

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
**STATE ADVISORY  
PANEL ON SPECIAL  
EDUCATION**



ANNUAL REPORT  
**2015-16**

Findings, Analysis and Recommendations:  
A Review of Education Programs and  
Services for Students with Disabilities in  
the District of Columbia



**SUBMITTED TO:**

**The Honorable Muriel Bowser, Mayor**

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**The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chair**

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## STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR - NEW SAPSE DIRECTIONS FOR 2015-2016

Dear Mayor Bowser, Councilmember Mendelson, Deputy Mayor of Education Niles, State Superintendent of Education Kang, and State Board of Education President Jacobson:

The State Advisory Panel on Special Education (SAPSE) is pleased to deliver its 2015-2016 Annual Report. The SAPSE serves as an advisory body to the Mayor and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) (the District's State Education Agency (SEA); and other related education agencies.

The SAPSE's primary responsibility is to advise regarding policies and best practices that help increase accountability for academic success for students with disabilities. Indeed, the active collaboration with OSSE and its Division of Elementary, Secondary and Specialized Education (ESSE) is stronger than ever and focused on key priority areas related to ensuring compliance and improving outcomes for students with disabilities. The SAPSE also provides policy guidance and recommendations regarding procedures to coordinate education and related services for students with disabilities, using its members' personal expertise and experiences as present and past consumers or providers of education and related services. A summary of our activities, findings and recommendations are included in this report.

In order to ensure efficiency of efforts, the Panel worked closely with OSSE on key initiatives identified as priority by OSSE and recognized by the SAPSE as critical issues from the perspective of parents of children in need of or receiving specialized education or services. As a result, the SAPSE established four subcommittees and developed priority action plans focusing on four key areas: special education policies and regulations, graduation and transitions, inclusion and training, and community outreach and parent engagement. After surveying the complex special education landscape in the District of Columbia and analyzing the work of SAPSE subcommittees, presentations from OSSE, DCPS and Public Charter Schools, and community and stakeholder outreach and input; the SAPSE has made recommendations for each priority area, with an emphasis on graduation and transition services; and on inclusion best practices.

As there were challenges in identifying, vetting and swearing in all the required members until further into 2016 fiscal year, the Panel was not fully staffed until April 2016, (the last quarter in the school year). While this delay created certain challenges to progressing the ambitious agenda outlined by the SAPSE at the beginning of the fiscal year, it did not diminish the Panel's commitment to serve students with educational challenges and their families. SAPSE and OSSE continue to work with the Mayors Office of Talent and Appointments (MOTA) to ensure meaningful participation in the SAPSE.

Although much remains to be done with regard to special education in the District of Columbia (and we address these areas in this report), we agree with the June 30, 2015 Determination letter from the U.S. Department of Education, which finds that substantial progress has indeed been made. We look forward to collaborating with OSSE and other education stakeholders to continue to address salient issues for students with disabilities, such as training for teachers and parents and the engagement of parents and community as a whole.

As Chairperson, I would like to commend OSSE for its administrative support, as well as its ongoing engagement and technical inputs to the SAPSE. I would especially like to thank Amy Maisterra, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary and Secondary Education, as well as our OSSE staff liaison, Sheryl Hamilton, Director of Community Learning and School Support, and Adrienne Rodriguez, Education Program Specialist. We are grateful for the engagement and advice of Yair Inspektor, Policy Advisor to the DC Deputy Mayor for Education. This report also makes commendations to OSSE for providing training opportunities to local education agencies (LEAs) through its LEA Institute and for the innovative strategies and detailed improvement activities included in the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP).

The growth in technical understanding and leadership of SAPSE members became evident as the year progressed. The learning curve was steep as the Panel reviewed, analyzed and discussed enormous amounts of education information and data and attended numerous briefings and community meetings. The 2015-2016 SAPSE also convened monthly meetings (open to the community), instead of the four meetings as required by law, in an effort to strengthen the capacity of the SAPSE and to better inform our recommendations to OSSE and other stakeholders. As a result, this year was very productive. The SAPSE could not be successful without the contributions and engagement of all panel members and especially the subcommittee leadership: Aaron McCormick (Vice Chair), Tamera Brown (Secretary), Julie Camerata (Policy Subcommittee Chair), Vivian Guerra (Inclusion Subcommittee Chair), Molly Whalen (Graduation Subcommittee Chair), Andrew Reese, Kenneth Taylor, Shawn Ullman, Nicole Lee-Mwandha, Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas, Tracy Dove, Zalika Brown (Outreach Subcommittee Chair), Brianna Copley, and Luis Morales. We also recognize value and wish to acknowledge our newest panel members Courtney Hall, Amy Williamson Barrios, and James Brooks. Each panelist went beyond the call of duty to ensure that the Panel actively focused on issues most relevant to students with disabilities.

It is my pleasure to serve as Chair of this dynamic, talented and compassionate group appointed by the Mayor. We accomplished much this year, and with the foundation laid and the partnerships forged, next year promises to be even better.

Respectfully Submitted,



Deon Woods Bell, Chair,  
District of Columbia State Advisory Panel on Special Education

## STATEMENT FROM THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION-DR. AMY MAISTERRA

June 29, 2016

Greetings Members of the State Special Advisory Panel for Special Education, on behalf of the District of Columbia (District) Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), I want to thank you for your commitment and hard work in school year 2015-2016.

As parents and practioners who are concerned with the education of children and youth with disabilities, the unique perspective you bring to our discussions has been a valuable part of OSSE's efforts to develop effective strategies to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Your dedication is exemplified by the many hours you spend working with each other and with our team while juggling professional and family commitments.

This year, with input from the Panel, OSSE continued to refine plans for the District's State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), a comprehensive multi-year plan required of all states under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to improve results for children with disabilities in the District of Columbia—a plan that drives the work to ensure that students with disabilities graduate equipped with the skills to succeed in life. Your questions and recommendations continue to help us think through additional mechanisms to accelerate improvement and prioritize our work moving forward.

As we prepare for school year 2016-2017, we look forward to continuing our partnership with the SAP as we prioritize our efforts to improve graduation rates and help schools improve outcomes for children. Thank you again for your commitment and dedication to this important work.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy Maisterra', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Amy Maisterra  
Assistant Superintendent  
Division of Elementary, Secondary, and Specialized Education  
Amy.Maisterra@dc.gov

## PURPOSE, DUTIES, REGULATORY AUTHORITY, AND COMPOSITION OF THE STATE ADVISORY PANEL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

As detailed in the Mayor's Order 2004-187, the purpose of the District of Columbia's State Advisory Panel on Special Education ("the Panel") is to serve as an advisory body to the Mayor, the District of Columbia Public Schools and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE- formerly the State Education Office) on matters pertaining to the education of children and youth with disabilities served by public and private agencies of the District of Columbia.

The primary functions of the Panel include:

- Advising on unmet needs within the District in the education of children with disabilities;
- Commenting publicly on any legislation, rules or regulations proposed by the state regarding the education of children with disabilities;
- Providing advice on systemic and other issues affecting the coordination and delivery of special education and related services to children and youth with disabilities;
- Advising on developing evaluations and reporting on data to the United States Department of Education in the implementation of IDEA;
- Providing advice in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports;
- Advising on the development and implementation of policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities, including advising on eligible students with disabilities in adult prisons; and
- Preparing an annual report of its activities and recommendations on or by July 1 of each calendar year, and submitting it to the Mayor, the District of Columbia Public Schools, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (formerly the State Education Office), other appropriate District government officials and the public.

### COMPOSITION OF THE PANEL

The Mayor's order further delineates the composition of the Panel as follows:

The Panel consists of at least 21 voting members, who are appointed by the Mayor;

- The members appointed to the Panel demonstrate interests in issues affecting special education, or the coordination and delivery of special education and related services to children and youth with disabilities;
- A majority of the members are individuals with disabilities, or parents of children and youth with disabilities;
- The members appointed by the Mayor to the Panel consist of:
  - ▶ Parents or guardians of children with disabilities who reside in the District;
  - ▶ Individuals with disabilities who reside in the District;
  - ▶ Teachers who reside in the District;
  - ▶ Representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel;
  - ▶ District education officials;
  - ▶ Representatives of public, public charter and private schools;
  - ▶ Representatives of District government agencies involved with financing or delivery of services to persons with disabilities;
  - ▶ Representatives of business, community, or vocational organizations in the District concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities;
  - ▶ Representatives of the service provider community who serve children and youth with disabilities in the District of Columbia;
  - ▶ Administrators of programs for children with disabilities; and
  - ▶ Representatives of District juvenile and adult corrections agencies.

## OVERVIEW OF 2015-2016 SAPSE PRIORITIES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND PARENT INPUT

The District of Columbia has local disability-related laws; however, there are also three important U.S. federal laws that guarantee the rights of students with disabilities:

1. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
2. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA")
3. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ("Section 504")

In addition, the District of Columbia has other local laws and regulations that provide students with additional rights; including the 2010 District of Columbia Policies and Procedures for Placement Review, which govern the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) criteria.

Finally, there are also general education laws that impact special education. This past December, Congress passed the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**, which replaces the No Child Left Behind Act. For the first time, the nation's general K-12 education law defines and endorses inclusion best practices by referencing Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that — (A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited in English proficiency.

The educational needs for children are often complex. Past shortcomings and systemically unmet needs of children with disabilities in the District of Columbia are well documented. Moreover, many students and their family's needs are currently unmet in many of the key priority areas outlined in this report. These circumstances notwithstanding, improvements are being made. The SAPSE is committed to working with OSSE and other stakeholders to ensure compliance and improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

In addition to the Mayor's order noted above (section III), the IDEA requires that each state, including the District of Columbia, establish and maintain a state advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state. The federal regulations specify membership and require that a majority of members be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities.

In the District of Columbia, the panel is known as the State Advisory Panel on Special Education (SAPSE). For the 2015-2016 year, SAPSE established new subcommittees which were structured as follows:

### SUBCOMMITTEES

This year, SAPSE established four subcommittees, in addition to the standing executive subcommittee, to conduct much of the work of the SAPSE. These include: (1) Policy and Key Stakeholder Engagement, (2) Graduation/Transitions, (3) Inclusion/Training, and (4) Outreach and Parent Engagement. The work of the standing executive committee and the four subcommittees are consistent with the priorities of the Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and parents' perspectives regarding critical disabilities issues.

SAPSE members are each assigned to subcommittees based upon each member's expertise, interests, and concerns. Each subcommittee is chaired by a member of the SAPSE, with the Chair providing input and feedback for all subcommittees. Subcommittees take the lead with

developing priority action plans and with making recommendations to the full committee. These recommendations may result in further study, including requests for additional information from OSSE, presentations to the SAPSE, and/or inclusion in the SAPSE's Annual Report to OSSE. OSSE personnel provided several technical briefings/trainings to the SAPSE on each of the topics of subcommittees.

**Executive** - The Executive Subcommittee includes the Chair, the Vice-chair, and the Secretary. The committee establishes priorities for meeting agendas and provides overall direction to the SAPSE, as well as feedback to subcommittees. Each Executive Subcommittee member participates as a member on another subcommittee. The Chair also interfaces with OSSE and the Mayor's Office on Talent and Acquisition (MOTA) as the primary SAPSE liaison.

