# DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE ADVISORY PANEL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION



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 The District of Columbia John A. Wilson Building 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20004

**The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chair** Council of the District of Columbia 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 504 Washington, DC 20004

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and ra

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# **STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR - NEW SAPSE DIRECTIONS FOR 2016-2017**

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

The District of Columbia State Advisory Panel for Special Education (SAPSE) is a federally mandated entity, pursuant to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires each state to operate an advisory panel. The SAPSE serves as the advisory body to the mayor and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) - the District's state education agency - as well as other related education agencies.

The SAPSE's primary responsibility is to advise regarding policies and best practices that help students with disabilities obtain academic success. Toward this end, the SAPSE advises concerning the unmet needs of students with disabilities, including the development of evaluations, reports, corrective action plans in response to federal monitoring, as well as the implementation of new policies and procedures for students with disabilities with accountability and fidelity. A unique feature of the SAPSE is that it is a multi-stakeholder body; the majority of SAPSE membership includes parents of children with disabilities, educators, DC and federal government officials, and education advocates. A summary of SAPSE activities, findings and recommendations are included in this report.

The panel worked closely with OSSE on key priority initiatives it considers critical from the perspectives of parents of children with disabilities. During the fiscal year, the SAPSE implemented priority action plans focusing on four key areas: special education policies/ regulations and key stakeholder engagement; 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 made recommendations for each priority area, with an emphasis on graduation and transition services and inclusion best practices. In addition to monthly meetings and numerous community meetings, the SAPSE also submitted comments on DC's State Education Plan required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); formally participated in a DC Council Special Needs Roundtable and the DC Parent Summit; convened an inclusion roundtable; and facilitated a meeting to hear directly from youth impacted by special education services, with an emphasis on the importance of youth self-determination and self-advocacy.

The District of Columbia has made tremendous gains with regard to special education. However, students in the District of Columbia continue to face significant barriers to graduating from high school, accessing high-quality inclusive education, and evidence-based best practices instruction. SAPSE looks forward to collaborating with OSSE and other stakeholders to continue to address salient issues for students with disabilities, such as low graduation rates, transition plans for higher education and employment, training for teachers and parents, and engagement of parents and the 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, Secondary, and Specialized Education, as well as our OSSE staff liaison, Sheryl Hamilton, director of Community Learning and School Support, and Adrienne Rodriguez, education program specialist. This report also commends 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 SAPSE regrets that, despite considerable efforts, we continue to struggle to secure panelists from the beginning of the school year and to obtain meaningful participation from some colleagues. The SAPSE and OSSE will continue to work with the Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments (MOTA) to streamline processes and find candidates interested in effectively contributing to work of the panel.

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, data and attended numerous briefings and community meetings. The 2016-17 school year 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 better inform our recommendations to OSSE and other stakeholders. Indeed, this year was very productive. Many SAPSE colleagues went beyond the call of duty to ensure that the panel actively focused on issues most relevant to students with disabilities. Panel members and subcommittee leadership included: Aaron McCormick (vice chair), Julie Camerata (policy subcommittee chair), Vivian Guerra (inclusion subcommittee chair), Molly Whalen (graduation/transition subcommittee chair), Nicole Lee-Mwandha (outreach subcommittee chair), Andrew Reese, Kenneth Taylor, Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas, Jennifer Halper, Latoria Brent, Tracy Dove, Luis Morales, Courtney Hall, Isaacba Davies, Matthew McCall, Pamela Downing-Hosten, Clifford Waddy and Amy Williamson Barrios. We also wish to acknowledge new panel members Katie Holloran, An Almquist, and Megan Dho. 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,

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**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, 2017

Greetings Members of the State Special Advisory Panel for Special Education (SAPSE),

On behalf of the District of Columbia (District) Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), I want to thank you for your continued service and hard work in the 2016-17 school year. The unique perspective you bring to our discussions continues to be a valuable part of OSSE's efforts to develop effective strategies to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities and has informed several policy improvements and considerations and ensures that our policies.

As we continue our collaborative work, it is encouraging to see that we have made progress on several key indicators for children with individualized education programs (IEPs); including rate of graduation, participation in the annual reading and math assessments, proficiency against grade level, modified and alternate academic achievement standards, and percent of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 served inside the regular class 80 percent or more of the day. Still, we are mindful that the data indicates a need to focus on improvements in the disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories and post-secondary outcomes.

This year, with input from the Panel, OSSE continued to refine plans for the District's State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). The SSIP is 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. Additionally, public comment on Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) gave OSSE much to consider as we drafted the state plan. Your questions and recommendations continue to help us think through additional mechanisms to accelerate improvement and prioritize our work moving forward.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with the SAPSE in the 2017-18 school year as we work toward improving educational outcomes for children, and we thank you for your willingness to volunteer and serve on behalf of students with disabilities.

Respectfully,

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 DCPS, OSSE, 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 2016-2017 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 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. In December 2015, Congress passed the <u>Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)</u>, 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 validated framework for guiding educational practice that, (a) provides flexibility in the way information is presented, students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and 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 unmet needs of children with disabilities in the District of Columbia have been well documented. Moreover, the needs of many students and their families are currently unmet in many of the key priority areas outlined in this report. These circumstances notwithstanding, improvements are being made. The panel 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 each state and the District of Columbia, to 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 SAPSE. For the 2016-17 school year, SAPSE subcommittees were structured as follows:

#### **Subcommittees**

SAPSE continued using four subcommittees, in addition to the standing executive committee, to conduct much of the work of the SAPSE. These include: (1) Policy, Regulation and Key Stakeholder Engagement, (2) Graduation/Transitions, (3) Inclusion and Training, and (4) Outreach and Parent Engagement. The work of the standing executive committee and the four subcommittees are consistent with the priorities of OSSE and parents' perspectives regarding disabilities issues.

Each SAPSE member is assigned to subcommittees based upon expertise, interests, and concerns. Each subcommittee is led by a member of the SAPSE, with the SAPSE chair providing input and feedback for all subcommittees. Subcommittees take the lead in developing priority action plans and making recommendations to the full panel. 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. During the course of the 2016-17 school year, OSSE personnel provided several technical briefings/trainings to the SAPSE.

**Executive:** The executive committee includes the chair, the vice-chair, and secretary. The committee establishes priorities for meeting agendas and provides overall direction to the SAPSE, as well as feedback to subcommittees. Each committee member participates as a member on another subcommittee. The chair also interfaces with OSSE and 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 transition 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 school 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 the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), parental involvement, discipline of students with disabilities, assessments, school dropout rates, graduation rates, and transitions. Finally, the Committee engaged in discussions with key stakeholders in OSSE, DCPS, Charter Schools and State Board of Education, the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and education advocacy groups to improve understanding of the unmet needs of students with disabilities.

**Graduation and Transitions:** This subcommittee concentrates on graduation rates and related data, as well as secondary transition and achievement data 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 Individualized education programs (IEP) 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 2015-15 school year, only 46.28 percent of students with IEPs graduated in four years. While this is an improvement over past years, the number remains low and should be targeted for improvement by OSSE. 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 to become more in compliance. However, there is still much progress to be made. More details for suggestions and recommendations from the SAPSE are provided in this report.

**Inclusion and Training:** The subcommittee focuses on inclusive best practices. Under the IDEA, students with disabilities have a right to be educated in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. However, students with disabilities within the District continue to face significant barriers to accessing high-quality inclusive education. The review of data is critical to informing individuals of the landscape of inclusion within the District of Columbia.

**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 percent 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 evaluate student success appropriately. We also suggest targeted parent resource colocation to facilitate a deeper understanding of substantive and procedural issues concerning disabilities rights.



# OVERVIEW OF 2016-2017 OSSE DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND SPECIALIZED EDUCATION UPDATES

#### **Division of Elementary, Secondary and Specialized Education**

OSSE's Division of Elementary, Secondary, and Specialized Education (ESSE) works to ensure that core K-12 work is fully coordinated across the agency and that use of talent, knowledge and resources is maximized. Among the division's desired outcomes is the use of data to identify and address challenges, and accelerate outcomes, while allowing ESSE to provide comprehensive citywide supports for students K-12.

