

# 2015-2016 Annual Report Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee

Submitted to:  
**Colorado State Board of Education**

By:  
**The Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC)**  
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## What is CSEAC?

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The Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC) is a state level committee mandated by federal and state law. According to Colorado Revised Statutes 22-20-104 (2) (a):

In order to assist the state board in the performance of its responsibilities for the implementation of this part 1, the state board shall appoint a state special education advisory committee of an appropriate size. The members of the advisory committee shall be representative of the state population and shall be composed of persons involved in or concerned with the education of children with disabilities, including parents of children with disabilities ages birth through twenty-six years; 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 section 22-33-103.5; administrators of programs for children with disabilities; representatives of other state agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities; representatives of private schools, district charter schools, and institute charter schools; at least one representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities; a representative from Child Welfare Services in the Department of Human Services established pursuant to section 26-5-102, C.R.S.; and representatives from the Division of Youth Corrections in the Department of Human Services and from the Department of Corrections. A majority of the members of the advisory committee shall be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities. Members shall be appointed for terms as determined by the by-laws of the advisory committee. Any additions to the composition of the advisory committee shall be made pursuant to the procedures of the state board.

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## Duties of CSEAC [34 CFR 300.169]

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The advisory panel must:

- a) Advise the State Educational Agency (SEA) of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;
- b) Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities;
- c) Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 618 of the Act;
- d) Advise the SEA in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Act; and
- e) Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.



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## CSEAC Vision Statement

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All learners are respected and challenged with high expectations, their needs are met, and student aspirations for success are fulfilled.

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## CSEAC Mission Statement

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Our mission is to actively represent children and youth with disabilities and impact decisions made on their behalf to enhance the quality of educational services.

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## CSEAC 2015-2016 Focus

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The CSEAC worked to continue to meet its mandate (Colorado Revised Statutes 22-20-104 (2) (a) and 34 CFR 300.169) and mission, in addition to partnering with the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) and the new leadership to develop an improved process for identifying unmet needs of children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and their families. CSEAC continued to work on reaching out to constituents across the state through local Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) and in 2016 identified the need to implement a streamlined process for gathering input on important issues.

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## Highlights of 2015-2016

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- Continued to work on a collaborative process to generate, develop and then communicate CSEAC advice on the unmet educational needs of children with disabilities. Following the collaborative process which includes CSEAC members gathering information from constituent groups on an identified topic, a document is created with comprehensive information and a review of the identified special education issue. It also includes the CSEAC's advice on how to improve the unmet needs of children with disabilities.
  - Made revisions to the *Early Dispute Resolution Guidance Document* created in 2015, including change in the title of the document to *Tips for Building/Maintaining Positive Relationships within the IEP Team*.
- Surveyed local Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) to gather constituent data on Extended School Year (ESY).
- Developed ad hoc subcommittee to review constituent input procedures and make changes to improve the process.
- CSEAC members served on various committees and groups including: Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Advisory Group on Early Dispute Resolution, State Graduation Guidelines Committee, Preschool Special Education Advisory Committee, specific disability organizations and local SEACs. Members also attended the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) meetings.
- Received updates from the executive director of ESSU with regard to goals, performance of Colorado students and OSEP indicators.
- Provided input to CDE on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Family, School and Community Partnering Implementation Guide, State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and the ESSU Data Management System.



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## Highlights of 2015-2016 (continued)

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- CSEAC representatives planned and held a successful SEAC Forum/Workshop in 2015. Highlights included:
  - What is happening at local SEAC level?
  - Sharing of best practices.
- CSEAC co-chair presented at the Colorado Special Education Directors' Fall Meeting.
- CSEAC member representative attended ESSU staff meetings.
- CSEAC member representative attended State Board of Education (SBE) meetings.
- CSEAC members attended the ESSU Legal Conference and provided information and highlights at CSEAC meeting on workshops attended.
- Reviewed updates from Colorado's Due Process decisions and State Complaints.
- Received legislative updates from Dr. Debora Scheffel, State Board of Education Liaison.
- Received updates and presentations on the following topics:
  - "Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Family, School and Community Partnering Implementation Guide Introduction and Feedback," by Cindy Dascher, Supervisor, Family and School Partnering, ESSU/CDE and Dr. Cathy Lines, Family-School Partnering Specialist, ESSU/CDE.
  - "State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)," by Wendy Sawtell, State Performance Plan Coordinator, ESSU/CDE.
  - "ESSU Data Management System," by Dr. Cindy Millikin, Director, Results Driven Accountability, ESSU/CDE.
  - "Moving Towards Inclusion," by Jason March, Vice Principal, REACH Charter School.
  - "Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) Conferences," by Alison Seyler, PEP Coordinator, ESSU/CDE.
  - "Update on CDE Early Dispute Resolution Project," by Lisa Weiss, Dispute Resolution and Policy Specialist, ESSU/CDE.
  - "Ashley Elementary: Turnaround in Action," by Zachary Rahn, Principal, Ashley Elementary School.
  - "Strategies When Your Child with a Disability is Getting Bullied," by Dr. Erin A. Sullivan, Colorado Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Statewide Coordinator, Office of Learning Supports, CDE.
  - "Best Buddies – About the Program and How to Set One Up in Your Neighborhood," by John Jordan, Colorado Expansion Board Chairman.