**Policy, Regulations and Key Stakeholder Engagement**- This subcommittee focuses on District of Columbia initiatives that either result in policy and regulations or have an impact on policies, regulations and guidelines as they pertain to students with disabilities. Changes regarding how students are transitioned from IDEA Part C to Part B services, procedural safeguards, IDEA Annual Determination Rubric and Proposed Changes, and the new Parents Guide to Due Process Hearings in DC Schools are examples of topics discussed this fiscal year. This subcommittee, together with the entire SAPSE, focuses on data from the Annual Performance Report (APR). This subcommittee conducts specific analysis around identified areas of concern including State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), parental involvement, discipline of students with disabilities, assessments, school dropout rates, graduation rates, transitions. Finally, the Committee engaged in discussions with key stakeholders in OSSE, DCPS, Charter Schools and State Board of Education, and education advocacy groups to better understand the unmet needs of students with disabilities.

**Graduation and Transitions** - This subcommittee focuses on graduation rates and related data as well as transitions and achievement data and under the SSIP and APR for students with disabilities. This subcommittee focuses not only on the federal expectations, but also on the necessary growth as determined by OSSE and other stakeholders. The subcommittee's goal was to provide feedback to OSSE regarding the graduation requirements and the status of secondary transition for DC students with disabilities. Students with disabilities and IEPs graduate at an incredibly low rate in DC. The District still does not meet its very modest goal for the percentage of students with IEPs who graduate within four years. In SY 2013, only 41% of students graduated in four years. The District has made tremendous gains regarding the development of transition plans, involvement of all necessary parties in the planning process, and post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities. However, there is still a lot of progress to be made. More details are provided in this report.

**Inclusion and Training** - This subcommittee focuses on inclusion best practices and training for both educators and parents and the related data. By law, students with disabilities are supposed to be included in general education to the greatest extent possible. However, children with disabilities and their families continue to face significant barriers to accessing inclusive high quality inclusive education, and too many children with disabilities continue to receive special education services in separate settings. Inclusion in education is an approach to educating students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. Full Inclusion typically rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities. However, special education takes place on a continuum and a significant amount of training for general education teachers, special education teachers and parents is warranted for meaningful inclusion to become a reality in the District of Columbia. One idea that surfaced during SAPSE deliberations was how advantageous it would be for educators in DC to have to be trained--through mandatory teacher preparation, training, and technical assistance in accessibility and specialized education. Determining appropriate metrics for inclusion is also a focus, as well as seeking opportunities to train parents to understand the District of Columbia special education bureaucracy and how they might help their own children with disabilities.

**Outreach and Parent Engagement** – This subcommittee focuses on community outreach and parent engagement since parent engagement is critical to the success of all students, but especially students with disabilities. This subcommittee, together with the entire SAPSE, focuses on data and analysis regarding parental involvement. Currently, less than 10% of parents of children with disabilities return OSSE parental engagement surveys and the subcommittee seeks ways to increase these percentages. In this report, we outline the need for coordinated collaboration and new tools for parents to appropriately evaluate student success. We also suggest targeted parent resource colocation to facilitate a deeper understanding of substantive and procedural issues concerning disabilities rights.

# OVERVIEW OF 2015-2016 OSSE DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND SPECIALIZED EDUCATION UPDATES

## REALIGNMENT – DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY AND SPECIALIZED EDUCATION

OSSE's Division of Elementary, Secondary, and Specialized Education (ESSE) was created through the restructuring of OSSE to ensure that core K-12 work was fully coordinated across the agency and that use of talent, knowledge and resources was maximized. Desired outcomes include the use of data to identify and address challenges, accelerated outcomes, and a clear focus. This allows ESSE to provide comprehensive city-wide supports for students K-12.

## INCLUSION EFFORTS

In SY15-16, OSSE implemented its annual three-part institute series to support local education agencies (LEAs). The goal of the institutes was to bridge LEAs and educators with District agencies that provide wraparound services and supports to students and their families. School leaders, teachers and administrators from the city's 63 LEAs participated in sessions that will help them find solutions that affect student outcomes. This year the series, titled *It Takes a City*, included the following training and collaboration opportunities.

### LEA Institute I: It Takes a City to Support School Excellence

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On November 18, 2015, OSSE hosted the LEA Support Session held at the Gallaudet University Kellogg Center to provide school teams an opportunity to learn best practices in school improvement planning, participate in peer collaboration activities, and have dedicated time to plan and collaborate with one another. Specific focus was given to the importance of SMART (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound) goals in special education.

### LEA Institute II: It Takes a City: Achieving Higher Standards

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On Friday, February 19, 2016, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the Institute focused on supporting educators and school leaders in helping all students achieve DC learning standards. Dynamic breakout sessions included focus on:

- ELA/Literacy Common Core State Standards
- Mathematics Common Core State Standards
- Next Generation Science Standards
- English Language Development Standards for English Language Learners
- DC Common Core Early Learning Standards

### LEA Institute III: It Takes a City: DC Does it Best

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On Friday, May 20 2016, OSSE's Division of Early Learning and Division of Elementary, Secondary, and Specialized Education teamed up to host *It Takes a City: DC Does it Best!* This institute covered early childhood, K-12, or adult education topics related to serving DC students ages 0 to 22. Participants reflected on high quality and innovative evidence and research-based practices in education and learned new strategies for success in improving outcomes for all children in the District. The following strands of training were offered:

#### Strand One: Special Education Workshop Sessions

- Person-Centered Planning and Self-Advocacy: A Culture Shift in IEP Meetings
- The DCPS Inclusive Vision Project: A Roadmap for Establishing a Culture of Inclusion and Implementing Inclusive Best Practice in our Schools
- Accommodations in the Classroom Through the use of Universal Design for Learning
- Secondary Transition: Connecting Students with Disabilities to Agencies that Serve Adults
- Optimizing the IEP Through the Structured Collaborative IEP Process (SCIP)
- Simplifying Differentiated Instruction for Teachers of Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
- Transition Planning in 30 Minutes or Less
- What Happens When My Child Turns 18?: Decision-Making Supports for Adult Students with Disabilities
- Promoting Executive Functions in Middle and High School

## POLICY UPDATES

OSSE also developed and implemented several key policies intended to improve outcomes for children with disabilities. These key policies include the following:

### a. Extended Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Dear Colleague Letter

On April 5, 2015, LEAs serving pre-K students received a letter from OSSE clarifying the timeline requirements of OSSE's Extended IFSP Option for Children Age 3 to Age 4 Policies and Procedures and Individualized Education Program (IEP) Implementation for Transfer Students Policy, with regard to children transitioning from the Part C Extended IFSP to services under Part B of the IDEA. The guidance pertains to the transitioning of eligible students from IDEA Part C to IDEA Part B services. LEAs serving pre-K students were contacted directly because the guidance addresses early childhood transitions for three and four year olds.

As noted in the letter, infants and toddlers with disabilities are eligible to receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C until they reach the age of three. Services are provided in accordance with an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP). However, for families who choose to participate in the Extended Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Option, children can continue to access Part C early intervention services until the beginning of the school year following the child's fourth birthday. The guidance, in the form of a Dear Colleague Letter, is available on the OSSE website [here](#).

### b. Procedural Safeguards

The Parental Procedural Safeguards document was updated to address requirements regarding parent notice for changes in service location, provision of documents to parents before and after IEP meetings, parent observations, expert witness fees, and burdens of proof and persuasion. The [document](#) is available to the public on the OSSE website.

### c. IDEA Part B Annual Determinations Rubric and Proposed Changes

OSSE coordinated the development of the State Performance Plan (SPP), a six-year plan that describes special education services in DC and the plan for continued improvement. The SPP covers 17 content areas, referred to as indicators. The U.S. Department of Education (USED) requires states to report on their performance against the targets outlined in the SPP for each indicator via the Annual Performance Report (APR), and uses the results from this report to make an annual determination on DC's overall performance. In addition to the SPP and APR, states are required to make "determinations" annually under Section 616(d) on the performance of LEAs' programs for students with disabilities (34 CFR §300.600(a)).

#### In making Part B LEA determinations, OSSE considers:

- Compliance with Annual Performance Report (APR) indicators;
- Information regarding timely, valid, and reliable data;
- On-site compliance monitoring and dispute resolution findings;
- Sub-recipient audit findings;
- Relevant financial data and compliance with the Funding for Public Schools and Public Charter School Amendment Act of 2011;
- Performance on results indicators; and
- Evidence of timely correction of findings of noncompliance
- Summary of Proposed Changes
  - ▶ Element 1: APR Compliance Indicators - Increase the weight of particular compliance indicators based on current agency priorities (e.g. secondary transition), and give full points for high compliance rates (90 %+ ) and full correction of noncompliance.
  - ▶ Element 2: Timely, Valid, and Reliable Data - Move all items that address timely submissions to OSSE under this element, including submission of IDEA applications and the MOE data collection.
  - ▶ Element 4: Audit Results - Limit the review to LEAs who had an A-133 review that included IDEA, and remove the results of the independent financial audit.
  - ▶ Element 5: IDEA Burn Rate - Increase the reimbursement threshold to 60% to match the criteria used in the ESSE Risk Matrix.
  - ▶ Element 7: APR Performance Indicators - Increase the weight of performance data in the overall determinations rubric, as it currently only counts for 7% of the overall score. Include the LEA's participation rate on the PARCC assessment in the FFY 2014 determination, and pilot the graduation and assessment results in preparation for FFY 2015 determinations.

## GRADUATION & SECONDARY TRANSITION

- d. **Secondary Transition:** OSSE has continued its efforts to support the implementation of effective secondary transition. On March 10, 2016, OSSE participated in an inter-agency effort and joined SchoolTalk at the 7th Annual Secondary Transition Forum held at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center to introduce materials, resources and supports regarding our secondary transition public awareness campaign. Over 400 students and 70+ teachers attended the all-day event.
- e. **State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)<sup>1</sup>:** The SSIP is a multi-year improvement plan that is focused on improving results for children with disabilities. Instead of multiple small improvement plans for each indicator in the State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR) there will be instead, broad strategies with detailed improvement activities.

The multi-year plan has three phases. Phase I, completed on February 1, 2015 SPP/APR, included data analysis, identification of the focus for improvement, infrastructure to support improvement and built capacity and a theory of action. OSSE began preparing for the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) by performing a general review of FFY 2011 and FFY 2012 State APR data in an attempt to understand the relative strengths and weaknesses in DC's programming for students with disabilities. At the same time, the SSIP conceptual framework, purpose, and core plan requirements were introduced to stakeholders including the State Advisory Panel, community members who attended public comment sessions related to proposed special education regulations and policies, and LEA stakeholders. Through these early conversations about the SSIP and the kinds of issues that DC might be able to address through the SSIP, OSSE learned that there was heightened interest and concern about graduation rates for students with disabilities and related issues such as dropout rates, truancy, meaningful post-secondary engagement with college or career, and effective secondary transition planning. This heightened interest coincided with the release of the DC Graduation Pathways Report, the launch of the DC Re-Engagement Center, and renewed attention on a number of other ongoing initiatives.

