



District of Columbia
**State Advisory Panel
on Special Education**



**ANNUAL REPORT
2017-18**



Fellow Washingtonians,

This past year DC's State Advisory Panel on Special Education (SAPSE) engaged with issues ranging from policy to governance, to next steps for students with disabilities. We are especially proud of the following accomplishments:

As a SAPSE, we

- provided feedback to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education on both the proposed revision of the DC Municipal Regulations and the development of a state report card for schools;
- engaged with parents of students with disabilities from all 8 Wards; and
- revised our bylaws, aligning them with the Mayor's order (creating the SAPSE) and modernizing some of the ways in which we do business.

Though proud of this work, we feel the urgency for the acceleration of change and improvement in how our city serves students with disabilities. Too many of our children are impacted by both achievement and opportunity gaps. In the coming months, we will focus on strengthening our relationships with local stakeholders in the hope of finding solutions. It will take all of us, government agencies, schools, support organizations, parents and students to improve our special education system.

Yours in service,

Julie Camerata, Chair

State Advisory Panel on Special Education.

Submitted to:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2** What is SAPSE?
- 3** Subcommittee Reports:
Graduation, Inclusion, Outreach, Policy
- 8** Meet the SAPSE
- 9** Acknowledgements
- 9** Appendices

THE SAPSE

What? The District of Columbia's State Advisory Panel on Special Education's (the "SAPSE") mission is to provide advice from the perspective of parents of students with disabilities to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).

Who? The SAPSE is made up of a majority of parents whose children have disabilities. There are also representatives from various District agencies and stakeholder groups. All members are appointed by the Mayor.

When? The SAPSE must meet at least four times per year. Meetings are usually held at OSSE offices. In the next session (school year 18-19) we plan to use video conferencing technology to make our meetings more accessible to parents.

Want to get involved? All of our meetings are public meetings and we especially value the participation of parents of children with disabilities and members of the community who themselves have disabilities. If you would like to attend a meeting, visit our website to see when the next one is happening! <https://bit.ly/2L1R9NY>

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

INCLUSION SUBCOMMITTEE

Recommendations:

We recognize that creating an inclusive climate for children with disabilities is not only key to providing them with an equal opportunity to learn and grow, but integral to helping them develop their full potential and thrive.

We also recognize that Inclusion and belonging are a state of mind, that requires a holistic pursuit of a combination of evaluation, outreach, learning, reflection and awareness.

With that aim in mind, SAPSE recommends the following goals to be established in the 2018-2019 school year:

- a. Work with OSSE to understand the current Inclusion focus in schools
- b. Evaluate current inclusion metrics in place
- c. Establish a working definition of Inclusion goals
- d. Recommend the establishment of an Inclusion Strategy
- e. Recommend the evaluation of current Inclusion practices and approaches
- f. Recommend guidelines for schools as it pertains to Inclusion training and resources

OUTREACH PARENT ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

I. Goals

- a. 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 Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan.
- b. 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 Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or 504 and special education services available for students (from early intervention through postsecondary education) in their native language as required by the Language Access Act.

II. Key Accomplishments/Highlights

- a. SAPSE had representation at numerous events across the city, partnering with PTAs, the Office of the Student Advocate, members of DC's State Board of Education and many more! For a complete listing of events, see Appendix A.
- b. Per our recommendation, additional demographic information was added in the Special Education Parent Survey to better understand how to serve all communities.

III. Data Connection

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 requires all states to develop a State Performance Plan (SPP) that describes how the state will implement the requirements and purposes of the IDEA, and improve results for students with disabilities (20 U.S.C. 1416). Included among the requirements is the measurement and public reporting of Indicator 8: Parent Involvement. More specifically, Indicator 8 addresses the percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. The committee reviewed the most current available data.

