



## **Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Annual Report July 2021-June 2022**

### **Preface**

The annual report of the Minnesota Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) is respectfully submitted to the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). The reporting period is July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. The annual report is a summary of the panel activities and recommendations during the reporting period. SEAP provides a broad base of input to MDE staff regarding policies, practices and issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities ages birth through 21, and advises MDE's Divisions of Special Education and Assistance and Compliance on the education of children and youth with disabilities.

### **Special Education Director's Letter**

Dear Colleagues:

I am honored to present the 2021-22 Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) annual report.

SEAP is a committee that is federally required to advise the Minnesota Department of Education on students with disabilities and their families. SEAP is a critical partner for the department and provides vital feedback on the agency's activities. Our time together is spent learning about special education program efforts and reviewing the quantitative and qualitative results of that work. The real value of the SEAP is found in the conversations that follow, collaboratively providing feedback and brainstorming on how to improve educational programming for students with disabilities across the state.

The 2021-22 school year was, yet again, atypical due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year SEAP engaged with issues ranging from Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) programming to the improvement of graduation rates and postsecondary success. When addressing each of those issues, SEAP was able to provide insights into how COVID-19 has impacted students and how we can recover from those impacts. We are especially proud of our robust and continued conversations regarding person-centered practices in Minnesota.

We are pleased to highlight all of the work from the last year in this report. It takes the collaboration of all of us—parents/guardians, government agencies, school personnel and students—to arrive at the

most meaningful solutions. MDE genuinely thanks every panel member for their services to Minnesota's students.

Sincerely,

Robyn Widley  
Director, Special Education Division  
Minnesota Department of Education

## 2021-22 SEAP Members

Name	Represents	Term Ends
Saido Abdirashid	School Administrator	2024
Kimberly Baker, Chair	Parent Representative	2024
Milena Bates	Parent Representative	2023
Tricia Brisbine	Parent Representative	2023
Amy Delgado	Parent Representative	2022
Michael Deschneau	Higher Education Representative	2023
Korto Dixon	School/Related Service Personnel	2022
Amy Ernst	School Administrator	2024
Deqa Farah	Parent Representative	2024
Satasha Green-Stephen	Higher Education Representative	2023
Thomas Hannasch	School/Related Service Personnel	2024
Alyssa Klein	Interagency Representative	2024
Rebecca Kottke	Student Representative	2022
Kim Lemcke	Interagency Representative, Foster Care Services	2023
Amber Madoll	Parent Representative	2023
Georgia Miller-Kamara	School/Related Service Personnel	2023
Rachel Pearson	Parent Representative	2024
Patty Popp	Interagency Representative, Juvenile Corrections	2023
Roberto Reyes	McKinney-Vento Homeless Advocate	N/A
Leann Shore	School/Related Service Personnel	2022
Sadie Tollman	Parent Representative	2023
Sarah Vinueza	Parent Representative	2024
Sabeen Zehra	Parent Representative	2023

## Duties

As established in accordance with 34 CFR 300.167-300.169 (2006), the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) of the state of Minnesota must:

1. Advise the State Educational Agency (SEA) of unmet needs within the state in the education of children with disabilities.
2. Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the state regarding the education of children with disabilities.
3. Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 618 of the Act.
4. Advise the SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Act.
5. Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.
6. The SEA, after deleting personally identifiable information, must provide SEAP with the due process hearing findings and decisions and make those findings and decisions available to the public (34 CFR 300.513(d) and 300.514(c)).

## Acknowledgements

MDE acknowledges and thanks the following staff for their contribution to this report and the work of the SEAP:

- Robyn Widley, Director, Special Education Division
- Kimberly Baker, SEAP Chair, 2021-22
- Holly Andersen, SEAP Coordinator
- Barbara Hess, Administrative Support
- Doug Gray, Communications Specialist

