SOUTH CAROLINA
ACESD
Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities

ACESD Full Council Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

March 27, 2026

Members Present

Allison Adrian, Susan Beck, Valarie Bishop, Jane Brandis, Damian Bridges, Megan Burns, Helen Campbell, Mary Lynne Diggs, Stephanie Donald, Jeni Garner, Elaine Gentry, Heather Googe, Denean Greene Rivers, Melissa Griffin, Danshelle Guy, Deborah Harris-Sims, Mary Higginbotham, Wendy Hite, Allison Huffstutler, Kimberly Humphrey, Cathy Kovacs, Laurie Lee, Angie Lucas, Daphne New, Sadina Outlaw, Shannon Polchow, Lindsay Porter, Anne Radue, Teresa Rhodes, Holden Roberts, Lindsay Schmelzel, Kristen Schmutz, Samica Snipes-Smith, Mary Stevenson, Karen Tucker, Bridgette Watson, Margie Williamson, Adair Yatko, Elizabeth Young

Guests/SCDE Staff Present

Ryan Bartola (for Rodney Zimmerman), Jenny Dillon, Barbara Drayton, Tyler Edmond (for Nikki Green), Anita Ellison-Porter (for Erin Laughter), Sherri Evans, Cheryl Fitts, Sandy Garner, Joy Ivester, Peter Keup, Allison Kitler (for Nikki Green), Katie MacVittie, Lisa McCliment, Elizabeth Moore, Tina Ross, Justin Tipton, Courtney Workman

Welcome, call to order by Susan Beck, Chair 10:02 a.m.

Approval of January 2026 Minutes

Holden Roberts seconded the motion to approve. During discussion, Mary Stevenson and Wendy Hite asked to be added to the minutes. Melissa Griffin moved to approve the amended minutes. Denean Greene Rivers seconded. During discussion, Lindsey Porter and Jane Brandis asked to be added to the minutes. Holden Roberts moved to approve the amended minutes. Kristen Schmutz seconded. The motion passed.

Voting on Approved Slate of Officers

Val Bishop, Heather Googe, and Margie Williamson served on the Nominating Committee. They presented a slate with Allison Huffstutler for chair and Karen Tucker for vice chair. There was a call for nominations from the floor for chair and vice chair. Hearing none, voting opened for the slate, which was unanimously approved.

2026-2027 Year Meeting Format Survey
Allison Huffstutler presented a member survey to help the executive committee plan for 2026-2027. She solicited input particularly about how the council will meet next year.

2026-2027 Membership Applications
The Advisory Council received thirty-seven membership applications for 2026-2027. The executive committee reviewed each one. Based on the needs of the council, the committee approved seventeen applications. Of those seventeen, five were from individuals with disabilities, eight were from parents of students with disabilities, and four were from disability-related organizations. Looking toward next year, there will be committee co-chair opportunities as Safe Schools will need two co-chairs as theirs are rotating off the Advisory Council.

Public Comment
There was no public comment.

Sub-Committee Meetings
Committees met in breakout sessions.

Sub-Committee Reports

- **Preschool:** The committee continued working on their priority list for 2025-2026. They have created a state inclusion leadership team and started working on policies and meeting evaluation. They completed *Key Acronyms in Early Childhood and Special Education* and will be distributing it across programs so that there is a common language within the early childhood sector. They also have an early transition work group started.
- **Professional Development:** The committee received an update on H.4468, a bill establishing advisory councils at the district level. The bill is coming out of subcommittee with one amendment and is heading to the full Education and Public Works Committee. After learning about 24-hour residential IEPs in January from Brad Stevenson and Amy Dickey from the Melmark School and learning that high-needs funding legislation just passed in North Carolina, the committee would like to research what South Carolina's numbers look like. Are students home-based due to behavior? The committee would like to draft a letter about this issue.

- **Transition and Self Advocacy:** The committee incorporated suggested edits from the executive committee and finalized their graduation-track document. The committee continued work on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) documents and will be sending them to Professional Development for feedback. They also established goals for next year.
- **Safe Schools/Social Emotional Learning:** Kimberly Humphrey reviewed data on foster care, dropout rates, expulsions and how they intersect with persons with disabilities. The committee discussed legislation moving through Columbia, especially the bill about educator safety and the mental health needs of teachers.

OSES Updates

- OSES Director, Peter Keup
    - Differentiated Monitoring and Support Reports (DMS) contacted OSES to announce the final close-out letter is complete and will be posted on the web site soon.
    - OSES will be discussing SPP/APR indicator 17 at today's meeting.
    - OSES wants to make changes to the parent input form. Members suggested including the following:
        - a question about transitions to get the parents thinking about the future;
        - a question about the vision the parents have for their child;
        - a question about what one hopes their child learns this year; and
        - a statement about how decisions may impact future educational pathways.

      Members can send additional suggestions to Cheryl Fitts.
- Dispute Resolution Overview, Barbara Drayton and Elizabeth Moore
    - A presentation was distributed to council members prior to the meeting so that the council's time could be spent asking questions
    - One member wanted to know the reason behind the increased number of dispute resolutions. While there is no indication as to why South Carolina has seen an increase, there is a national increase. Some theories include that people are becoming more knowledgeable of their rights, or that AI is misleading people of their rights.

    - Members were encouraged to review the National & State Dispute Resolution Data Dashboard to see how South Carolina compares to the nation.
- State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Overview, Sandy Garner and Lisa McCliment
    - Indicator 17 is the multi-year plan that OSES participates in. The current plan is concluding, and OSES is looking ahead to the next project.
    - OSES would like to keep the same SiMR. They would like to continue with the reading focus with the assessment via the SC Ready.
- Transition Alliance of South Carolina, Joy Ivester
    - The Transition Alliance of South Carolina (TASC) is one of four OSES-funded organizations. The organization works with districts to improve transition services and graduation outcomes.
    - TASC focuses on graduation rates and career readiness. When working with a to the district. Oftentimes attendance and course completion are district, they look at what is working well, examine the data, and see where they can provide real support concerns.
    - TASC provides tiered resources based on district needs. There are open-access, universal needs, application-only targeted needs as requested by the district, and intensive needs as identified by OSES.
    - They will be hosting two future events:
        - SC Dropout Prevention Symposium on April 30
        - Diploma Planning Institute July 9

Announcements
There were no announcements.

Motion to adjourn
Holden Roberts moved to adjourn. Kristen Schmutz seconded. Meeting adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

Next Advisory Council Meeting
2026-2027 calendar TBD.