



# **Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)**

## **Annual Report**

**May 6, 2011**

Developed by the Special Education Advisory Panel  
for the Minnesota Department of Education

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## 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, 2010, through June 30, 2011. 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 Policy and Compliance and Assistance on the education of children and youth with disabilities.

### 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 Education 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; and,
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:

Barbara L. Troolin, Ph.D., Director, Special Education Policy  
Pam Taylor, SEAP Chair, 2010-2011  
Cindy Shevlin-Woodcock, SEAP Coordinator  
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.

## REFLECTIONS: SEAP CHAIR PAM TAYLOR

I have had the privilege and honor of serving as the chair for the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) for the state of Minnesota during 2010-2011. This committee is comprised of people from many different backgrounds and regions of the state representing parents, educators, advocates and other professionals. These people bring a wealth of experience, divergent viewpoints and, above all, clear and targeted concern for the education of all children with disabilities in the state of Minnesota.

During this year, SEAP met for five sessions focusing on their six mandated duties. At each session, this committee worked with intensity and focus. Further, each member contributed their unique expertise and perspective to the work. Diverse viewpoints were welcomed and honored as our need to understand and consider all disabilities, communities and children remained at the forefront of our work. Members did not hesitate to volunteer to represent SEAP on other committees. Further, committee members readily volunteered to serve on needed workgroups.

Each session offered us the opportunity to both expand our understanding and advise the Minnesota Department of Education regarding its important duties. In addition, we made public comment on proposed changes to law for the state of Minnesota.

Our work was supported and encouraged through the leadership of Barbara Troolin, Cindy Shevlin-Woodcock and all of the talented and capable staff. Their efforts have truly enriched this committee and our work.

It was our distinct pleasure to meet the new Commissioner of Education, Brenda Cassellius. She expressed her appreciation for our work and welcomed our comments and questions.

The energy, enthusiasm, attention to detail and commitment of this group was rare. As we close out this year, I thank this group for their consistent hard work and courage in offering advice to the department. On behalf of the Minnesota Special Education Advisory Panel, it is with great honor that I present this SEAP Annual Report.



Pam Taylor, Chair  
Special Education Advisory Panel

## DIRECTOR'S LETTER

*"You must look within for value, but must look beyond for perspective."*  
-- Denis Waitley

That is what our state Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) continues to do—gain perspective.

Their knowledge, wisdom, personal experiences and relationship in the broader special education community are of great value to a working advisory group. How fortunate we are to have perspectives from parents, special education administrators and interagency partners. Our members have offered lively discussions, challenging questions and helpful suggestions to do work with student focus and a strong belief in continuous improvement.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) opened a new chapter of their history book this year. Our new Commissioner, Dr. Brenda Cassellius, offered a special greeting to our SEAP group this winter and commended all for their time, talent and contributions. All of us echo that sincere thank you as we go about our important business and whether we discussed federal reports, grant updates, internal or external projects and programs, there was a sense of enthusiasm and energy around supporting students and families and service providers.

Thank you SEAP members!



Barbara L. Troolin, Ph.D.  
Director, Special Education Policy

*Division Vision:*  
*All children get necessary support for healthy development and lifelong learning.*

