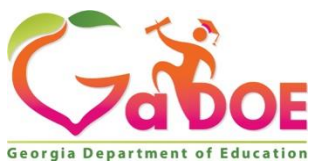


# Georgia Department of Special Education **State Advisory Panel (SAP)**

## **FY21 Annual Performance Report**

**Karin Fisher, Chair**  
**Patti Greyson, Co-Chair**



**July 1, 2022**



## Introduction

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

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

## SAP Membership

Members represented diverse knowledge, background, and opinions and brought their own real-life personal and professional experiences to the SAP. The Panel had 39 members and maintained the regulatory requirement of a minimum of 51 percent of the members being parents of students with disabilities and/or individuals with disabilities. The membership included 20 parents of students with disabilities, two individuals with disabilities, two district administrators, seven teachers, and representatives from various agencies.

Agency Representatives included:

- Georgia Department of Education, Charter Schools
- Georgia Department of Education, Special Education
- Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
- Georgia Department of Corrections
- Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
- Georgia Department of Family and Children Services
- Georgia Babies Can't Wait
- Institute of Higher Education, Special Education
- Georgia Advocacy Office
- Georgia Superintendents' Association (GSSA)
- Georgia Parent and Teacher Association (PTA)
- Parent to Parent of Georgia (Parent Training and Information Center)
- Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education (GCASE)
- Georgia Department of Education, Federal Programs
- Georgia Department of Public Health Early Intervention

## SAP Overview

It was another extraordinary year for the SAP. Due to the pandemic, the Panel did not hold any in-person meetings, which are typically four during the school year, held in Macon, GA, each lasting a day-and-a-half. In their place, there were six virtual meetings, in September, October, and November in 2021 and January, March, and May of 2022.

In the first meeting, members were divided into five groups based on SPP indicators. Panel members provided their input on targets for indicators discussed within their groups. Additionally, the Chair provided updates on the SAP operating procedures and requested input. Panel members agreed upon revised Operating Procedures. After our October meeting, Panel members completed a survey on the SPP indicators.

Members of the GaDOE staff as well as other individuals, agencies, and organizations presented to the Panel.

Topics included:

- Equitable Access to Physical Activity for Children with Disabilities
- Georgia State Systemic Improvement Plan
- Restart Guidance for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) from the Office of Special Education Programs
- Assistive Technology, Accessible Educational Materials, partnership with the Georgia Instructional Materials Center
- Parent Survey
- Annual Performance Report Compliance Indicators
- Georgia Dyslexia Pilot and Implementation updates
- State Systemic Improvement Plan results
- Family Engagement and Dispute Resolution
- Review of FY23 IDEA Application

## SAP Public Comments

The SAP only received one public comment, far fewer than previous years, probably owing to the virtual format.

The public comment was related to:

- Individual Education Programs provided with academic and functional benchmarks against peers
- Additional funding
- Compensatory services for those impacted by Covid
- More experienced teachers

## SAP Committees

Over the past years, SAP Committees included the following list:

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

Sub-committees that met as needed in conjunction with the meeting of the full panel and committees included the following list:

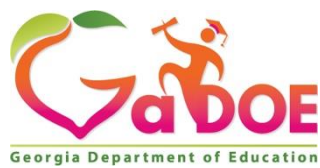
- Best Practices
- Family Engagement
- Inter-Agency Collaboration
- Flexibility and Accountability
- Dispute Resolution
- Public Comment
- Marketing

In the 2021-'22 school year, owing to the virtual format, there were no committee or sub-committee meetings.

## SAP Recommendations

Feedback from SAP members was sought individually on surveys on each of the Annual Report Performance Compliance Indicators. The SAP made the following recommendations:

1. GaDOE should continue its focus on providing infrastructure and supports for leaders, teachers, and families to address the needs of the whole child.
2. GaDOE should continue to address learning loss brought on by the pandemic.
3. GaDOE should address the mental health of students and teachers.
4. GaDOE should continue to address the needs of students with dyslexia and other areas of reading difficulty.
5. GaDOE should address equity issues and concerns that impact students with disabilities and their families.
6. GaDOE should continue to address the shortage and attrition of special education teachers.



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