



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (KDE)
STATE ADVISORY PANEL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
(SAPEC)
SUMMARY

AUG. 25, 2026

ATTENDANCE: Allison Armstrong, Lacheena Carothers, Tiffanie Clark, Tal Curry, Emily Fox, Amber Hamm, Jackie Hawley, Eileen Hoover, Heather McConnell, Jessica Moore, Amy Smith, Zachary Stumbo, Laura Tipton, Jeni Ward, Alexandria Wright, Jeff Coles

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ashley Barlow, Cora McNabb, Layla Frazier

SUMMARY:

Agenda Item: Welcome and Introduction of New Staff Members

Presenter: Gretta Hylton, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner and State Director of Special Education Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL)

Summary of Discussion:

The Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL) introduced staff and updated the panel on recent leadership transitions. Key staff introduced included Erin Harrell, who is taking on new office-level responsibilities and serving as a liaison to the advisory panel; Jarrod Slone, the new Division Director for IDEA Monitoring and Results; Angela Gould, DIMR Admin Support, Jason Wheatley, Director of the Transition Education Unit; Traci Sharpe, Executive Strategic Advisor in OSEEL; Andrea Bartholomew, Early Learning Unit Director; Melody Cooper, policy advisor in the office; David Richards, Federal Policy and Regulatory Coordinator; Shannon Sparkman, Director for the Division of State Schools and Gretta Hylton, Associate Commissioner and Kentucky State Director of Special Education.

Feedback:

None

Agenda Item: Agenda Review and Review of Meeting Purpose, Duties, and Norms

Presenter: Erin Harrell, SAPEC Liaison, Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL)

Summary of Discussion:

Ms. Harrell reviewed the meeting agenda and revisited the purpose, responsibilities, and established norms of the advisory panel to ensure members had a shared understanding of expectations and how they will work together effectively.

Feedback:

None

Agenda Item: Election of Officers

Presenter: Jarrod S. Slone, Director of the Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results (DIMR)

Summary of Discussion:

The panel conducted elections for Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary because no officers were currently serving at the start of the new term.

Chair: Tal Curry nominated Tiffanie Clark for Chair, and Amy Smith seconded the nomination. With no other nominations, Jeni Ward made the motion to elect Tiffanie Clark as Chair, and Tal Curry seconded. Following a roll-call vote, the motion carried and Tiffanie Clark was elected Chair.

Vice Chair: Tiffanie Clark nominated Laura Tipton for Vice Chair, and the nomination was seconded. With no additional nominations, Jeni Ward made the motion to elect Laura Tipton as Vice Chair, and the motion was seconded. Following the roll-call vote, the motion carried and Laura Tipton was elected Vice Chair.

Secretary: Tiffanie Clark nominated Emily Fox for Secretary, and the nomination was seconded. With no other nominations, a motion was made to elect Emily Fox as Secretary, and Amy Smith seconded the motion. Following the roll-call vote, the motion carried and Emily Fox was elected Secretary.

The newly elected officers were therefore **Tiffanie Clark, Chair; Laura Tipton, Vice Chair; and Emily Fox, Secretary.**

Feedback:

None

Agenda Item: Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Presenter: Tiffanie Clark, President, SAPEC

Summary of Discussion:

KDE:OSEEL: EKH

August 25, 2026

Tal Curry moved to approve the current meeting agenda, Amy Smith second. The panel approved the meeting agenda and subsequently reviewed and approved the minutes from the March 11, 2026, meeting.

Feedback:

None

Agenda Item: SAPEC Future Date/Time/Location Meeting Setting

Presenter: Tiffanie Clark, President, SAPEC

Summary of Discussion:

Proposed meeting dates were provided by the OSEEL and Amy Smith made a motion to approve the proposed meeting dates of:

Dec. 15, 2026

March 2, 2027

April 20, 2027

June 16, 2027

Lacheena Carruthers seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Feedback:

None

Agenda Item: Fall 2026 Accountability

Presenter: Jennifer Stafford, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Office of Assessment and Accountability (OAA) Shara Savage, Director, OAA

Summary of Discussion:

Jennifer Stafford and Shara Savage provided an overview of Kentucky's Fall 2026 school accountability system and explained how school performance will be measured and reported. Members reviewed the distinction between Status, which represents a school's current-year performance, and Change, which measures improvement or decline from the previous year. Status and Change are combined to evaluate performance across indicators that include reading and mathematics; science, social studies and writing; English learner progress; school climate and safety; and, for high schools, postsecondary readiness and graduation rate.