#### DC's New State Education Plan: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

As required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), OSSE is charged with developing the ESSA state education plan for DC. OSSE facilitated a thorough and transparent process while designing the plan, and engaged a diverse group of education stakeholders including the SAPSE. The public comment period on the ESSA State Plan lasted from Jan. 30 to March 3, 2017. OSSE and the State Board of Education hosted a series of community-based meetings in each ward in February 2017, including a meeting in Ward 7 at the request of the SAPSE. During these meetings, OSSE presented the proposed ESSA consolidated plan and provided the public the opportunity to express comments and ask questions. OSSE consolidated major pieces of feedback that were consistently heard throughout. OSSE believes that the feedback gathered was constructive and helpful in making the state plan stronger. The input received from all stakeholders was used to inform the writing of the plan. Resources, updates, and meeting recaps for these activities may be found on OSSE's website at www.osse.dc.gov/essa. This proposed plan is intended to not only sustain, but also accelerate and deepen the progress being made in our schools to support all of our students.

#### **Inclusion Efforts**

In the 2016-17 school year, OSSE implemented its annual three-part institute series to support 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 67 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. OSSE encouraged school teams to attend this event.

# LEA Institute I: 'It Takes a City: Bridging LEAs to Resources for Enhanced Student Outcomes'

On Nov. 29, 2016, OSSE held its LEA Institute titled, 'It Takes a City: Bridging LEAs to Resources for Enhanced Student Outcomes.' Since the 2014-15 school year, OSSE has brought educators, administrators, and other stakeholders together to bring awareness of District resources, important initiatives, and best practices in education through the LEA Institute. The goal of these offerings is to support and facilitate improved educational outcomes for all students attending public school in DC. Mirroring its first and very successful institute, this institute brought together LEA teams to hear from and engage with representatives from key District agencies and discussed how to remove barriers to student achievement. This event was designed to meet a pressing need expressed by educators for:

- More information about what resources are available from non-educational service providers;
- Better coordination between schools and agencies;
- Clear, updated points of contact; and
- A commitment to problem solving around longstanding, complex challenges.

Reducing barriers to learning was highlighted in Session C: Behavioral Crises in Schools: Supporting Children's Social and Emotional Needs. The following five levels of intervention were discussed:

- Primary Prevention: Intervention strategies for all students to prevent mental health, behavioral, and social issues before they occur.
- Early Intervention Services: These services are provided at the first occurrence of emotional, behavioral, or social concerns (e.g., Primary Project).
- Treatment Services: Treatment includes individual, family, and group therapy.
- Crisis Services: Interventions are provided for urgent situations and needs. Services include crisis debriefing, grief counseling, and psychiatric referrals.
- Parent/Family Support: Educational, supportive, and treatment services are provided for families.

# LEA Institute II: 'It Takes a City to Ensure Every Student Succeeds'

On Feb. 28, 2017, OSSE held its LEA Institute, titled "It Takes a City to Ensure Every Student Succeeds," at the Kellogg Conference Hotel at Gallaudet University.

On Dec. 10, 2015, President Obama signed ESSA, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. ESSA creates an important opportunity for education leaders and practitioners to work together to leverage and expand upon current reform efforts. The focus of the February 2017 LEA Institute was ESSA transition and implementation. Intended outcomes for Institute participants include:

- Gain an understanding of ESSA requirements;
- Learn about DC's new State Education Plan: Meeting the Needs of All Learners through ESSA;
- Determine their readiness for ESSA implementation at the local and school level;
- Provide input on specific policy areas of DC's new state plan; and
- Give feedback on OSSE's plan for LEA transition support.

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

On May 25 2017, OSSE's Division of Early Learning teamed up with ESSE 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 <u>Special Education and Positive Behavior Support</u> <u>Workshop Session training</u> were offered:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) & Growth Mindset: The Practice of Creating Accessibility for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities;
- Schoolwide Behavior Supports to Include All Students: Teacher Action Research Plans for Professional Development;
- Intersections of Discipline, Disabilities & English Language Learners;
- Innovative Approaches for Reaching Divergent Learners;
- Implementing Essential Inclusive Practices to Improve Outcomes for All Learners; and
- Understanding Why Parent and Family Engagement is so Important to Healthy Child Development.

### **Policy Updates**

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

#### a. Non-Regulatory Guidance: School Discipline

On June 29, 2016, OSSE published non-regulatory guidance to assist LEAs in meeting their obligations with federal and local laws and regulations regarding the administration of student discipline. To ensure that all students are provided with equal access to educational opportunities, it is important to avoid student discipline policies that have a disproportionate impact on any group of students, including students with disabilities, and instead, create learning environments that will allow all students to thrive. This guidance provides LEAs and schools with an overview of federal and local laws that affect school discipline, key frameworks for understanding and addressing behavior, recommended practices, and a range of local and national resources. A section of the guidance is dedicated to discipline of students with disabilities, including a review of major anti-discrimination laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, with particular focus on discipline actions resulting in a change in placement and manifestation determinations. The guidance is available on the OSSE website.

#### b. Educational Decision-Making and Transfer of Educational Rights

The Special Education Student Rights Act of 2014 required changes to the local transfer of rights process under the IDEA. Regulations governing the transfer of educational rights to students with disabilities upon reaching the age of majority went into effect on July 1, 2016, after two public comment periods (July 24, 2015 through August 5, 2015 and May 13, 2016 through May 27, 2016). The final rules deleted the prior § 3023 "Transfer of Rights" and replaced it with the following sections: § 3034 "Transfer of Rights: General Provisions and Supported Decision-Making"; § 3035 "Transfer of Rights: Exceptions"; and § 3036 "Transfer of Rights: Notice". The regulations establish the OSSE procedure for appointing an educational representative for an adult student with a disability who is determined to be unable to provide informed consent, as well as addressing supported decision-making. OSSE developed required and model forms to assist IEP teams with supported decision-making and assist the community with the educational representative appointment process. These forms and additional information on the transfer of educational rights process can be found on the OSSE website.

#### **Graduation & Secondary Transition**

#### c. Secondary Transition:

OSSE continued its efforts to support the implementation of effective secondary transition. On March 10, 2017, OSSE participated in an inter-agency collaborative effort, joining SchoolTalk (a local entity that helps members of the DC special education community), students, families, schools, government agencies and community organizations at the Eighth Annual Voices of Change Youth conference held at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center to address each stage of conflict constructively. Participants were introduced to materials, resources and supports through OSSE's secondary transition public awareness campaign. More than 400 students and 70+ teachers attended the all-day event. This year, Quality Trust and Advocates for Justice in Education collaborated to run the parent track for the event, which included sessions targeted to specific parental concerns for transition age youth with disabilities. More than 75 parents attended the event to gain more knowledge and information about secondary transition for students with disabilities.

#### d. DC Secondary Transition Institute:

ESSE hosted a <u>DC Secondary Transition Institute on June 8 and 9</u> for interested LEAs. Over the course of two days, participants received information about secondary transition for students with disabilities through inspiring keynote speakers, rich content sessions, thought-provoking panels, and will be given the opportunity to gather resources and meet with individuals from across the District who are working diligently to improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.

#### e. OSSE Update Regarding Special Education Law Enactment:

In 2014, the DC Council passed legislation which indicated that 1) beginning July 1, 2017, or upon funding, whichever occurs later, LEAs would be required to evaluate a student who may have a disability and who may require special education services within 60 days from the date that the student's parent or guardian provides consent for the evaluation or assessment (rather than the current requirement of 120 days from referral to eligibility determination); and 2) beginning July 1, 2016, or upon funding, whichever occurs later, the first IEP in effect after a child with a disability reaches 14 years of age shall include transition assessments and services (rather than the current requirement of 16 years of age).

It was subsequently determined that these requirements will not go into effect for the 2017-18 school year; instead, OSSE indicates that these requirements are expected to be in effect by July 1, 2018, prior to the 2018-19 school year. OSSE is moving forward with efforts to ensure that LEAs are equipped to fully transition to these new requirements for initial evaluation and for secondary transition. Specifically, OSSE is setting aside dedicated funding for which LEAs can apply to support planning in the 2017-18 school year and implementation in the 2018-19 school year. The funding would be distributed on a formula basis to those LEAs that apply.

LEAs that access these funds will engage with OSSE in a bi-annual data review process to review metrics related to evaluation timelines and middle school secondary transition, and will receive technical assistance support needed to help meet the new requirements. This review process will help OSSE and LEAs understand each LEA's needs related to practice changes and the fiscal impact of these changes.

