IDEA Advisory Meeting

MINUTES

DECEMBER 18, 2025 · 9:00 AM – 12:30 P.M. · VIRTUAL MEETING

MEETING CALLED BY	Christopher Larson
TYPE OF MEETING	IDEA Advisory Meeting
FACILITATOR	Christopher Larson
NOTE TAKER	Michelle Souther
ATTENDEES	Michelle Souther, Mary McCarvel-O'Connor, Nicole Reybok, Christopher Larson, Colette Fleck, Lucy Fredericks, Grace Larsen, Brooke Tayer, Michelle Pfaff, Jennifer Withers, Katy Barnum, Andrea Johnson, Michelle Griffin, Jeff Anderson, Alyssa Kramer, Michael Netzloff, Aimee Easton, Annie Skiba, Maggie Williams, Susan Wagner

Agenda topics

	BY-LAWS	CHRISTOPHER LARSON

DISCUSSION	The bylaws changes need to be made 30 days before a vote. We will be discussing to see if we want to make any changes today. Nicole and Chris were wondering if the chairperson position could be held longer. They feel like that once the person gets familiar with the position their term is up. How does the committee feel if the chairperson held the position longer? Jeff Anderson suggested maybe we just remove the term limits and ask the committee to vote on that. Chris, Nicole, and Jeff will serve as a policy committee and come up with language changes to the bylaws. IDEA Advisory Committee

	Listening Sessions	NICOLE REYBOK

DISCUSSION	A listening session was held On October 28, 2025, and the following issues that were brought during the session were:
	
	IDEA Advisory Committee Summary Report
	  • **Attendees:** Pam Peterson (SVSEU Coordinator), Rachel Haffner (ARC Upper Valley), James Hilliard, Katy Barnum, Elizabeth Kar, Shawn Huss (Special Education Director), Elisha Johnson (Grand Forks Public Schools Coordinator), Carolyn Maroski (Parent), Johanna Pierce (P&A;), Marit Erikssen, Heidi Budeau (Special Education Director), Alia Cota (P&A;), Midge Thompson (Grand Forks Public Schools Coordinator)
	
	Key Themes and Issues
	
	IEP and 504 Process Concerns
	  • Use of process facilitators for IEP development creates distance between teachers and the planning process.
	  • Classroom teachers are sometimes unaware of students' IEP status.
	  • 504 coordinators need clearer guidance on writing plans and ensuring implementation.
	  • Families struggle to access DPI resources during crises; need for periodic education opportunities (webinars, videos).
	Staffing Shortages and Service Gaps
	  • Lack of special education providers and resource rooms leading to gaps in services.
	  • Shortage of paraprofessionals for students with intensive needs, causing more restrictive placements.
	  • Inconsistent para support (few days per week instead of daily).
	  • Retention of qualified service providers and special education teachers is a statewide issue.
	Collaboration and Systemic Issues
	  • Disability areas are siloed, insufficient collaboration between schools, developmental disability agencies, and medical providers.