Several groups of external stakeholders were involved in the collection and analysis of the data. First, as part of its longitudinal Graduation Pathways study, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education and Raise DC, a cross-sector partnership of local public, private, philanthropic and non-profit stakeholders, consulted with DCPS and several public charter schools. In developing the Phase I SSIP plan, OSSE consulted with LEAs, including DCPS central office staff and principals, the Public Charter School Board, a working group of the State Board of Education, members of the Special Education State Advisory Panel, the Title I Committee of Practitioners, the Secondary Transition Community of Practice, OSSE's Post-Secondary Division, the Special Education Co-operative (a professional development network for public charter schools), and the District of Columbia Association for Special Education (an association of DC nonpublic special education schools). OSSE further engaged parents and community stakeholders through ten community meetings that addressed OSSE's SEA priorities.

OSSE held several in-person meetings and webinars with a variety of stakeholder groups where the SSIP was introduced, timelines and the State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) selection issues were vetted. Stakeholder groups included DCPS central office staff and principals, the Public Charter School Board, a working group of the State Board of Education, members of the SAPSE, the Title I Committee of Practitioners, the Secondary Transition Community of Practice, OSSE's Post-Secondary Division, the Special Education Co-op (a professional development network for public charter schools), the District of Columbia Association for Special Education (an association of nonpublic special education schools), and parents and community stakeholders through ten community meetings that addressed the SEA's education priorities. After extensive stakeholder feedback expressing concern regarding the graduation outcomes of students with disabilities in non-SIMR schools, and suggesting differentiated interventions for all high schools, the SIMR was changed to be the same as Indicator 1 and the originally proposed SIMR group was instead identified as the group of high schools who will receive universal interventions.

Phase II, completed on February 1, 2016 SPP/APR - included infrastructure development, supported LEA implementation of evidence-based practices and an evaluation plan.

Phase III, due February 1, 2017 SPP/APR - will include the results of ongoing evaluation and revisions to the SPP.

On Thursday, March 10, 2016 the SAPSE participated in a SSIP Family/Community presentation.

## OUTREACH

- f. **Annual Parent Survey:** On July 6, 2015, OSSE released its annual special education parent survey. This survey measures families satisfaction with special education services and supports and is used to provide data for the APR that OSSE submits to the Office of Special Education Programs each February. This confidential survey is made available in electronic and hard copy formats. Hard copy surveys are mailed to the home of students receiving services during the 2014 – 2015 school year. The online survey can be viewed by the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/53DV5L9>.

While targeted strategies resulted in a significant increase in responses as reported in the most recent Annual Performance Report, OSSE will be working to increase the response rate by creating greater awareness of the Survey among parents and among community agencies serving students with disabilities.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION DATA FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The SAPSE reviewed a tremendous amount of data during FY 2015-16. While the SAPSE consumed far too much data to share in this report, the most significant data relating to the key priorities addressed by the SAPSE include the number of students with Individual Education Plan's (IEPs); the number of students educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), the graduation and drop-out rates of children with disabilities, and the number of students taking statewide assessments.

IDEA requires all states to have a special education performance plan. The State Performance Plan (SPP) is a six-year plan that describes special education services in DC and the plan for continued improvement. The SPP covers 17 content areas, referred to as indicators. The U.S. Department of Education (USED) requires states to report on their performance against the targets outlined in the SPP for each indicator via the Annual Performance Report (APR), and uses the results from this report to make an annual determination on DC's overall performance. The chart below was submitted by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to the United States Department of Education for the Annual Performance Report. This SPP data is partially described below: The pre-loaded data for total number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 was 10,743 students, OSSE changed the total number of students to 10,697. The pre-loaded data included forty-six (46) children with disabilities placed by their parents in private schools. OSSE does not include children with disabilities placed by their parents in private schools when reporting on educational environments. The following charts are excerpts from the Annual Performance Report (APR) which led the conversations which ultimately drove the SAPSE to create subcommittees which will be explored throughout this report.

SOURCE	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DATA
SY 2014-15 Child Count/Educational Environment Data Groups (EDFacts file spec C002; Data group 74)	6/4/2015	Total number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21	10,743
SY 2014-15 Child Count/Educational Environment Data Groups (EDFacts file spec C002; Data group 74)	7/2/2015	A. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 inside the regular class 80% or more of the day	5,840
SY 2014-15 Child Count/Educational Environment Data Groups (EDFacts file spec C002; Data group 74)	7/2/2015	B. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 inside the regular class less than 40% of the day	1,630
SY 2014-15 Child Count/Educational Environment Data Groups (EDFacts file spec C002; Data group 74)	7/2/2015	c1. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 in separate schools	1,169
SY 2014-15 Child Count/Educational Environment Data Groups (EDFacts file spec C002; Data group 74)	7/2/2015	c2. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 in residential facilities	62
SY 2014-15 Child Count/Educational Environment Data Groups (EDFacts file spec C002; Data group 74)	7/2/2015	c3. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 in homebound/hospital placements	2

The archived data for total number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 was 10,743 students, OSSE changed the total number of students to 10,697. The archived data included forty-six (46) children with disabilities placed by their parents in private schools. OSSE does not include children with disabilities placed by their parents in private schools when reporting on educational environments. The following charts are excerpts from the Annual Performance Report (APR) which led the conversations which ultimately drove the SAPSE to create subcommittees which will be explored throughout this report.

## GRADUATION: INDICATOR 1

### Graduation and Dropout Rates

**Indicator 1 (results):** The percent of students with disabilities graduating high school with a regular diploma (not a certificate or GED).

FFY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target (%)	44%	45.8%	49.8%	54.8%	60%	60%

**Indicator 2 (results):** The percent of students with disabilities dropping out of high school.

FFY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target (%)	5.8%	5.6%	5.3%	5.1%	4.8%	4.6%

## POLICY AND INCLUSION: INDICATOR 3A AND 3B

### Statewide Assessments

**Indicator 3A:** The percent of school districts (LEAs) meeting their targets for students with disabilities on statewide assessments.

FFY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target (%)	16%	22%	22%	30%	40%	50%

**Indicator 3B:** The percent of students with disabilities taking the statewide assessment.

FFY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target (%)	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%

## INCLUSION: INDICATOR 5 AND 6

### LRE and Preschool Settings

**Indicator 5:** The percent of students with disabilities served in the following settings:

FFY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
A. Regular classroom 80% or more of the school day	50%	53%	56%	59%	61%	64%
B. Regular classroom less than 40% of the day	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	12%
C. Separate schools, residential programs, hospital/home	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%

**Indicator 6:** The percent of children ages 3 to 5 with disabilities attending:

FFY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
A. Regular early childhood program & receiving majority of services there	55%	56%	57%	58%	59%	60%
B. Separate special education class, school, or residential program	16%	16%	14%	12%	11%	10%

## SUBCOMMITTEE PRIORITY ACTION PLANS, GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Panelists examined and listened to reports regarding the Part B Annual Performance Report (APR) and State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). They have also shared information and ideas on other important issues. Based on the technical assistance received and a review of the relevant performance data, the Panel identified four key priorities for the FY2015-2016 calendar year.

### A. POLICY, REGULATIONS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE:

As previously noted, the mission of the Policy, Regulations and Key Stakeholder Subcommittee is to provide feedback to the OSSE regarding District of Columbia initiatives that either result in policies, regulations and guidelines or have an impact on policies, regulations or guidelines as they pertain to students with disabilities. The Subcommittee started its efforts by reviewing all APR Indicators data.

Performance on Indicator #17 (SSIP) provided perspective given the comprehensive nature of the SSIP as a multiyear plan that focuses on improving result for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. Moving forward, this group hopes to ensure that disability-related policies, regulations and guidelines are promulgated with appropriate input from SAPSE in the early stages and/or prior to public release. SAPSE would also like to be engaged in the review process prior to implementation and other decision-making regarding policies, guidelines and regulations that impact students with disabilities and their families. This group also met with key stakeholders regarding policies, and reviews parent and community engagement policies/strategies. In particular the committee attended community meetings and participated on panels in Wards 5, 7 and 8 and as well as meetings with DCPS. The Policy Subcommittee included the following members: Julie Camerata (Lead), Dr. Kenneth Taylor, Dr. Amy Williamson Barrios and Deon Woods Bell (SAPSE Chair).

In April 2016, members of the subcommittee reached out to the OSSE policy unit with a request to be updated on policies in the OSSE pipeline. The Subcommittee was informed of the following:

- OSSE was in the process of issuing transfer of rights regulations. OSSE anticipated having these regulations finalized by July 2016.
- OSSE is also working on non-regulatory discipline guidance, which will include a blend of general and special education issues. (no timelines assigned)
- OSSE is also developing EL regulations. (no timelines assigned)
- OSSE has also updated the procedural safeguards and has;
- Released a Dear Colleague letter regarding children transitioning from an extended IFSP to Part B services.

Moving forward, this group hopes to ensure that disability-related policies, regulations and guidelines are promulgated with appropriate input from SAPSE in the early stages and prior to public release. SAPSE would also like to be engaged in the review process prior to implementation and other decision-making regarding policies, guidelines and regulations that impact students with disabilities and their families. The Subcommittee, and the entire SAPSE, were given a meaningful opportunity to provide comments on the Parents Guide to Due Process Hearings in DC Schools. SAPSE was advised that these comments were useful. OSSE and the SAPSE have committed to work together to ensure that meaningful opportunities to comment on these issues that impact educational outcomes for children with special needs are provided to the SAPSE.

### THE POLICY AND KEY STAKEHOLDER SUBCOMMITTEE PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OSSE:

So that the SAPSE may have the appropriate information that will allow it to provide meaningful feedback regarding proposed policies and regulations, we recommend that OSSE:

- Provide the SAPSE, or a representative of the SAPSE, with a red-line copy of proposed changes of all policies and/or regulations pertaining to students with disabilities to be reviewed by the SAPSE Policy Subcommittee.
- Include the SAPSE, or a representative of the SAPSE, on any district-level correspondence regarding proposed policy changes.
- Create a briefing/overview paper for parents to explain any policy modifications
- Provide all materials to the SAPSE in a timely manner (ideally 30 days before any action is due).
- Assign an OSSE policy liaison to meet with a representative of the SAPSE on a monthly basis to discuss any upcoming policy changes.
- Provide explanations of all policies, guidelines and regulations in clear and concise English, and translations in Spanish and other community languages.
- Engage the community, in partnership with SAPSE, including special needs students and parents regarding OSSE and special needs policies and guidelines that impact the special needs community prior to finalization of the policies, guidelines and regulations.

## POLICY AND KEY STAKEHOLDER SUBCOMMITTEE PRIORITY COMMITTEE GOALS:

- The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee will research and analyze special needs policies and guidelines and thereafter disseminate to the SAPSE and other community stakeholders.
- The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee plans to convene monthly teleconferences/meetings with OSSE officials and report to SAPSE regarding key policies and guidelines.
- The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee also plans to convene meetings with other key special needs and education stakeholders, including DCPS, Federal authorities, Other SAPSE bodies from neighboring jurisdictions, State Departments of Education, etc.
- The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee will develop and share talking points and other relevant information.
- The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee will distribute talking points and other relevant information to the SAPSE generally and the Outreach Subcommittee more specifically so that they can share with the community, their constituents and other stakeholders.
- The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee will write a SAPSE Annual report section focusing on relevant policies, guidelines and regulations.

