

## **Continuing Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting Minutes**

August 21, 2024 9:05am – 11:57am

**CAC Attendees:** Susan Nichols, April Estrada, Tara Cevallos, Aaron Bangor, Adrian Guerra, Sheryl Kubala, Diana Nelson, Rebecca Lopez, Lori Brown-Duncan. Amy Litzinger, Aaron Bangor, Agatha Thibodeaux, Marissa Esquivel

**CAC Members Absent:** Claudia Cavazos, JoAnn Wofford and Kevin Markel

**Texas Education Agency:** Stephanie Koch, Kristin McGuire, Brittany Brettschneider, Susan Bineham

**9:05 Begin Meeting-** Stephanie Koch Reviewed the CAC Members' Duties and Agenda

**9:08 Kristin McGuire reviewed TEA Commissioner Rules and State Board of Education Rules**

- TAC Updates August 2024 PowerPoint
- SBOE Updated the Dyslexia Handbook Effective
- TEA Posted a Frequently Asked Questions on website [tea.texas.gov/dyslexia](http://tea.texas.gov/dyslexia)
- 19 TAC 89.1049 Parental Rights Regarding Adult Students
- 19 TAC 89.1065 Extended School Year Services.
- 19 TAC 89.1141 Education Service Center Rules
- 19 TAC 89.1011 Full Individual and Initial Evaluation
- 19 TAC 89.1040 Eligibility Criteria
- 19 TAC 89.1050 The Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee
- 19 TAC 89.1055 Individualized Education Program
- 19 TAC 89.1131 Qualifications of Special Education, Related Service, and Paraprofessional Personnel
- 19 TAC 89.1001 Scope and Applicability
- 19 TAC 89.1005 Instructional Arrangements
- 19 TAC 89.1075 General Program Requirements.
- 19 TAC 89.1085 Referral for the TSBVI and the TSD Services
- 19 TAC 89.1094 Contracting for Nonpublic or Non-District

- 19 TAC 102.1601 Changes to Program
  - o Application opens on February 3, 2025 subject to appropriations
- SHARS Update-The Health and Human Services manages programs. TEA coordinates and works with HHS since it is a Medicaid program. There are potential rule changes in October.
- TEA is asking school districts to help collect data that can potentially be added

### **Public Comments**

**9:32 Catherine Harwood**, and advocate for people with Neurological Disabilities. She is working on a bill about protecting students with disabilities at public schools. Struggled with several medical conditions.

**9:38 Steven Aleman** Disability Rights Texas.

Spoke about a new policy report by Disability Rights Texas. The report concerns segregated schools and shadow campuses for students with disabilities. In summary, the report examines segregated settings for students with disabilities in the Texas public education system. The report reviews data trends, issues, and policy recommendations.

### **CAC Recommendations**

#### **9:45 Aaron Bangor Digital Literacy and Accessibility Work Group Recommendations**

1. Recommend that TEA should require through administrative rule that every local agency adopt a (or review and revise as needed) a digital accessibility policy that includes:

- Statement of purpose
- Scope of policy
- Conformance standards aligned with State of Texas practice
- Person(s)/role(s) accountable for compliance
- Reasonable timelines for implantation and remediation

2. Recommend that TEA should identify, at a minimum, the top five most critical barriers to the accessibility of digital materials used with and by students.

3. Recommend that TEA should establish and make readily available to all LEAs a template of procedures and resources to ARD committees for when assistive technologies and/or built-in accessibility features are an integral part of the student's education plan, that sufficient training and other support resources are provided to the student, their support network, and faculty/staff

to work toward and ultimately achieving proficiency with the assistive technology device or service both in school and at home.

#### **9:49 Janie Melendez Staffing Work Group Recommendations**

1. Recommend that a teacher-student ratio be implemented in self-contained classrooms and resource classrooms.
2. Incentivize teachers that work with students with disabilities.
3. Implementation of a grant program for current teachers that want to get certified in special education.