#### f. State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP):

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)/APR, there will be broad strategies with detailed improvement activities.

The multi-year plan has three phases. Phase I, submitted to United Stated Department of Education on April 1, 2015, included data analysis, identification of the focus for improvement, infrastructure to support improvement and built capacity, and a theory of action. Phase II, submitted to the department of education on April 1, 2016, included infrastructure development, supported LEA implementation of evidence-based practices, and an evaluation plan. This year, Phase III, submitted on March 29, 2017, included a detailed update of implementation progress, discussion of results and data collected to conduct an evaluation of fidelity implementation, and enumeration of implementation plans for the 2017-18 school year.

In developing each of the SSIP reports, OSSE held several inperson meetings and webinars with a variety of stakeholder groups, which 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 Division of Postsecondary and Career Education, the Special Education Cooperative (a professional development network for public charter schools, the District of Columbia Association for Special Education (an association of nonpublic special education schools), along with parents and community stakeholders.

On March 9, 2017, the SAPSE participated in a presentation by OSSE staff on APR/SPP, which included review and discussion of SSIP and the plans for the 2017-18 school year.

#### Outreach

#### g. Annual Parent Survey

On July 6, 2016, 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 department of education each February. This confidential survey was made available in electronic and hardcopy formats. Hard copy surveys were mailed to the home of students receiving services during the 2015 – 16 school year. The online survey can be viewed by the following link: <u>https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/53DV5L9</u>.

While targeted strategies resulted in decreased responses as reported in the most recent APR, 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.

#### h. Parent Summit

OSSE hosted its Parent and Family Engagement Summit on Oct. 22, 2016 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. The summit provided an opportunity for OSSE to engage families as partners in education, provided resources and supported

parents to have access to learn about a high quality education for their children, in accordance with the parental engagement provisions of ESEA and IDEA. The summit supports the following goals of ESSE's Family and Community Engagement Partnership Framework.

- Establish enhanced partnerships with community partners that enhance coordination in support of families.
- Create city-wide parent and student advisory panels to inform the agency's work and to assist in the dissemination of information to families.
- Provide training and technical assistance to parents on their rights and on effective ways to navigate the educational system to support their children.

The summit included opportunities for parents and other family members to:

- Learn about ESSA and the State Education Plan/Strategic Plan learn about their rights as parents
- Learn how to navigate the education system to get support for their children
- Learn strategies and best practices to support learning at home and school to increase academic achievement
- Be informed about 21st Century Community Learning Centers that provide extended learning opportunities during non-school hours (before and after-school and during the summer); and
- Learn, share, and be empowered

Sessions offered included:

3.

- 1. Meet the State Advisory Panel on Special Education (SAPSE)
- 2. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Parent Feedback
  - Accessing Early Education: Why Quality Matters
- 4. The Value of Family Engagement in a Child's Education
- 5. Blast off with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)!
- 6. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) for Parents: A Workshop on the District's Next Generation Assessment
- 7. Pre-Employment Transition Services
- 8. Preparing DC's Students to be College and Career Ready
- 9. Student Health and Wellness
- 10. Supporting English Learners: An Overview of Services for Students Learning English in DC Schools
- 11. The Benefits of After-school and Summer Learning Program
- 12. Are You Experiencing Homelessness? Know Your Educational Rights!

Overall, parents and families actively participated in the sessions and provided meaningful feedback. The feedback informed OSSE's development of the new State Education Plan which is designed to deliver quality education and services to DC youths and create pathways for all students to be college and career and ready.



# SPECIAL EDUCATION DATA FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The SAPSE reviewed a tremendous amount of data during FY 2016-17. Most significantly, the SAPSE reviewed data relating to the key priorities addressed by the SAPSE including the number of students with IEPs; the number of students educated in the 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 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 requires states to report on their performance against the targets outlined in the SPP for each indicator via the APR, and uses the results from this report to make an annual determination of DC's overall performance. The following charts are excerpts from the draft APR that led the SAPSE to create targeted subcommittees that are described throughout this report.

DATE	DESCRIPTION	DATA
7/14/2016	Total number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21	10,787
7/14/2016	A. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 inside the regular class 80% or more of the day	5,986
7/14/2016	B. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 inside the regular class less than 40% of the day	1,871
7/14/2016	c1. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 in separate schools	1,030
7/14/2016	c2. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 in residential facilities	46
7/14/2016	c3. Number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 in homebound/hospital placements	5

According to the OSSE EDFacts Report, the archived data for total number of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 was 10,764 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 chart is a summary of the District's performance provided in its report submission to the USED Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). This excerpt from the APR led to the conversations which ultimately drove the SAPSE to create subcommittees which will be explored throughout this report.

#### Graduation: Indicator 1 and 2

INDICATORS	FFY 2014	2015 TARGET	FFY 2015	MET/NOT MET
Indicator 1: Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma.	40.88%	49.8%	46.28%	PROGRESS
Indicator 2: Percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.	8.08%	5.3%	23.79%	SLIPPAGE

# Policy and Inclusion: Indicator 3A and 3B

INDICATORS	FFY 2014	2015 TARGET	FFY 2015	MET/NOT MET
Indicator 3A: Percent of the districts with a disability subgroup that meets the State's minimum "n" size (25 students with IEPs) that meet the State's AYP targets for the disability subgroup.	FFY 2014: Not Applicable per guidance received from OSEP on 12/22/2015 that states would not be required to submit AMOs for SY 2014-15 and SY2015-16.	22%	FFY 2015: Not Applicable per guidance received from OSEP on 12/22/2015 that states would not be required to submit AMOs for SY 2014- 15 and SY2015-16.	NO CHANGE
Indicator 3B: Participation rate for children with IEPs in reading and in math.	FFY 2014 Reading: 87.59% – new baseline – first year of PARCC administration FFY 2014 Math: 86.12% - new baseline – first year of PARCC administration	95%	FFY 2015 Reading: 90.95% FFY 2015 Math: 91.51%	PROGRESS

# Inclusion: Indicator 5 and 6

INDICATORS	FFY 2014	2015 TARGET	FFY 2015	MET/NOT MET
Indicator 5A: Percent of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 served inside the regular class 80% or more of the day.	FFY 2014: 54.59%	56%	FFY 2015: 55.61%	PROGRESS
Indicator 5B: Percent of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 served inside the regular class less than 40% of the day.	FFY 2014: 15.24%	15%	FFY 2015: 17.38%	SLIPPAGE
Indicator 5C: Percent of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 served in separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound/hospital placements.	FFY 2014: 11.53%	13%	FFY 2015: 10.04%	PROGRESS
Indicator 6A: Percent of children aged 3 through 5 with IEPs served in the regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program.	FFY 2014: 48.99%	57%	FFY 2015: 43.17%	SLIPPAGE Note: It is likely that the use of the extended Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) option is impacting this indicator, as more children age 3-4 are remaining in early intervention; however, be have not yet analyzed the data.
Indicator 6B: Percent of children aged 3 through 5 with IEPs within separate special education class, separate school, or residential facilities.	FFY 2014: 4.34%	14%	FFY 2015: 7.75%	SLIPPAGE Note: It is likely that the use of the extended IFSP option is impacting this indicator, as more children age 3-4 are remaining in early intervention; however, be have not yet dug into the data.

# SUBCOMMITTEE PRIORITY ACTION PLANS, GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Panelists examined and listened to reports regarding the Part B APR and SSIP. They also have 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 FY2016-2017 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. During this period, progress was made to ensure that disability-related policies, regulations and guidelines are promulgated with appropriate input from the SAPSE in the early stages and/or prior to public release. The SAPSE would also like to continue and deepen engagement in the review process prior to implementation and other decisionmaking regarding policies, guidelines and regulations that impact students with disabilities and their families. This group also met with key stakeholders regarding policies and reviewed parent and community engagement policies/strategies. In particular, the committee attended community meetings and participated on panels in Wards 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8 and as well as meetings with US Department of Education, the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and as well as the Office of the Student Advocate Office of the State Board of Education. The Policy Subcommittee included the following members: Julie Camerata (chair), Dr. Kenneth Taylor, Courtney Hall, and Deon Woods Bell (SAPSE chair).