## B. GRADUATION/TRANSITION SUBCOMMITTEE:

As previously noted, the mission of the Graduation/Transition Subcommittee is to provide feedback to the OSSE regarding graduation rates and related data as well as transitions. As a result, the graduation/transition subcommittee reviewed current and proposed new graduation requirements and current transition activities in the District. The sub-committee's goal was to provide feedback to OSSE regarding the graduation requirements and the status of secondary transition for DC students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities and IEPs graduate at an incredibly low rate in DC. The District still does not meet its very modest goal for the percentage of students with IEPs who graduate within four years. In SY 2013, only 41% of students with IEPs graduated in four years. The District has made tremendous gains in its performance on transition related performance indicators, i.e., indicators 13 and 14, regarding development of transition plans and involvement of all necessary parties in the planning process, and post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities. However, there is still a lot of progress to be made.

Performance on Indicator 13 (Secondary Transition with IEP Goals), regarding development of transition plans has improved from just over 0% to approximately 70%. However, the District continues to lag in the more important Indicator 14 (Post School Outcomes), which measures students' involvement in post-secondary education, training or employment. For the most recent year reported, only approximately 30% of students were engaged in post-secondary education training or employment one year after graduation. The District is clearly not currently fulfilling Mayor Bowser's goal of ensuring that all youth exit high school prepared for post-secondary success, particularly as it relates to youth with disabilities. Panel members on this sub-committee are: Molly Whalen (Lead), Andrew Reese, James Brooks and Tami Brown (SAPSE Secretary).

Although some of the proposed changes to the graduation requirements are positive, they do not go far enough in allowing for the flexibility needed to accommodate for the special needs of students with disabilities. We have a number of concerns about the current graduation standards in the District:

- The requirement of 4 years/credits of math without flexible options will greatly inhibit students with disabilities from obtaining a diploma. Instead, providing flexible options such as: allowing 9th graders to take Pre-Algebra to fulfill a math credit, or allowing "Get Ready for Algebra" courses for HS credit, or including options for a fourth math credit that include a Financial Literacy course that builds on using math in life settings versus a course that has Algebra II as a prerequisite; will offer math credits that are obtainable as well as life-skills focused.
- The extensive physical activity requirements of 225 minutes, including not allowing the tracking of Arts and Physical Education (PE) activities outside of school to award credit, limits student choice in determining how they use their high school experience to prepare themselves for post-secondary options.
- Although there has been an increase in career readiness and vocational options in the District, these options are not adequately available to students with disabilities. There are prohibitive scheduling issues for these courses. This limits options available to ensure that students with disabilities are able to exit school as prepared for post-secondary success as their counterparts without disabilities.
- Community service hours requirement is prohibitive, especially for students with disabilities. 100 hours is one of the largest requirements in the local area; and hours should be allowed to be obtained beginning in 7th grade, not 9th grade; as well, in school volunteer service should be allowed. This change would fit well with the change in the transition age, from 16 to 14.
- There should be flexibility in the foreign language requirement, allowing this to be waived for students with speech language or other learning disabilities.

There are currently over 10,743 students (ages 6-21) with IEPs in DCPS and DC public charter schools. The proposed SBOE/OSSE graduation requirements are highly likely to make achieving a diploma challenging for students with developmental and learning disabilities. It is important to emphasize the importance of making graduation requirements flexible for our students with disabilities and special needs, so that they are able to obtain a diploma and not a certificate.

DC has notoriously failed in achieving positive outcomes with secondary transition programs and has failed to achieve targets in this indicator. With the change of DC law to now begin transition at the age of 14 (instead of 16), it will require OSSE and all the LEAs to greatly step up performance in this critical area.

### GRADUATION/TRANSITION SUBCOMMITTEE PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OSSE:

The subcommittee recommends that the following be key guidelines/vision statements for OSSE in focusing on Graduation and Transition metrics for DC students:

- I. Students with disabilities will obtain a high school diploma which will allow them to obtain employment and secondary education; in addition to reaching productive and independent futures.
- II. Improved effective and guided secondary transition plans will support understanding the need for student self-advocacy, and understanding the process of transition towards productive lives.

### MOREOVER, THE GRADUATION/TRANSITION SUBCOMMITTEE FURTHER RECOMMENDS:

- OSSE should track students with disabilities who obtain a diploma in five or six years.
- OSSE should develop means of tracking not just compliance with the development of transition plans, but also some quality assessment of these plans.
- OSSE should track the number of students with disabilities who are able to enroll in the career and vocational courses.
- OSSE, DCPS and all Public Charter Schools should work with workforce agencies, including RSA and DOES Youth Services Programs to ensure that all students with disabilities have opportunities for work based learning experiences while they are in high school.
- OSSE increase efforts to get families involved early on the importance for effective and guided secondary transition plans, understanding the need for student self-advocacy, and understanding the process of transition, especially with the age of secondary transition moving to 14 (and beginning in middle school vs. high school) for DC.
- OSSE increase opportunities for supporting LEAs in designing real vocational training and career readiness courses for students with IEPs. (The current emphasis on college as the only successful path is prohibitive for students with disabilities receiving the support they need for productive and independent futures.)

### GRADUATION/TRANSITION SUBCOMMITTEE PRIORITY GOALS:

- I. Work with OSSE to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to achieve HS diploma.
- II. Work with OSSE to provide necessary support to middle schools and charter LEAs to ensure that when the transition age moves to 14 that the District continues its improved performance on indicator 13, in terms of ensuring development of transition plans for all youth by the age of 14.

### C. INCLUSION/TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE:

As previously noted, the mission of the Inclusion/Training Subcommittee is to provide feedback to the OSSE regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms as well as the community. Inclusion in education is an approach to educating students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. Moreover, inclusion presents this challenge not just on behalf of students with disabilities, but also on behalf of students who are different in other ways. Different languages and cultures, different homes and family lives, and different interests and ways of learning all need accommodation and adjustments from educators. The Inclusion/Training Subcommittee reviewed APR Indicator #5, outcomes for Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Placement, which suggests that integrating students with disabilities into the general education classroom could help close the achievement gap. Inclusion is a key priority and best practice. Moreover, inclusion is aligned with Mayor Bowser's goal of ensuring that all students exit high school ready for post-secondary education or employment. Indeed, APR indicator #14, Post-School Outcomes, also analyzed by the Subcommittee, also supports the Mayor's philosophy. The identified strategy is to increase the integration of students with disabilities in general, including in high school, which is likely to lead to more post-secondary success (e.g., prepared after high school for education, college, training, jobs, etc.) Panel members include: Vivian Guerra (Lead), Tracy Dove, Shawn Ullman and Courtney Hall.

By federal and local law, students with disabilities are supposed to be included in general education to the greatest extent possible. However, children with disabilities and their families continue to face significant barriers to accessing high quality inclusive education and too many children with disabilities continue to receive special education services in separate settings.

Being meaningfully included as a member of society is the first step to equal opportunity one of America's most cherished ideals, and is every person's right—a right supported by our laws.

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 specifically supported inclusive thinking and practices. Now, IDEA calls for involving students with disabilities in general education curricula, assessment practices, and classrooms. It encourages general and special education teachers to work together for the benefit of each and every student.

Ultimately, the goal of inclusive education is preparing students for full adult lives, one with careers, friends, and interests within integrated communities. Inclusive education is a critical path toward achieving this for many individuals with disabilities, families, caregivers, and self-advocates.

**“UNLESS OUR CHILDREN BEGIN TO LEARN TOGETHER, THERE IS LITTLE HOPE THAT OUR PEOPLE WILL EVER BEGIN TO LIVE TOGETHER.”**

—JUSTICE THURGOOD MARSHALL-MILLIKEN V. BRADLEY

### SEVERAL FACTORS CAN DETERMINE THE SUCCESS OF INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS:

- Family-school partnerships
- Collaboration between general and special educators
- Well-constructed plans that identify specific accommodations, modifications, and goals for each student
- Coordinated planning and communication between “general” and “special needs” staff
- Integrated service delivery
- Ongoing training and staff development
- Leadership of teachers and administrators

### RESEARCH SUPPORTS INCLUSION

Research has shown positive effects for children with disabilities in areas such as reaching individualized education program (IEP) goal, improving communication and social skills, increasing positive peer interactions, many educational outcomes, and post school adjustments. Positive effects on children without disabilities include the development of positive attitudes and perceptions of persons with disabilities and the enhancement of social status with nondisabled peers. Bennett, T, Deluca, D., & Bruns, D (1997). Putting inclusion in practice: perspectives of teachers and parents. *Exceptional Children*, 64.

#### Inclusion/Training Subcommittee Priority Recommendations for OSSE:

- Significantly increase the % of students w/ disabilities aged 6-21 served in the general education classrooms to 80% or more of the day.
- Measure and evaluate (a) the quality of the curriculum and intentional teaching (e.g., planning, delivering and evaluating instruction, relating positively to students and adults); and (b) environmental and structural quality indicators (e.g., physical environment, student-staff ratio, staff qualifications, communication and collaboration with families, administrative leadership, compensation).
- Ensure quality supports and services in general education classroom to access the general education curriculum are measured by research based methods.

- Increase ongoing professional development training to general educators, special education educators, and administrators on inclusive best practices in the classroom, non-academic activities, and extracurricular for teachers, parents and administrators.
- Increase the percentage of youth with disabilities engaged in post-secondary education and employment.
- Provide training on Person-Centered Thinking/Planning to local education agencies, self-advocates and families.
- Increase the percentage of youth with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities to be engaged in post-secondary education and employment opportunities.
- Support additional post-secondary options for students with disabilities that include community college and college credit based programs within the District. ( For example, George Mason University LIFE Program, Montgomery College, and Indiana University)
- Provide transition plans to return to the Least Restrictive Environment for students with disabilities that have been removed.
- Establish strong school relationships with parents/caregivers and the community to learn and engage in inclusive practices.
- Increase English Learners (EL) student's further integration in inclusive classrooms.

### INCLUSION/TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE PRIORITY COMMITTEE GOALS:

- The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee will research inclusion best practices resources and training ideas from other jurisdictions and thereafter disseminate to the SAPSE and other community stakeholders.
- The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee plans to analyze data regarding inclusion practices (both classrooms and trainings) in DC and neighboring jurisdictions.
- The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee plans to research and analyze data regarding the use of assistive technology and other tools in inclusive classrooms.
- The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee plans to work with OSSE to facilitate LEA, teacher, administrator and parent (including SAPSE) training in inclusive practices.
- The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee will attend community meetings and trainings to learn more about and share inclusion best practices information.
- The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee will write a SAPSE Annual report section focusing on inclusion.

### INCLUSION/TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Because the SAPSE supports inclusive education in the District of Columbia, the SAPSE Inclusion/Training subcommittee has outlined the following goals, objectives, and recommendations to guide the Districts' SEA, LEAs, school administrators, and IEP team members in promoting, implementing, and taking accountability of inclusive practices consistent with IDEA requirements.

