

The Arc Michigan Education Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2025

The meeting came to order at 10:07am.

Present: Kelsey Biswanger, Michelle Driscoll, Katherine Mills, Darlene Heard-Thomas, Debbie Whitford, Carl Hankins, Emily Henderson, Lesley Moffat, Kenya Harper, Sherry Kenworthy, Maggie Kolk

Approval of Meeting Minutes: January meeting minutes were approved.

Governmental Affairs/Legislative Update:

Emily Henderson, Governmental Affairs Consultant and Lobbyist for Arc Michigan with McCall Hamilton.

Michigan House Education and Workforce Committee:

Leadership

- [Rep. Nancy DeBoer \(Republican\) District-86](#) (Chair)
- [Rep. Rylee Linting \(Republican\) District-27](#) (Majority Vice Chair)
- [Rep. Jimmie Wilson Jr. \(Democrat\) District-32](#) (Minority Vice Chair)

Members

- [Rep. Brad Paquette \(Republican\) District-37](#)
- [Rep. Joseph Fox \(Republican\) District-101](#)
- [Rep. Tom Kunse \(Republican\) District-100](#)
- [Rep. Alicia St. Germaine \(Republican\) District-62](#)
- [Rep. Joseph Pavlov \(Republican\) District-64](#)
- [Rep. Matt Koleszar \(Democrat\) District-22](#)
- [Rep. Regina Weiss \(Democrat\) District-5](#)
- [Rep. Erin Byrnes \(Democrat\) District-15](#)

Governor Whitmer presented a record breaking budget that includes:

- *\$516 million to support school operations through a 4.1% increase in base per-pupil funding— equating to an additional \$392 per student, for a total of \$10,000 per pupil.*
- *\$202.4 million to continue expanded support for special education students – a 10% increase in the state allocation from adjusted current law levels.*
- *\$258 million to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of 1.4 million students through continuation of mental health and safety grants to districts.*

Have not seen a lot of bills introduced.

This question was asked: What might the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE) look like without the Office of Special Education Programs

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(OSEP)? Emily responded that they are keeping an eye out for information. Michigan is thinking about conceptual changes, but nothing concrete at this time.

SEAC Report Summary:

Kelsey Biswanger, Michigan Alliance for Families SEAC Alt Representative

1. Accepting SEAC applications for three openings to begin July 1, 2025:

- Two Members-At-Large and one permanent organization seat.
- Priority will be given to those submitting applications prior to April 1, 2025.
- Application on website: [Special Education Advisory Committee](#)

2. State and Federal Legislative Update: <https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/State-Board/Agendas/2025/February/Item-K--MEMO---State-and-Fed-Update-February-2025.pdf>

3. OPTIMISE Update: Kathy Fortino and Laurie VanderPloeg

- [OPTIMISE CALL TO ACTION.docx](#)
- High level introduction on the work of the different Optimise Action Teams (work groups)
 - i. Completed Recommendations: Barriers and Influence Map, School Psychologists, Behavior Support, Paraeducator, Inclusive Building Leader, Speech-Language Pathologists, Standards, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 - ii. Pending Recommendations: Paperwork Reduction, Workload/Caseload, Credentialing, Compensation

4. CERTIFICATION UPDATE: Gina Garner, Higher Education Consultant, Educator Preparation Unit; Kelli Brozanski, Director, Office of Educator Excellence (OEE)

- Reviewed the Proposed Standards for the Preparation of Special Education Teachers
- Represent a new K-12 Special Education Teacher endorsement, including the skills and knowledge needed for beginning special educators who can be placed in select special education programs
- [2025 - 006 Public Comment on the Proposed Standards for the Preparation of Special Education Teachers](#)
- [Public Comment Announcement](#)

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- [Presentation of the Proposed Standards for the Preparation of Special Education Teachers](#)
 - All feedback on the proposed standards must be submitted by 11:59pm, Feb 27
5. **OSE REPORT & ONSITE UPDATE:** Teri Rink, Director, Office of Special Education
- LRE Monitoring
 - Four ISDs and 50 districts have been visited
 - Most recently in Wayne RESA
 - 30-minute, face to face onsite interviews have been conducted
 - 437 staff have been interviewed
 - General and special education teachers, building admin, superintendents, and ISD admin, PACs
 - Common Areas for Improvement:
 - Reframe understanding of IDEA as a Civil Rights Law
 - Broaden the understanding of the public agency in the implementation of the IDEA requirements
 - Increase the understanding of ISD and district administrators, building administrators, and GE teachers in their role of ensuring FAPE in the LRE
 - Focus on utilizing the SE teachers and providers as a support to the GE system
 - Rethink how IEPs are developed to support SWDs in making progress in the general education curriculum
 - Special education teachers/providers need to be knowledgeable of the content standard for various academic and grade levels for effective goal development
 - Participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities need to be addressed in IEP development and talked about with the parents and the student
 - The placement decision is the LAST step in the sequence of completing the IEP
 - MARSE does not define the continuum of alternative placements

