



**ADVISORY  
COUNCIL** for the  
**EDUCATION** of  
**STUDENTS** with  
**DISABILITIES**

# Annual Report

July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019

# 2018-19 Advisory Council Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Area of Representation</b>
Shannon Taylor, Chair	Parents
Joey Ellis, Vice-Chair	Individuals with Disabilities
Amy Allen	Special Education Administrators
Brian Brown	Parents
David Craig	Private Schools
Jennifer Escue	Parents
Dawn Fry	Parents
Chantal Hess-Taylor	Parents
Angela Jackson	State & Local Education Officials
Melvin L. Jackson	Organizations Providing Transitional Services
Catherine Knowles	Office of the Coordinator of Homeless Children and Youth
Mary Meador	Juvenile Corrections Agencies
Stephanie Ortego	Teachers
Darlene Walden	Parents

State of Tennessee  
Bill Lee, Governor beginning January 2019

Tennessee Department of Education  
Penny Schwinn, Commissioner beginning January 2019

Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Populations  
Theresa Nicholls, Assistant Commissioner

# Introduction

State and federal guidelines require the Advisory Council for the Education of Student's with Disabilities (Council) provide an annual report to the State Board of Education, the Tennessee Department of Education (department), the governor, and the state legislature. Information included in this report represents the progress made in programs for children with disabilities during fiscal year 2019. It is the Council's intention to work with the department's division of special populations to ensure the provision of appropriate services for children with disabilities throughout the State of Tennessee. This is accomplished through:

- Reporting by the division of special populations to the Council
- Council providing feedback to the division of special populations
- Public input presented to the Council
- Experiences of Council members, who represent consumers

## ***Mission Statement***

The Council's mission is to influence policy that shall ensure student success.

## ***Authority***

The Council was established in 1972 and is required by [T.C.A. § 49-10-105](#). This legislation states that the Council shall advise and consult with the governor, the commissioner of education, the state board of education, and the director of the division of special education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) § 1412(a) (21), requires states to establish and maintain an advisory panel to provide policy guidance on special education and related services for children with disabilities. The Council's duties include:

- Advising the department of unmet needs in the education of students with disabilities;
- Commenting publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the state regarding the education of students with disabilities;
- Advising the department in developing evaluations and reporting data to the U.S. Secretary under Section 618;
- Advising the department in developing corrective actions plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports under this part;
- Advising the department in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities; and
- Advising the department in serving the needs of students with disabilities in adult prisons.

# Part One

T.C.A. § 49-10-105(e)(4) states that the Council shall provide an annual report to the governor, the general assembly and the state board of education that presents the Council's views of the progress or lack of progress made in special education by the state, its agencies and institutions and its school districts during the preceding year. The Council's goals for the period of July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019, are outlined in this section with a summary of the department's work related to the Council goals.

## ***Goal One***

Promote improved student learning/outcomes, including **promoting inclusive educational services** that meet the needs of all students, regardless of their abilities, and promote a sense of belonging and mutual respect for all students while affirming each student's individuality.

## ***Department Work Related to Goal One***

1. The Alternate Academic Diploma (AAD) policy was approved by the State Board of Education on July 26, 2018.
  - a. Created alternate academic course codes with endorsement correlations inclusive of both the general education setting and the special education setting to ensure LRE and promote inclusive education.
  - b. Developed course requirements, aligned to state standards, for each of the AAD course codes.
  - c. Provided trainings throughout the state at the regional conferences, mini-conferences, TAASE, TOSS meeting, and within districts on the AAD policy and implementation including inclusive educational scheduling.
2. The department's Early Childhood Special Education (619) team focused on promoting quality inclusion for children ages 3-5.
  - a. The ECSE team completed year one of the first SPDG Early Childhood Inclusion Cohort that involved 17 districts receiving training, classroom observations, monthly community of practice calls, and ongoing technical assistance to promote increasing inclusion and enhancing the quality of early childhood programs. These 17 SPDG districts significantly outpaced the rest of the state in improving their indicator 6 data, which measures the percentage of children being served in a general education setting and getting the majority of their services, including related services, in that setting.
  - b. The ESCE team provided regional trainings, conference sessions, and ongoing district-level professional development to address ensuring IDEA requirements are met and to promote increasing early childhood inclusion.
3. Twenty new districts were added to the work of the K-12 SPDG (State Personnel Development Grant).