During the fiscal year, members of the subcommittee met with representatives from the OSSE policy unit and were updated on policies in the OSSE pipeline. These meetings stemmed from a recommendation the SAPSE made to OSSE in its 2015-16 school year report. The SAPSE would like to acknowledge OSSE's responsiveness to the request and sincerely hopes this standing meeting will continue. With regard to data and the APR, SAPSE learned that certain states, such as New Jersey hold meetings to discuss data prior to submitting to the federal government. SAPSE would like to explore the possibility of the same with SAPSE. During the 2016-17 school year, the subcommittee was informed of the following:

- ESSA State Plan Draft and Public Comments
- Forthcoming revisions to the DC Municipal Regulations was a standing item. OSSE has informed the SAPSE that revisions will not be made public until Summer 2017
- Pending development of non-regulatory discipline guidance, which will include a blend of general and special education issues.

• Delayed implementation of two aspects of the Special Education Reform Act. These are: 1) lowering the age of secondary transition eligibility from 16 to 14 and 2) reducing the identification/eligibility timeline from 120 days to 60 days. OSSE indicated that the delay is due to lack of appropriate funding for implementation, however SAPSE learned that the budget shortfall is only \$150,000 and has questions regarding the same. Both requirements will go into effect in SY18-19.

#### The subcommittee, in collaboration with the entire SAPSE, provided comments on DC's draft ESSA State plan. The comments were submitted on March 3, 2017 and included the following comments, among other issues:

- I. Regarding the proposed STAR (School Transparency and Reporting) rating system:
  - a. OSSE should be extremely mindful that any weighting system that is developed for student performance on statewide tests does not dis-incentivize LEAs serving high percentages of students with disabilities, especially students with high levels of need.
  - b. School environment measures should include anti-bullying indicators specifically for students with disabilities
  - c. The SAPSE would like to see the following data points directly included in the report for each LEA:
    - i. Percent of time students with disabilities spend in the general education environment
    - ii. Inclusive features of the school (e.g. co-teaching)
    - iii. Clear data on the number of students with disabilities graduating with a diploma or a certificate
    - iv. Discipline data by subgroup (including rates of seclusion and restraint)
    - v. Special education monitoring results data
    - vi. Number of special education complaints and,
    - vii. Post-secondary outcomes data

II. Regarding how OSSE's ESSA state education plan addresses subgroup gaps on PARCC testing:

- a. OSSE is currently proposing a 20-year timeline for getting to 85percent proficiency. The SAPSE believes this timeline is too long and proposes cutting the timeline to 10 years; thereby reaching 85 percent proficiency by the 2028-29 school year.
- III. Regarding how OSSE's ESSA state education plan addresses graduation rates
  - a. OSSE is currently proposing a 20-year timeline for getting to a 90 percent% graduation rate for students with disabilities. The SAPSE believes this timeline is too long and proposes cutting the timeline to 10 years; thereby reaching 85 percent proficiency by the 2028-29 school year.
  - b. The SAPSE proposes that OSSE include a goal and tracking for a six-year graduation cohort. This aligns with students' rights to stay in school through their 22nd birthday.

- IV. Regarding how OSSE's ESSA state education plan addresses educator growth and development systems
  - a. OSSE is proposing to develop "a set of minimum state standards for teacher evaluation systems." The SAPSE proposes that any teacher evaluation system should include general education teacher competency vis-à-vis serving students with disabilities.
  - b. The SAPSE proposes that OSSE develops guidance for schools in the following areas: PBIS, co-teaching, dually-identified students (i.e., special education and bilingual).
  - c. SAPSE recommends that OSSE align the STAR system with its TA priorities.

OSSE advised the SAPSE that these comments were useful. However, the SAPSE is disappointed that OSSE did not include its recommendations in the final ESSA state education plan. Continued failure to implement SAPSE comments, especially after such extensive multi-stakeholder efforts and parental engagement, could potentially diminish the positive and collaborative partnership between the two bodies.

Moving forward, the SAPSE hopes to ensure that disabilityrelated policies, regulations and guidelines are promulgated with appropriate input from SAPSE in the early stages and prior to public release. SAPSE appreciates the opportunity 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. 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.

#### Policy and Key Stakeholder Subcommittee Priority Committee Goals for SY17-18:

- The Policy Subcommittee will lead the SAPSE in efforts to provide written comments on policies and/or regulations pertaining to students with disabilities.
- The Policy Subcommittee will provide testimony and public comment and communication to the broader community on special education issues and policies proposed for implementation in the District of Columbia
- The Policy Subcommittee will develop and distribute talking points and other relevant information to the SAPSE generally and the Outreach Sub-Committee more specifically so that the information can be shared with the community, especially parents and other special education stakeholders.

#### The Policy Subcommittee will accomplish these goals by:

- Reviewing and analyzing guidance and information received from OSSE and other special education stakeholders;
- Researching and analyzing special education information, policies, regulations and guidelines;
- Convening monthly teleconferences/meetings with OSSE officials; and
- Participating in meetings and engaging key local, national and international special needs and education stakeholders.

#### 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:

#### Create more opportunities for meaningful SAPSE input into policy development and special education processes. For example, OSSE should:

- Provide the SAPSE's policy subcommittee with a red-line copy of proposed changes of all policies and/or regulations pertaining to students with disabilities.
- Implement the recommendations of SAPSE, and incorporate them into policies and regulations.

# - Communicate with the SAPSE and parents of students with disabilities in a way that is accessible and timely. For example, OSSE should:

- Provide all materials (for which OSSE would like SAPSE comments) to the SAPSE in a timely manner (e.g., at least 30 days prior to required action). For instance, it has come to SAPSE's attention from a third party that there are upcoming recommendations this summer, which have not yet been shared with the SAPSE.
- Include the SAPSE, or a representative of the SAPSE, on any district-level correspondence regarding proposed policy changes.
- Provide explanations of all policies, guidelines and regulations in clear and concise English, and translations in community languages.
- Create a briefing paper for parents that explain any new/ updated policies.

#### b. Graduation/Transition Subcommittee:

As previously noted, the Graduation/Transition Subcommittee provides feedback to OSSE regarding graduation rates, requirements and related data as well as 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 modest goal for the percentage of students with IEPs who graduate within four years. In 2014-15 school year, only 46.28 percent of students with IEPs graduated in four years. Because of the focus that OSSE leadership and staff have directed toward secondary transition, 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 postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. However, there is still a lot of progress to be made to insure that students with disabilities receive evidence-based best practices in their transition plans and that these plans support their preparation for success in postsecondary education and employment. Performance on Indicator 13 (Secondary Transition with IEP Goals), regarding development of transition plans has improved from just over 70 percent to approximately 90 percent. 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 30percent of students were engaged in post-secondary education training or employment one year after graduation. The District is not currently fulfilling the 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 (chair), Andrew Reese (proxy, Pamela Downing-Hosten), Isaacba Davies and Tamera Brown.

DC has notoriously failed in achieving positive outcomes with secondary transition programs and has failed to achieve targets in this indicator. The SAPSE, along with many special education advocates, were disappointed with the delay in implementing the 2014 Special Education reform legislation, especially the delay in changing the District's transition age from the current 16 years old to 14 years old. This delay occurred because funding for the implementation of the2014 Special Education reform will not be available until 2018-19. That said OSSE has committed to making funding available and training available. The SAPSE is concerned about the ability of OSSE and all the LEAs ability to increase performance in this critical area.

This subcommittee led a meeting focused on secondary transition, student-led IEPs, and the importance of youth self-determination and self-advocacy on Feb. 23, 2107. Highlighted at this meeting were the programs and efforts by OSSE over the past several years to focus on capacity building in secondary transition efforts. OSSE, along with community partners, has developed multiple useful and dynamic resources surrounding secondary transition and should be commended for these developments. These include the DC-based video series: "The Best Me I Can Be" and "Get Started NOW: Talking about Disabilities: A Family Perspective," the website: www. ossesecondarytransition.org, and the youth created "Who I Am" video. OSSE has also instituted the Community of Practice: Secondary Transition workgroup that meets monthly and is well attended by community organizations, agencies and stakeholders.

There are currently more than 10,764 students (ages 6-21) with IEPs in DCPS and public charter schools in the District. The new graduation requirements adopted by OSSE/SBOE last year are highly likely to make it challenging for students with developmental and learning disabilities to earn a diploma. It is important to emphasize the need to make graduation requirements flexible for our students with disabilities and special needs, so that they are able to obtain a diploma and not a certificate.

