

Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children

North Carolina State Advisory Council

2024-2025 Annual Report

Peyton Davis, Chairperson
Aimee Combs, Vice-Chairperson

Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) requires that every state establish and maintain a state advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state. The federal regulations specify membership and require a majority of the membership be parents of children with disabilities and individuals with disabilities.

Specifically, the regulations require the following membership include:

- Parents of children with disabilities ages birth through 26
- Individuals with disabilities
- Teachers
- Representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel
- State and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities under subtitle B of title VII of the *McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act*
- Administrators of programs for children with disabilities
- Representatives of other state agencies involved in the financing and delivery of related services to children with disabilities
- Representatives of private schools and public charter schools
- Representative of vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities
- Representative of the State Child Welfare agency responsible for foster care
- Representative from the state Juvenile Justice and adult corrections agencies

The Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children (CESEC) is established in accordance with Section 300.167-300.169 of the federal regulations, Section 1412(a)(21) of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA 2004) and Section 115C-121.1 of the North Carolina General Statutes as the State Advisory Panel to the State Board of Education. The purpose of the Council is to:

- Advise the Board of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities:
- Comment publicly on rules and regulations proposed by the Board regarding the education of children with disabilities:
- Advise the Board in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the United States Secretary of Education as required by IDEA:
- Advise the Board in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports required by IDEA:
- Assist the Board in developing and implementing policies related to the coordination of services for students with disabilities; and
- Carry out any other responsibilities as designated by federal law or the State Board of Education.

Membership

The Council shall consist of a minimum of 24 members. Currently, the Council consists of 28 members - 24 appointees and 6 ex-officio. Members are appointed by the Governor, President Pro Tem of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, and the State Board of Education. Appointees represent individuals with disabilities from the ranks of parents, teachers, higher education, public and private schools, business/vocational community, and charter schools. A majority of the representatives shall be parents of children with disabilities and persons with disabilities. The term of appointment for members appointed by the State Board of Education is four years. All other terms are two years.

The current list of members of the Council can be found on the [Office of Exceptional Children](#) (OEC) website.

Key Accomplishments

- The Council successfully transitioned its leadership from Diane Coffey to Peyton Davis as chairperson in December 2024.
- The Council reviewed the OEC's proposed changes to the implementation of the annual Indicator 8 Parent Survey for the 2024-2025 SY and provided feedback.
 - Council members recommended changes to improve access to the survey, including keeping it open for six months instead of three, which would give families more time to participate.
 - Additionally, members recommended reducing the number of questions from 27 (plus demographics) to 7 (plus demographics) to make the survey user-friendly.
- Members took a proactive role in encouraging parents in their respective regions to complete the Indicator 8 Parent Survey, demonstrating our commitment to involving all stakeholders in our initiatives.

- Members learned about the OEC *Parent and Family Updates* monthly newsletter and were encouraged to sign up and share this information with parents in their respective regions.
- Members successfully drafted, edited, and approved a letter of support to the State Board of Education for implementing the Weighted Funding Model, which proposes to improve special education funding tailored to student-specific needs and complexity.
 - The letter of support for the proposed Weighted Funding Model was sent to the Director of SBE and the Senior Director of Government Affairs and Strategy.
- Membership recommendations were sent to the State Board of Education (SBE) by June 2025.

Engagement and Stakeholder Activities:

- Council members shared membership openings and recruitment information through social media outreach.
- Increased engagement from council members during meetings, resulting in a renewed sense of energy.
- Members will complete in-person training through the Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) at the OEC Conference on Exceptional Children 2025.

Challenges Identified:

- Funding and Resource Allocation:
 - The complexity of funding models remains a significant challenge, particularly in addressing the diverse and intensive needs of exceptional students. The current funding framework does not fully accommodate the nuanced demands of special education services.
- Attendance and Participation:
 - Concerns have been raised regarding inconsistent attendance among Council members, which may impact the effectiveness of Council deliberations and actions.

Recommendations for Future Action:

- Develop an internal directory of Council members to foster greater understanding, collaboration, and improved member participation.
- Encourage attendance from the State Board of Education members to guide and educate members on legislative priorities.

- Gather data from 2025-2026 SY Fall and Spring in-person Regional meetings with families regarding the unmet needs of students with disabilities.
- Reestablish committees to help foster member engagement, buy-in, and obtain data from the field.
- Request continued support from DPI OEC Leadership to contract Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) to provide training to the entire Council during the OEC Conference on Exceptional Children in November 2025. Subsequently, consider continued training for Council members.

Staff support provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Office of Exceptional Children.

Dr. Carol Ann Hudgens, Senior Director