## Overview

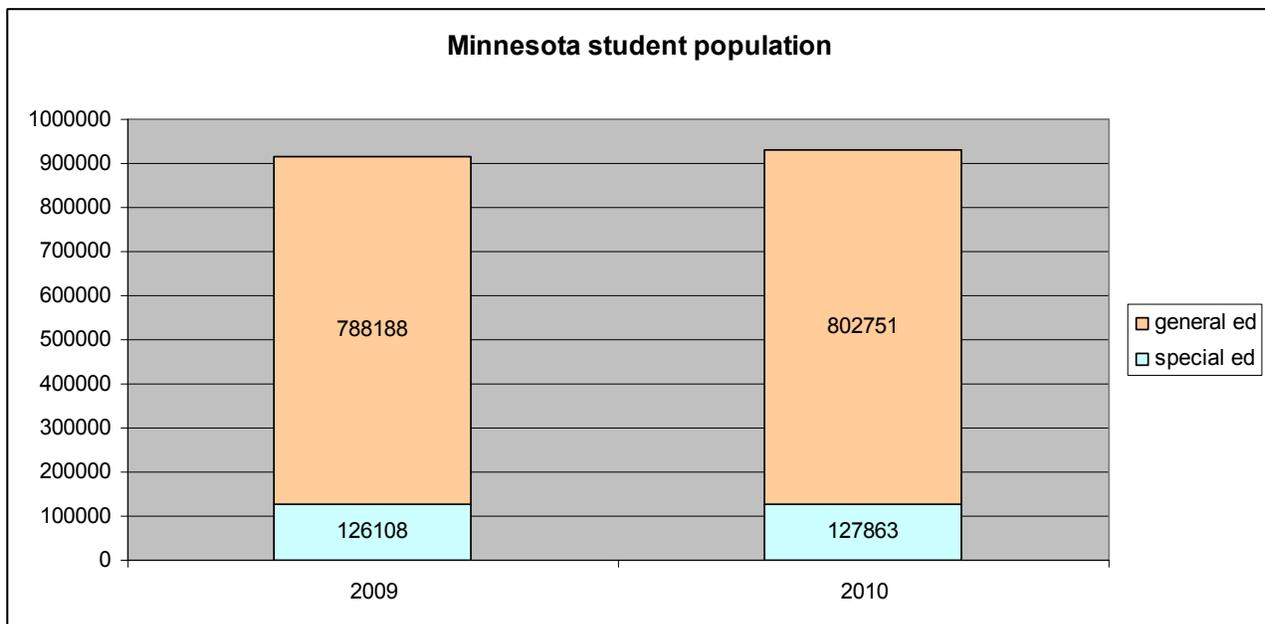
The Minnesota Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) provides policy guidance for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) divisions of Special Education Policy and Compliance and Assistance with respect to special education and related services for children and youth with disabilities in Minnesota. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (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. For a list of SEAP members for 2010-11, see Appendix A. For a list of education groups on which SEAP members also serve, see Appendix B.

## 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.

There were 930,614 children and youth from birth to 21 years old enrolled in some form of Minnesota public or nonpublic education on December 1, 2010. Of those, 127,863, or 13.7 percent, were children and youth with disabilities. This represents an increase of 1.4 percent from the 126,108 Minnesota children receiving special education services in 2009-10.



Compared to December 1, 2009, there were increases in the number of students in 5 of the 14 disability categories: Severely Multiply Impaired, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Developmental Delay, Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Other Health Disabilities. The number of students remained relatively stable in another five categories: Physically Impaired, Speech/Language Impaired, Developmental Cognitive Disability-Severe/Profound, Specific Learning Disabilities and Deaf-Blind. There were decreases in the number of Minnesota students in the remaining four categories: Emotional Behavioral Disorders, Developmental Cognitive Disability-Mild/Moderate, Blind/Visually Impaired and Traumatic Brain Injury. SEAP members will continue asking questions and holding intense discussions as they track and analyze these trends in Minnesota's special education child-count data.

Minnesota's special education programs continued their strong performance in several measures as the state received another positive evaluation from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. The graduation rate for students with disabilities remains stable at nearly 85 percent. The dropout rate for these students decreased to 4.2 percent, below the target rate.

However, there are still performance areas that need improvement. A small number of districts were identified as having disproportionate student representation in special education due to inappropriate identification; the target for this indicator is no districts in this category. A smaller percentage of parents reported feeling involved in their children's special education program than in previous years.

MDE reports annually on the state's special education performance in its Annual Performance Report (APR), which can be found on the MDE website. [View the APR.](#)

## **Annual Workplan**

The duties assigned to SEAP via federal legislation are discussed on an annual basis. An annual work plan is developed as a tool to guide the work of SEAP. This year, SEAP focused on six areas:

1. Advise the Special Education Policy Division on the State Performance Plan (SPP) and the Annual Performance Report (APR) process.
2. Comment on and participate in developing the proposed special education rules.
3. Advise the Special Education Policy Division on the State Personnel Development Grant.
4. Advise the Compliance and Assistance Division on IDEA noncompliance findings.
5. Advise MDE in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under Part B of IDEA.
6. Advise MDE in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

SEAP members actively engaged in discussions, asked helpful questions and provided valuable insights and comments on all of these matters. The following summarizes the key themes and results of SEAP's work during the past year.