Last year's proposed changes to the District's graduation requirements are overall positive; however, they do not go far enough in allowing for the flexibility needed to accommodate the special needs of students with disabilities. We wish to continue to list our concerns about the current graduation standards in the District:

- The requirement of four years/credits of math without flexible options will greatly inhibit students with disabilities from obtaining a diploma. Instead, providing flexible options will offer math credits that are obtainable as well as life-skills focused. Those options include allowing ninth graders to take pre-algebra to fulfill a math credit, allowing "Get Ready for Algebra" courses for high school credit, 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.
- The extensive physical activity requirements of 225 minutes, which do not allow the tracking of arts and physical education activities outside of school (e.g., team sports, etc.) to be counted toward 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.
- The requirement for community service hours is prohibitive, especially for students with disabilities. The requirement for 100 hours of community service is one of the largest in the local area; students should be allowed to earn hours beginning in seventh grade, not ninth grade; and 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 to allow waivers for students with speech/language or other learning disabilities.

#### Graduation/Transition Subcommittee Priority Goals:

- 1. The Graduation/Transition Subcommittee will continue to advocate for OSSE to track and highlight graduation rates for students with disabilities (in 4-5-6 years) in order to communicate the importance of improving this rate.
- 2. The Graduation/Transition Subcommittee, together with the entire SAPSE, will provide testimony, advocacy and communication to the community for the use of OSSE's developed secondary transition resources (student-led IEPs, family engagement, <u>www.ossesecondarytransition.org</u>, etc.).

#### Graduation/Transition Subcommittee Priority Recommendations for OSSE:

#### OSSE should:

 Develop a citywide focus to improve the rates of students with disabilities graduating with a high school diploma since it is clear that students with disabilities who graduate with a diploma vs. certificate are better able to obtain employment and secondary education, in addition to reaching productive and independent futures.

- 2. Increase efforts to get families involved early around the importance of 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, because students have stronger secondary transition experiences when families are involved.
- Require all LEAs to incorporate "The Best Me I Can Be" program for all students with disabilities because student-led IEPs are proven to be a successful first step to self-determination and self-advocacy for students with disabilities, and the BEST ME I CAN BE resources have already been developed specifically for DC LEAs.
- 4. Increase opportunities for supporting LEAs in designing real vocational training and career readiness courses for students with IEPs because quality and available vocational and career readiness programs are pivotal for youth with disabilities to access employment with living wages. (The current emphasis on college as the only successful path is often prohibitive for students with disabilities receiving the support they need for productive and independent futures.)
- 5. OSSE, DCPS and all public charter schools in the District should work with workforce agencies, including Rehabilitative Services Administration and Department of Employment Services Youth Services Programs to ensure that all students with disabilities have opportunities for pre-employment transition services (work-based learning experiences) while they are in high school.

#### In addition, we recommend that OSSE specifically focus on tracking the following data and be able to report to the SAPSE and the community in 2018 on the following:

- The number of students with disabilities who are obtaining a high school diploma vs. certificate of completion;
- The number of students with disabilities who obtain a diploma in five or six years (in addition to four years);
- Develop the means of tracking not just compliance with the development of transition plans, but also a quality assessment of these plans;
- Track the number vocational programs available to students with disabilities and the number of student with disabilities who enroll in and take advantage of the programs; and
- Track the number of students with disabilities who attend post-secondary education, obtain (part-time/full-time employment, etc.

#### c. Inclusion Subcommittee:

As previously noted, the mission of the Inclusion Subcommittee is to review the current state of inclusion in the District of Columbia and provide information on inclusive practices and information regarding successful inclusion programs. Panel members include: Vivian Guerra (chair), Jennifer Halper, and Traci Dove. During the 2016-17 school year, the Inclusion Subcommittee assembled a diverse panel to discuss inclusive practices in DC, Maryland and Virginia. The panel consisted of Kerri Larkin, deputy chief of Specialized Instruction at DCPS, Tauna Szymanski, chair of the Arlington County Inclusion Task Force, and Selene Almazan, legal director of the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates and formerly of the Maryland Coalition of Inclusive Education. The outcome of the panel was a deeper and nuanced understanding of the issues and best practices in DC, Maryland and Virginia. This understanding helps to influence the comments.

In addition, the committee reviewed the data from the Annual Performance Report. During the review, the committee realized additional data was necessary, and looked to the 38th Annual Report to Congress to obtain a larger picture of the status of inclusion in the District of Columbia. The review of the data led to the committee having several concerns. First, OSSE reports that under Indicator 5A there is an increase in the percentage of students receiving education in the general education classroom for 80 percent or more of the day from 54.59 percent to 55.61 percent. OSSE categorizes this increase of less than 1 percent as progress yet does not indicate whether this increase is considered statistically significant according to scientific measures.

OSSE reports under Indicator 5B an increase in the number of students receiving education in the general education setting for less than 40 percent of the day from 15.24 percent to 17.38 percent. OSSE did not explain the slippage to SAPSE and so it is unclear why additional students are being served in this setting.

The Inclusion Subcommittee also reviewed Indicators 6A and 6B, which report on the educational settings of students ages 3-5. OSSE reports slippage in serving preschool students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Students serviced in general early childhood program slipped from 48.99 percent to 43.17 percent. In addition, preschool students with disabilities placed in a separate class, separate school or residential facility increased from 4.34 percent to 7.75 percent. OSSE indicates that one reason for the increase could be the Extended IFSP, which allows toddlers to remain in the Part C program until age 4; but they have not sufficiently analyzed the data. However, OSSE has not explained how the Extended IFSP could produce an outcome leading to more preschool students being served in settings that are more restrictive.

Finally, a review of the 38th Annual Report to Congress produced greater concerns regarding the status of inclusion in the District of Columbia. The APR does not report on the number of students receiving services for 40 percent to 79 percent of the day in the general education setting. The Annual Report to Congress, however, provides that data. In the District of Columbia, 17.9 percent of students with disabilities receive education in the general education setting for 40 percent to 79 percent of the day. This is equal to approximately 2,300 students.

The APR lumps students with disabilities into one number when accounting for students who are served in separate schools, residential facilities, and home/hospital setting. The Annual Report to Congress separates these settings and indicates that less than .05 percent of students with disabilities are served in a home/hospital setting. The Inclusion Subcommittee is concerned

that there may be more students in these settings who are not receiving services. Of particular concern are students who are admitted to the Psychiatric Institute of Washington, who do not appear to be receiving any educational services.

However, the most concerning data from the Annual Report to Congress are the high percentages of students with disabilities, intellectual disabilities and emotional disturbance being served in segregated settings. The District of Columbia only services 35.7 percent of students with emotional disturbance in the general education setting for 80 percent or more of the school day. Only 11.1 percent of students with emotional disturbance receive education services in the general education setting for between 40 percent and 79 percent of the school day. Therefore, the District serves the majority of students with disabilities in separate settings away from their nondisabled peers. The percentages for students with intellectual disabilities are even starker. Only 8.9 percent of students with intellectual disabilities receive educational services in the general education setting for 80 percent or more of the day. Only 19.6 percent of students with intellectual disabilities receive educational services in the general education setting for between 40 percent and 79 percent of the school day. Therefore, D.C. serves more than 70 percent of D.C. students with intellectual disabilities in separate settings away from their nondisabled peers. Looking solely at these disability categories help to highlight which students are being segregated from their typical peers.

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

- Integrated service delivery
- Collaboration between general and special educators
- Leadership of teachers and administrators

Ongoing training and staff development

- Well-constructed plans that identify specific accommodations, modifications, and goals for each student
- Coordinated planning and communication between "general" and "special needs" staff

#### **Inclusion Subcommittee Priority Goals:**

- The Inclusion Subcommittee will review all LRE data for the District of Columbia and comparison data for neighboring states;
- The Inclusion Subcommittee will attend community meetings and training to learn more about inclusive best practices and share the information;
- The Inclusion Subcommittee will assist the Policy Subcommittee with developing talking points and sharing the same with the Outreach Subcommittee so the information can be shared with the broader community, especially parents and other special education stakeholders.
- The Inclusion Subcommittee will assist in drafting the SAPSE Annual Report as it relates to inclusion and training.

