

Join Fellow LaTEACH Members!

Put on your Purple

SEAP needs to hear your voice!

March 24, 2016

Greetings!

The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) for the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meets next week (Wednesday) to consider:



- **2016-2017 IDEA grant application**
 - **Budget of state activities**
- **State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)**

Do you agree that how the La. Department of Education is spending special education money (i.e., IDEA budget) is improving instruction and services for children with disabilities?

Do you think the La. Department of Education's plan to improve special education in the state will result in improved outcomes for students with disabilities?

See below for more information!

If these issues are important to you, put on your purple shirt and join fellow LaTEACH members at SEAP! SEAP members need to hear from you!

[Click here](#) to let Patsy White, SEAP Co-Chair, how you feel about these issues:

WHAT: Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)

**WHEN: March 30, 2016
9:00 a.m. until noon**

**WHERE: Claiborne Building
The Louisiana Purchase Room (1-100)
1201 N. Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802**

[Click here](#) to see the SEAP agenda for March 30, 2016.

If you don't have a purple LaTEACH shirt, contact your [LaTEACH Regional Leader](#) and we will provide one for you at the SEAP meeting.

Additional Information

For additional information to help you understand issues to be discussed see the two main issues below.

IDEA Grant Application and Proposed Budget

[Click here](#) to see the FFY 2016 IDEA Part B Grant Application and Budget.

Questions have been raised about how LDOE is spending IDEA funds and whether the expenditures are providing desired outcomes related to providing special education and related services to children with disabilities. At the January SEAP meeting members asked how IDEA funds were being spent and what were

the outcomes for those expenditures. Below is follow-up correspondence seeking more information related to these expenditures:

- On February 19, 2016 the [Louisiana Special Education Directors' Association \(LASEA\)](#) sent a letter to Superintendent John White requesting how IDEA funds were spent relative to assessments and personnel. The crux of the request was related to two major issues.
 - First, Louisiana substantially increased its IDEA budget for developing alternate assessments and providing test accommodations, yet in [December 2015 the U.S. DOE placed La. on 'high-risk status'](#) in part for our alternate assessment not being aligned with our general content standards. So LASEA asked how La. spent \$4.8 million last year that were budgeted for developing alternate assessments and offering accommodations for students to take the tests.
 - Second, special education directors across the state noted an increase in IDEA funding for the state administration and personnel yet support to special education from the LDOE has decreased significantly. They requested a list of staff paid with IDEA funds and the roles of those staff member pertaining to special education supports and services.
- The [LDOE response to LASEA](#) on March 11, 2016 raised more questions and concerns among special education directors and advocates regarding IDEA expenditures. Specifically:
 - The LDOE letter stated, *"Currently eleven percent of students in Louisiana have been identified as receiving special education services under IDEA disability classification, therefore, currently up to eleven percent of statewide assessments are funded by the IDEA grant."*
 - IDEA funds are restricted to pay excess costs of providing a free and appropriate public education. So permissible excess costs covered by IDEA Part B funds include the special education and related services provided to children with disabilities. In general it is not permissible to use IDEA Part B Funds for things that every other student would already receive - like a state assessment.
 - The LDOE letter contained the names of personnel and the percentage of their salary covered by IDEA funds; however, the response did not contain information related to each staff member's role pertaining to special education supports and services.

State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)

For its [SSIP](#) Louisiana is targeting English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency of students with disabilities in nine school systems participating with [LSU's State Personnel Development Grant \(SPDG\)](#). As a result of training and leadership development the SSIP has a goal to increase the percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient on ELA statewide assessments. While the SSIP appears to have been developed with good intentions, there are a few questions, such as:

- What is the difference between the SSIP and the LSU grant activities (SPDG)?
- How can performance on standardized tests be used as the measure of success for SSIP with all the changes in content and tests? Consider:
 - Changes to the content standards and subsequent assessments render comparisons across years of student proficiency on these tests meaningless; and,
 - Proficiency of the latest tests were determined using a norm-referenced model based on how students perform relative to other students. Since proficiency is not defined beforehand and is not criterion referenced, making comparisons across years is even more difficult.

Did You Take Action?

Please let us know if you contacted your SEAP Co-Chair or attended a SEAP meeting by emailing us at info@lateach.org.



Any questions?

If there are any questions about the information in this alert, contact LaTEACH at:

Email: info@lateach.org
Phone: 1-800-450-8108
Phone: 1-800-894-6558
Website: www.lateach.org



LaTEACH is an initiative of the [Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council](#).

Coming October 2016

LaCAN & LaTEACH unite into one powerful advocacy network!