The CSEAC continues to build working relationships with CDE, SBE, the Colorado Legislature, statewide special education directors and educators, local SEACs, families, agencies and other partners in special education.



## 2015-2016 CSEAC Subcommittee Reports

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CSEAC Subcommittees worked diligently on the following priorities:

- to align and give input on legislation and contribute to CDE rulemaking;
- to strengthen relationships between CSEAC, communities and other stakeholders;
- to promote “People First” philosophy and language statewide; and
- to increase the number of local SEACs, support existing ones and build grassroots family and school partnering in special education.



## Communications Subcommittee

Purpose: To facilitate communication between the state and local SEACs.

Goal: To support local SEACs in their development and sustainability by providing two-way communication of information.

Co-Chairs: Roberta Curtis, Linda Hayes

Members: Bruce Ediger, Irwin Faaiu, Tom Gribble, Cindy Holden, Kirstin Kurlander, Dr. Tracy Mueller, Anna Stewart, Lori Werhane

Accomplishments:

- Updated local SEAC contact info (including individual districts within BOCES) and created a registry of the information.
- Planned and held SEAC Forum/Workshop in November.
- Invited local SEACs to attend CSEAC meetings.
- Coordinated CSEAC attendance at SBE meetings.
- Continued distribution of People First Language information.
- Began updating *Power of Partnership: A Resource for Local Special Education Advisory Committees in Colorado*.



## Membership Subcommittee

**Purpose:** To actively recruit members to fill vacant positions, including positions that become vacant due to members reaching their term limit.

**Goal:** To fill vacant positions with well-qualified and motivated individuals and communicate CSEAC membership obligations.

**Co-Chairs:** Ray Merenstein, Renee Niskanen

**Member:** Liz Freys

### Accomplishments:

- Notice of vacancies published in September with a request to fill positions for nine parents of children with disabilities ages birth through twenty-six years or individuals with disabilities; one representative of state and local education officials including officials who carry out activities under Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; one general education teacher; one special education teacher; one representative of a vocational, community or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities; one representative from the Department of Corrections; two administrators of programs for students with disabilities; and one representative from institute charter schools. Membership Subcommittee focused on Congressional Districts 3, 4 and 7.
- Interviewed 21 well-qualified applicants. Eleven individuals recommended for appointment by the SBE. Five positions remain open and are being recruited for including: three parents of children with disabilities or individuals with disabilities; a representative from the Department of Corrections; and a representative of state and local education officials including officials who carry out activities under Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- Continued mentorship program for incoming members.
- Obtained CSEAC members' commitment for service and followed up with absentees.
- Honored CSEAC members whose terms ended.





## Public Policy and Legislation Subcommittee

Purpose: To stay abreast of public policy and legislation in the state of Colorado that impacts outcomes of students with disabilities.

### Goals:

- To stay current on relevant legislation and inform CSEAC members.
- To provide input and influence to CDE on recently-passed legislation.

Chair: Jennifer Wilger

Members: Adric Arndt, Missy Seiders, Lori Thompson

### Accomplishments:

- Tracked legislation and policy-making and reported out if there was anything that would impact CSEAC's work.
- Worked diligently with various CDE leadership changes.



## Student Outcomes Subcommittee

**Purpose:** To advise CSEAC members and the State of unmet needs and issues to help improve outcomes for students with disabilities in Colorado.

**Goal:** To provide advice for the improvement of Results Driven Accountability (RDA) for students with disabilities.

**Chair:** Roxanne Bradley

**Members:** Beverly Harris, Rich Humphrey, Karla McKechnie, AJ McKinney, Missy Sieders, Dan Wright

**Accomplishments:**

- Maintained subcommittee connection to the SSIP and RDA development.
- Provided input to CDE liaisons on the SSIP and for the pilot program for student outcome improvement.
- At July 2015 Planning Meeting, Student Outcomes Subcommittee agreed on the importance of culture to the success of schools. To support investigation into best practices of this concept, Zachary Rahn, principal at Ashley Elementary, a turnaround school, was invited to present at CSEAC meeting. Mr. Rahn confirmed the Student Outcomes Subcommittee's belief that culture is one of the key elements to a successful school. Based on information presented, it was suggested by the Student Outcomes Subcommittee that the 18 State Identified Measurable Result Project Schools hire a culture consultant before hiring an instructional coach.
- Reviewed documents and processes in place related to outcomes for students with disabilities and identified opportunities for improvement in particular areas (example: best practices for teaching, including preferred instructional delivery methods).