FFY 2015 SPP/APR Data

Number of respondent parents who report schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities	Total number of respondent parents of children with disabilities	FFY 2014 Data	FFY 2015 Target	FFY 2015 Data	Status	Slippage
525	628	84.47%	80.00%	83.60%	Met Target	No Slippage

FFY 2014 SPP/APR Data

Number of respondent parents who report schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities	Total number of respondent parents of children with disabilities	FFY 2013 Data	FFY 2014 Target	FFY 2014 Data	Status	Slippage
794	940	81.76%	80.00%	84.47%	Met Target	No Slippage

FFY 2013 SPP/APR Data

Number of respondent parents who report schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities	Total number of respondent parents of children with disabilities	FFY 2012 Data	FFY 2013 Target	FFY 2013 Data	Status	Slippage
529	647	93.00%	80.00%	81.76%	Met Target	No Slippage

“I believe it is critically important for parents to have the information and resources they need to meaningfully participate in and make informed decisions about their child’s education. I believe parents having knowledge makes all the difference in children receiving the special education supports and services they need and are entitled to. This proved true for my child in our journey to get him the services he needed.” - SAPSE Parent Member

IV. Recommendations

- a. 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);
- b. 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; and
- c. OSSE should utilize additional demographic data from last year’s Annual Parent Survey to formulate a plan that targets parents of children with disabilities to increase the percentage of parents responding to the Annual Parent Survey.

POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

I. Goals

- a. Provide comments and testimony to OSSE on the DCMR revisions
- b. Identify and develop relationships with OSSE liaison for information sharing
- c. Collaborate with SAPSE committees to elevate concerns to OSSE

II. Key Accomplishments/Highlights

- a. STARS report card - focus group and follow-up discussions with OSSE team members
- b. Participated in monthly meetings with OSSE's Policy Team
- c. Provided feedback to OSSE on the April 2018 release of the DCMR
- d. Provided testimony at the DC Council on Education's Special Education Roundtable

III. Data Connection

Challenge: SAPSE still struggles to access real-time or current data in a timely fashion.

- a. SAPSE reviewed the Part B Data Display submitted by OSSE to the US Department of Education in 2017, covering data over the 2014-2015 school year (<https://bit.ly/2L26opW>). This data included student enrollment data and information for children with disabilities across the District. Of particular interest to the Policy committee were the educational environments for children with disabilities in DC public and public charter schools, and post-school outcomes for young adults with disabilities.

"The spirit of the IDEA (Federal law that governs special education) can ONLY be realized when parents of students with disabilities are truly included in policy making. These decisions affect the lives of our children each day they attend school." - SAPSE Parent Member

IV. Recommendations

Create more opportunities for meaningful SAPSE input into policy development. For example, OSSE should:

- i. 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.
- ii. Upon request, assist SAPSE with access to key policy stakeholders (Deputy Mayor of Education, DC Council, DC State Board of Education).
- a. Communicate with the SAPSE and parents of students with disabilities in a way that is accessible and timely. For example, OSSE should:
 - iii. Provide all materials (for which OSSE would like SAPSE comment on) to the SAPSE in a timely manner (30 days prior to required action).
 - iv. Include the SAPSE, or a representative of the SAPSE, on any district-level correspondence regarding proposed policy changes.
 - v. Provide explanations of all policies, guidelines and regulations in clear and concise English, and translations in community languages.
 - vi. Create a briefing paper for parents that explains any new/updated policies.

TRANSITION/GRADUATION SUBCOMMITTEE

I. Goals

- a. Support OSSE's efforts to ensure that by July 1, 2018 LEAs will be prepared to ensure all students with disabilities have a meaningfully developed transition plan by age 14.
- b. Advise on policies and practices to ensure all students with disabilities receive the supports and services to graduate on the appropriate pathway after they have completed a full course of study that is consistent with graduation requirements.
- c. Provide guidance and support to Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and OSSE to ensure all potentially eligible students will receive access to pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) before they graduate from high school.

II. Key Accomplishments/Highlights

- a. Committee members had consistent participation in the Secondary Transition Community of Practice's sub-committee on Employment and on Middle School Transition. This allowed for engagement with stakeholders in the community regarding policies and practices for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) around secondary transition.
- b. Committee members co-led the development of a parent session regarding transition services at the 9th Annual Voices of Change Secondary Transition Conference (<https://conta.cc/2u7FKT2>). Parents were informed about the upcoming changes to the age requirements for transition plans and discussed the parent role in the transition planning process. Additional committee members conducted a session for the parents that highlighted adult services and discussed Pre-ETS activities available to their students through RSA.
- c. Committee members attended community forums and meetings regarding the graduation challenges the District has faced during SY17-18. Committee members have engaged with OSSE on their taskforce for Certificate of IEP completion to discuss the course of study for students with disabilities who require an alternative to a diploma.

