



Minutes

January 13, 2020

10 a.m.

Tennessee School for the Blind

115 Stewarts Ferry Pk.

Nashville, TN 37214

Council Members in Attendance

Dawn Fry, Chair
Joey Ellis, Vice Chair
Amy Allen
Angela Jackson
Catherine Knowles
Chantal Hess-Taylor
David Craig
Shannon Taylor
Jennifer Escue
Mary Meador
Melvin Jackson
Stephanie Ortego
Mark Liverman

Council Members Not in Attendance

Brian Brown
Darlene Walden

Department Employees in Attendance

Theresa Nicholls, Assistant Commissioner
Joanna Bivins
Kate Martin
Joann Runion
Scott Indermuehle
Rachel Suppé
Susan Usery
Zachary Stone
Nancy Williams
Anika Chambers
Crystal McCarver
Michael Holman
Allison Davey

Visitors in Attendance

Kim Kredich
Erin Richardson

Objective

Provide policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in Tennessee.

Welcome/Introductions

Dawn Fry, Chair

- A brief introduction was made for the first Advisory Council meeting of 2020. Guests, council members, and TDOE employees were thanked for their attendance.

Approval of Current Agenda (Guiding Principle Seven)

Dawn Fry, Chair

See AC website ([here](#)) for agenda

- **Action Item**
Dawn advised the present council members to review the January 13, 2020 agenda.
- **Final Action Taken**
The Council reviewed the agenda and voted to approve.

Approval of October 21 Meeting Minutes (Guiding Principle Seven)

Dawn Fry, Chair

See AC website ([here](#)) for October minutes

- **Action Item**
Dawn advised the present council member to review the October 21, 2019 minutes.
- **Final Action Taken**
The council reviewed the minutes and voted to approve.

Administrative Complaint Process

Scott Indermuehle, Senior Special Education Complaints Investigator

- Scott presented information regarding the administrative complaint process and the situations when they might be necessary.
- Anyone, regardless of what state they live in, may file an administrative complaint.
- An administrative complaint may be filed in a child specific matter or for systemic issues.
- A complaint must be filed within one calendar year of an alleged violation.
- The state has 60 days to determine whether there was a finding or not.
 - In rare circumstances, the law may make provisions for more time beyond the 60 day limit.
- If a violation is identified, a Corrective Action Plan is required.
 - The investigators follow up after Corrective Action Plans are put in place to ensure that the conditions set forth in the plan are being met.

Local Determinations Update

Zac Stone, Director of IDEA Data Services

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that states make an annual determinations of performance for all districts.

- Out of a total 146 districts in Tennessee, there are 66 that are currently in the 'Meets Requirements' determination, 54 in the 'Needs Assistance' determination, and 26 in the 'Needs Intervention' determination.
- There are three different categories that the state looks at when reporting back to districts: results, compliance, and other elements.
- Currently, participation in the alternate diploma programs is reported as a dropout.

IEA Program Overview

Robert Lundin, Assistant Commissioner of School Models and Programs

- Robert Lundin gave a brief introduction of himself and his team and provided the council with an overview of the work that the School Models and Programs division is undertaking in regard to the IEA program.
- There are currently 40,000 IEA eligible families in Tennessee.
- Robert has asked that anyone with suggestions, concerns, or observations regarding the program contact him at (615) 253-1767.
- More information regarding the IEA program can be found at www.tn.gov/education/iea
- Students enrolled in the program must either attend a private school or be homeschooled.
- Question: Why weren't students with behavioral or mental health diagnoses included in this population?
 - Answer: There are specific qualifications in the current wording of the program which define the scope of eligible participants. It is possible that this scope could be expanded to meet the needs of more students, should the need for such expansion prove evident and be written into policy.
- Question: Are there efforts in place to consider students with behavioral or mental health diagnoses for this program?
 - Answer: Yes, there are.

Public Comments (Guiding Principle Seven)

- Kim Kredich, a volunteer advocate in Knox County and parent of a child with a disability, spoke about advocating for gifted students.
- She noted that there is a disparity between counties in the amount of students identified as being gifted.
- She stated that Knox County is not providing adequate services for gifted students or the identification of those students.
- Kim Kredich also made a comment, stating that the council and the department should re-evaluate the state's funding mechanisms, as she feels these are inadequate for meeting student needs.

Strategic Plan Update

Theresa Nicholls, Assistant Commissioner of Special Populations

- An emphasis has been placed on post-secondary success for Tennessee students.

- The department is planning on creating regional hubs that would house expertise needed for districts to be able to support students with disabilities.
- The department is working to improve grant funding by aligning to needs identified through district planning processes.
- The council members agreed that the answers districts provided in the technical assistance surveys matched the issues they encounter when working in the field.

SPDG 3.0 Feedback

Kate Martin, Senior Director of Special Education

- The original grant from OSEP ends in June of 2020, but the state will be continuing the work.
- SPDG 3.0 will encompass K-12 and early childhood programs.
- The department will be aiding chosen districts in April by helping them make decisions to ensure the effectiveness of their participation in this program.
- Question: Is this aimed at new districts or previous SPDG participants?
 - Answer: This is for new districts that have not previously participated.
- Question: Are trainers available between scheduled trainings to address situational issues that may arise?
 - Answer: More supports are being added to address such issues. It is also suggested that districts choose trainers that will be easily available so that they can redeliver content to others at short notice.

Restraint and Isolation Update

Joanna Bivins, Director of School Psychology and Behavior Services

- Members of the department meet every other month to review restraint and isolation data.
- A report containing restraint and isolation data within the state is compiled yearly.
- The department has been reviewing and modifying its restraint and isolation reporting form in hopes of gaining more accurate data.

Special Education Support Plan

Crystal McCarver, Senior Director of Regional Engagement

- It is the division's goal to work with other divisions within the department for purposes of planning, monitoring, and technical assistance.
- Districts will be offered help with technical assistance and monitoring in hopes that it will aid in prioritizing needs and improving overall results for students with disabilities.
- According to recent survey results, districts are satisfied with the technical assistance the department has offered.

New Business/Additional Items (Guiding Principle Seven)

Dawn Fry, Chair

- No new business or additional items were suggested by the council.

Call for Future Meeting Topics (Guiding Principle Seven)

Dawn Fry, Chair

- It was suggested that the department follow up on the public comment and present information about child-find procedures.
- Information about progress regarding the IEA program was requested.

Closing Remarks/Adjourn (Guiding Principle Seven)

Dawn Fry, Chair

- Dawn thanked everyone for their input and attendance and adjourned the meeting.