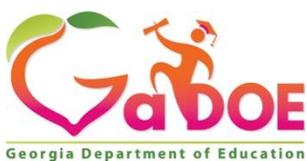


Georgia Special Education State Advisory Panel (SAP)

FY20 Annual Performance Report

Juree Hall, Chair

Ganesh Nayak, Co-Chair



July 1, 2020



Introduction

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that each state establish and maintain a Special Education State Advisory Panel (SAP) to advise the State Director for Special Education regarding the unmet needs of the state. Parents, individuals with disabilities, educators, administrators as well as representatives from public and private agencies comprise SAP.

The SAP advises the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) Division for Special Education Services and Supports on the unmet needs related to the education of children with disabilities within the state and provides feedback on any rules or regulations proposed by GaDOE regarding special education. The SAP is a critical partner in the development of Georgia's State Performance Plan (SPP) and the Annual Performance Report (APR). The SAP also advises the State Director on improvement activities that need to be developed and implemented to improve functional outcomes and improved results for students with disabilities. Each year, members review data on the improvement activities included in the SPP and the APR and make suggestions for updates to the appropriate activities and targets.

SAP Membership

The SAP maintained the regulatory requirement of a minimum of 51 percent of the members being parents of students with disabilities and/or individuals with disabilities. The membership included thirty-seven parents of students with disabilities, two individuals with disabilities, and representatives from state and protection advocacy agencies. Members represented diverse knowledge, background, and opinions and brought their own real-life personal and professional experiences to the SAP.

Agency Representatives included:

- Georgia Department of Education, Charter Schools
- Georgia Department of Education, Special Education
- Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
- Georgia Department of Corrections
- Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
- Georgia Department of Family and Children Services
- Georgia Babies Can't Wait, Department of Public Health
- Institute of Higher Education, Special Education
- Georgia Advocacy Office
- Georgia Network for Education and Therapeutic Supports (GNETS)
- Georgia Superintendents' Association (GSSA)
- Georgia Parent and Teacher Association (PTA)
- Parent to Parent of Georgia (Parent Training and Information Center)
- Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education (GCASE)
- McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

SAP Overview

The SAP met four times this year. The August, November, and January meetings were face-to-face and held in Macon, Georgia. The SAP held its final meeting virtually. Presentations were made to the committee by members of the GaDOE staff as well as other individuals, agencies, and organizations.

Topics included:

- Georgia's System of Continuous Improvement
- Senate Bill 48 (Georgia's Dyslexia Bill)
- Georgia's Teacher Shortage (Council for Exceptional Children)
- Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Agency (GVRA)
- State Identified Alternate Diploma Check-in
- Family Engagement and Dispute Resolution data and trends
- Compliance Indicators
- Georgia State Systemic Improvement Plan
- Special Education Services for Students in Foster Care -Georgia Department of Family and Children Services
- Special Education Services for Incarcerated Youth - Georgia Department of Corrections –
- CARES Act, ED Report to Congress Recommended Waiver Authority

SAP Public Comments

The SAP received a total of seventy-four public comments. Public comments were heard at each meeting held during August, November, and January by allowing members the opportunity to listen to constituents around the state.

Primarily, public comments received were related to:

- Need for better understanding of Senate Bill 48 (Georgia's Dyslexia Bill)
- Need more money, personnel, and training related to dyslexia
- Need for more qualified teachers for special education
- Need for defined education guidelines for students with disabilities (SWD)'s related to the pandemic

A sampling of public comments is listed below.

Forsyth County

- Provided public comment via phone conference:
GaDOE should alter the policies to address the needs of students and parents, not the school districts. Schools are using inappropriate compulsory attendance reports to require students to return to school even without access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). There is a trend of denial of FAPE cases.

Forsyth County

- Provided public comment via a written statement:
GaDOE does not have robust laws around dyslexia and teacher training like other states. The response to intervention process must include early intervention. School is like running a race. If you fall behind, it will be harder to catch up, and more at risk of dropping out.

Cobb County

- Provided public comment via a written statement:
Progress monitoring (dyslexia) is a critical component of this work, and GaDOE should appropriately address it in the handbook. We must consider objective data, subjective data, norm-referenced, and criterion-referenced data. The special education rule requires the progress monitoring data to be presented at the same intervals for the report card-at a minimum.

Fayette County

- Provided public comment via a written statement:
Georgia is failing the students-especially students with dyslexia.

Paulding County

- Provided public comment via a written statement:
Special education services are inadequate and poorly implemented. Teachers can improve services for students with disabilities by focusing on methods. We need more training on laws and implementation. Leadership must provide guidance. Local schools should comply with this guidance.

SAP Committees

Five standing committees met regularly in conjunction with each quarterly meeting of the full panel. SAP Committees included the following list:

- Dispute Resolution
- Family Engagement
- Membership
- Public Comment
- Operating Procedures

Seven standing sub-committees met as needed in conjunction with each quarterly meeting of the full panel and committees.

Sub-committees included the following list:

- Best Practices
- Family Engagement
- Inter-Agency Collaboration
- Flexibility and Accountability
- Dispute Resolution
- Public Comment
- Marketing

SAP Recommendations

Having used a consensus decision-making model, the SAP made the following recommendations.

1. GaDOE should provide infrastructure and supports for leaders, teachers, and families to meet all the needs of each student.
2. GaDOE should create, improve, and maintain policy and procedures to support a productive school climate that can result in increased quality of life and workforce ready future for students with disabilities.
3. GaDOE should develop and implement best practices for free appropriate public education (FAPE) in a COVID/pandemic climate.
4. GaDOE should continue to address the needs of students with dyslexia and other areas of reading difficulty.



205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE
Atlanta, GA 30334
www.gadoe.org



@georgiadeptofed

Richard Woods, State School Superintendent
Educating Georgia's Future