The team also reviewed how the various indicators are weighted differently at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and how those scores contribute to a school's overall accountability rating. Schools receive performance ratings using a five-color system, Blue,

Green, Yellow, Orange and Red, with Blue representing the highest level of performance. Examples were provided to demonstrate how Status and Change scores are calculated and combined to determine indicator and overall performance ratings. The presentation also reviewed the cut scores used for each school level.

KDE representatives also presented the proposed revisions to [703 KAR 5:270](#), which come after the passage of [House Bill 257](#) during the 2026 legislative session. The key regulatory changes beginning in 2026–2027 school year, means Kentucky will use new individual student growth and chronic absenteeism indicators, proposed indicator weights, revised accountability calculations and changes affecting first-year English Learners. The bill reduced testing by removing on-demand writing and editing and mechanics from Kentucky’s assessment exams. KDE will continue gathering stakeholder feedback before the proposed amendments to 703 KAR 5:270 return to the Kentucky Board of Education in October.

Feedback:

The panel asked questions pertaining to attendance indicators and what is absent or unexcused and what qualifies as a partial school day or a shortened school day.

Follow-up Required:

Panel was encouraged to review the slide deck from the presentation and provide any questions in their post-meeting survey so OSEEL can provide answers to those questions.

Agenda Item: State-Defined Alternate Diploma Updates

Presenter: Tania Sharp, Exceptional Children Consultant, Division of IDEA Implementation and Programs (DIIP)

Summary of Discussion:

Tania Sharp with KDE’s Guidance and Support Branch provided an overview of House Bill 562 and the development of Kentucky’s new state-defined Alternate High School Diploma. Unlike Kentucky’s current alternative high school diploma, the new diploma will meet the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), be standards-based, and align with the state’s minimum graduation requirements for a regular high school diploma. Students will have to age 21, within the allowable period for a free appropriate public education (FAPE), to meet the diploma requirements. Importantly, students earning the state-defined Alternate High School Diploma will be considered high school graduates and will be able to indicate that they have earned a high school diploma.

KDE is working through a cross-agency collaborative group to develop policies, procedures, employer partnerships, training and guidance for implementation. Discussion emphasized the importance of ensuring the diploma is meaningful to employers while also establishing safeguards so students who could earn a regular diploma with appropriate supports are not unnecessarily placed on the alternate diploma track. Implementation is required beginning with the 2027–2028 school year. KDE noted that development is still in its early stages and that the panel will be asked to provide additional input as the requirements and guidance are developed.

Feedback:

The panel thanked KDE and OSEEL for their work on HB 562.

Agenda Item: OSEEL Monitoring Shareholder Feedback Project

Presenter: Gretta Hylton, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, OSEEL

David Wickersham, Federal Policy and Regulatory Coordinator,
OSEEL Jeanna Mullins, Consultant

Summary of Discussion:

Gretta Hylton, David Wickersham and Jeanna Mullins presented information regarding OSEEL's Monitoring Shareholder Feedback Project. The project is intended to gather feedback about the special education monitoring process and identify opportunities to improve communication, understanding and the overall monitoring experience.

As part of this work, OSEEL convened a monitoring focus group in April 2026 that included superintendents representing cooperative regions and districts with recent monitoring experience. Feedback has already resulted in several actions, including adding “Myth Busters” information to OSEEL's News You Can Use, removing first-year Directors of Special Education as a risk factor from the Risk Assessment, continuing weekly spotlights of effective district practices and sharing statewide monitoring trends.

Feedback:

None

Agenda Item: IDEA Monitoring and Trends for 2025-2026

Presenter: Jarrod S. Slone, Director of the Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results (DIMR),
Jessica Jones, Education Program Manager, DIMR

Summary of Discussion:

KDE presented findings from the 2025–2026 IDEA fiscal monitoring cycle. Budget and expenditure issues were identified in all 11 districts reviewed, while nine had findings related to Personnel Activity Reports, eight had inventory findings, four had concerns involving private-school proportionate amounts, and three had procurement findings.

The presentation identified recurring issues involving documentation and the appropriate use and coding of IDEA funds. Personnel Activity Report findings included missing reports for employees funded wholly or partially with special education funds, discrepancies between reports and payroll records, and Section 504 salary expenses being charged to IDEA and/or Maintenance of Effort.

Feedback:

None

Agenda Item: Public Comment

Presenter: None

Summary of Discussion:

There were no public comments.

The next meeting is scheduled for Dec. 15, 2026

The meeting was adjourned at 1:14 p.m. ET.