

# State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Special Education 2021-2022 Annual Report

## Message from the Chair

The State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Special Education is pleased to submit its 2021-22 Annual Report.

Educators along with students with disabilities and their families continued to face unprecedented challenges during the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council recognizes the extraordinary efforts of teachers, administrators, and school staff to provide safe learning environments for their students. We also honor the remarkable flexibility and advocacy of parents and primary caregivers as they strove to ensure that their children were receiving an appropriate education.

Council members actively participated in discussions; comments provided us with a variety of perspectives, and questions asked provided opportunities for greater insight and understanding. The State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report was a key part of the Council's work: reviewing data on performance and determining goals for the plan that will guide the work of DPI and districts for the next six years. Council members enhanced their understanding of the concerns and issues faced by parents and persons with disabilities related to services provided to children in schools through review of complaints and due process hearings, information on the effects of the pandemic, and public forums.

Council recommended the State Superintendent inform the public about the importance of equity and inclusion for students with disabilities leading up to the April 5 elections; she provided a public statement. Previous Council priorities indicated a need to focus on high quality instruction, teacher shortages, and proper training. At the June meeting we discussed the possible need for professional development; a recommendation was drafted for consideration at the Sept. meeting of the Council.

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## Council Purpose

The role of the Council is to bring the voice of various special education stakeholders to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), share information from DPI with those stakeholder groups, and provide input on pending rules, regulations, and Wisconsin's federal reporting to the U.S. Department of Education. DPI strives to have advisory councils that reflect the racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity of Wisconsin. The Council must be comprised of a majority of parents of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)-eligible students (age 3-21) or individuals with disabilities.

## Council Functions

- Advising the state education agency of unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities within the state.
- Advising the state education agency in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the U.S. Department of Education.
- Advising the state education agency in developing plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports.
- Advising the state education agency in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities and on any other matters upon which the state superintendent wishes the Council's opinion.
- Commenting publicly on any rules proposed by DPI regarding the education of children with disabilities.
- Reviewing the findings of facts and decisions of hearings and appeals brought before the state superintendent.

## Council Meeting Schedule for 2021-2022

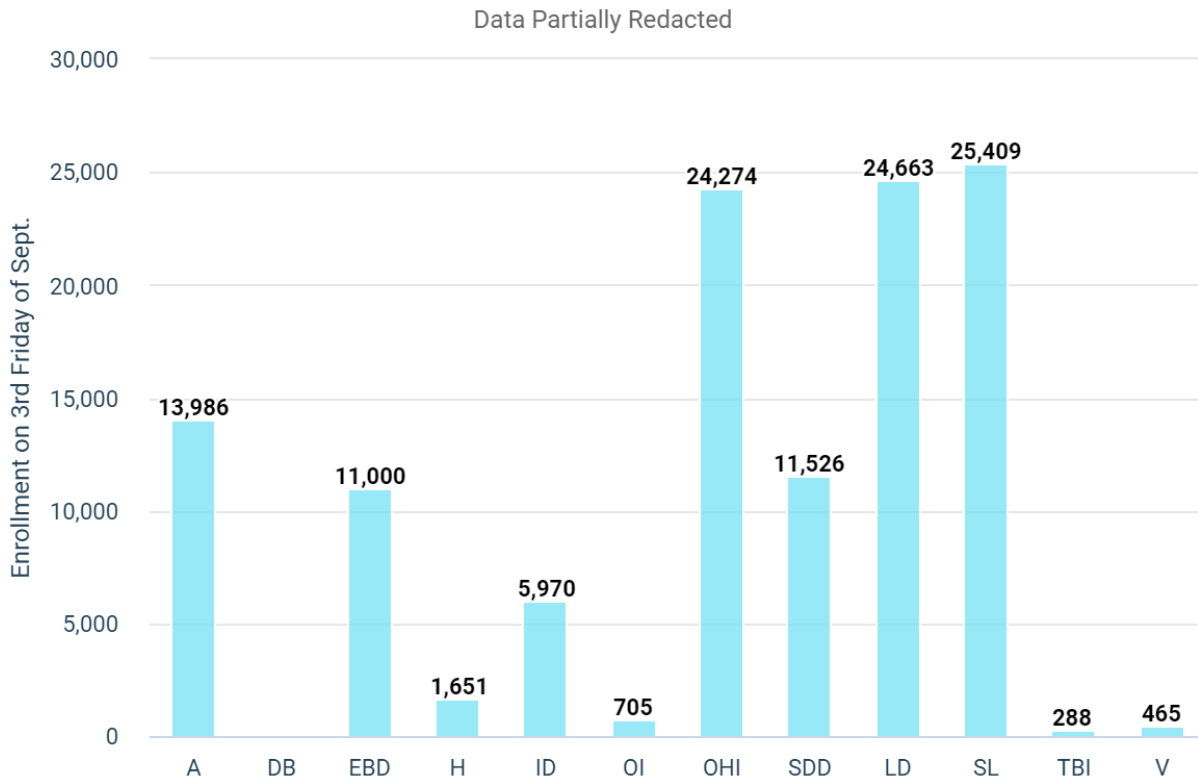
- Friday, September 24, 2021
- Wednesday, October 13, 2021 (Public Forum)
- Friday, December 3, 2021
- Friday, March 11, 2022
- Friday, June 17, 2022

