

MISSOURI SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL

*Advising the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on
Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*

June 2011

Chair

Scott Montgomery

Vice Chair

Secretary

Dorothy Parks

Dear Citizens of Missouri:

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires that each state education agency establish a committee to provide advice regarding programs and services for children with disabilities. The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) serves in that capacity for the Special Education Office of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Special Education Advisory Panel plays an important role in representing the various constituencies who are impacted by or have an interest in special education in Missouri.

Being aware of the fiscal constraints faced by our state, the SEAP determined it should do its part. Consequently, the SEAP authorized this summary letter be written to replace the printed annual report. This letter is intended to provide an overview of the responsibilities and activities of the SEAP during the 2010-2011 school year.

For more complete information about the SEAP and its activities, members of the public are encouraged to visit the following website
<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Administration/AdvisoryPanel/94142mainpage.html>.

Membership on state advisory committees is intended to represent stakeholders who have specific knowledge of and interest in special education. Membership categories are defined in *IDEA*. They include parents of children with disabilities, individuals with disabilities, public school teachers and administrators, representatives of charter and private schools, and representatives from various state agencies or organizations.

The duties and responsibilities of the SEAP are authorized by *IDEA*. The primary function of the panel is to advise the Department about special education and related services for children with disabilities. The panel accomplishes this charge by advising the Department about unmet needs, offering comments on proposed rules and regulations, advising state officials regarding reports

provided to and received from the U.S. Department of Education, and other special education issues brought to the attention of the panel.

The work of the SEAP occurs at regularly scheduled meetings of the entire panel, as well as through a number of subcommittees (evaluation, rules and regulations, monitoring, programs, nominations, and public comment). The SEAP meets at least four times each year and meeting dates are posted on the Department website.

SEAP meetings are open to the public and time is allocated at each meeting to receive comments from the public. In addition, the SEAP has a dedicated email address that enables individuals to communicate their thoughts or concerns about special education matters. Comments received in this manner are presented to the SEAP by the chairperson of the public comment subcommittee.

The meetings and activities of the SEAP are documented on the Special Education section of the Department's website. Meeting agendas and minutes are posted in a timely manner, along with other pertinent information and documents. The dates, times, and locations of SEAP meetings are also posted on the website to facilitate attendance by members of the public.

The SEAP and the Office of Special Education had a busy school year. Here are a few highlights of SEAP activities:

- The panel gave a welcome aboard to our new Assistant Commissioner, Stephen Barr.
- In September, a monitoring team from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) spent a week with Department officials. In preparation for the monitoring visit, SEAP members responded to an OSEP survey about their role as panel members and the SEAP relationship with the Department.
- Significant time during two SEAP meetings was devoted to discussion regarding concerns about the practices of seclusion or restraint of special education students in Missouri. The discussion occurred as the result of newspaper articles on the practices and particular interest in the issue on the part of several panel members. Similar deliberations have been occurring at the federal level and legislation to regulate these practices is pending in Congress.
- Panel meetings have also included presentations, reports, and discussions on various initiatives to improve the quality and consistency of special education services around the state. These have included: a presentation on the National Dropout Prevention pilot project; a review of due process

hearings and decisions; development of an on-line Individualized Education Program (IEP) reporting system and plans to pilot the program; a model to improve transition services for students exiting K-12 education; a presentation on the *Missouri Integrated Model* directed at increasing student achievement and transforming school culture; MAP-A Science presentation; a discussion of the draft for the Missouri Part B Annual Performance Report and State Plan; and, the *Missouri School-wide Positive Behavior Support* (SWPBS) program aimed at providing students with skills for success in the school setting (<http://pbissmissouri.org/>).

- On behalf of the SEAP, a letter was sent to Commissioner of Education Chris Nicastro regarding the importance of school improvement initiatives funded by the Office of Special Education (e.g. SWPBS, suggesting scale-up of those initiatives and requesting their consideration as part of Missouri's application for federal *Race to the Top* funding). Subsequent to that letter, a representative of the SEAP participated in the initial planning for Missouri's RTTT application. Although Missouri was not among the first group of finalists announced in March, a refined proposal was submitted on June 1 for the second round of applications.

Website pages include a complete list of membership categories and the current SEAP members, a full description of duties of the SEAP, and minutes of this year's panel meetings. For members of the public wanting more detailed information about the state of special education in Missouri, the State Performance Plan (SPP), the Annual Performance Report (APR), and the response and determinations from OSEP can also be found on the Department's website (<http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/SPPpage.html>).

Individuals with concerns about special education are encouraged to communicate to the SEAP through the dedicated email address or to attend regularly scheduled SEAP meetings. For those who might want greater involvement, review panel requirements and the nominations process and consider an application for SEAP membership.

Sincerely,

Scott B. Montgomery
Chairperson, 2010-2011