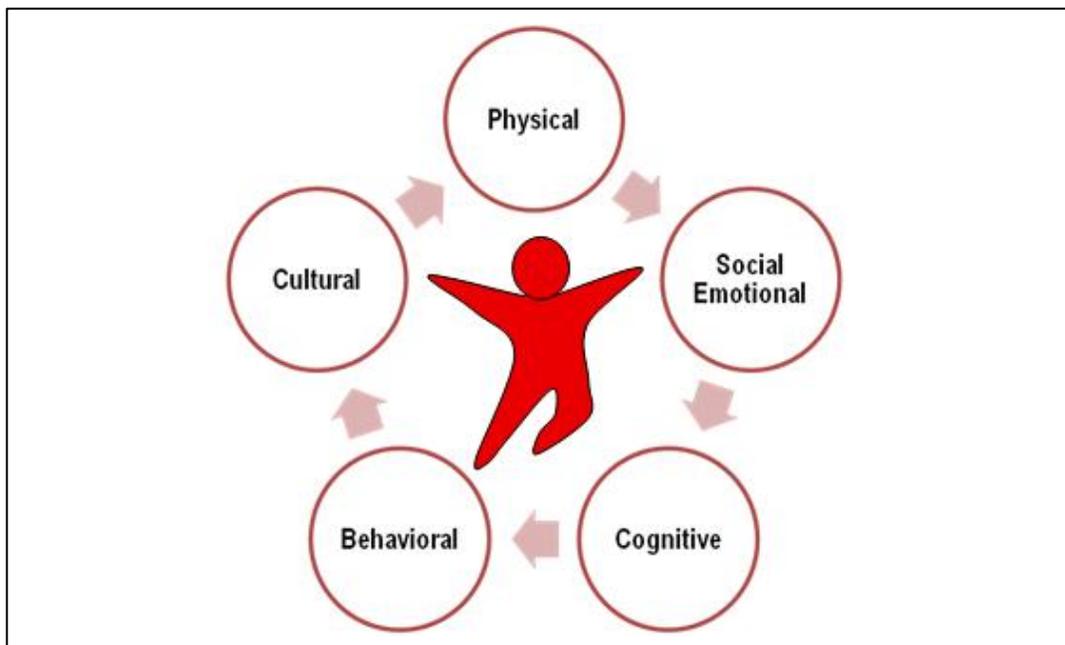
## Whole Child Approach

*“Together SEAP members bring rich diversity and experiences, tacit knowledge and a passion to influence a focus on the ‘whole child’ and improve outcomes for all.”*  
— SEAP member Simoine Bolin

Staff from MDE’s Special Education Policy (SEP) division informed SEAP about continuing work on developing and implementing a whole child approach to service delivery. Whole child thinking recognizes the multiple influences on a child’s life and well-being and expects educational support is based on each child’s unique needs to prepare them for further education, employment, independent living and community participation. Whole child thinking:

- Recognizes children are multi-dimensional.
- Encourages interactive dialogue.
- Includes youth voice and engagement.
- Connects home, school and community.
- Ensures children get what they need when they need it.

SEAP members expressed consensus on the positive value of the whole child approach and support for extending it across the spectrum of services for children in Minnesota special education programs.



*The whole child approach recognizes children and their needs across five dimensions.*

