Iowa Special Education Advisory Panel
Date: February 21, 2020
Facilitator: Nancy Hunt
Panel Secretary: Celina Turner

Present: Jennifer Aldrich, Jennifer Anderson, Dawn Bonsall, Lori Frieden-Janke, Ruth Frush, Rhonda Haitz, Valerie Harmon, Elizabeth Hockey, Jessica Iverson, Mary Jackson, Pam Litterer, Keri Osterhaus, Sandra Smith, Rachel Terry, Karen Thompson, Daniel Van Sant, David Van Horn, and Joel Weeks

Department Staff Present: Barb Guy, Nancy Hunt, and Celina Turner

Absent: Cynthia Blackard, Jodi Bonnett, Heather Brand, Polly Brekke, Kate Cole, Kim Neal, Kelly Ramus, Bryan Sage, Shannon Tackes, and Doug Wolfe

Presenters: MeLissa Lawson, Shan Sievert, and Barb Guy

Handouts:

- [Agenda](#)
- [uPAR Project Results](#)
- [Legislative Update](#)
- [ACHIEVE Update and Feedback](#)

Welcome/Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Elizabeth Hockey at 9:02 a.m.

Approval of Consent Agenda

The minutes from the January 10, 2020, meeting were reviewed. No edits were made. Jessica Iverson motioned to approve the consent agenda. Joel Weeks seconded the motion. Motion approved.

DHH Study Group – Barb Guy

Barb Guy discussed the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Study Group that is being formed in response to legislation put forth by the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K).

LEAD-K is an advocacy group that has proposed legislation to establish an advisory committee to solicit input on language development milestones in English and American Sign Language (ASL) and require the Iowa Department of Education (Department) to annually compile and publish a report that is specific to language and literacy development of deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to eight years of age.

In response to this legislation, the Department is forming a study group to provide information around quality services for students who are deaf and hard of hearing in Iowa. The Department is currently in the process of identifying members for the group. The group will meet in the spring. If you're interested in participating in the study group, please email Tori Carsrud at tori.carsrud@iowa.gov or Barb Guy at barbara.guy@iowa.gov.

uPAR Project Results – MeLissa Lawson

MeLissa Lawson is an Education Program Consultant with the Department for AEM and UDL. She discussed the Universal Protocols for Accommodations in Reading (uPAR). The uPAR is an assessment tool used to determine whether students need accommodations when engaged in reading tasks. Within uPAR, there are three conditions for accommodations: comprehension in independent reading, comprehension with human audio, and comprehension with a text reader.

The uPAR supports data-based decision making, helps teams learn the way students comprehend text, outlines evidence-based practices used to make decisions about selecting a suitable reading accommodation for students, and is a repeatable, systematic process.

One important challenge with uPAR is determining which students need Accessible Educational Materials (AEM). It's often difficult to determine which students need AEM when dealing with audio and digital text. Another important concept surrounding uPAR is remediation versus compensation. When a student is eligible for a reading goal, a lot of work is done to remediate that reading deficiency. However, important questions remain about what happens if the student doesn't get to grade level, should the teacher compensate the student's reading deficiency, and, if so, when should the teacher begin to compensate for the student's reading deficiency.

MeLissa Lawson presented the results from three different research studies. In 1998, research was done that showed there was an increase in reading comprehension among most of the research subjects when using text reader software. Similarly, research done in 2010 showed students accessed twice as much content and demonstrated improved comprehension when using text reader software. Research completed in 2012 also showed students had improved attitudes toward reading, increased engagement in reading, and significant gains in vocabulary and comprehension when using speech-to-text software combined with reading comprehension instruction.

MeLissa Lawson also presented five student reports from the uPAR. These reports can be found on slides 10-14 in her presentation.

Dawn Bonsall asked how the reading level of each student was determined. MeLissa Lawson clarified that teachers determine the reading level of each student. Some teachers look at fluency while others look at comprehension. MeLissa Lawson stated the Department encourages teachers to look at the entire range of literacy skills when determining a student's reading level.

Karen Thompson asked if uPAR is being widely used across the state. MeLissa Lawson stated that it is being used across the state in certain school districts.

MeLissa Lawson discussed a study that was conducted between five districts using uPAR and five districts not using uPAR. The study had two core research questions:

1. To what extent did the IEPs of students in schools utilizing the uPAR methodologies and schools not using uPAR contain the necessary AEM and Assistive Technology (AT) services related accommodations to meet learning needs?