	• Lack of related service providers and mental health services. • Behavioral health needs remain unmet despite proposed processes. • Families often feel adversarial toward schools; need strategies to foster teamwork. *Behavioral Health and Eligibility Gaps* • Inadequate behavioral health support for students. • Students who do not qualify for IEPs face service gaps. • Stress from these gaps contributes to high teacher turnover. *Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Challenges* • Students placed in restrictive settings due to lack of para support. • Limited access to typically developing peers. • Families perceive insufficient support in general education classrooms. *Technology and Accessibility Concerns* • Overstimulation from excessive device access. • Difficulty accessing online learning during snow days due to support needs. • Schools favor certain apps that may not align with individual communication needs. *Broader Policy and Advocacy Concerns* • Worries about federal removal of DEI initiatives and potential impact on Special Education and IDEA. **Recommendations** • Improve IEP and 504 Processes: Ensure teachers implementing IEPs are actively involved in development; provide standardized training and guidance for 504 coordinators; develop a clear communication protocol so classroom teachers know which students have IEPs. • Address Staffing Shortages: Advocate for increased funding to hire and retain special education teachers and paraprofessionals; explore incentives for recruitment and retention of qualified providers. • Enhance Collaboration: Create interagency task forces to improve coordination between schools, DD agencies, and medical providers; develop shared mental health service plans across districts. • Expand Behavioral Health Supports: Implement statewide behavioral health initiatives and ensure follow-through on submitted processes; provide training for staff on managing behavioral needs and crisis intervention. • Protect LRE Access: Increase para support in general education settings to reduce restrictive placements; monitor compliance with LRE requirements and provide technical assistance to districts. • Improve Technology Access: Standardize assistive technology options to meet diverse student needs; provide guidance for managing device use to prevent overstimulation. • Family Engagement and Education: Offer quarterly webinars or video resources to help families • navigate special education systems; develop strategies to foster collaborative relationships between families and schools. • Advocacy and Policy Monitoring: Monitor federal policy changes related to DEI and IDEA; prepare contingency plans to safeguard special education rights. Jeff Anderson- Lack of para educators is a big issue, and a frequently cited IEP violation by the parents that I've heard from. Chris would like to have these listening sessions annually.

FEDERAL SPECIAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS   MARY MCCARVEL-O'CONNOR

DISCUSSION	Monitoring 1. Three Tiers of Monitoring-Universal, Targeted and Intensive 2. Three Tiers of Technical Assistance 3. All districts/special education units are monitored every six years. Understanding Sources of Authority - State-IDEA-Requirements-Outline_WestEd_Sep2025.pdf IDEA 4. IDEA Statue-IDEA passed by Congress 5. IDEA Regulations-Rules issued by the US DOE to implement the statue. 6. OSEP Guidance-Non-binding guidance issued by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) interpreting the regulations and statute.

As I think about the current federal and state landscape, when it comes to policy making for students with disabilities in North Dakota:

1. I am excited about ….

2. I am wondering about ….

3. I am worried about ….

Nicole is excited that they will have a little more control over students' needs. ND already goes above and beyond for students, but it would be nice to have more control. ND provides more intensive services than other states. We get to chart our own course.

Andrea is wondering if OSEP goes away how soon would NDDPI be able to write rules and would define where we want to go.

Worried – will we have funding, consistency and fidelity for students with disabilities. If a student moves to another state to ND how would the student be affected if each state is doing their own thing and there is no consistency from state to state. We hope that most states will continue doing what they are doing.

As parents, how do we know what to expect if there is no federal guidance. Will it be the same from district to district? Funding? Fargo is cracking down on transportation. How will it all play out and how will parents find out?

How do we set our own indicators and change services for students with disabilities?

As I think about what matters most for students with disabilities:

1. What state actions/activities are making a difference in North Dakota?

2. What state actions/activities are not making a sufficiently strong impact on North Dakota?

3. What ideas do you have about actions/activities we should look into?

Paes is a program that helps students find where their strengths are. Funding is an issue. Paes is roughly $40,000.00. Changes in Medicaid further limit our abilities. University Startup can't be modified for more severely disabled students.

[What Matters Most in Order to Realize Positive Outcomes for Students With Disabilities? – WestEd](#)

Prioritize the five key constructs:

1. **Accurately identify and make students eligible** for special education services.

2. **Develop outcomes-focused Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)** such that services are configured to ensure educational benefit.

3. **Provide specially designed instruction with fidelity,** as specified in students' IEPs.

4. **Promote meaningful family–educator–principal partnerships** that result in the functional application of procedural safeguards for student and family rights.

5. **Design and implement an efficient and effective statewide system of General Supervision and strategic resource allocation** to drive accountability and support that propels excellence in the priorities listed above.

Embracing Opportunities

After seeing the recommended five key constructs:

1. What do you think North Dakota should consider?

2. What additional key construct(s) should we look at?

Emphasis on outcome IEPs. Curriculum doesn't always align to the classroom. Research shows you shouldn't be removing students from the classroom during reading and math because SWD having the core curriculum is important. How do we get more training for all staff on scaffolding for students?