#### **10:02 Dr. April Estrada Behavior Work Group Recommendations**

1. All staff working with students engage in de-escalation training prior to the start of the school year.
2. Provide requirements for funding for additional behavior staff/personnel for each LEA based on student population, special ed population and needs.
3. Implement a Grant Program to attract and retain teachers working with students with disabilities

#### **10:11 Tara Cevallos Dyslexia Work Group Recommendations**

1. Recommend that TEA provide a list of evidence-based dyslexia programs.
2. Recommend that class size for dyslexia instruction be limited to Tier 3 small group instruction.
3. Recommend funding for a Dyslexia Grant Program similar to grants offered from 2022-2024 that provided training for school teachers that were interested in being trained in evidence-based dyslexia programs.

#### **10:18 Adrian Guerra Funding Work Group Recommendations**

1. Salaries

We recommend that the State of Texas offer a partial loan forgiveness program for every 5 years of service as a full-time special education teacher in Texas public schools. Many teachers are now graduating with loan debt. A loan forgiveness program will certainly incentivize teachers to remain on the job.

We further recommend that the state provide funds that will be used specifically for salary stipends for special education teachers. School districts provide many stipends to a variety of employees. Given the responsibilities and duties that special education teachers encounter on a daily basis, it is imperative that we consider providing school districts funding for these stipends.

## 2. Costs of Full Individual Initial Evaluation(FIIE)

We recommend that the state of Texas consider providing formula-based funding to school districts based on the number of FIIE's conducted each school year. While this requirement is a federal mandate and one of the first steps in determining eligibility, an FIIE does not necessarily translate into a student being identified as needing special services.

## 3. Medical Billing Transparency

We recommend that school districts receiving SHARS reimbursements be required to share at a public meeting information about their SHARS reimbursements and to notify parents about the exact services that are being billed. Currently parental notice and consent are required prior to requesting any reimbursements, schools are not currently required to present this information to the public.

## 4: Funding for Interpreters

We recommend that TEA conduct a survey of sign language interpreters to determine prevailing market pay rates across the state for students with disabilities in K-12 education, including for Regional Day School Programs for the Deaf (RDSPD). Further recommend using the survey data to inform LEAs about expected pay rates for certified/qualified sign language interpreters as well as guide the funding requests for the RDSPDs that adequately supports hiring and retention of certified/qualified sign language interpreters.

## **10:27 Amy Litzinger- Justice Work Group Recommendations**

1. We recommend that the state legislature gather data on student interaction with the justice system while receiving special education services.

2. We recommend that TEA gather data about how many students on behavior intervention plans via their IEP eventually move to a disciplinary alternative educational placement, and how many of those end in a placement in the judicial system.

3. We recommend that the state legislature request data about whether or not students served under IDEA within the Texas judicial system are receiving their special education support while incarcerated.

4. We recommend that the state legislature request data regarding the return to school process for previously incarcerated students either receiving or eligible for but not yet receiving special education services.

5. We recommend the state legislature request data regarding how many individuals within the Texas prison system were missed under Child Find during the years of the special education cap. Additionally, we request that a plan be created with TEA to identify these individuals and offer them appropriate compensatory services.

### **10:36 Amy Litzinger-Health and Safety Work Group Recommendations**

1. We recommend that fire safety for people with disabilities become a priority for TEA and legislators.
2. We recommend that school wide epilepsy procedures be developed and shared with all staff and interested parents and that epilepsy safety plans be included as part of the IEP process for students with an identified need.
3. We recommend that students be evaluated for feeding and swallowing disorder if there is either a known issue, or the IEP team has concerns.
4. We recommend that restraint and seclusion techniques no longer be used as a disciplinary measure and or classroom management technique, and instead are only used in rare situations to prevent further harm to a student or their peers.

**11:15 CAC Members unanimously voted to approve recommendations.** Adrian Guerra motioned to approve recommendations. Lori Brown-Duncan seconded motion.

**11:17 CAC Subcommittees will email reports to Stephanie Koch by September 27, 2024.**

Next CAC tentative meeting date is Friday, November 8, 2024.

### **11:52 Motion to Approve Minutes**

Aaron Bangor motioned to approve minutes. Lori Brown-Duncan seconded motion. Roll call votes to approve minutes by Stephanie Koch.

### **11:57 Motion to Adjourn Meeting**

Motion to adjourn meeting by April Estrada. Tara Cevallos seconded motion.