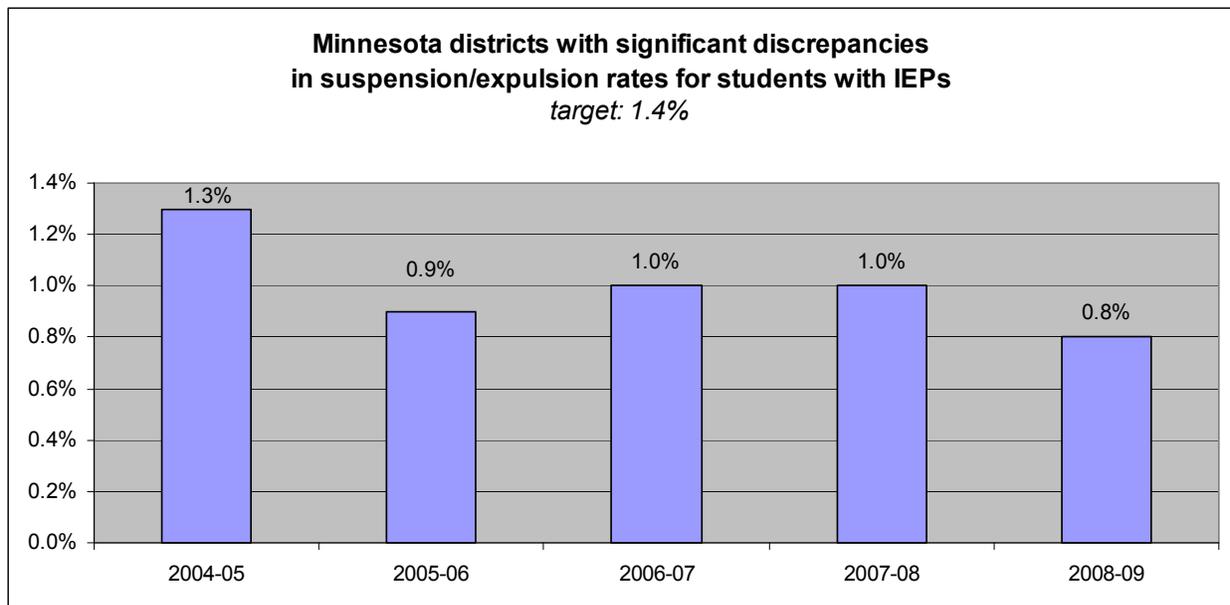
*“We work on hard issues and heart issues.”*  
— SEAP members Sally Baas and Barb Ziemke

## Special Education Performance Indicators

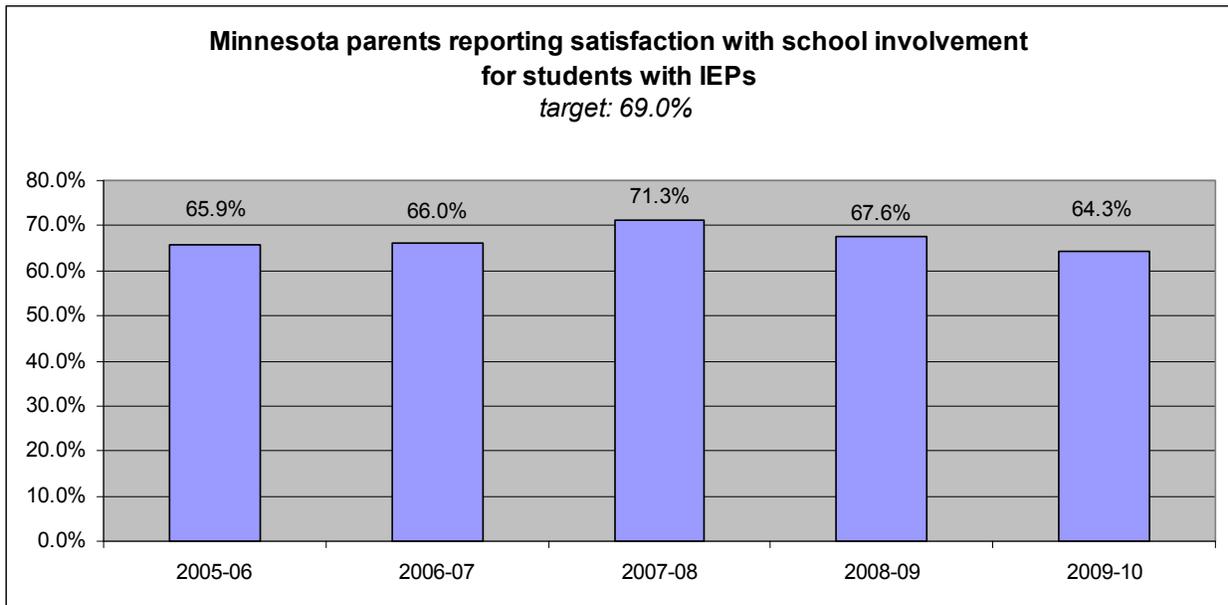
Minnesota and all other states report annual special education progress on 20 indicators to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). In accordance with its workplan, SEAP continued to monitor these indicators and the reporting process. Minnesota’s latest Part B Annual Performance Report (APR) received a determination score of “meets expectations,” the highest rating possible, from OSEP.