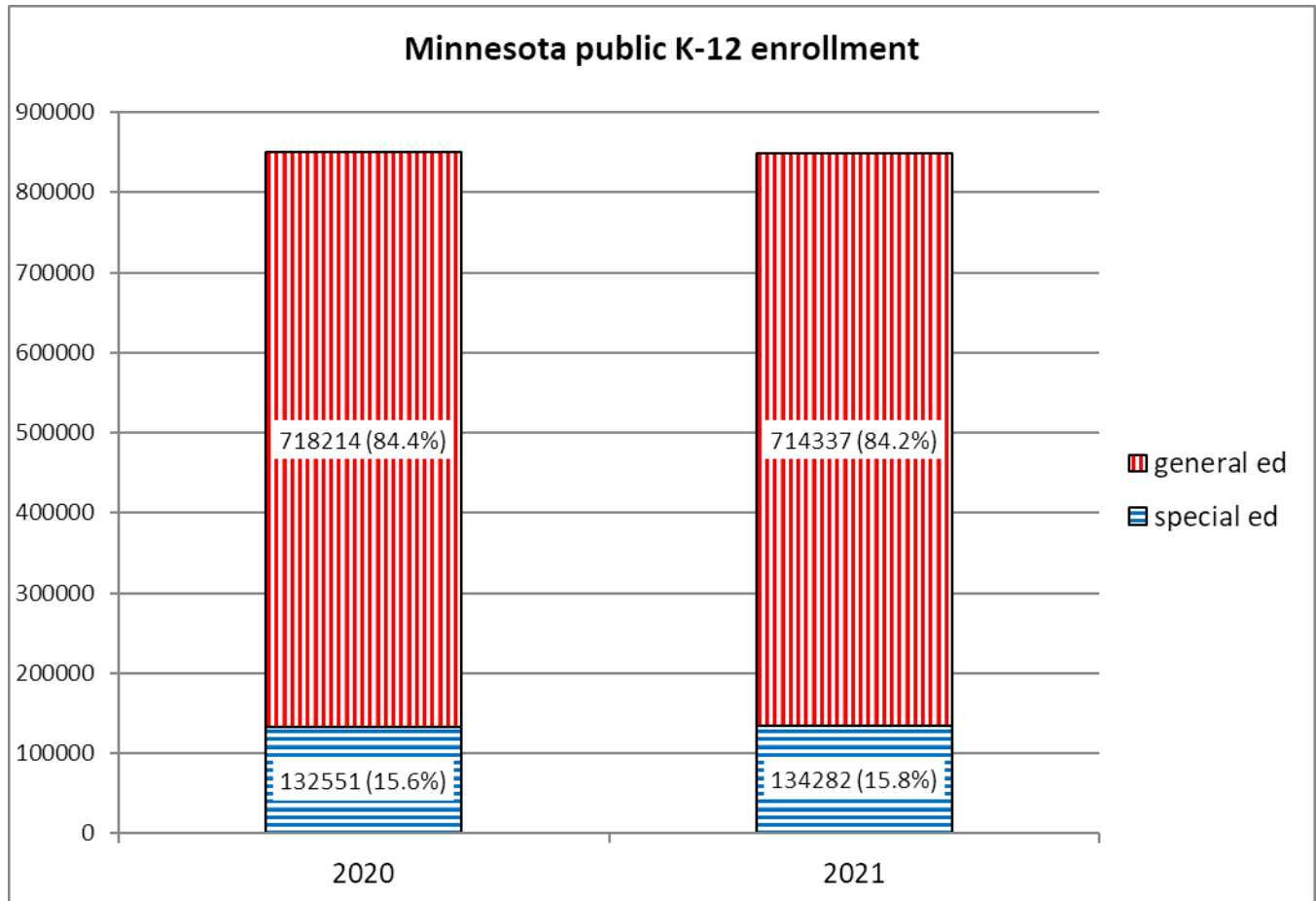
The SEAP is funded by federal funds obtained by MDE through Special Education — Grants to States CFDA 84-027A of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) and amendments thereto.

## Overview

SEAP provides policy guidance for MDE's divisions of Special Education Policy and Assistance and Compliance with respect to special education and related services for children and youth with disabilities in Minnesota. IDEA and state law establish SEAP and outline its duties. SEAP members are appointed by the Commissioner of Education as the governor's designee. SEAP members include parents, individuals with disabilities, educators, teacher trainers, advocates, special education directors and staff from MDE and other state agencies, bringing their diverse perspectives together to make recommendations on special education issues.

## Special Education in Minnesota

By federal law, public schools must provide individualized special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities. Special education is specially designed instruction, provided at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. It may include instruction in the classroom, home, hospitals, institutions and other settings.



On December 1, 2021, 151,532 Minnesota children and youth from birth to 21 years old received special education services. This represents an increase of 1.4 percent from the 149,382 Minnesota children receiving special education services in 2020-21. Of those, 134,282 were enrolled in grades K-12 in Minnesota public schools, 15.8 percent of the total statewide public school K-12 enrollment of 848,619. The number of Minnesota children and youth from birth to 21 years old receiving special education services for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Speech/Language Impairment (S/LI) increased somewhat; the number receiving services for Blind/Visually Impaired (B/VI), Severely Multiply Impaired (SMI), Physically Impaired (PI), Deaf-Blind (DB), Developmental Cognitive Disability-Severe/Profound (DCD SP), Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) decreased somewhat; and the number receiving services for Other Health Impairments (OHI), Developmental Cognitive Disability-Mild/Moderate (DCD MM),

Developmental Delay (DD) and Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) remained relatively stable compared to December 1, 2021.