2. How well are the uPAR methods being implemented and are the necessary district- and school-level support structures in place?

In this study, 111 IEPs were analyzed from uPAR districts and 123 IEPs were analyzed from non-uPAR districts. When these IEPs were pulled, each student had a reading goal. The key findings from the study are shown in the table below.

Supports Included in IEPs

	AEM*	AT*	SDI	Para Support*
non-uPAR district	10%	32%	98%	21%
uPAR district	40%	62-63%	97%	38%

*statistical significance

MeLissa Lawson also discussed the qualitative data taken from one-hour interviews of four staff members from four different districts. This data showed:

- The uPAR aligns with school practices and is an effective reading accommodation assessment

- The uPAR should be considered for all students

- Limited fidelity data

- Variability in processes related to implementation

- Ongoing professional development is necessary

- The uPAR initiative positively impacts student outcomes including improved reading levels, comprehension, confidence, and engagement

Daniel Van Sant asked if there is a cost to use the uPAR assessment tool. MeLissa Lawson stated there is a cost to use uPAR. Daniel Van Sant then stated that if there is a cost to use uPAR, and the previous study was done in districts already using the uPAR, in his opinion, it seems the data results are skewed toward wealthier districts with wealthier families. He asked if the data was controlled for the socioeconomic makeup of the districts. Barb Guy stated the districts selected for the study were not selected at random since they had to select districts already using uPAR; however, she stated the socioeconomic levels of the districts did vary.

Jennifer Aldrich and Jennifer Anderson asked if there was any data for younger students who are still learning how to read. MeLissa Lawson stated that the Department generally recommends waiting to use uPAR until the student has crossed the bridge from learning to read to reading to learn. She stated there are specific and individual situations where they would look at text reader software for students who are still learning to read; however, as a whole, the uPAR is used to assess students who have already learned to read.

Barb Guy asked MeLissa Lawson to describe how a teacher applies the uPAR results they receive and the supports they need in order to do that. MeLissa Lawson stated the first step is to show the student their results and see if they are receptive to using a computer for their reading. The teacher would then ensure all materials are provided digitally. Depending on the district, there's also a lot of planning that needs to be done ahead of time, such as ensuring book publishers know the information needs to be accessible for all students. The book publishers should put the digital files into a repository called Bookshare. From there, the teacher should meet with the student to show them the text reader software, how it works, where the files are stored, and how to open and navigate the files. The teacher would also need to ensure the reading goal and/or assistive technology is listed on the student's IEP.

Jessica Iverson asked if text reader software is being offered to all students in terms of the ISASP. MeLissa Lawson stated that text reader software is a designated feature, meaning it is a feature that has to be turned on when the student needs it. Text reader software is not a universal feature that is available to every student.

Rachel Terry asked how to encourage teams and districts not to drop the reading goal and/or assistive technology from the IEP when that is what's helping the student become successful. MeLissa Lawson stated in this case, they would likely move the student to a 504 Plan because while the student still needs support and accommodation, they don't necessarily need the goal area.

Barb Guy stated the Department will continue to report back to the Panel on this initiative in upcoming meetings.

Legislative Update – Shan Sievert

Shan Sievert is the legislative liaison to the Department. She discussed bills that passed in a Senate Committee or House Committee and are considered funnel proof. If you would like to receive legislative updates, please visit the website to sign up.

Shan Sievert discussed House Study Bill 680, which pertains to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. This bill comes from LEAD-K and provides for the development and dissemination of a resource for parents/guardians of deaf or hard of hearing children. It also requires the Department to employ an Early Language Coordinator. The bill establishes an advisory committee to solicit input on language development milestones in English and American Sign Language and requires the Department to annually compile and publish a report that is specific to language and literacy development of deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to eight years of age. The bill passed the House Education Committee and is eligible for debate on the House floor.

Shan Sievert noted that in regards to House Study Bill 680, the Department is working on some clarifying language in the bill that would prevent conflict with federal requirements. Barb Guy noted that this bill requires certain assessments. This requirement concerns some individuals who fear this would mean teachers would only use the required assessments and wouldn't individualize or tailor the assessment to the student. Barb Guy also noted the concern around the emphasis of ASL. David Van Horn stated the AEAs do not have a unified message regarding this bill. Shan Sievert noted that the AEAs are registered as undecided on this bill.