#### **Inclusion Subcommittee Priority Recommendations for OSSE:**

- Ensure all least restrictive data is available and accessible to the community including the Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- Assess the quality of the access of the general education curriculum for all students with disabilities within the District of Columbia and provide guidance to LEAs; and
- Enhance inclusive best practices for inclusion within the District of Columbia including co-teaching, universal design for learning, and training for general education teachers around meeting the needs of students with disabilities.
- Ensure that programming and resources are available during the summer months for students with specials needs.

#### d. Outreach and Parent Engagement Subcommittee:

As previously noted, the mission of the Outreach and Parent Engagement Subcommittee is to provide feedback to OSSE regarding outreach efforts 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 percent 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 priority 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 as well as how to complain when FAPE is not met and procedural safeguards are violated.

Panel members include Nicole Lee-Mwandha, LaToria Brent, Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas, Luis Morales and Aaron McCormick (SAPSE vice chair).

In monthly SAPSE meetings the 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:

- Annual Performance Report (APR), specifically Indicator #8 Annual Special Education Parent Survey
- PTA Meeting at Cleveland Elementary School September 2016
- OSSE Parent Summit October 22, 2016
- Ward 7 & 8 Educational Council Meeting November 2016
- ESSA Accountability Focus Group: Wards 7 & 8 November 19, 2016
- EdFEST 2016 District of Columbia's only citywide school fair December 10, 2016.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Secondary Transition Forum: Voices of Change -March 10, 2017
- SAPSE & Ward 8 Education Council Meeting: Mental Health & Special Education April 6, 2017
- Ward 7 Parent Empowerment Summit May 6, 2017
- DCPAVE May 20, 2017
- Planning of the OSSE Parent Summit for 2017

#### **Outreach Subcommittee Priority Goals:**

- The Outreach Subcommittee will work with OSSE and the SAPSE more generally to help increase the quality of communications and partnerships between parents and schools regarding the educational well-being of students with disabilities, especially with regard to the ESSA State Plan.
- The Outreach Subcommittee will work with OSSE and other stakeholders to disseminate information to ensure that parents and students 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).

# Outreach Subcommittee Priority Recommendations for OSSE:

OSSE, DCPS and Public Charter Schools should:

- Be more proactive in providing communities with clear and easy to understand 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);
- Obtain additional demographic information in the Special Education Parent Survey to better understand how to serve all communities;
- 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;
- Collaborate with SAPSE to ensure the Panel has marketing materials and is physically present with OSSE to distribute vital information in various formats;
- Facilitate and encourage collaboration between the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and as well as Office of the Student Advocate of the State Board of 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;
- Invite SAPSE and other parents to OSSE trainings such as the LEA series, and other trainings provided to teachers and administrators; and
- Inform SAPSE and other stakeholders regarding Mental Health issues.

## **OSSE COMMENDATIONS**

The SAPSE would like to commend OSSE regarding several important initiatives. First, the training opportunities to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) through its LEA Institute have been well received. In particular, the annual three-part institute series sponsored by OSSE to support LEAs is an excellent model for how to potentially increase the capacity of the SAPSE, teachers and other community stakeholders. The goal of the institutes is to build a bridge between LEAs and educators with District agencies that provide wrap-around services and supports to students and their families, school leaders, teachers and administrators from the District's 67 LEAs. This initiative can easily transition to enhance the capacity of even more educators, students and families.

# SPECIAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION RESOURCES

#### **School System Resources:**

- OSSE Specialized Instruction <u>http://osse.dc.gov/service/specialized-education</u>
- OSSE Office of Dispute Resolution <u>http://osse.dc.gov/service/office-disput resolution-odr</u>
- Office of the Student Advocate <u>http://sboe.dc.gov/page/office-student-advocate</u>
- Ombudsman for Public Education <a href="http://sboe.dc.gov/ombudsman">http://sboe.dc.gov/ombudsman</a>
- DC Public Schools <u>http://dcps.dc.gov/specialeducation</u>

#### **General Education Resources/Special Education Resources:**

- Advocates for Justice and Education <a href="http://aje-dc.org">http://aje-dc.org</a>
- Bazelon Center <u>http://bazelon.org</u>
- Children's Law Center <u>http://childrenslawcenter.org</u>
- DC Association for Special Education <u>http://dcase.org/</u>
- DC Special Education Cooperative http://specialedcoop.org/coop/
- Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services <u>www.uls-dc.org</u>
- US Education Department Parent Resources <u>www.ed.gov/parents/</u>
- School Talk <u>http://schooltalkdc.org</u>
- Special Education Guide <u>www.specialeducationguide.com</u>
- Quality Trust <u>http://dcqualitytrust.org</u>
- Smart IEP's Tutorials and Checklists <u>http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/iep.goals.plan.htm</u>
- Advocacy & Informational Resources Page Office of the Student Advocate <a href="http://bit.ly/sboedcgov">http://bit.ly/sboedcgov</a>

#### Laws:

- Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") <u>https://www.ada.gov/</u>
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") http://idea.ed.gov/
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ("Section 504") http://bit.ly/2rUOPvh and http://bit.ly/2sUmuqe
- 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). <u>http://bit.ly/2tcmuUP</u> and <u>http://bit.ly/2tf9qij</u>
- Specialized Education Local Policies http://bit.ly/2sJPBhn
- Olmstead Integration Plan <a href="http://bit.ly/2u9Ucrd">http://bit.ly/2u9Ucrd</a>

# Current policies related to the provision of special education and related services in the District of Columbia are listed below:

- 2010 District of Columbia Policies and Procedures for Placement Review http://bit.ly/2tcyHst
- 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

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SAPSE would like to commend OSSE and DC Government agencies 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 SY 2016-2017

- 1. Deon Woods Bell, SAPSE Chair, Parent, Deon.Bell@gmail.com; Deon.Bell@dcbc.dc.gov
- 2. An Almquist, Parent, An.Almquist@dcbc.dc.gov

3. LaToria Brent, Parent, Latoria.Brent@dcbc.dc.gov

- 4. Julie Camerata, Charter School Administrator, jcamerata@specialedcoop.org
- 5. Issacba Davies, Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), <a href="https://www.usacba.bavies@dc.gov">lssacba.Davies@dc.gov</a>
- 6. Megan Dho, Deputy Director Program Operations, DC Child & Family Services Agency, <u>Megan.Dho@dc.gov</u>; Courtney Hall, former DC Child & Family Services Agency (transitioned to new position in DCPS)

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

- 8. Vivian Guerra, Parent, Vguerra0873@yahoo.com
- 9. Jennifer Halper, Lawyer, University Legal Services, JHalper@uls-dc.org
- 10. Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas, Parent, R.hilighthomas@gmail.com
- 11. Katie Holloran, Teacher, Katieholloran@gmail.com
- 12. Nicole Lee-Mwandha, OSSE McKinney-Vento Representative , Nicole.Lee-Mwandha@dc.gov
- 13. Matthew McCall, Parent, <u>Matthew.d.Mccall@gmail.com</u>
- 14. Aaron McCormick, Vice Chair, Parent, <u>Aaron.Mccormick@dcbc.dc.gov</u>
- 15. Luis Morales, Supervisory Social Worker, Department of Behavioral Health, Luis.Morales3@dc.gov
- 16. Andrew Reese, Director, Department on Disability Services, and Parent, Andrew.Reese@dc.gov
- 17. Kenneth Taylor, PhD, Federal Agency Liaison, United States Department of Education, Kenneth.Taylor@ed.gov
- 18. Clifford Waddy, Parent/Community Member, Clifford.Waddy@dcbc.dc.gov
- 19. Molly Whalen, Parent and Special Needs Advocate, Dc.whalen@verizon.net
- 20. Amy Williamson Barrios, Division Chair, Education, Health, and Social Work, University of District of Columbia, Amy.Williamson@udc.edu

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

SAPSE meets to build the capacity of the body and looks for ways it can advise the OSSE and other stakeholders regarding special education and related services for children with disabilities. By law, the SAPSE is required to convene meetings at least four times a year, but meets on a monthly basis. The following is a calendar of SAPSE and other select meetings held during the 2016-17 school year. SAPSE meetings are open to the public.