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- Increase understanding and consistent implementation of MTSS framework (learning and behavior) with fidelity
 - Tiered levels of intervention should be made available to SWDs even in areas addressed in the IEP
 - Special Education services and supports should be provided to the student and/or teacher/interventionist in the tiered framework to align with LRE and support progress in the GE curriculum
 - Personal Curriculum needs to be used more broadly to support SWDs in meeting graduation requirements
- Federal Actions of Current Administration
 - Lots of uncertainty and confusion
 - Focus on your CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE and not so much on your CIRCLE OF CONCERN until we have more information
 - [Circles of Influence. What it is, How it Works, Examples.](#)
 - Take care of yourself and stay calm
 - Dr Rice is a great communicator and is regularly talking with the press about relevant topics
 - If you would like to receive the MDE weekly communication released each Thursday, you can sign up:
 - [Michigan Department of Education](#)
- Annual Performance Report (APR)
 - Report submitted
 - State will receive its determination in June 2025

Proposed Standards for the Preparation of Special Education Teachers Discussion

Katherine Mills is the only parent on the committee to develop the [Proposed Special Education Teacher Standards](#). Katherine shared that there were good discussions about her comments and concerns shared and clarified that these proposed standards are not watering down of special education standards; options are not being taken away but rather adding an additional option to become a special education teacher in a shorter amount of time. The committee used the CEC standards as a starting point, making a lot of changes. This endorsement only allows someone to teach students who receive special education services. Katherine also shared that there were conversations around whether this endorsement is appropriate for K-12 and does a teacher at the higher grade level have the content expertise needed. Katherine clarified that the general education teacher is expected

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to be the content expert and should work collaboratively with others who support the student, including the IEP team. She also stated that there were conversations that a teacher with this endorsement should be treated as a 5th year student, given support, not just thrown into a program without needed support.

Discussion:

- What does “meet and exceed” mean in standard 1?
- Correlation between reading (specific learning disability) and behavior is a crucial issue. Katherine shared that Standard 3 addresses reading and math and that there is a general education teacher overseeing the teacher with this endorsement. The science of reading.
- Is there a reason that severe multiple impairment is not listed as a program that a teacher with this endorsement can teach? How did the committee determine which programs would be appropriate for this endorsement and which are not? Katherine commented that it depends on MARSE Requirements and who can teach students with certain disabilities.
 - With this endorsement a teacher can teach students in programs for cognitive impairment, emotional impairment, specific learning disability, physical impairment and other health impairment and elementary and secondary level resource.
 - This endorsement on its own would not be appropriate for placement in programs for autism spectrum disorder, deaf or hard of hearing, early childhood special education, visual impairment, adapted physical education services, or speech and language impairment services.
- It was asked if anyone knew about the School Finance Research Collaborative (SFRC) report. No one is aware of this report. It was commented that Michigan Parent, Advocate and Attorney Coalition (MIPAAC) is digging into where special education funding comes from trying to find transparent funding streams.
- The Education Committee does not feel the need to provide public comment. Arc MI Education Committee members are in support of the **Proposed Standards for the Preparation of Special Education Teachers.**

Development of new Position Statements

The Education Committee will continue working on these at the next meeting [The Arc MI Position Statement on Child Find DRAFT.docx](#) (Sherri Boyd approved the statement and will be sharing it with the board for board approval). Once the position statement is approved by the Arc MI Board, it will be added to the website and translated into Spanish and Arabic. Current [Arc MI Position Statements](#)

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Evaluation and Eligibility: Document started on Google drive and members contributed thoughts and notes on how to begin creating a position statement on evaluation/eligibility. Committee members can access the [Evaluation and Eligibility Working Document](#) and continue to add notes and comments. We will continue to work on this at the February meeting.

Additional Business:

- Discussion of [School Safety Bill Package Signed into Law](#) by Governor Whitmer. These 19 commonsense, bipartisan bills make Michigan schools, homes, and communities safer.
- The committee discussed [House Bill 5549](#) that addresses that each school, operated by a board, board of directors, or governing body, has a behavior threat assessment and management team.
- We discussed educating parents, credible vs. non credible threats, and that there is no clear definition of "concerning behavior." If there is no clear definition in the law, the courts will determine what it means if a case arises. Committee members shared that School Resource Officers (SROs) are going to parents' houses to look for weapons and they need a warrant to do that. Conversation about prioritizing safety of students, in addition to educating them.

It was asked if we may need an extra meeting to discuss what is being shared in the news about the federal education system if anything changes. We will add a meeting if anything urgent arises that the committee should discuss. Committee members were encouraged to keep doing their good work to support the families we serve, not panic, and to keep ourselves healthy and well.

Committee members were encouraged to sign up for [MDE Weekly Emails](#)

The next meeting is **Thursday, March 6 from 10:00am-11:30am**

Upcoming Monthly Meeting Dates:

3/6/2025, NO APRIL MEETING, 5/1/2025, 6/5/2025 and AUGUST 2025 TBD
[Join Zoom Meeting](#) (Meeting ID: 890 8280 7363 / Passcode: 299054)

The meeting adjourned at 11:23am

Respectfully Submitted,
Michelle Driscoll for Debbie Whitford and Kelsey Biswanger