In their searching discussion of these critical issues, SEAP members noted the continued high performance in many of the indicators. Along with the other valuable feedback they provided, SEAP members recommended increasing the targets to between 80 and 90 percent in some of the areas where over 80 percent of Minnesota special education students met state target rates currently set between 75 and 85 percent.

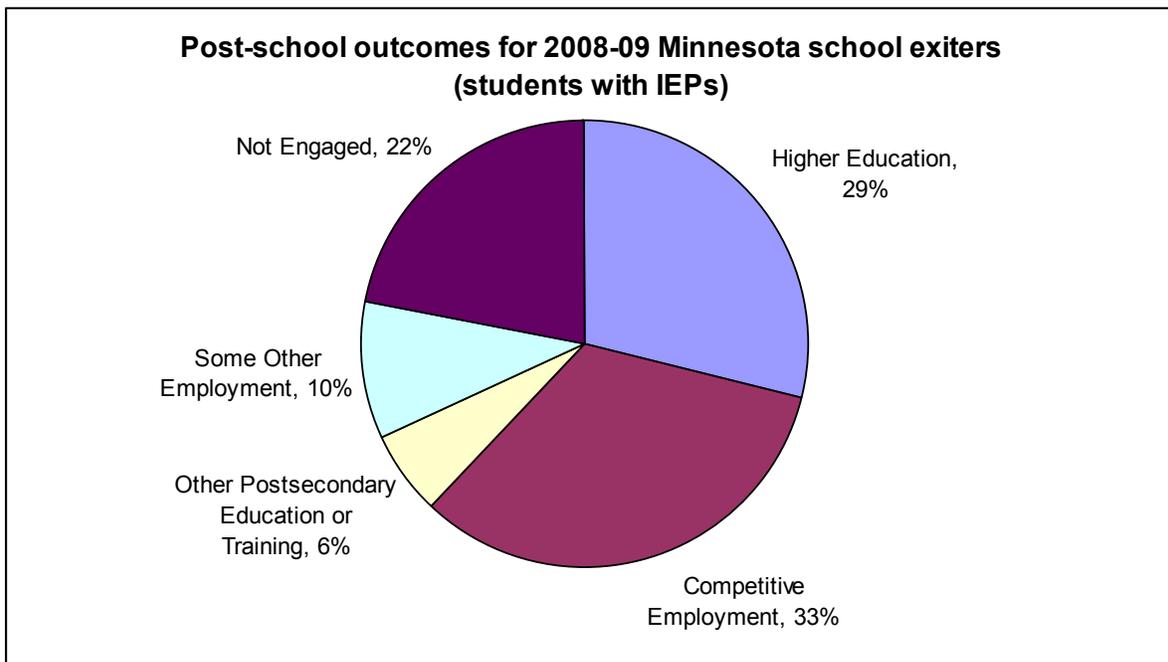
Suspension and expulsion data remained a focus for SEAP in the past year. In the latest reporting period, the percentage of school districts with significant discrepancies in suspension and expulsion rates for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) decreased, while remaining under the state’s target rate.



Parents receive an annual survey as part of another performance indicator to determine whether they feel schools are facilitating their involvement to improve services to students with IEPs. While Minnesota’s performance on this indicator slipped in the latest reporting period, the difference was not large enough to be significant. SEAP recommended improvements to the survey and the survey process, but supported retaining the current state target rate of 69 percent while working toward improvements in this area.



Minnesota gathered baseline data on another performance measure for students with IEPs making successful transitions to postsecondary education, training or work. SEAP members made several recommendations in this area including setting target rates; improving response rates, especially for students from minority groups; and information sharing to improve performance.