## **Policy Areas of Interest**

### **Special Education Recovery Services and Supports**

In 2021, the Minnesota legislature passed, and Governor Walz signed, [Minnesota Session Laws – 2021, Chapter 13, Article 5, Section 1](#). This requires MDE, school districts and charter schools to ensure that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on in-person instruction and access to a free appropriate public education are addressed. MDE kept SEAP members updated on the requirements of the new law and resources it made available to help schools implement them.

SEAP members expressed interest in the funding mechanisms related to the new law and its requirements. SEAP, MDE and their partners will continue to work closely together to ensure Minnesota students receive the special education services they need as the state and nation readjust to the educational landscape and the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)**

In common with Part B for school-age children, Minnesota's Part C system of early childhood special education adopted a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) focused on improved educational results and functional improvements for children and supportive and collaborative partnerships for caregivers. ECSE is working with other state agencies, tribal nations, local committees and programs, and caregivers to implement a comprehensive system of professional development and improve operations and implementation of its programs statewide.

Using a child outcomes summary process, ECSE gathered data on how Minnesota children receiving ECSE services progressed in social-emotional, knowledge and skills acquisition and behavioral areas. This data showed how ECSE programs performed against previously-set benchmarks. To support its work and programs, ECSE awarded American Rescue Plan funding to four partner organizations involved in improving family engagement and to 21 school districts across the state for their local programs. Referral to ECSE programs returned to high levels after falling somewhat during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SEAP members raised questions around licensing standards for ECSE providers and pointed out the need to identify children who require services at the youngest ages and make data collection easier and more understandable for parents. MDE will continue to rely on SEAP members' input as it works to build and improve ESCE services for Minnesota's youngest children.

## **State Performance Plan (SPP), Annual Performance Report (APR) and State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)**

Annually, the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) releases state determinations on implementation of IDEA Part B and C. IDEA requires each state to report each year to ED on its performance under its State Performance Plan (SPP), submitting an Annual Performance Report (APR) providing information on the progress made in meeting the established targets. IDEA details four categories for determination: meets the requirements and purposes of IDEA, needs assistance, needs intervention, or needs substantial intervention. ED uses both compliance and results data for Part B and Part C state determinations in a Results Driven Accountability (RDA) framework.

For fiscal year 2020, 22 states and territories met the "Meets Requirements" determination, Minnesota being one of them again for Part B. Minnesota also met the "Meets Requirements" determination for Part C, making it one of only 14 states and territories to meet in both areas. Minnesota continues to have much to celebrate about the quality work teachers and administrators are doing across the state for students with disabilities.

In 2014, ED required states to develop a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) focused on improving results for students over a six-year period. MDE identified six-year graduation rates for American Indian and Black students with disabilities as its focus area for improvement. In 2015, the Duluth, Minneapolis, Osseo and St. Paul school districts became partners in the work. The partner districts chose to implement Check & Connect at selected schools during the 2016-17 school year and beyond. MDE also designed its State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) to support SSIP implementation by reducing dropouts and increasing graduation rates for American Indian students with disabilities and supporting higher education partnerships to increase the number of American Indian teachers in special education. The University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration supports Check & Connect training and coaching, while MDE's partner PACER supports family engagement.

Partner district teams have completed the District Capacity Assessment (DCA) to align their efforts and resources around practices intended to impact student outcomes each year. DCA results guide districts in developing individualized action plans to address areas of need while building on existing strengths. All four districts have shown an increase in their capacity to implement Check & Connect.

MDE continues to support district implementation of evidence-based practices, reporting progress and results and evaluating the plan. Subsequent progress reports note continued MDE and partner district support to improve outcomes for American Indian and Black students with disabilities. OSEP feedback on Minnesota's SSIP submissions has been very positive, especially related to its collection and use of scaling data.

SEAP members explored the connections between the SPP/APR process and state and district accountability for positive, equitable outcomes for students with disabilities. Members expressed

concern that partnership and support efforts need to be purposeful and measured consistently and well in order to affect outcomes. SEAP and MDE will continue their partnership and focus on the SPP/APR process to ensure Minnesota has a strong special education system for the future.

## Going Forward

SEAP is a broad-based constituency group that plays an active and influential role in improving the education of children and youth with disabilities in Minnesota. SEAP members participate on other state and local committees and task forces such as the special education teacher licensure task force and the MDE special education higher education forum. As a result of their membership on other groups, there is opportunity to communicate priorities and make connections. Working together helps all our efforts move forward. SEAP will continue studying and recommending improvements for Minnesota's special education services to improve outcomes for students.

## SEAP Meeting Schedule 2021-22

Tuesday, September 14, 2021 (orientation)

Friday, September 24, 2021

Friday, November 19, 2021

Friday, January 21, 2022

Friday, April 15, 2022

Monday, June 17, 2022

SEAP meetings for 2021-22 were held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SEAP meetings were scheduled from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For information about SEAP, [visit the Advisory Panel's website](#).

For questions about SEAP, please contact [Holly Andersen](#) at 651-582-8668.