III. Data Connection

- a. DC Graduation Report (<https://bit.ly/2K0ttx6>)
- b. DC SY16/17 and SY17/18 Indicator 13 and 14 Data (receive updates from OSSE)
- c. RSA Pre-ETS Data – Currently 1,870 students of 3,352 students with disabilities, ages 16 to 21, have been reached.

IV. Recommendations

- a. The subcommittee recommends that OSSE invest in a process to ensure transition plans are meaningfully developed and not merely a compliance measure. The goal of transition plans is to invest in a child's future by developing a plan of action for the future, but often times it is measured solely by the compliance metrics. As such a system needs to be developed to reflect the processes aimed to prepare a student for postsecondary success.
- b. The committee recommends more investment from the mayor's office to develop more training programs and workforce development training for students with disabilities, specifically, so that they can more seamlessly transition into employment opportunities. An example would be to ensure that the new DC Infrastructure Academy is accessible to all residents in DC.
- c. The committee recommends that OSSE work with the State Board of Education to develop appropriate flexible pathways for Diploma graduation requirements for students with disabilities; to ensure that certificate options are utilized only in the most severe cases. The goal is for the DC graduation requirements to meet the intersection of accessibility and achievement, especially for students with disabilities
- d. The committee recommends that OSSE consider building in resources for transition into the Special Education Data System (SEDS) for LEAs to print and/or email to parents so that they have adequate information regarding transition services. This would look like existing resources in SEDS for the Transfer of Rights process.

“Many parents of students with disabilities in DC are completely unaware of what secondary transition planning is and how important it is to preparing for their young adult for well-rounded and high-achieving adult lives. The SAP can help make parents in the District aware of transition planning time and resources to empower parents to support their child to successfully transition into employment, education, and independence.” - SAPSE Parent Member

MEET THE **SAPSE**



An Almquist
Parent



Latoria Brent
Parent



Julie Camerata
Charter School
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**Molly Laychak
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APPENDIX A

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TOPIC	PARTNERS
Sept. 16, 2017	2017 DC Parent and Family Engagement Summit	Walter E. Washington Convention Center	Various parent engagement topics	Office of the Student Advocate, Ombudsman, and OSSE
Oct., 11, 2017	Houston Elementary School PTA Meeting	Houston Elementary School	Informing parents of services	PTA
Oct. 25, 2017	Plummer Elementary School PTA Meeting	Plummer Elementary School	Provided overview of DBH mental health services	Office of the Student Advocate & PTA
Nov. 28, 2017	Principal's Chat and Chew	Plummer Elementary School	Understanding Child Find and student rights under IDEA	Advocates for Justice in Education (AJE)
Nov. 9, 2017	Paradise and Parkside Civic Association Meeting	Neval Thomas Elementary School	Informing parents of their rights	Office of the Student Advocate
Dec. 9, 2017	EdFEST 2017	DC Armory	DC's citywide school fair, where families were able to explore over 200 DCPS and public charter school options for their children	OSSE and My School DC
Dec. 11, 2017	Special Education Workshop Series	Ward 3 - Wilson High School	IDEA	Wilson Feeder Education Network & Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3 Representative, State Board of Education
Feb. 1, 2018	Special Education Workshop Series	Ward 8 - Excel Academy PCS	IDEA	Markus Batchelor, Ward 8 Representative, State Board of Education, and Excel Academy PCS
Feb. 21–25, 2018	Learning Disabilities Association of America's (LDAA) 55th Annual International Conference	Atlanta, GA	Learning disabilities	LDAA
April 9, 2018	Special Education Workshop Series	Ward 6 - Northeast Neighborhood Library	IDEA	DC Council Member Charles Allen, Ward 6 Representative Joe Weedon, State Board of Education, and Capitol Hill Public Schools Parent Organization
April 28, 2018	Ward 8 Parenting Empowerment Conference	DC Prep PCS – Anacostia	Parent engagement	Nation's Capital Mother's Group, Safe Shores and Ascensions Psychological and Community Services
May 15-17, 2018	2018 National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) Capacity Building Institute	Denver, CO	Secondary Transition	NTACT
June 6, 2018	2018 DC Secondary Transition Institute	OSSE	Secondary Transition	OSSE