## Minnesota State Interagency Committee (MnSIC)

SEAP members discussed issues regarding the coordination of interagency services for children and youth with disabilities with representatives from the Minnesota State Interagency Committee (MnSIC). MnSIC brings seven state public agencies (the Minnesota Departments of Education, Employment and Economic Development, Commerce, Corrections, Health, Human Rights, and Human Services) together to make needed policy changes to reduce duplication of local efforts, improve local response to the needs of children and families, and develop and implement a coordinated, multidisciplinary service system for children ages three through 21 with disabilities.

To focus its efforts, MnSIC recently adopted a statement of its visions, goals and key messages.

### **Vision**

All children get the necessary support for healthy development and lifelong learning.

### **Mission/Purpose**

Multiple agencies/programs work together to improve services for children and youth with disabilities and their families.

### **Guiding Principle**

Strategic coordinated planning efforts across home, school and community have a big impact on the success of children and youth with disabilities and their families.

### **Values**

- Children graduate healthy, ready to work and live independently in their community.
- Children/youth are successfully and safely maintained in their family/community.
- Children/youth and their families have access to the services they need.
- Children/youth needing coordination are identified and served.

SEAP members discussed the continued need for training and support of local areas and to bring champions forward to discuss the “how to” of interagency work. They recommended that MnSIC try to recruit and cultivate champions by providing incentives, for example, through grant programs. Members also expressed interest in significant barriers to interagency service provision involving payment for services on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Individual Interagency Intervention Plans (IIPs).

*“I really appreciated the discussion on interagency work which is such a strength of Minnesota when working with . . . children.”*  
— SEAP member Carolyn Strnad

## Special Education Teacher Licensing Rules

SEAP monitored the development of new proposed rules for special education teacher licensing in Minnesota. Minnesota Board of Teaching Executive Director Karen Balmer and MDE staff provided useful and timely information on the proposed rules. After deep discussion and feedback between SEAP and Ms. Balmer, SEAP chair Pam Taylor and member Bradley Harper signed a letter to the Board of Teaching expressing the panel's thanks for this information and appreciation of the opportunity to comment.

SEAP comments addressed its concerns over some of the wording in the proposed rules as well as the need for effective and consistent training to enable licensed special education teachers to handle the many challenges and opportunities they encounter with students, including a basic understanding of alternative best practices to restraint and seclusion, mental health disorders, the effects of common medications, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and effective teaching practices; advanced competency in developing transition-focused IEPs; and core skills in case management, conflict management and collaboration with both fellow educators and parents.

As the adoption of the proposed rules advances, SEAP will continue to monitor the process and communicate its thoughts and concerns to those involved.

*"We should be proud of what we have done in Minnesota and in the United States since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. We have come so far as a society."  
— SEAP member Janet Lowe*

## 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, the state interagency committee, and the higher education forum. As a result of their membership on other groups, there is opportunity to communicate our priorities and make connections. Working together makes all our efforts move forward. SEAP will continue to recommend improvements in the special education service system to improve outcomes for students.

*"I am proud to be a participant because it shows the commitment of the panel members. Our intense, powerful, passionate, and professional discussion about special education paperwork was an excellent example of how a committee should function when dealing with complex and controversial topics."  
— SEAP member Brad Harper*