MEETING DAY & DATE	TIME	LOCATION	ТОРІС
Thursday, Sept. 15, 2016	6:15-8 p.m.	OSSE	Goal Setting
Friday, Oct. 14, 2016	noon-2 p.m.	OSSE	PCSB, MOTA, ESSA
Saturday, Nov. 5, 2016	9:30 a.m. noon	University of the District of Columbia	Post-Secondary Transition Services, and Ombudsman
Thursday, Dec. 15, 2016	6:15-8 p.m.	OSSE	Inclusion Subcommittee Panel on DC, MD and VA Inclusion Best Practices
Friday, Jan. 27, 2017	noon-2 p.m.	OSSE	Policy Subcommittee - ESSA Comments
Thursday, Feb. 23, 2017	6:15-8 p.m.	OSSE	Secondary Transition/Graduation - Youth Perspectives - Self-Advocacy
Thursday, March 9, 2017	noon-2 p.m. (webinar)	OSSE	Annual Performance Report (Targets)
Thursday, April 6, 2017	6:15-8 p.m.	Ward 8 Library	Outreach Subcommittee - Community Meeting and Mental Health Services
Thursday, May 11, 2017	6:15-8 p.m.	OSSE	Report Prep and Data Analysis Working Meeting
Thursday, June 8, 2017	6:15-8 p.m.	OSSE	Report Review and Data Analysis Working Meeting
Thursday, June 29, 2017	6:15-8 p.m.	OSSE	2016-17 School Year Review, Goals and Recommendations

## **Additional Meetings:**

MEETING DAY & DATE	TIME	LOCATION	ТОРІС
Wednesday, Aug. 31, 2016	6:15-8 p.m.	Cleveland Elementary School	PTA Meeting
Saturday, Oct. 22, 2016	6:15-8 p.m.	Ward 5	OSSE Parent Summit
October 2016	5-8 p.m.	Wilson Builiding	DC Council Roundtable on Special Education
Saturday, Nov. 19, 2016	9:30 a.mnoon	Wards 7 & 8	ESSA Parent Engagement and Community Meetings
November 2016	6:15-8 p.m.	Wards 7 & 8	Education Council Meeting
Saturday, Dec. 10, 2016	9 a.m5 p.m.	DC Armory	DC EDFEST
Friday, March 10, 2017	9 a.m5 p.m.	Walter E. Washington Convention Center	8th Annual Secondary Transition Forum: Voices of Change
Saturday, May 20, 2017	10 a.m2 p.m.		DCPAVE

# **APPENDIX C - SAPSE SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION PLAN CHART**

	Inclusion/Training	Graduation/Transition	Outreach	Policy
Panel Member	Vivian Guerra (Subcommittee Chair), Tracy Dove, Jennifer Halper, An Almquist, and Clifford Waddy	Molly Whalen (Subcommittee Chair), Andrew Reese, James Brooks, and new members: Pamela Downing-Hosten, Isaacba Davies	Nicole Lee-Mwandha, LaToria Brent, Rochanda Hiligh- Thomas, Luis Morales and Aaron McCormick (SAPSE Vice Chair)	Julie Camerata (Subcommittee Chair), Dr. Kenneth Taylor, Courtney Hall, and Deon Woods Bell (SAPSE Chair)
Mission	The subcommittee focuses on inclusive best practices and related training necessary for student success in accessing the curriculum. Under the IDEA, students with disabilities have a right to be educated in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. However, students with disabilities within the District continue to face significant barriers to accessing high quality inclusive education. The review of data is critical to informing individuals of the landscape of inclusion within the District of Columbia.	This subcommittee focuses on graduation rates and related data, as well as secondary transition 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 2015, only 46.28% of students with IEPs graduated in four years; while this is an improvement over past years, the number remains low and should be a focus for improvement by OSSE. 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 to become more in compliance. However, there is still a lot of progress to be made. More details for suggestions and recommendations from SAPSE are provided in this report.	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.	This subcommittee focuses 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 4, 5, 7 and 8 and as well as meetings with DCPS, DC Council, and the Ombudsman among others.

	Inclusion/Training	Graduation/Transition	Outreach	Policy
Priority Goals	<ul> <li>Monitor and review all LRE data for the District of Columbia and comparison data for neighboring states.</li> <li>Attend community meetings and trainings to learn more about inclusive best practices and share the information.</li> <li>Assist in drafting the SAPSE Annual Report as it relates to inclusion.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Advocate for OSSE to track and highlight graduation rates for students with disabilities (in 4-5-6 years) - in order to communicate the importance of improving this rate.</li> <li>Provide testimony, advocacy and communication to the community for the use of OSSE's developed secondary transition resources (student-led IEPs, family engagement, www. ossesecondarytransition. org, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>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)</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Lead the SAPSE in efforts to provide written comments on policies and/or regulations pertaining to students with disabilities.</li> <li>provide testimony and public comment and communication to the broader community on special education issues and policies proposed for implementation in the District of Columbia.</li> <li>Develop and distribute talking points and other relevant information to the SAPSE generally and the Outreach Sub-Committee more specifically so that the information can be shared with the community, especially parents of children with disabilities.</li> </ul>

	Inclusion/Training	Graduation/Transition	Outreach	Policy
Recommendations	<ul> <li>OSSE should:</li> <li>Ensure all least restrictive data is available and accessible to the community including the Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.</li> <li>Assess of the quality of the access of the general education curriculum for all students with disabilities within the District of Columbia.</li> <li>Enhance inclusive best practices for inclusion within the District of Columbia including co-teaching, universal design for learning, and training for general education teachers for meeting the needs of students with disabilities.</li> <li>Ensure that programming and resources are available during the summer months for students with specials needs.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>OSSE should:</li> <li>Develop a citywide focus to improve the rates of students with disabilities graduating with a high school diploma.</li> <li>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>Require all LEAs to incorporate this program for all students with disabilities.</li> <li>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> <li>Work with workforce agencies, including RSA and DOES Youth Services Programs to ensure that all students with disabilities have opportunities for Pre-Employment Transition Services (work based learning experiences) while they are in high school.</li> <li>Track certain data outlined in the report and be able to report to the SAPSE and the community in 2018 on the following (e.g., the number of students with disabilities who attend post-secondary education, obtain (part- time/full-time employment, among other)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>OSSE, DCPS and Charter Schools should:</li> <li>Obtain additional demographic information in the Special Education Parent Survey.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Support SAPSE's presence at EdFEST 2017</li> <li>Collaborate with SAPSE to ensure the Panel has marketing materials and is physically present with OSSE to distribute vital information in various formats.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Convene a parent summit sharing special education best practices.</li> <li>Invite SAPSE and other parents to OSSE trainings such as the LEA series, and other trainings currently provided to teachers and administrators.</li> <li>Partner with SAPSE to produce a one stop shop parent guide for due process and hearings.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>OSSE should:</li> <li>Create more opportunities for meaningful SAPSE input into policy development.</li> <li>For example, OSSE should:</li> <li>Provide the SAPSE's policy subcommittee with a red-line copy of proposed changes of all policies and/or regulations pertaining to students with disabilities.</li> <li>Implement the recommendations of SAPSE, and incorporate them into policies and regulations.</li> <li>Communicate with the SAPSE and parents of students with disabilities in a way that is accessible and timely. For example, OSSE should:</li> <li>Provide all materials (for which OSSE would like SAPSE comment on) to the SAPSE in a timely manner (30 days prior to required action).</li> <li>Include the SAPSE, or a representative of the SAPSE, on any district-level correspondence regarding proposed policy changes.</li> <li>Provide explanations of all policies, guidelines and regulations in ccam and concise English, and translations in community languages.</li> <li>Create a briefing papers for parents that explain any new/updated policies.</li> </ul>

# **APPENDIX D: SAPSE PANEL MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES**

#### State Advisory Panel (SAPSE) on Special Education for the District of Columbia | 2016-17 school year



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

Deon brings considerable expertise as the Chair of the State Advisory Panel on Special Education, 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.

Notable is her extensive experience identifying key issues and opportunities for collaboration, negotiating complex 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 within the U.S. and 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 and three children.



An Almquist Parent

An Almquist is an educator, advocate, and mother. She previously served as a professor and founding faculty member at the Center for Urban Education at the University of the District of Columbia. For the past 15 years, An also worked with PK-12 students and families as a curriculum specialist and secondary teacher in public, private, and charter schools. She is currently a doctoral candidate and previously earned an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree from the George Washington University in Special Education with a concentration in emotional, behavioral disorders. She also has a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) from American University in Secondary Education, and a B.A. in Management and Organizational Studies from Gettysburg College. An enjoys playing with her son and rescue dog, volunteering at the Smithsonian Institution and his charter school.