Shan Sievert also discussed House File 2454, which pertains to State Accreditation Standards and Process. This bill provides additional options for instructors to meet the state accreditation standards by combining education and experience in the occupational area. The bill passed unanimously in the House Education Committee. Both House File 2454 and Senate File 2154 are eligible for debate on their respective floors.

Shan Sievert noted this is a Department bill put forth to assist CTE instructors who are teaching at community colleges to allow them to meet the state accreditation standards by using both their education and their experience.

Lori Frieden-Janke asked about House File 2418, which pertains to the School Budget Review Committee. This bill authorizes the Department to notify the Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) if an error in reporting impacts an individual's licensure experience. The notification from the Department certifying that a district error in a basic education survey within the last three years would have impacted an individuals' licensure will be sufficient for the BOEE to correct any licensure experience based on incorrect information. The bill passed in the House Education Committee and is eligible for debate on the House floor.

Shan Sievert stated this bill came about due to a prior incident in which a teacher's experience as an administrator was not counted for a year due to a reporting error. Therefore, the proposed legislation states that if the Department discovers a licensure error, the Department is able to notify the BOEE, and the BOEE will correct the error. Lori Frieden-Janke asked if this pertains to any error or only errors on administrators' licenses. Shan Sievert noted it pertains to any licensure error. Joel Weeks clarified that is also pertains to teachers' licenses.

For more information on legislative bills, visit the Iowa Legislature's BillBook.

ACHIEVE Update and Feedback – Barb Guy

- **ACHIEVE Phases of Development and Projected Timelines**

Barb Guy presented an update on the ACHIEVE system. She stated there are three mains components to the ACHIEVE process. These include the IEP/IFSP itself, the reporting mechanism, and general supervision. Running through each component will be a parent portal. She also noted there are five main phases of development for the ACHIEVE system. These include Process Review, Specifications/Requirements Documentation, Wireframes, Development, and Internal Testing and Approval.

Barb Guy discussed the flow of content development for the IEP/IFSP section, which is also shown on the ACHIEVE Google Site. In regards to the flow of content development, Child Find and Referral is complete; Evaluation, Assessment, and Eligibility is nearly complete; and IEP/IFSP Data Collection is in process.

The target for the statewide launch of the ACHIEVE system is the 2021–2022 school year. Next year, the Department will focus on professional development. Barb Guy noted there will be functions in the new system that the Department wants to review with the necessary people prior to the launch. For example, in the existing system, there is only one way to monitor progress. This has created the unintentional consequence of narrowing how goals are written. In the new system, there will be multiple ways to monitor progress.

Barb Guy also stated the Department is aware of the frustrations people have been having with the new system. These frustrations are caused mainly from a software update that slowed down the system. The Department has contracted with OCIO to complete a deeper analysis and audit of the system.

The Department is now beginning to conceptualize the family portal. Barb Guy noted the Department is looking into delaying access to the portal until the parent/guardian has signed consent for an evaluation. She asked the Panel if they see any implications or unintended negative consequences if the Department waits to provide access to the family portal until consent for evaluation has been signed.

Karen Thompson asked how much of disability suspect will happen inside the portal, such as processes, documents, and communication. Barb Guy clarified that it will be how it is now with documentation of the process happening inside the portal. Karen Thompson then asked if that documentation will be made available to parents/guardians even if they don't have access to the portal. Barb Guy stated that the parent/guardian will be given access to that documentation.

Valerie Harmon asked if parents would be able to see when people are working on documents or if they'd have to wait until the document is complete. Barb Guy clarified that the new system will contain a workspace for an individual to complete and tag their work, but the parent will only be able to see the document once it becomes finalized. However, Barb Guy noted this varies depending upon what level of information it is.

If members of the Panel wish to provide input on the areas of Portal Access, System Messaging, or Family Surveys, please email Nancy Hunt at nancy.hunt@iowa.gov. The Department will then set up a way the interested parties can have a deeper discussion.

Future Agenda Items to Discuss

- The membership application is due April 17, 2020.

- Three volunteers are needed to review membership applications. Volunteers will be accepted during the April 3, 2020, meeting.

- Nominations are needed for the position of Vice Chair. Cynthia Blackard will accept the role of Chair in the fall.

Joel Weeks motioned to adjourn. Sandra Smith seconded the motion. Motion approved. Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Next meeting: April 3, 2020
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Grimes State Office Building
Facilitator: Nancy Hunt
Minutes: Celina Turner