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## Discussions Surrounding Parental Concerns

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- Extended School Year services
- Inclusive education
- Turnaround schools
- Children with special needs being bullied in school
- Data Privacy and ESSU Data Management System
- Peer support systems for children with IEPs in school programs and Best Buddies program

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## Looking Ahead

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- CSEAC will work with CDE on the “unmet needs” of students with IEPs in the following areas: Mental Health, Charter School/School Choice and Use of 504 Plans.
- CSEAC will streamline the constituent input process that was initiated by CSEAC in 2014-2015.
- CSEAC will continue to develop constituent input documents on specific special education topics and share these with the SBE, CDE, local SEACs, families and other constituent groups.
- CSEAC will develop a pilot process for tracking the impact of CSEAC’s work.
- CSEAC will encourage continued support of the RDA process to monitor the results of students with disabilities on statewide standardized testing, including tracking the achievement and progress of these students from year to year.
- CSEAC will continue to urge meaningful transition planning and options to increase student graduation rates and improve postsecondary outcomes – including employment – for students with disabilities.
- CSEAC will continue to support Colorado’s SSIP and its collaboration with CDE to accomplish the SiMR.
- CSEAC will continue to review and update CSEAC publications.



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## CSEAC Members 2015-2016

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Name	Role	County	Congressional District
<b>Adric Arndt</b>	Special Education Administrator	Teller	5
<b>Roxanne Bradley</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Jefferson	7
<b>Roberta Curtis</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Douglas	6
<b>Bruce Ediger</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Denver	1
<b>Irwin Faaiu</b>	Representative from the Division of Youth Corrections	Arapahoe	6
<b>Elisabeth Freys</b>	Facility School Administrator	Weld	4
<b>Tom Gribble</b>	Special Education Administrator	Larimer	2
<b>Julie Harmon</b>	Representative from the Parent Training and Information Center	El Paso	5
<b>Beverly Harris</b>	General Education Administrator	Arapahoe	6
<b>Nancy Harris</b>	Representative from the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services	Denver	1
<b>Linda Hayes</b>	Special Education Administrator	El Paso	5
<b>Cindy Holden</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Eagle	3
<b>Richard Humphrey</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Summit	2
<b>Joanne Irons</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Archuleta	3
<b>Kirstin Kurlander</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Arapahoe	6
<b>Dana Lange</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Denver	1
<b>Karla McKechnie</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	El Paso	5
<b>Alicia McKinney</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Adams	7

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<b>Patti McVay</b>	Administrator of a Program for Students with Disabilities	Arapahoe	4
<b>Ray Merenstein</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Denver	1
<b>Tracy Mueller, Ph.D.</b>	Representative from an Institution of Higher Education	Larimer	4
<b>Renee Niskanen 2016-2018 Co-Chair Elect</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	El Paso	5
<b>Laurie Pacht</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Arapahoe	4
<b>Debra Paul 2014-2016 Co-Chair</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Boulder	2
<b>Katherine Rains 2015-2017 Co-Chair</b>	Representative from a District Charter School	Denver	1
<b>Kindra Sanchez-Marble</b>	Representative from the Charter School Institute	Adams	7
<b>Missy Sieders</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	El Paso	5
<b>Lori Smith</b>	Special Education Teacher	Arapahoe	6
<b>Anna Stewart</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Boulder	2
<b>Lori Thompson</b>	Representative from a State Agency Involved in the Financing or Delivery of Related Services	Larimer	4
<b>Mellisa Umphenour</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Jefferson	7
<b>Lori Werhane</b>	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Douglas	6
<b>Jennifer Wilger</b>	Private School Administrator	Boulder	2
<b>Dan Wright</b>	Special Education Administrator	Arapahoe	6

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## New CSEAC Members 2016-2017

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The following new members were appointed by the Colorado State Board of Education and will join CSEAC in July 2016:

- Lindsay Applebaugh – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 1)
- Mark Chartier – representing individuals with disabilities (Congressional District 7)
- Carisa Clinton – representing vocational, community or business organizations concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities (Congressional District 2)
- Nicole Dallek – representing special education teachers (Congressional District 4)
- Laurie Ditterline – representing administrators of programs for children with disabilities (Congressional District 1)
- Lynn Fisher – representing administrators of programs for children with disabilities (Congressional District 2)
- Rebecca Hall – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 3)
- Chelsea Marx – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 6)
- Michelle Quakenbush – representing general education teachers (Congressional District 6)
- Lori Werhane – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 6)
- Barbara Zayas – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 6)

The following new member will serve on an interim basis and join CSEAC in July 2017:

- Greg Holloway – representing parents of children with disabilities (Congressional District 4)

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## Schedule of Meetings 2016-2017

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- Thursday-Friday, July 14-15, 2016 (Planning Meeting)
- Thursday, September 15, 2016
- Thursday, November 17, 2016
- Thursday, February 16, 2017
- Thursday, April 20, 2017



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## Additional Information and CSEAC Contacts

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For further information about the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee, please visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/CSEAC.asp> or contact one of the following persons:

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2015-2017 CSEAC Co-Chair  
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Renee Niskanen  
2016-2018 CSEAC Co-Chair Elect  
719-339-3831  
[Renee.niskanen@yahoo.com](mailto:Renee.niskanen@yahoo.com)

Angela Denning, Executive Director, Exceptional Student Services Unit  
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