## INCLUSION/TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Support high quality inclusive supports and services in the Least Restrictive Environment.	Develop tools to evaluate and measure the quality of Supports and Services delivered in least restrictive environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an inclusive education self-assessment tool for schools to self-assess to identify priority needs, develop goals, plan improvement strategies, and organize resources to support the implementation of inclusive practices.</li> <li>• Develop inclusive classroom profiles: a structured observation rating scale designed to assess the quality of provisions and daily practices that support the developmental needs of children with disabilities in the least restrictive setting.</li> <li>• Develop a quality rating and improvement system aimed at improving inclusion program. Most states have developed or are in the process of developing these systems as a way of assessing program quality, documenting program quality improvements, and communicating information about program quality to parents and other consumers.</li> </ul>
Enhance inclusive best practices at all LEAs	Implement inclusive best practices in the general education classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide expert special educators as mentors</li> <li>• Require mandatory ongoing professional development on inclusive best practices for academics and behavior support</li> <li>• Provide comprehensive wraparound services for children and families/caregivers in crisis</li> <li>• Provide capacity building grants to strengthen inclusive practices that are aligned with the school's mission on inclusion</li> <li>• Require universal design for learning training for general education, special education teachers, and administrators</li> <li>• Explore creating specialized inclusive schools e.g. have specialists on site and the general education teachers would become skilled in providing accommodations for students with disabilities</li> <li>• Promote highly effective inclusive practices e.g. responsive classroom behavior management, co-teaching, positive behavior intervention and supports, response to intervention, universal design for learning, assistive technology and even full inclusion.</li> </ul>
Provide transition plans to return to the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities that have been removed.	Monitor and ensure transition plans are in place in the case a student with a disability is removed from the least restrictive environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop specific guidelines to develop transitions plans to return the student to the least restrictive environment.</li> </ul>
Enhance and support ongoing professional development training, mentoring, and coaching on inclusive practices in the classroom, non-academic activities, and extracurricular for teachers, administration, and family/caregivers.		<p>Trainings on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UDL practices that addresses both academics and behavior along with significant ongoing professional development for teachers.</li> <li>• Assistive Technology training and ongoing supports to teachers and family/caregivers of students with disabilities.</li> <li>• Teaching problem-solving skills to teachers, administration, and family/caregivers to support students with disabilities to progress and be meaningfully included academically and socially in the least restrict environment.</li> <li>• Developing a strong school inclusive vision and mission (based on high expectations and school-wide, not isolated classrooms/settings).</li> <li>• School-community relationship building to support inclusive practices.</li> <li>• Person-Centered Thinking/Planning to local education agencies, self-advocates and families/caregivers.</li> <li>• Cultural and Linguistic competency (responsive to all races, gender, socioeconomic backgrounds, language background, disability, artistic background, family, and cultural background).</li> <li>• Special education law training (federal and local policies and regulations) for teachers, administration, and families/caregivers.</li> </ul>

## INCLUSION/TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Protect and support IDEA regulations that require schools to educate children with disabilities with children who are not disabled, “to the maximum extent appropriate.” A child may only be removed from the regular educational setting if the nature or severity of the disability is such that the child cannot be educated in regular classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services.	Develop general principles designed to guide LEAs, school administrators, and IEP team members in decision making placement with an aim toward retaining and supporting the student in the least restrictive environment and promoting inclusive practices consistent with IDEA requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop checklist in which LEAs, school administrators, and IEP team members have to go through prior to removing a student with disabilities from the general education setting to a segregated educational setting.</li> <li>• Require that schools demonstrate that they have fully implemented with fidelity a robust IEP, inclusive of necessary supplementary aides and services, prior to the determination to place a child in a more restrictive setting, in order to rule out the possibility that the student is not making progress in the less restrictive environment due to a failure on the part of that educational environment.</li> <li>• Assure that schools have developed a full continuum of supports and services within the educational environment, and that these services are made available in regular education classrooms to the greatest extent possible.</li> <li>• Utilize peer-reviewed, research-based models, practices, and curricula within the regular education setting before contemplating placement in a more restrictive setting.</li> <li>• Use rigorous progress monitoring and a tiered intervention framework aligned with Universal Design for Learning and Response to intervention to demonstrate that these inclusive best practices have not proven beneficial.</li> </ul>
Enhance post-secondary education and employment opportunities for students with disabilities.	Increase the percentage of youth with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities to be engaged in post-secondary education and employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide additional post-secondary options for students with disabilities that include community college and college credit based programs within the District.</li> </ul>

### D. OUTREACH AND PARENT ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE:

As previously noted, the mission of the Outreach and Parent Engagement Subcommittee is to provide feedback to the OSSE regarding outreach to parents and students with disabilities. This subcommittee analyzed APR Indicator #8 data regarding Parent Involvement and found that only a small percentage of parents respond to the Annual parent survey, less than 10 % of parents of children with disabilities. As a result, the Outreach Subcommittee determined that the first priority goal is to increase quality communications and partnerships between parents, schools and OSSE regarding the educational well-being of students with special education needs. The second goal is to ensure that parents and students obtain a clear understanding of early intervention supports, the process for obtaining an IEP and/or 504 plan and special education services available for students from early learning through secondary education. These priority goals are designed to ensure that a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) remains in the forefront of our efforts and that parents and students are reminded of their [parental procedural safeguards](#). Panel members include: Zalika Brown (Lead), Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas, Nicole Lee-Mwandha, Luis Morales and Aaron McCormick (SAPSE Vice Chair).

In our monthly SAPSE meetings as a subcommittee, we received several updates from OSSE and other stakeholders. We also had opportunities to provide feedback and were invited to participate in the following important initiatives and events focusing on children and youth with disabilities, among others:

- Extended IFSP [Dear Colleague Letter](#), as referenced by the Policy Subcommittee and in the OSSE Policy Updates section of this report.
- Annual Performance Report (APR), specifically indicator #8 – Annual Special Education Parent Survey
- EdFEST 2015 – District of Columbia’s only city-wide school fair which was held at the DC Armory on December, 12, 2015.
- DC Inclusion Meeting – held on April 25, 2016 at DC Public Schools’ Central Office
- Ward 7 & 8 Educational Council Meeting – November 9, 2015
- Ward 5 Special Education – April 19, 2016
- DC State Board of Education Meetings – Various meetings, June 2016
- DC Coalition for Change – June 2016

## OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OSSE:

OSSE, DCPS and Public Charter Schools should be more proactive in providing communities with information regarding the steps necessary to access special education services, including providing students with early intervention opportunities and providing parents and guardians with tools for achieving success in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

- OSSE should obtain additional demographic information in the Special Education Parent Survey.
- OSSE, DCPS and Public Charter Schools should increase efforts to collaborate with emergency shelter and transitional housing providers to target families experiencing homelessness and ensure that displaced students with special needs receive appropriate and timely supports.
- OSSE should support SAPSE's presence at EdFEST 2016
- OSSE should collaborate with SAPSE to ensure the Panel has marketing materials and is physically present with OSSE to distribute vital information in various formats.
- SAPSE and OSSE should facilitate and encourage collaboration between the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, community service providers and various relevant DC Government agencies to ensure that District Wards offer opportunities for parents to obtain essential information regarding the educational rights of students with disabilities.
- OSSE and SAPSE should convene a parent summit sharing special education best practices.
- SAPSE and other parents should be invited to OSSE trainings such as the LEA series, and other trainings currently provided to teachers and administrators.
- OSSE should partner with SAP to produce a one stop shop parent guide for due process and hearings

## OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE PRIORITY GOALS:

- I. Increase in quality communications and partnerships between parents, schools, other stakeholders and OSSE regarding the educational well-being of students with special education needs. (Engagement/Involvement)
- II. Parents and students should receive the needed support and obtain a clear understanding of early intervention supports, the process for obtaining an IEP and/or 504 and special education services available for students from early intervention through secondary education.

## OSSE COMMENDATIONS

SAPSE would like to commend OSSE in the areas of providing training opportunities to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) through its LEA Institute, the new Parents Guide to Due Process Hearings in DC Schools, and for its plan for innovative strategies with detailed improvement activities surrounding the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP).

In particular, the annual three-part institute series sponsored by OSSE to support LEAs can be an excellent model for how to increase the capacity of the SAPSE, teachers and other community stakeholders. It appears the goal of the institutes was to bridge LEAs and educators with District agencies that provide wraparound services and supports to students and their families, school leaders, teachers and administrators from the District's 63 LEAs. They participated in sessions that will help them find solutions which impact student outcomes. This initiative can easily transition to enhance the capacity of even more educators, students and families.

SAPSE would especially like to commend OSSE for its work on the new Parents Guide to Due Process Hearings in DC Schools. SAPSE appreciated the opportunity to provide meaningful comments on the document.

## IX. SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION RESOURCES

### SCHOOL SYSTEM RESOURCES

#### OSSE – Specialized Instruction

<http://osse.dc.gov/service/specialized-education>

#### OSSE – Office of Dispute Resolution

<http://osse.dc.gov/service/office-disput-resolution-odr>

#### Ombudsman for Public Education

<http://sboe.dc.gov/ombudsman>

#### DC Public Schools

<http://dcps.dc.gov/specialeducation>

### GENERAL EDUCATION RESOURCES/SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES

#### Advocates for Justice and Education

<http://aje-dc.org>

#### Bazelon Center

<http://bazelon.org>

#### Children's Law Center

<http://childrenslawcenter.org>

#### DC Association for Special Education

<http://dcase.org/>

#### DC Special Education Cooperative

<http://specialedcoop.org/coop/>

#### US Education Department – Parent Resources

[www.ed.gov/parents/](http://www.ed.gov/parents/)

#### School Talk

<http://schooltalkdc.org>

#### Special Education Guide

[www.specialeducationguide.com](http://www.specialeducationguide.com)

#### Quality Trust

<http://dcqualitytrust.org>

#### Smart IEP's Tutorials and Checklists

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/iep.goals.plan.htm>

#### Advocacy & Informational Resources Page

##### Office of the Student Advocate

<http://sboe.dc.gov/page/advocacy-and-informational-resources>

### LAWS

#### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

<https://www.ada.gov/>

#### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA")

<http://idea.ed.gov/>

#### Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ("Section 504")

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html> and

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/section504/>

**Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**, which replaces No Child Left Behind. For the first time, the nation's general K-12 education law defines and endorses inclusion best practices by referencing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) <http://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn> and <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/every-student-succeeds-act/>

#### Specialized Education Local Policies

<http://osse.dc.gov/service/specialized-education-local-policies>

#### Olmstead Integration Plan

<http://bit.ly/2abWZll>

## CURRENT POLICIES RELATED TO THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:

2010 District of Columbia Policies and Procedures for Placement Review <http://bit.ly/29LK4ze>

- Comprehensive Child Find System [PDF, 3.3 MB]
- Confidentiality of Student Information Policy
- Early Childhood Transition Policy
- Entry and Exit Enrollment Code Policy and Special Education Guidance
- Extended IFSP Option for Children Age 3 to Age 4 Policies And Procedures
- Extended School Year (ESY) Services Policy and Certification
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) Amendment Policy
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) Implementation for Transfer Students Policy
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process Policy
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B Grant Eligibility and Administration Hearing Process Policy
- Least Restrictive Environment Policy
- Part B Initial Evaluation and Reevaluation Policy
- Policies and Procedures for Placement Review, Revised
- Related Services Policy
- Secondary Transition Policy
- Special Education Transportation Services Policy

## RELATED SERVICES:

Specialized Education Policies and Guidance

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SAPSE would like to commend OSSE for collaborating with the Panel. We would especially like to thank Amy Maisterra, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary and Secondary Education, as well as our OSSE staff liaison, Sheryl Hamilton, Director of Community Learning and School Support and Adrienne Rodriguez, Education Program Specialist.