	State Performance Plan (SPP) · **Is a multi-year roadmap** for how the state will improve special education services under IDEA. · It covers several years at a time. (6 six years) · It sets goals and explains what the state plans to do to meet them. · It describes how the state will measure progress (using Indicators). · It focuses on long-term improvement. **Annual Performance Report (APR)** · It is a **year-to-year "report card"** showing how well the state is doing on the goals and indicators in the SPP. · It is submitted every year. · It shows the actual results: Did the state meet its targets? Improve? Fall behind? · It includes data about how schools and programs performed that year. · It explains any changes or steps taken during that year. Data is from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 Indicator 1 – Graduation – target 76.93% Rate – 76.05%. Target not met. Indicator 2 – Drop-Out – target 17.80% - Rate 22.03%. Target not met Indicator 3 – Assessment – Grade 4 Reading– 95% -Rate 95.49% - Target met. Math – Target – 95% - rate – 95.69%. Target met. Grade 8 – Reading – Rate – 95% - target – 92.69% - target not met. Math – target 95% - 93.10% - target not met. Grade 10 & 11 – Reading – Target – 95% 0 rate 89.14% - target not met. Math – target 95% - rate 89.21% - target not met. Proficiency Rate on Alternate Assessment: Grade 4 – ELA – target - 56.26%, rate 53.76%. Target not met. Grade 4 – Math – target – 32.94% - rate 31.18%. Target not met Grade 8 – ELA – target 38.15% - rate 47.14% - target met Grade 8 – Math – target 14.98% - rate 30% - target met Grade 10 & 11 – ELA – target 41.57% - rate 29.11%. Target not met. Grade 10 & 11 – Math – target 37.48% - rate 25.32%. Target not met. Indicator 4: Suspension/Expulsion – Target 6.95% - rate 9.38%. Target not met.

DISCUSSION	Nicole asked if NDDPI has noticed an increase in Indicator 4 due to the mental health crisis? Yes, we have.
	
	Indicator 5: Least Restrictive Environment –
	· Regular Classroom – target 74.12% - rate – 73.45%. Target not met.
	· Separate Classroom – target 5.71% - rate – 7.53%. Target not met.
	· Separate Facilities – target 1.41% - rate 1.56%. Target not met.
	LRE – Preschool Students
	· Regular Classroom – target 23.07% - rate – 18.21%. Target not met.
	· Separate Classroom – target 39.49% - rate – 43.12%. Target not met.
	· Separate Facilities – target 1.18% - rate .98%. Target met.
	Indicator 7: Child Outcomes
	· Social-Emotional Skills – Target – 87.07% - rate 87.65%. Target met.
	  o Functioning within age expectations – target – 61.67% - rate – 56.40%. Target not met.
	· Acquisition of use and Knowledge of Skills – Target – 89.86% - rate – 90.24%. Target met.
	  o Functioning within age expectations – Target – 52.11% - rate 48.05%. Target not met.
	· Use of Appropriate Behaviors – Target – 86.99% - rate 88.30%. Target met.
	  o Functioning within age expectations - Target – 69.48% - rate 64.86%. Target not met.
	Indicator 8: Parent Involvement – Target 69.87% - Rate – 67.16%. Target not met. – Parent Survey.
	Indicator 9: Disproportionate Representation – Target 0% - Rate 0%. Target met.
	Indicator 10: Disproportionate Representation by Disability – Target – 0% - Rate – 1.15%. Target not met.
	Indicator 11: Child Find – Target – 100% - Rate 99.12% - Target not met. – 60-calendar day evaluation timeline. This is a compliance indicator, so you need 100%.
	Indicator 12: Early Childhood Transition – Target – 100% - Rate -99.55%. Target not met. Students from Part C to Part B.
	Indicator 13: Secondary Transition - Target – 100% - Rate -88.78%. Target not met. Compliance indicator so Target is 100%.
	Indicator 14: Post-School Outcomes:
	· Enrolled in higher ed within 1 year of leaving school – Target 21.10% - Rate 28.44%. Target met.
	· Competitively employed or enrolled in higher ed within 1 year. Target 62.39% - Rate 61.98%. Target not met.
	· Enrolled in another type of postsecondary education/training. Target 82.57% - Rate – 80.54%. Target not met.