LaToria Brent Parent

LaToria Eason Brent is a former Pharmaceutical Representative with over thirteen years experience as a sales representative and seven of those years were spent in the pharmaceutical industry. She is a part-time adjunct instructor for Howard Community College. In addition to teaching part time she currently is the founder bridal blog and website called Next Brides.

Brent has board and varied community service background, with a focus on early literacy and community focus. She has been Stronghold Civic Associations President, Family book club coach for Centronia , and is currently a member of the Junior League of Washington. Brent received her Bachelors of Arts in International Business from the University of Memphis along with Masters Degree from Myers University. LaToria Eason Brent is the mother of two daughters and resides in Washington, DC.



Julie Camerata Charter School Representative and Parent <u>jcamerata@</u> <u>specialedcoop.org</u>

As Executive Director of the DC Special Education Cooperative (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 troubleshooting 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).



Issacba Davies Supervisory Youth Development Representative, District of Columbia Government, Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services Mrs. Davies-Clark fosters the belief that with the cohesive support and effort of community, parents, students and educators Students will be equipped with the tools needed to be capable learners and attain success academically. She believes in holding schools accountable, empowering parents and helping to close the achievement gap.

Mrs. Davies-Clark is a passionate career long educator and trainer who

currently serves as a Program manager for the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS). Prior to joining DYRS, she served as the Program Manager/Academy Director for the Health Sciences Academy at a Public Charter school in N.E. Washington, DC. During her 8year tenure at the school she launched Allied health certification programs that included pharmacy, nursing assistant, EMT and sports medicine programs, created and implemented accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities inspiring students to enjoy learning and make better decisions, directed and coordinated academic and service learning activities for the Academy, and taught multiple subjects including; Medical Terminology, Anatomy and Physiology, Foundations in Health Science and Technology, Biotechnical Engineering, Microbiology, Biology and AP Biology

Her past work experience includes spending over 12 years in the Biotech industry assisting with research projects and serving in multiple capacities including Program Manager and Trainer. Mrs. Davies-Clark serves as a mentor to multiple young adults. Mrs. Davies-Clark holds a Masters in Science Administration with a concentration in Health Services Administration.



Megan Dho Supervisor of Education and Child Care within the Office of Well Being, DC's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) Ms. Dho has over a fifteen years' experience working as a child advocate in Washington, DC, and has focused her efforts on providing educational advocacy for at-risk children and youth in the child welfare system. In December of 2014, she joined DC's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) to serve as the Supervisor of Education and Child Care within the Office of Well Being. In that role, she leads the implementation of the agency's first ever agency-wide Education Strategy while supervising a team of education specialists who link children to vital educational and child care services and provide consultative support to case workers. Prior to that, she spent nine years at the DC's Children's Law Center where she created an Educational Advocacy Project within their Guardian ad Litem Program in effort to improve the educational outcomes of their child clients in the child welfare system. She has also represented parents and caregivers of children with special needs as a clinical teaching fellow with the Family Advocacy Clinic at the Georgetown University Law Center and as an Equal Justice Works fellow at the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia. She currently serves as the co-chair of the DC Superior Court's Education Subcommittee to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care, she was the founder and former co-chair of DC's Special Education Attorney Roundtable and while she was a student in law school, Ms. Dho was a founding member of the Thurgood Marshall Public Charter School in SE Washington. Ms. Dho holds a J.D. and LL.M. degree from Georgetown University Law Center and completed her undergraduate studies at Bucknell University where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a B.A. in International Relations and Spanish.



Tracy Dove Parent Tracydove00@gmail.com



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

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

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.



Jennifer is a staff attorney who advocates on behalf of students with disabilities navigating the special education system as well as adults with disabilities seeking services through the Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. She brings 14 years of experience in advocating on behalf of students with disabilities in New Jersey. Jennifer co-authored the paper "New Jersey's Early Intervention Program: The Need for Fiscal Reform and Long-Term Financing." She is a graduate of the University of Maryland College Park with a Bachelor of Arts in Government and Politics and a graduate of the University of Maryland, School of Law with a Juris Doctorate.

Jennifer Halper Attorney, Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration



Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas Parent <u>r.hilighthomas@gmail.</u> <u>com</u>

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.



Katie Holloran began her teaching career as a Music Teacher at a Charter School in DC during the 2001-2002 school year. Since 2002, Katie has earned her Masters in Special Education (focusing on children with emotional and behavioral disabilities) as well as her Board Certification in Behavior Analysis.

Katie started a company providing in-home behavior services to children with Autism and Developmental Delays in 2005. Katie now focuses her work on supporting DC Charter Schools in the development of Functional Behavior Assessments, Behavior Intervention Plans, and training programs for teachers and staff around positive behavior supports.

Katie lives in the District with her husband and two sons, who attend a DC Public Charter School.

of Clinical Services, International Diagnostic Solutions Founder of The Behaviorist Next Door

Katie Holloran Parent and Director



Nicole Lee-Mwandha, OSSE McKinney-Vento Representative , 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).



"Ruggy" as his friends call him is a prior service United States Marine who went on to Found, "Our Hands Helping Others, Inc." a 501C3 that helped women & children escape slavery in the Middle East. Previous to founding Interactive Curriculum & Application Developers, Inc., Ruggy was the President and Chief Technology Officer at Vetwork Learning Solutions, Inc. a small government contracting IT company. Ruggy is a graduate of Oxford University's SAID Business School a Harvard Fellow and is a proud husband to Melissa Kopolow – McCall & father to twins Asher & Abagail.

Matthew D. McCall, Parent and President and Chief Information Officer, Vet-work Learning Solutions, Inc.



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.

Aaron McCormick Parent aaron.mccormick@dcbc. dc.gov



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 Director, Department on Disability Services and Parent andrew.reese@dc.gov

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.



With more than 15 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.

Kenneth Taylor, Ph.D. U.S. Department of Education, Federal Liaison Kenneth.taylor@ed.gov



Clifford Waddy Parent

Mr. Waddy is a Ward 8 resident and currently serves as the Administrative Aide to Ward 8 Council member LaRuby May. Mr. Waddy was sworn in as a member to State Advisory Panel on Special Education in July 2016. Mr. Waddy will celebrate his 70th birthday in July 2017.

Mr. Waddy is a 35 years community activist and public servant, having previously served as the Vice President of the AARP (Anacostia, Bellevue, and Congress Heights Chapter #4870), and working for DCPS as a Counselor for at-risk students for 26 years. He is also a former ANC Commissioner in what was formally ANC 2C, having served as an SMD Representative, and as the Chair of the Commission. Over the years, he has served on numerous community boards as a founding member and dedicated public servant.

Mr. Waddy has a Master's Degree in Public Administration (Financial Management/Budgeting) from The University of Pittsburgh, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (Pittsburgh, PA) and a Bachelor of Arts Degree (History) from Loyola University (Chicago, IL).



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

Molly is a life-long Washington DC resident and a results-driven nonprofit leader with over 25 years of experience in positions involved with strategic planning, community relations, leadership training, communications, and fundraising & development. A seasoned facilitator and presenter, she has presented hundreds of leadership and development workshops nationwide. A graduate of the University of Virginia, Molly is currently the Executive Director of the DC Association for Special Education (DCASE). In her role, she serves as a catalyst and connector in building collaborations to greater serve the local special education and disability community. She previously served for five years as the Director of Development & Communications for The Ivymount School & Programs.

As a parent of two children with autism she has a passion for improving the environment of special education and disability advocacy for all stakeholders, and creating a positive experience for parents and families of children with special needs. A dedicated volunteer, she has served as a board member for several local and national organizations. 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 been a member of the State Advisory Panel for Special Education (SAPSE) since 2007 when she was appointed by Mayor Adrian Fenty, and led as Chair from 2008-2012. In 2011 she was honored with the St. John's Community Service Advocacy Award for her service in supporting people with disabilities in the District.



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

Dr. Amy Williamson 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.

(Footnotes)

1 SY 2015-16 Child Count/Educational Environment Data Groups (EDFacts file spec C002; Data group 74)