SAPSE colleagues worked hard to ensure a successful year. We commend each colleague that went beyond the call of duty to ensure that the Panel actively focused on issues most relevant to students with disabilities.

## APPENDIX A - SAPSE MEMBERSHIP LIST SY2015-2016

Deon Woods Bell, SAPSE Chair, Parent, Deon.bell@gmail.com

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James Brooks, Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), jamesf.brooks@dc.gov

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Tamera Brown, Parent, tameraab@aol.com

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Zalika Brown, Special Education Coordinator, Zalikaw@hotmail.com

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Julie Camerata, Charter School Administrator, jcamerata@specialedcoop.org

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Betsy Centofanti, School Administrator, SAPSE Emeritus, blcentofanti@gmail.com

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Brianna Copley, Teacher, Brianna.copley@dc.gov

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Tracy Dove, Teacher and Parent, Tracydove00@gmail.com

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Vivian Guerra, Parent, vguerra0873@yahoo.com

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Courtney Hall, Deputy Director – Program Operations DC Child & Family Services Agency, Courtney.Hall3@dc.gov

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Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas, Parent, r.hilighthomas@gmail.com

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Nicole Lee-Mwandha, OSSE-McKinney-Vento, nicole.lee-mwandha@dc.gov

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Aaron McCormick, Vice Chair, Parent, aaron.mccormick@dcbc.dc.gov

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Luis Morales, Supervisory Social Worker, Department of Behavioral Health, Luis.Morales3@dc.gov

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Andrew Reese, Interim Director, Department on Disability Services, andrew.reese@dc.gov

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Claudia Sauls, Parent, c\_sauls@hotmail.com

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Kenneth Taylor, PhD, Federal Agency Liaison, United States Department of Education, Kenneth.taylor@ed.gov

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Shawn Ullman, Lawyer, University Legal Services, sullman@uls-dc.org

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Molly Whalen, Parent and Special Needs Advocate, dc.whalen@verizon.net

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Amy Barrios, Division Chair, Education, Health, and Social Work, University of District of Columbia, amy.williamson@udc.edu

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## APPENDIX B - SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, OUTREACH AND PRESENTATIONS

SAPSE meets to discuss ways in which members can advise the OSSE in its role as the State Education Agency (SEA) on special education and related services for children with disabilities. The SAPSE is required to convene meetings at least four times a year, but met this year on a monthly basis. The following is a calendar of meetings held during the SY 2015-16 term. SAPSE meetings are open to the public.

DATE	MEETING TIME	SPEAKER/SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT	TOPIC AREA
Saturday, September 12, 2015	9:30 AM-12:30 PM	Sheryl Hamilton Sharon Hainsfurther, Facilitator	General SAPSE Introduction
Thursday, October 29, 2015	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Amy Maisterra	State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)
Thursday, November 12, 2015	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Amy Maisterra	State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)
Saturday, December 5, 2015	9:30 AM-12:30 PM	Interactive Working Meeting	New Subcommittee Breakout Sessions
Thursday, January 7, 2016	6:00 PM - 8 PM	Amy Maisterra	Annual Performance Report (APR)
Saturday, February 13, 2016	9:30 AM-12:30 PM	John Copenhagen	SAP Training and Priority Setting Session
Thursday, March 10, 2016	6:00 PM - 8 PM	Brandon Wallace	Universal Design for Learning: DC Lesson Generator
Saturday, April 09, 2016	9:30 AM-12:30 PM	Jerri Johnston-Stewart	Inclusion: Early Learning
Thursday, May 05, 2016	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Tracey Langley Sharon Hainsfurther-Facilitator	Due Process Hearings Subcommittee Interactive Working Meeting with Breakout Sessions
Saturday, June 04, 2016	9:30 AM-12:30 PM	N/A	Drafting the Annual Report
Thursday, June 30, 2016	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM	N/A	Final Annual Report, Stakeholder Strategy, Agenda for next Fiscal Year
<b>ADDITIONAL MEETINGS</b>			
Saturday, December 12, 2015	9:00am -5:00pm	DC EdFest	General Education
Monday, November 9th, 2015	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Ward 7 and 8 Education Council Meeting	Special Education
Monday, April 25, 2016	5:30 PM - 7:30 PM	DCPS Curriculum-Inclusion Meeting	Inclusion
Tuesday, April 19, 2016	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM	The Ward 5 Special Education Office of Student Advocate	Special Education
June 4, 6, 8, 16, and 21	Various times	DC State Board of Education Meetings	General Education/ Special Education
Saturday, June 18, 2016	9:30 AM-12:30 PM	DC Coalition for Change	General Education

## APPENDIX C - SAPSE SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION PLAN CHART

	INCLUSION/TRAINING	GRADUATION/TRANSITION	OUTREACH	POLICY
Panel Member	Vivian Guerra (Lead), Tracy Dove, Shawn Ullman, and Courtney Hall	Molly Whalen (Lead), Andrew Reese, James Brook, and Tamera Brown (SAPSE Secretary)	Zalika Brown (Lead), Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas, Nicole Lee-Mwandha, Luis Morales and Aaron McCormick (SAPSE Vice Chair)	Julie Camerata (Lead), Dr. Kenneth Taylor, Amy Williamson Barrios, and Deon Woods Bell (SAPSE Chair)
Mission	<p>This subcommittee focuses on inclusion best practices and training for both educators and parents and the related data. By law, students with disabilities are supposed to be included in general education to the greatest extent possible. However, children with disabilities and their families continue to face significant barriers to accessing inclusive high quality inclusive education, and too many children with disabilities continue to receive special education services in separate settings. Inclusion in education is an approach to educating students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. Full Inclusion typically rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities. However, special education takes place on a continuum and a significant amount of training for general education teachers, special education teachers and parents is warranted for meaningful inclusion to become a reality in the District of Columbia. One idea that surfaced during SAPSE deliberations was how advantageous it would be for educators in DC to have to be trained--through mandatory teacher preparation, training, and technical assistance in accessibility and specialized education. Determining appropriate metrics for inclusion is also a focus, as well as seeking opportunities to train parents to understand the District of Columbia special education bureaucracy and how they might help their own children with disabilities.</p>	<p>This subcommittee focuses on graduation rates and related data as well as transitions and achievement data and under the SSIP and APR for students with disabilities. This subcommittee focuses not only on the federal expectations, but also on the necessary growth as determined by OSSE and other stakeholders. The subcommittee's goal was to provide feedback to OSSE regarding the graduation requirements and the status of secondary transition for DC students with disabilities. Students with disabilities and IEPs graduate at an incredibly low rate in DC. The District still does not meet its very modest goal for the percentage of students with IEPs who graduate within four years. In SY 2013, only 41% of students graduated in four years. The District has made tremendous gains regarding the development of transition plans, involvement of all necessary parties in the planning process, and post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities. However, there is still a lot of progress to be made. More details are provided in this report.</p>	<p>This subcommittee focuses on community outreach and parent engagement since parent engagement is critical to the success of all students, but especially students with disabilities. This subcommittee, together with the entire SAPSE, focuses on data and analysis regarding parental involvement. Currently, less than 10% of parents of children with disabilities return OSSE parental engagement surveys and the subcommittee seeks ways to increase these percentages. In this report, we outline the need for coordinated collaboration and new tools for parents to appropriately evaluate student success. We also suggest targeted parent resource colocation to facilitate a deeper understanding of substantive and procedural issues concerning disabilities rights.</p>	<p>This subcommittee focusses on providing feedback to the OSSE regarding District of Columbia initiatives that either result in policies, regulations and guidelines or have an impact on policies, regulations or guidelines as they pertain to students with disabilities. Notwithstanding, the Subcommittee acknowledges that it is not easy to obtain all information relevant to its mandate. The Subcommittee started its efforts by reviewing all APR Indicators data. Performance on Indicator #17 (SSIP) provided perspective given the comprehensive nature of the SSIP as a multiyear plan that focuses on improving result for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. Moving forward, this group hopes to ensure that disability-related policies, regulations and guidelines are promulgated with appropriate input from SAPSE in the early stages and/or prior to public release. SAPSE would also like to be engaged in the review process prior to implementation and other decision-making regarding policies, guidelines and regulations that impact students with disabilities and their families. This group also met with key stakeholders regarding policies, and reviews parent and community engagement policies/ strategies. In particular the committee attended community meetings and participated on panels in Wards 5, 7 and 8 and as well as meetings</p>

	INCLUSION/TRAINING	GRADUATION/TRANSITION	OUTREACH	POLICY
Priority Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee will research inclusion best practices resources and training ideas from other jurisdictions and thereafter disseminate to the SAPSE and other community stakeholders.</li> <li>• The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee plans to analyze data regarding inclusion practices (both classrooms and trainings) in DC and neighboring jurisdictions.</li> <li>• The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee plans to research and analyze data regarding the use of assistive technology and other tools in inclusive classrooms.</li> <li>• The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee plans to work with OSSE to facilitate LEA, teacher, administrator and parent (including SAPSE) training in inclusive practices.</li> <li>• The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee will attend community meetings and trainings to learn more about and share inclusion best practices information.</li> <li>• The SAPSE Inclusion and Training Subcommittee will write a SAPSE Annual report section focusing on inclusion.</li> </ul>	<p>Work with OSSE to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to achieve HS diploma.</p> <p>Work with OSSE to provide necessary support to middle schools and charter LEAs to ensure that when the transition age moves to 14 that the District continues its improved performance on indicator 13, in terms of ensuring development of transition plans for all youth by the age of 14.</p>	<p>Increase in quality communications and partnerships between parents, schools, other stakeholders and OSSE regarding the educational well-being of students with special education needs. (Engagement/Involvement)</p> <p>Parents and students should receive the needed support and obtain a clear understanding of early intervention supports, the process for obtaining an IEP and/or 504 and special education services available for students from early intervention through secondary education.</p>	<p>The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee will research and analyze special needs policies and guidelines and thereafter disseminate to the SAPSE and other community stakeholders.</p> <p>The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee plans to convene monthly teleconferences/meetings with OSSE officials and report to SAPSE regarding key policies and guidelines.</p> <p>The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee also plans to convene meetings with other key special needs and education stakeholders, including DCPS, Federal authorities, Other SAPSE bodies from neighboring jurisdictions, State Departments of Education, etc.</p> <p>The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee will develop and share talking points and other relevant information.</p> <p>The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee will distribute talking points and other relevant information to the SAPSE generally and the Outreach Sub-Committee more specifically so that they can share with the community, their constituents and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The SAPSE Policy Subcommittee will write a SAPSE Annual report section focusing on relevant policies, guidelines and regulations.</p>

