committee Members

Diane Perry, Chairperson  
Heidi Allen  
Gretchen Humble  
Rachel Schlosser  
Sharon Janosik  
Yvonne Hughes  
Maria Edelberg  
Cathy Roccia-Meier  
Cecelia Thompson  
Gina Scala



# 2024-2025 Special Education Advisory Panel Members – Membership Role and Term

SEAP is a requirement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Public Law 105-17. The law outlines the requirements for panel members and stipulates the various agencies and programs they are to represent. IDEA also requires that panel membership be comprised of more than 50 percent individuals with disabilities or parents of students with disabilities. The members serve a three-year term. The following is a list of the 2024-2025 members, their position, requirement of IDEA, and terms. The 2024-2025 panel made the recommendations that are summarized in this report.

Member Name	Requirement of IDEA	Term
Heidi Allen	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Cynthia Alvarez	Representative of Office of Child Development and Early Learning	2022-2025
Lori Bauerline	Representative of Office of Child Development and Early Learning	2025-2028
Kimberley Brown-Flint	Representative of approved private schools and public charter schools	2022-2025
Gary Decker	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2023-2026
Maria Edelberg	Representative of administrators of programs for students with disabilities	2021-2024
Amy Fisher	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Lisa Fulton	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Naomi Galman	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Luz Hernandez	Representative of parent center (HUNE)	2022-2025
Yvonne Hughes	Individual with a disability	2023-2026
Gretchen Humble	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Aaron loos	Individual with a disability	2024-2027
TaWanda Jackson	Representative of Department of Human Services, Office of Developmental Programs	2022-2025
Sharon Janosik	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Michele Jennings	Representative of state juvenile and adult corrections agencies	2022-2025
Christopher Keeler	Representative of administrators of programs for students with disabilities	2022-2025
Wendy Kinnear	State official responsible for McKinney Vento Homeless Student activities	2022-2025
Joseph Kleppick	Individual with a disability	2023-2026
Jennifer McEvoy	Representative of approved private schools	2025-2028
Ken Oakes	Individual with a disability	2023-2026
Diane Perry	Representative of parent center (PEAL)	2024-2027
Judith Petruzzi	Representative of teachers	2025-2028
Lucille Piggott-Prawl	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Cathy Roccia-Meier	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Sarah Ronosky	Representative of charter school administrators of programs for students with disabilities	2023-2025
Perri Rosen	Representative of Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services	2023-2026
Kaitlin Salvati	Representative of Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	2022-2025
Robert Savakinus	Representative of school age transition	2023-2026
Gina Scala	Representative of Higher Education	2022-2025
Rachel Schlosser	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Krista Sloan	Representative of Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	2024-2027
Klarissa Spencer	Representative of Office of Early Childhood	2023-2026
Cecelia Thompson	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025
Edward Titterton	Individual with a disability	2022-2025
Dawn Traill	Representative of Department of Human Services, Office of Family, Children and Youth	2022-2025
Ned Whitehead	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2022-2025

# 2025-2026 Special Education Advisory Panel

## Members – Membership Role and Term

SEAP is a requirement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Public Law 105-17. The law outlines the requirements for panel members and stipulates the various agencies and programs they are to represent. IDEA also requires that panel membership be comprised of more than 50 percent individuals with disabilities or parents of students with disabilities. The members serve a three-year term. The following is a list of the 2025-2026 members, their position, requirement of IDEA, and terms. The 2024-2025 panel made the recommendations that are summarized in this report.