All meeting agendas and meeting notes may be found on the [DPI Special Education Special Education Council Agenda and Meeting webpage](#).

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## Special Education Student Count 2021-2022

(cut and paste graph from [Public WISEdash](#) below – see example below)



## 2021-2022 Ongoing Council Agenda Items

### Updates from Wisconsin DPI Special Education Director

- The majority of updates related to current guidance and information relating to the COVID-19 public health emergency as well as a summary of the types of IDEA complaints submitted. Additional updates include updates from US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs and Wisconsin DPI updates relating to new guidance, resources, and supports available to Wisconsin school districts and families.

### State complaint review

- For each council meeting, council members reviewed quarterly reports of state complaint and due process hearings filed with Wisconsin DPI. These reports are disaggregated by race and CESA region of the person filing the state complaint.

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## 2021 Annual Complaint Filing Data 2021-2022

Complaints filed in 2021-2022: (88)

### Complaints filed in:

CESA 01: 39	CESA 02: 19	CESA 03: 1	CESA 04: 4
CESA 05: 2	CESA 06: 9	CESA 07: 4	CESA 08: 3
CESA 09: 3	CESA 10: 3	CESA 11: 3	CESA 12: 1

## Summary of Complaint Topics

Child Find: 1	Evaluation: 3:	Shortened School Day: 2
Parent Communication: 9	Graduation: 0	ESY: 1
IEP Development: 13	Transportation: 1	IEP Implementation: 5
Seclusion and Restraint: 1	Placement: 8	Additional Services : 3
Behavior: 3	Extracurricular: 1	Post Transition Planning: 2

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## 2021-2022 Council Agenda Special Topics and Discussion

### September 2021 Special Reports

- Stakeholder Input on Wisconsin's State Performance Plan

### December 2021 Special Reports

- Stakeholder Input on Wisconsin's State Performance Plan

### March 2022 Special Reports

- Review & Discussion of Council Priorities
- Wisconsin DPI Legal Updates
- Effects of the Pandemic on Students with Disabilities and Mental Health of Students
- Discussion: Extending the Age of High School Enrollment

### June 2022 Special Reports

- State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report: Review of Stakeholder Process and Submitted Report and Data
- Professional Learning Needs for Staff Educating Students with Disabilities and Recommendations for Statewide Professional Development
- Council Priorities Discussion

### Other Topics in 2021-2022

- Special education director updates
- Debrief public forum responses
- Chair reports
- Review of complaint and due process hearing requests

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## Wisconsin Council on Special Education Public Forum

*October 13, 2021*

### **What did council hear at the public forum?**

The major themes of the public comments focus on social emotional learning and inclusion and diversity, increased parental input and provide better understanding of special education for parents, improved training for school staff and students safely returning to school.

It was noted that DPI resources and training on social emotional development/learning is not filtering through the classroom, including understanding of behavior as a method of communication. Related to this is the need to understand minority students with an IEP and their culture. Inclusion should be encouraged, including people attending school board meetings and contacting their elected officials to support inclusion, diversity and equity, as these affect students with special needs. One person noted that it seems that many teach as if everything is ideal, but life is not ideal and there needs to be a bridge between ideal and real. Regarding employment for individuals with disabilities, it was noted that there should be stronger DPI language to closer match DHS language and that there needs to be high employment expectations.

Parent engagement needs to be strengthened beyond IEP activities for parent engagement. There needs to be increased value on what parents have to say. Information that is provided to parents new to the referral and IEP process should be more easily read and understood (the readability level of forms may be a barrier to some parents); perhaps someone should be sitting with the parents when forms are to be completed explaining what each item/question on the form means. Related to this was the opinion that WSPEI liaisons programs should be expanded so the expertise available is not lost when/if the liaison leaves.

Kids returning safely to schools was also expressed. UW Madison has a project to support I'm person services to medically fragile students.