	INCLUSION/TRAINING	GRADUATION/TRANSITION	OUTREACH	POLICY
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significantly increase the % of students w/ disabilities aged 6-21 served in the general education classrooms to 80% or more of the day.</li> <li>Measure and evaluate (a) the quality of the curriculum and intentional teaching (e.g., planning, delivering and evaluating instruction, relating positively to students and adults); and (b) environmental and structural quality indicators (e.g., physical environment, student-staff ratio, staff qualifications, communication and collaboration with families, administrative leadership, compensation).</li> <li>Ensure quality supports and services in general education classroom to access the general education curriculum are measured by research based methods.</li> <li>Increase ongoing professional development training to general educators, special education educators, and administrators on inclusive best practices in the classroom, non-academic activities, and extracurricular for teachers, parents and administrators.</li> <li>Increase the percentage of youth with disabilities engaged in post-secondary education and employment.</li> <li>Provide training on Person-Centered Thinking/Planning to local education agencies, self-advocates and families.</li> <li>Increase the percentage of youth with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities to be engaged in post-secondary education and employment opportunities.</li> <li>Support additional post-secondary options for students with disabilities that include community college and college credit based programs within the District. ( For example, George Mason University LIFE Program, Montgomery College, and Indiana University)</li> <li>Provide transition plans to return to the Least Restrictive Environment for students with disabilities that have been removed.</li> <li>Establish strong school relationships with parents/ caregivers and the community to learn and engage in inclusive practices.</li> <li>Increase English Learners (EL) student's further integration in inclusive classrooms.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Adopt the following be key guidelines/vision statements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students with disabilities will obtain a high school diploma which will allow them to obtain employment and secondary education; in addition to reaching productive and independent futures.</li> <li>Improved effective and guided secondary transition plans will support understanding the need for student self-advocacy, and understanding the process of transition towards productive livelihoods.</li> <li>Moreover, the Graduation/ Transition Subcommittee further recommends:</li> <li>OSSE should track students with disabilities who obtain a diploma in five or six years.</li> <li>OSSE should develop means of tracking not just compliance with the development of transition plans, but also some quality assessment of these plans.</li> <li>OSSE should track the number of students with disabilities who are able to enroll in the career and vocational courses.</li> <li>OSSE, DCPS and all Public Charter Schools should work with workforce agencies, including RSA and DOES Youth Services Programs to ensure that all students with disabilities have opportunities for work based learning experiences while they are in high school.</li> <li>OSSE increase efforts to get families involved early on the importance for effective and guided secondary transition plans, understanding the need for student self-advocacy, and understanding the process of transition, especially with the age of secondary transition moving to 14 (and beginning in middle school vs. high school) for DC.</li> <li>OSSE increase opportunities for supporting LEAs in designing real vocational training and career readiness courses for students with IEPs. (The current emphasis on college as the only successful path is prohibitive for students with disabilities receiving the support they need for productive and independent futures.)</li> </ul>	<p>OSSE should obtain additional demographic information in the Special Education Parent Survey.</p> <p>OSSE, DCPS and Public Charter Schools should increase efforts to collaborate with emergency shelter and transitional housing providers to target families experiencing homelessness and ensure that displaced students with special needs receive appropriate and timely supports.</p> <p>OSSE should support SAPSE's presence at EdFEST 2016</p> <p>OSSE should collaborate with SAPSE to ensure the Panel has marketing materials and is physically present with OSSE to distribute vital information in various formats.</p> <p>SAPSE and OSSE should facilitate and encourage collaboration between the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, community service providers and various relevant DC Government agencies to ensure that District Wards offer opportunities for parents to obtain essential information regarding the educational rights of students with disabilities.</p> <p>OSSE and SAPSE should convene a parent summit sharing special education best practices.</p> <p>SAPSE and other parents should be invited to OSSE trainings such as the LEA series, and other trainings currently provided to teachers and administrators.</p> <p>OSSE should partner with SAP to produce a one stop shop parent guide for due process and hearings</p>	<p>Provide the SAPSE, or a representative of the SAPSE, with a red-line copy of proposed changes of all policies and/or regulations pertaining to students with disabilities to be reviewed by the SAPSE Policy Subcommittee.</p> <p>Include the SAPSE, or a representative of the SAPSE, on any district-level correspondence regarding proposed policy changes.</p> <p>Create a briefing/overview paper for parents to explain any policy modifications</p> <p>Provide all materials to the SAPSE in a timely manner (ideally 30 days before any action is due).</p> <p>Assign an OSSE policy liaison to meet with a representative of the SAPSE on a monthly basis to discuss any upcoming policy changes.</p> <p>Provide explanations of all policies, guidelines and regulations in clear and concise English, and translations in Spanish and other community languages.</p> <p>Engage the community, in partnership with SAPSE, including special needs students and parents regarding OSSE and special needs policies and guidelines that impact the special needs community prior to finalization of the policies, guidelines and regulations.</p>

## APPENDIX D - SAPSE PANEL MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

### STATE ADVISORY PANEL (SAPSE) ON SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA | SY2015-2016

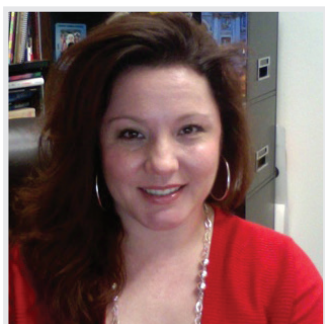


Deon Woods Bell, Parent  
SAPSE Chair  
Deon.bell@gmail.com

With almost twenty years of public and private sector experience and just as many years volunteering with local parent groups and non-profits as well as transnational organizations such as the Smithsonian Institution and Global Rights: Partners for Justice, Deon brings considerable expertise as the Chair of the State Advisory Panel on Special Education.

Notable is her extensive experience identifying key issues and opportunities for collaboration, negotiating complex commercial agreements, briefing high level officials on global policy matters, building coalitions, managing budgets as well as developing and implementing successful strategic plans amongst public sector, private sector and civil society entities within the U.S. and with countries throughout the world. Also of note and critical to her perspective and experience is her detailed and sustained engagement with local school-based organizations, volunteering as Chair and Treasurer of a DCPS PTO, Founder of a Bilingual Family Resource initiative, and Co-Founder of a Special Needs Committee.

The inspiration for her passion surrounding special needs and education are her autistic son and her hearing-impaired sister. Ms. Woods Bell lives in the District of Columbia together with her husband Christopher, and her three children.



Amy Barrios  
University of the District of Columbia  
amy.williamson@udc.edu

Dr. Amy Barrios serves as Division Chair of Education, Health and Social Work and Associate Professor of Education in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of the District of Columbia. The division, which is comprised of education, speech language pathology, social work and counseling programs, serves more than 200 students and more than 65 full time and part time faculty. Prior to moving to the DC area, Amy was a faculty member in the College of Education at Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas, and at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia. She began her education career as a high school English teacher in her hometown of Ashburn, Georgia. Amy's leadership in the field of education earned her a national Emerging Leader in Education award through Phi Delta Kappa in 2011, and she currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Association of Teacher Educators. Amy is certified as a teacher and administrator in more than a dozen areas and is passionate about ensuring teachers are prepared to address the diverse needs of today's student population. Her research interests include Literacy strategies, classroom diversity, curriculum development, teacher quality and preparation, online teaching, instructional leadership, and international education. Amy is a graduate of Baylor University.



James Brooks  
Department of Youth  
Rehabilitation Services (DYRS)  
jamesf.brooks@dc.gov

With over 14 years of experience in special education improvement, James F. Brooks brings expertise and experience in working with and training both school and organizational leaders around special education policy and implementation. Mr. Brooks has conducted investigations; reviewed special education complaints at the SEA level (OSSE); developed best practice trainings for principals and teachers on Part B General Supervision indicators under the IDEA; prepared corrective action plans; served as a liaison at mediations on behalf of DCPS; drafted monitoring reports and managed special education monitoring teams to perform site reviews at Public, Non-Public, Charter and Residential Treatment Facilities across the United States. Finally, Mr. Brooks drafted contractual agreements and reviewed attorney agreements on behalf of DCPS to avoid and diminish parental requests for due process hearings. Mr. Brooks, did a brief stint with his own education company Franklin & Brooks, LLC where he turned around a local charter school's special education program at two campuses; subsequently, returning to DCPS to assist with student retention and dropouts for regular and special education students while facilitating transfers with the assistance of DCPS Instructional Superintendents where students were victims of violent crimes within the school or surrounding communities. Presently, Mr. Brooks works with the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) as Head of Schools. In this capacity Mr. Brooks addresses all education issues from GED, Special Education, Regular Education and Higher Education as it relates to youth associated with the agency. As a graduate of The Catholic University of America and The UDC, David Clarke School of Law, Mr. Brooks can be considered an expert in the field of education.



Tamara Brown  
Parent  
tameraab@aol.com

Tamera (Tami) Brown was raised in Washington, DC. As a mother of twin sons with learning differences, Tami Brown has worked to learn what her children's rights to an appropriate education really meant. She took on her most important job of making sure their rights and needs were met. She gave advice to friends and many other people on questions to ask and how to get questions answered in Individual Education Plan meetings. Soon after, Tami was nominated and served on the Board of Directors of the Kingsbury Center for six years. Tami has served on the Board of The Madeira School, and is currently serving on the Board of Trustees of the Delaware Bioscience Industry.

Professionally, Tami joined Merck & Co., Inc. in 1997 as a Pharmaceutical Representative in Washington, DC and earned many awards in that capacity. As an award-winning representative in the sales arena, Tami continued to present herself as a leader on Merck's DC sales team.

In 2009, Tami joined the State Government Affairs and Policy department of Merck as Manager of Government Affairs covering the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. She lobbied the Executive and Legislative branches of state governments, represented the industry through industry associations and built coalitions on issues. In 2010, Tami was elected Chair of the District of Columbia PhRMA Task Force and in the following years, took on the responsibility for the states of Delaware, and West Virginia.

Tami graduated from The Madeira School in McLean, Virginia and Boston University. She works tirelessly to help her adult sons advocate for themselves as they continue their education while attending college.



Julie Camerata  
Charter School Representative  
and Parent  
jcamerata@specialedcoop.org

As Executive Director of the DC Special Education Co-operative (the Co-op) for the past 11 years, Julie has led the design, delivery of high quality technical assistance to member LEAs. She has experience with program development and program restructuring. Julie spends the majority of her time trouble-shooting for and collaborating with DC School Leaders and Special Education Administrators regarding their special education services. She has liaised with city agencies and community stakeholders on behalf of all DC charter schools to ensure charter school engagement and representation in policy discussions. For the past 6 years, Julie has delivered training at the local and national level. She has led "start up" workshops for new charters and has presented at the National Alliance's conference on 3 occasions. In 2010, Julie co-developed and implemented the Co-op's ASSIST DC graduate-level training program for special education assistants at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. In 2011, Julie co-led a comprehensive special education program review for an LEA in danger of revocation. She co-developed the review process, conducted LEA staff interviews, and analyzed data from DC's Special Education Data System (SEDS). In 2013, Julie co-developed the training for The Office of the State Superintendent's newly developed Special Education Quality Review tool. Prior to joining the Co-op, she worked in the District's traditional, non-public, and charter schools as a special education teacher and administrator.