Member Name	Requirement of IDEA	Term
Heidi Allen	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2025-2028
Lori Bauerline	Representative of Office of Child Development and Early Learning	2025-2028
Maria Edelberg	Representative of administrators of programs for students with disabilities	2024-2027
Amy Fisher	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2025-2028
Lisa Fulton	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2025-2028
Naomi Galman	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2025-2028
Luz Hernandez	Representative of parent center (HUNE)	2025-2028
Yvonne Hughes	Individual with a disability	2023-2026
Gretchen Humble	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2025-2028
Aaron loos	Individual with a disability	2024-2027
TaWanda Jackson	Representative of Department of Human Services, Office of Developmental Programs	2025-2028
Sharon Janosik	Individual with a disability	2025-2028
Michele Jennings	Representative of state juvenile and adult corrections agencies	2025-2028
Christopher Keeler	Representative of Administrators of Programs for Students with Disabilities	2025-2028
Wendy Kinnear	State official responsible for McKinney Vento homeless student activities	2025-2028
Joseph Kleppick	Individual with a disability	2023-2026
Jennifer McEvoy	Representative of approved private schools	2025-2028
Ken Oakes	Individual with a disability	2023-2026
Diane Perry	Representative of parent center (PEAL)	2024-2027
Judith Petruzzi	Representative of teachers	2025-2028
Lucille Piggott-Prawl	Individual with a disability	2022-2025
Cathy Roccia-Meier	Individual with a disability	2023-2025
Sarah Ronosky	Representative of charter school administrators of programs for students with disabilities	2025-2028
Perri Rosen	Representative of Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services	2023-2026
Robert Savakinus	Representative of school age transition	2023-2026
Gina Scala	Representative of higher education	2025-2028
Rachel Schlosser	Parent of child with disabilities ages birth through 26	2025-2028
Krista Sloan	Representative of Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	2024-2027
Cecelia Thompson	Individual with a disability	2025-2028
Edward Titterton	Individual with a disability	2025-2028
Dawn Traill	Representative of Department of Human Services, Office of Family, Children and Youth	2025-2028



# Federal Regulations Regarding State Special Education Advisory Panels

## Sec. 300.167 State advisory panel.

The State must establish and maintain 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.

## Sec. 300.168 Membership.

(a) General. The advisory panel must 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—

- (1) Parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26);
- (2) Individuals with disabilities;
- (3) Teachers;
- (4) Representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel;
- (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.*);
- (6) Administrators of programs for children with disabilities;
- (7) Representatives of other State agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities;
- (8) Representatives of private schools and public charter schools;

- (9) Not less than one representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities;
- (10) Representatives from the State child welfare agency responsible for foster care; and
- (11) Representatives from the State juvenile and adult corrections agencies.

A special rule in Sec. 300.168 requires that the majority of the members of the panel must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26).

## Sec. 300.169 Advisory panel functions.

(a) General. The State advisory panel must—

- a. Advise the State Education Agency (SEA) of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;
- b. Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities;
- c. Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under Section 618 of the Act;
- d. Advise the SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Act; and
- e. Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

# Relevant Acronyms

ADA	Americans With Disabilities Act	NASDSE	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
APR	Annual Performance Report	NCLB	No Child Left Behind, an Educational Act of Congress
APS	Approved Private School	OCDEL	Office of Child Development and Early Learning
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder	ODR	Office for Dispute Resolution
ATF	Autism Task Force	OMHSAS	Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, DPW
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress, a measurement of improvement in NCLB	OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. government office
BEC	Basic Education Circular	OVR	Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
BEISFS	Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports	PASA	Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment
BHT	Behavioral Health Technician	PaTTAN	Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network
BSE	Bureau of Special Education	PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children	PDE	Pennsylvania Department of Education, "the Department"
DMS	Differentiated Monitoring and Support	PSEA	Pennsylvania State Education Association
DPW	Department of Public Welfare	PSSA	Pennsylvania System of School Assessment
EI	Early Intervention, ages 3 to 5	RBT	Registered Behavior Technician
EITA	Early Intervention Technical Assistance	SAP	Student Assistance Programs
EL	English Learners, also ESL, English as a Second Language	SEAP	Special Education Advisory Panel, "the Panel"
FAPE	Free and Appropriate Public Education	SPP	State Performance Plan
GIEP	Gifted Individualized Education Plan	SSIP	State Systemic Improvement Plan
HOUSSE	Highly Objective Uniformed State Standard of Evaluation	SWPBIS	School Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act reauthorized by Congress	TSS	Therapeutic Support Staff
IEP	Individualized Education Program	USDE	United States Department of Education
IU	Intermediate Unit, designed to provide specialized services to districts		
LEA	Local Educational Agency, usually the school district		
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment, best educational placement for a student		

## For more information:

[Pennsylvania Special Education Advisory Panel Flyer](#)

SEAP Meeting Schedule and Public Attendance: <https://tinyurl.com/SEAPinPA>



## Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Josh Shapiro, Governor



Pennsylvania  
Department of Education