## APPENDIX A: Special Education Advisory Panel, 2010 - 2011

<b>Member</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Represents</b>	<b>Term ends</b>
Pam Taylor, Chair	Minnetonka	Parent/Advocate	2011
Bradley Harper, Vice Chair	St. Paul	Parent/School Administrator-Corrections	2013
Sally Baas	St. Paul	Higher Education	2012
Simoine Bolin	Windom	School Personnel	2014
Linda Bonney	Grand Rapids	Parent/Advocate	2011
Shannon Erickson	Pelican Rapids	School Administrator	2012
Lynda Gault	Richfield	School Administrator	2011
Jeri Johnson	Plymouth	Parent/School Personnel	2012
Nancy Kelly	Cottage Grove	Parent/Advocate	2013
Karen Kennedy	St. Paul	School Administrator	2013
Shirley Klitzke	Maplewood	School Personnel/Charter school	2012
Dawn Lamping	Goodland	Interagency Staff/Vocational	2011
Janet Lowe	Eagan	School Personnel	2012
Mary Ann Marchel	Duluth	Higher Education	2011
Diane McCarron	Paynesville	School Personnel	2014
Jacki McCormack	St. Paul	Parent/Advocate	2014
Suzanne Renfro	Bloomington	Parent/Advocate	2011
Carolyn Strnad	Moorhead	Parent/Advocate	2013
Stacey Vogele	Cottage Grove	Parent/Advocate	2012
Terri Yellowhammer	St. Paul	Interagency Staff/Foster Care	2013
Barb Ziemke	Lakeville	Parent/Advocate	2014

### **Minnesota Department of Education Staff**

Cindy Celany, Administrative Support Staff

Ruth Ellen Luehr, School Health Services and Homeless Education Specialist

Amy Roberts, Director of Compliance and Assistance

Cindy Shevlin-Woodcock, Alternatives and Prevention Support Specialist

Barbara Troolin, Director of Special Education Policy

## APPENDIX B: Special Education Advisory Panel Representation on Other Groups

Special Education Advisory Panel members also serve on many other groups dealing with education policy, demonstrating the broad range of experiences they bring to their deliberations. These groups include:

Accommodations Advisory Review Panel (MDE)  
Advisory Council to the Minnesota Disability Law Center  
The Arc of Minnesota  
Assessment Advisory Committee (MDE)  
Bloomington Special Education Community Advisory Committee  
Bloomington Community Education Advisory Council  
Children's Local Advisory Committee for Mental Health  
Clay County Collaborative  
Community Corrections Advisory Board-Anoka County  
Community Transition Interagency Committee  
Diversity Task Force (MDE)  
Institutes of Higher Education Workgroup (MDE)  
Interagency Coordinating Committee  
Local Parent Advisory Council  
Moorhead Schools Special Education Advisory Panel  
Minnesota Administrators of Special Education  
Minnesota Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health  
Minnesota Association College Teachers of Education  
Minnesota Association of Charter Schools Board  
Minnesota Association of School Administrators  
Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness  
Minnesota Interagency Coordinated School Health Team  
Minnesota Protection and Advocacy Agency  
Minnesota School Psychologists Association  
Minnesota State Interagency Committee  
Minnesota Teacher Education Early Childhood Special Education Consortium  
Minnesota Department of Education Third Party Reimbursement Leadership Team  
National Association for Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
National Association of School Nurse Consultants  
National Association of School Nurses

## APPENDIX B: Special Education Advisory Panel Representation on Other Groups

National Association of School Psychologists  
Other Health Disabilities Workgroup  
Ottertail County School-based Mental Health Workgroup  
Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER)  
Part C/Autism Spectrum Disorders Leadership Workgroup (MDE)  
Protection and Advocacy for People with Mental Illnesses (PAIMI, Minnesota Disability Law Center)  
Roseville Public Schools Local Advisory Committee-Legislative Action Committee  
School Nurse Organization of Minnesota  
South Washington County District 833 Special Education Advisory Committee  
Special Education Form Advisory Committee  
Standards-based IEP Workgroup  
Student Engagement Indicators Group  
Student Services Coalition for Effective Education  
University of Minnesota-Duluth Early Childhood Education Department Educational Policy Council  
Universal Design for Learning Cadre Region 6&8 West Metro Regional Directors  
Wayzata Public Schools Special Education Advisory Council

## APPENDIX C: SEAP Meeting Schedule, 2010 – 2011

Friday, August 27, 2010

Friday, November 19, 2010

Thursday and Friday, January 27-28, 2011

Friday, March 4, 2011

Friday, May 6, 2011

SEAP meetings in 2010-2011 were held at the Minnesota Department of Education Conference Center. SEAP meetings were scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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

For questions about SEAP please contact Cindy Shevlin-Woodcock at 651-582-8656 or [cindy.shevlin-woodcock@state.mn.us](mailto:cindy.shevlin-woodcock@state.mn.us).