Indicator 15 & 16 – are dispute indicators. We don't have to report these until we have over 10.
Indicator 17 – SSIP – graduation rates for ED students. (6-year cohort)
Indicator 18 – compliance and noncompliance indicators

The SPP/APR is due February 2, 2026. We received the final report in June, 2026 and then that will be posted to our NDDPI webpage.

Indicator 3 Target Setting –A new statewide test was administered in Spring 2025, ND A-PLUS so we need to set new targets for Spring 2026 for Indicator 3B and 3D.

3B Target Setting – We will take a look at the trend lines to see what direction of performance - up, down or flat.

Target Options for Spring 2026 – 3B Math – **The following target options were chosen by the IDEA Advisory Committee for new targets.**

Grade 4: Target Option 1 – 18.85%
Grade 8: Target Option 1 – 13.20%
Grade 10: Target Option 1 – 4.71%

3B Target Setting – Reading - **The following target options were chosen by the IDEA Advisory Committee for new targets.**

Grade 4: Target Option 1 – 14.83%
Grade 8: Target Option 1 – 11.30%
Grade 10: Target Option 1 – 9.71%

What are improvement strategies that can be implemented by special ed units, districts, and/or staff to increase proficiency rates of SWD?
- Students with mild to moderate learning disabilities need to stay in the general education setting for those core courses.
- Testing breaks to regain focus as needed

What are barriers to making progress on the proficiency rate of SWD on the regular test?
- Teach testing taking strategies on beefing on those strategies as a reminder prior to participation
- Bunching all SWD into the same classroom to test
- Test taking can be overwhelming and cause students to display behaviors, test taking strategies prior and support during tests
- Too many teams believe students need an alternate reading/math curriculum

Indicator 3D Math – measures the gap in math proficiency rates for all students who took the regular state test and all students with disabilities who took the regular state test. Over time, we want the gap to decrease.

The following target options were chosen by the IDEA Advisory Committee for new targets.

Grade 4: Target Option 1 – 24.13%
Grade 8: Target Option 1 – 30.90%
Grade 10: Target Option 1 – 16.94%

Indicator 3D – Reading – the gap in reading proficiency rates for children with IEPs and all students against grade level academic achievement standards.

The following target options were chosen by the IDEA Advisory Committee for new targets.

Grade 4: Target Option 1 – 22.59%
Grade 8: Target Option 1 – 30.80%
Grade 10: Target Option 1 – 30.23%

What are some barriers to making progress on the gap rate of SWD?
- Students pulled from gen ed often get more help in sped than they actually need – over supportive sped teacher/para who help read to speed up getting work done but doesn't allow student to grow
- Students pulled from class often work with para – but those that need the most help should receive it from the most qualified educator
- Lack of understanding of best practice literacy instruction

What are some improvement strategies surrounding gap rate of SWD that could be implemented?
- Utilize co-teaching models more

	• Allow students time to read for all subjects, allow time to develop skills instead of rushing through tasks • More instruction training for paras • ESY • Utilizing peer mentors • Provide teachers with PD on how to truly use their data to implement positive growth outcomes for students – reflection/action research on instructional

SUGGESTIONS SUMMARY		
Issues and Concerns in our State: No issues.		
ACTION ITEMS	**PERSON RESPONSIBLE**	**DEADLINE**
The September meeting minutes were approved. Michael Netzolff made the motion, and Jeff Anderson seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm. Aimee Easton made the motion to adjourn, and Jen Withers seconded it. **Public Comment:** No Public Comment. The March meeting is scheduled for March 26, 2026. Agenda Items for the March meeting: • Bylaw Changes • IDEA-B Application		