Julie has a master's degree in Transition Special Education from George Washington University in Washington, DC (1999) and a Bachelors of Arts in Politics from Oberlin College (1994).



Betsy Centofanti  
Administrator and SAPSE Emeritus  
blcentofanti@gmail.com

With several years of experience as a Board Member and Board Chair of an Inclusion-Model school for students with and without special needs, Betsy Centofanti brings an understanding of education administration issues to the panel.

Notable is her involvement as a parent in Ward 5.



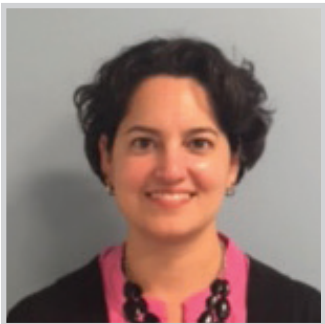
Brianna Copley  
Teacher  
Brianna.Copley@dc.gov

With several years of experience as a teacher at Ballou High School working in a self-contained classroom with special needs, Brianna Copley brings an understanding of education instruction and administration issues to the panel.



Tracy Dove  
Parent  
Tracydove00@gmail.com

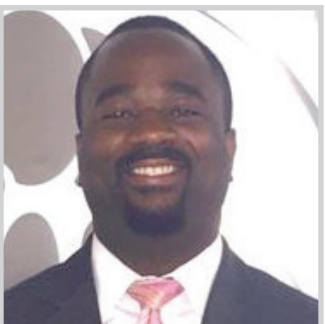
With several years of experience as a teacher at a Public Charter School in the District, Tracy Dove brings an understanding of education administration issues to the panel. Notable is her involvement as a parent in Ward 5.



Vivian Guerra  
Disability Program Development  
Specialist and Parent  
Vguerra0873@yahoo.com

Vivian Guerra is a 15 year District resident and parent of two children, one of whom has an intellectual/developmental disability. Her children have attended both DCPS and DC public charter schools. Vivian works for the DC Department on Disability Services as a Program Development Specialist and the Outreach Lead for the District's No Wrong Door project, a citywide initiative to implement a single system that provides easy and reliable access to a full range of long-term supports and services for all populations, which are person and family centered, culturally and linguistically responsive and coordinated across a person's life. Previously, Vivian worked at the DC Office of Planning as the Ward 1 Neighborhood Planner, and worked in the field of international development at Chemonics International and the Inter-American Development Bank. Vivian Guerra brings with her over 15 years of experience in positions involving strategic planning, community development, and project management. For the last 5 years, she has matched her leadership and development skills to the challenges of removing barriers to achieving meaningful inclusive education practices for children with disabilities, as well as supporting the empowerment, and independence of all individuals with disabilities.

Vivian has a dual undergraduate degree in Economics and International Studies from George Mason University and a Master's in Community Planning from the University of Maryland, College Park. She enjoys international travel, spending time with family, and cooking.



Courtney Hall  
Deputy Director – Program Operations  
DC Child & Family Services Agency,  
Courtney.Hall3@dc.gov

With 13 years of experience in the Public Child Welfare field, Courtney Hall brings a deep understanding of Child Welfare leadership issues to his work.

Notable is his involvement as Deputy Director for the Office of Program Operations at the Child and Family Services Agency – D.C.



Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas  
Parent  
r.hilighthomas@gmail.com

Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas has over 20 years of direct legal experience working in the District of Columbia's legal services community. She is currently the Interim Executive Director of Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE), the Parent Training and Information Center for D.C. As the former Director of Legal Services and Advocacy and Senior Staff Attorney at AJE, Ms. Hiligh-Thomas spent over the last twelve years representing hundreds of parents and students in school discipline, special education and other educational matters. In addition she has provided extensive training to parents, youth, school staff and other professionals in those same areas. Within the last seven years, Ms. Hiligh-Thomas has focused her efforts in developing a robust school discipline project to provide critical legal services to students, particularly those with disabilities, who are facing suspension and expulsion from D.C.'s public schools.

Prior to joining AJE, Ms. Hiligh-Thomas was the Assistant Director for Legal Operations at the Neighborhood Legal Services Program of D.C. where she spent over seven years providing free legal services to low income D.C. residents in various areas of the law at the administrative, trial court and appellate levels. Ms. Hiligh-Thomas holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Tuskegee University and a law degree from the District of Columbia School of Law. She is currently co-chair of the steering committee of the D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers and is a long standing appointed parent member of the D.C. State Advisory Panel on Special Education. Ms. Hiligh-Thomas is the proud mother of four children who attend a public school in D.C., one of whom has special needs.



Nicole Lee-Mwandha  
OSSE-McKinney-Vento  
Nicole.Lee-mwandha@dc.gov

With eighteen years of experience in the educational and youth development field, Nicole Lee-Mwandha's career has taken her from youth development work in St. Lucia as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, to empowering incarcerated youth with media advocacy tools and leadership skills, to advocating for homeless students in the District of Columbia's public schools and public charter schools as the District's Homeless Education State Coordinator. She brings a wealth of advocacy and community outreach expertise to her current board position as an appointed member of the State Advisory Panel (SAPSE), representing state and local education officials who carry out activities of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Notable is her concurrent appointed board position with the District of Columbia Interagency Coordinating Council (DC ICC).



Aaron McCormick  
Parent  
Aaron.Mccormick@dcbc.dc.gov

With 15 years of experience in the construction management field, Aaron McCormick brings fifteen years of experiences in special education due to a personal connection with his child with special needs who is attending a District of Columbia Public School.

Notable is his involvement as a board member for the Southwest Families Collaborative, Inc., and Founder of the Mentoring Group at Perry Street Preparatory Charter School, and as well as President of PTO at H.D. Cooke Elementary School from 2006 to 2007.



Luis Morales  
Department of Behavioral Health  
Luis.Morales3@dc.gov

With 16 years of experience in the field of Clinical Social Work, Luis Andres Morales brings considerable expertise treating children and adolescents experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Depression, Anxiety, ADHD, OCD and ODD; as well as adults and families dealing with issues of Depression, Anxiety and Trauma.

Mr. Morales began his career as a Social Worker with the Puerto Rico Department of Families. Soon after he moved to Apopka, Florida, where he served as an AmeriCorp Volunteer for two years. He then moved to Washington, D.C., and worked at La Clinica del Pueblo as Director of the Social Services Department. Since 2006 he has been working for the Department of Behavioral Health as a Clinical Social Worker, first with the D.C. CSA and then with the School Mental Health Program. Mr. Morales was awarded the NASW Social Worker of the Year Public Agency Award of 2011 for the high caliber of his work.

Currently a Supervisory Social Worker with the D.C. Department of Behavioral Health School Mental Health Program, Mr. Morales leads a group of clinicians that provide mental health services to children and adolescents attending D.C. Public and charter schools. Mr. Morales is a Board Member for Notre Dame AmeriCorp Volunteers, and served as a Neighborhood Advisory Commissioner for Columbia Heights, from 2008 to 2010.



Andrew Reese  
Interim Director, Department on  
Disability Services and Parent  
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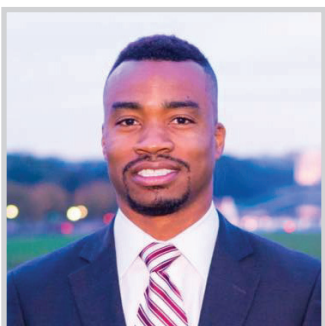
Andrew Reese was appointed by Mayor Bowser as the Interim Director of the Department on Disability Services on April 22, 2016. Immediately prior to this he had served as the Deputy Director of the Department on Disability Services (DDS), responsible for the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) since December, 2012. RSA is the District agency responsible for vocational rehabilitation services (VR) in the District. These services help people with disabilities obtain, retain, regain or advance in employment.

Prior to being appointed as the Deputy Director for DDS, Mr. Reese served as the Deputy General Counsel for DDS, primarily responsible for RSA legal matters. Mr. Reese worked with the DC Office of the Attorney General from 2003-4, in the Child Protection Section. He returned to the Office of the Attorney General in 2008, as the Deputy Attorney General for the Family Services Division, responsible for the Domestic Violence, Mental Health and Child Protection Litigation Sections.

Mr. Reese is an attorney, admitted to the bar in DC and MD, and a licensed clinical social worker. He has worked in both the public and non-profit sectors, as well as serving ten years as a clinical instructor on the faculty of the University of MD at Baltimore, in the School of Social Work and the Law School, and working as a sole practitioner in the District, representing parents and acting as a Guardian ad litem for child in the foster care system. While on the faculty at the University of MD, Mr. Reese served as the Chair of a disability advocacy organization, the AIDS Legislative Committee, from 1996 through 2002.

Mr. Reese received his JD from the University of MD School of Law, his Masters in Social Work from Howard University and his Bachelor of Science in Family Studies from the University of MD, College Park.

Mr. Reese is a life-long resident of the DC Metro area. He currently lives in Ward 4. He and his partner have an 18 year old son with disabilities who graduated in June 2015 from Wilson High School.



Kenneth Taylor, Ph.D.  
U.S. Department of Education  
Federal Liaison,  
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With more than 14 years of experience in education administration, Kenneth Taylor, Ph.D., brings considerable experience in policy and the design, implementation, and evaluation educational programs at the local, state, and federal levels. In 2008, he began his tenure with the U.S. Department of Education as a data analyst before ascending into his current role as the senior quality control analyst with the Office of Federal Student Aid.

Kenneth is the founder of the Partnership for Education Growth Systems (PEGS), to bridge the pipeline between industry and minority youth in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Notable is Kenneth's volunteer involvement with the Washington Mathematics Science and Technology Public Charter School, elected officer with his chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and a frequent speaker at area high schools and educational organizations.



Molly Whalen  
Special Needs Advocate and Parent  
dc.whalen@verizon.net

Molly is a results-driven nonprofit leader and seasoned facilitator & public speaker with nearly 30 years of experience. She is a graduate of the University of Virginia, and most recently served as the Director of Development & Communications for The Ivymount School & Programs; where she led all development, communications and external relations efforts during a time of incredible growth for the school.

A life-long volunteer, she has worked as a volunteer and board member for several local and national organizations; including the Bridges Public Charter School, DC Special Education Co-Operative, Fight for Children Quality Schools Initiative, and the Make A Wish Foundation. She is currently serving as a member of the State Advisory Panel (SAPSE) for Special Education in the District of Columbia, which she was appointed by Mayor Adrian Fenty in 2007, and led as Chair from 2008-2012. She was appointed and served on the DC Mayoral Education Transition Executive Committee in 2011.

Molly is a member of the strategic development team who piloted and designed sensory friendly programming for families with children with special needs at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. She has a passion for improving the environment of special education for all stakeholders, and creating a positive experience for parents and families of children with special needs within the Washington DC metropolitan area educational community. In 2011 she was honored with the St. John's Community Service Advocacy Award for her service in supporting individuals with disabilities.



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