SOUTH CAROLINA
ACESD
Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities

ACESD Full Council Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
August 28, 2026

Members' Present
Allison Adrian, Isabelle Borduas, Jane Brandis, Damian Bridges, Kimberly Brock, Megan Burns, Helen Campbell, Erika Chapman, Mary Lynne Diggs, Tyler Edmond, Andrea Erb, Elizabeth Filaseta Boone, Stephanie Ford, Rebekah Francis-Barnes, Jeni Garner, Elaine Gentry, Heather Googe, Denean Greene Rivers, Melissa Griffin, Miranda Harris, Malerie Hartsell, Deborah Harris-Sims, Mary Higginbotham, Wendy Hite, Muri Howle, Allison Huffstutler, Allison Kitler, Annia Knight, Cathy Kovacs, Erin Laughter, Shannon Polchow, Lindsay Porter, Anne Radue, Holden Roberts, Jenny Scarchilli, Lindsay Schmelzel, Kristen Schmutz, Joshua Shumak, Mary Stevenson, Preston Trippe, Karen Tucker, Tekeshia Wade, Bridgette Watson, Shannon Watson, Valerie White, Margie Williamson, Mary Wood, Adair Yatko, Elizabeth Young

Guests/SCDE Staff Present
ASL Interpreters Katie & Josh, Dana Bennett, Joyce Bryngelson (for Stephanie Donald), Sherri Evans, Cheryl Fitts, Michael Helton (for Shannon Helton), Ayla Horton, Susan Howard (for Laurie Lee), Peter Keup, Angie Neal, Jo Wallace

Welcome, call to order
Allison Huffstutler, Chair 10:01 a.m.

Approval of March 2026 Minutes
Holden Roberts motioned to approve. Karen Tucker seconded. The motion passed.

Public Comment
Stephanie Lane, a parent and special education advocate, submitted a comment to be read. She highlighted concerns about unsupported behavioral and emotional needs in students with disabilities, mentioning that students' disability-related needs are often treated as discipline problems, leading to suspensions, early pickups, and reduced schedules. Ms. Lane requested statewide tracking of formal and informal discipline removals, practical Tier I training, and clear expectations for MTSS and FBAs while emphasizing the need for consistent input, staffing, and collaboration for teachers to effectively address students' needs.

Sub-Committee Meetings
Committees met in breakout sessions.

Sub-Committee Reports

- **Preschool:** The committee welcomed new members and started strategic planning for the upcoming year. The want to focus on connecting families to services and stay on top of changes at the state and federal levels and their impact on families and children.

- **Professional Development:** The committee welcomed new members and recapped what the committee accomplished last year. While H.4468 seems to have stalled at Columbia, there does seem to be traction at the district level as districts move to create their own district-level advisory councils. The committee is researching home-based instruction while looking ahead to the need to advocate for training about behavior.

- **Safe Schools/Social Emotional Learning:** The committee had a robust conversation concerning Indicators 4a and 4b, discipline and behavior, and S.430. The committee is interested in an in-depth examination of the suspension and expulsion rates within the preschool population, including why students are being removed from school and how parents are involved when suspension is being discussed. They discussed different organizations to invite to speak to the committee, including the South Carolina Infant Mental Health Association, the PEAR Program, and Handle with Care.

- **Transition and Self Advocacy:** Heading into this year, the committee would like to take on more of an advisory role this year, informing the department where and how things can improve. As such, the committee is working to wrap up their documents, including their WIOA documents, and searching for organizations with a transitional focus to invite to future meeting.

OSES Updates

- OSES Director, Peter Keup
- According to the data, the critical-needs areas for South Carolina include:
    - support for high-quality ELA and math instructions;
    - graduation / dropout rates;
    - mental health and student behavior; and
    - teacher / service provider shortage.
- The advisory council briefly reviewed the eight components to South Carolina's general supervision plan.
- SEA Determinations & LEA Determinations
    - SEA Determinations is like a report card for states.
    - South Carolina is in the *needs assistance* category, and this is where most of the states are.
    - Where can South Carolina improve? The state has fixed internal timelines in making corrections in the SPP/APR process and hopes to pick up points in the next review. The state is making gains on the compliance rate on Indicator 13, performance on NAEP (Math and

ELA, 4th and 8th Grade), graduation rate for students with disabilities along with dropout rate for students with disabilities, but we remain knocking on the door of the next tertile.
    - Please see this link for South Carolina's LEA determinations.
- State & Legislative Updates
    - Coming out of the OSEP conference held the first week in August in Washington, DC, there were several key takeaways:
        - There is interagency agreement between the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. They are partners in the special education process.
        - There is a push for additional funding for IDEA. The proposed federal budget does have increased funding for IDEA. However, time will tell if this makes it through the budget process.
        - School choice was emphasized.
    - At the state level, there are several new regulations in effect.
        - Act 186 went into effect on May 18, 2026, and requires school districts to consider private ABA providers to deliver services, which will be paid for by parent's third-party provider or Medicaid.
        - By January 6, 2027, the State Board of Education will develop a model policy, which will set the parameters for private providers observing and evaluating a student or to provide medically necessary services during the day. Districts will have until July 1, 2027, to adopt the policy or create a policy that adopts the minimum requirements established by the model policy.
        - The next phase of the ASL interpreter regulations goes into effect, establishing the minimum qualifications for educational interpreters.

- **South Carolina Partnerships for Inclusion (SCPI)**, Dana Bennett
    - SCPI provides information and support to school districts across the state. SCPI strategizes to expand the preschool continuum of services and support for meeting IDEA indicators
    - SCPI provides resources, creates partnerships and connections, and provides professional development.
    - They will be hosting their annual conference, "United for Every Child: Inclusion and the Pyramid Model in Action," on September 23-25, 2026 at the R2i2 Conference Center in Columbia, SC.

Announcements

- The Advisory Council has an online library where members can find videos, presentations, and other materials presented during meetings.

- The Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children is hosting their Fall Public Hearings. Dates and locations can be found on their web site.
- GiGi's Playhouse is hosting the GiGi's Educator Symposium. "Teaching Strategies for Individual with Down Syndrome" will be held online on Saturday, September 26, 2026, from 11:00 am until 3:45 pm.
- SCPI is hosting their annual conference, "United for Every Child: Inclusion and the Pyramid Model in Action," on September 23-25, 2026 at the R2i2 Conference Center in Columbia, SC.

Motion to adjourn
Holden Roberts moved to adjourn. Adair Yatko seconded. Meeting adjourned at 1:59 p.m.

Advisory Council Meetings
October 30, 2026 (in person)
January 29, 2027
March 26, 2027