- a. The department received over thirty applications and collaboratively chose twenty of these districts to participate in two intensive years of capacity-building professional development.
  - b. These districts began year one with a focus on providing each student with access to high quality Tier One instruction through the framework of universal design and respectful teaching. Eighty facilitators were trained and these facilitators then trained over 1300 K-12 general educators, special educators, and administrators in their districts. Classroom observations of the trained educators showed that over 91% improved classroom implementation in the span of just a few months.
  - c. The department also recognized the top twenty percent of districts from the first cohort at the Partners in Education (PIE) conference in January for their commitment to and implementation of the work across two years and beyond.
4. Year two of ACCESS training began with a focus on providing increasingly intensive intervention at all levels, including special education. Various methods were utilized to increase district capacity including regional train-the trainer sessions, conference sessions, and in district-specific trainings. The department increased its focus on math intervention by leading a collaborative that focused on positive mindsets about student math potential, math assessment practices that lead to individualization, and effective math instructional strategies for students in special education intervention.
    - a. Developed Reading Intervention Programs document to help teachers make more educated decisions about matching interventions to individual student needs.
    - b. Developed a Math Assessments document to help teachers better conduct a root cause analysis in order to match intervention to student need.
  5. The department provided training on culturally inclusive practices, considering the impact of decisions about environment, curriculum, and materials, and planning with all students in mind.
  6. Training was provided on the eligibility and participation criteria for the alternate assessments.
  7. Educators and administrators continued work with the department through the gifted consortium to better understanding the characteristics of students who are gifted and advanced.
  8. Technical assistance and training was provided to districts across the state to improve student learning/outcomes including training on the least restrictive environment (LRE) requirement of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Reviewed over 1,300 Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to identify districts in need and effectively provide technical assistance.

## ***Goal Two***

Promote expanded access and quality of services for students with disabilities (SWD) to better prepare them for **transition into independent living**, meaningful work or post-secondary education.

## ***Department Work Related to Goal Two***

1. The department continued its intentional inter-agency collaboration to improve post-secondary outcomes for students.
  - Continued monthly collaboration with the Employment Roundtable, which now has eleven state agencies who have a focus on employment of people with disabilities. The goal of this group is to better align the service delivery system for citizens in TN with disabilities.
  - Continued with regular meetings with TransitionTN and sent a small team to the National Technical Assistance Center's (NTACT) Capacity Building Institute. From that, state goals for TransitionTN were created and operationalized by the leadership team.
  - Provided content and school district success stories for the 2018 and 2019 Expect Employment Governor's Report. The 2019 report will be provided to the Governor at the Jackson-Madison School System ProjectSEARCH program.
  - Served on the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center Advisory Board and the Vocational Rehabilitation State Rehabilitation Council to discuss ways to transform VR services to in-school students with disabilities.
2. Work-based Learning (WBL) continues to be a focus of the department.
  - Standards have been drafted for WBL: Special Education Transitions course and will be submitted to the state board.
  - Six regional mini-conference sessions on Postsecondary Readiness and Work-based Learning (WBL) were provided.
  - The fifth WBL Regional Leadership team was hired to provide initial WBL certification, recertification, and technical assistance.
3. The state board approved a series of Principles on Transition courses and the department completed two Transition webcasts to better promote their use.
4. The Passport to the Future pre-conference was hosted as part of the Partners in Education Conference. Attendance was around 450. The Passport to the Future 2020 requests for proposals has gone out.
5. Middle school course requirements for students assessed on the alternate assessment have been drafted in collaboration with teachers from across the state.
6. Technical assistance was provided to districts making decisions about services and scheduling for students who are English learners with disabilities.

## ***Goal Three***

Promote the use of **ongoing assessments and unique accommodations** that will accurately evaluate SWD, while considering the scope of individual needs encountered.

## ***Department Work Related to Goal Three***

1. Collaborated internally to draft comprehensive assessment accommodations guide for the 2019-20 test administration.
2. Revised the EasyIEP alternate assessment participation page to ensure parents are informed of the implications of participation in the alternate assessment.
3. Provided technical assistance and training to districts across the state on providing appropriate accommodations in the classroom and on state assessments. Reviewed over 1,300 Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to identify districts in need of technical assistance in the use of appropriate accommodations.
4. Held regional community of practice sessions for school psychologists to promote the use of appropriate evaluation practices. Sessions included topics such as dyslexia screenings and evaluation batteries, emotional disturbance evaluations, and intellectual disability evaluation practices.
5. Continued district support on the accommodations included Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for English learners, promoting collaboration to ensure careful alignment between the ILP and IEP.
6. Year one for SPDG K-12 districts emphasized the overlap of accommodations, modification, and universal design for all students, including those with IEPs.

## ***Goal Four***

Promote increased **quality and quantity of special educators**, general educators, and para professionals serving eligible children and youth with disabilities.

## ***Department Work Related to Goal Four***

1. Delivered trainings to multiple districts related to improving speech-language practices.
  - a. Facilitated two regional speech-language communities of practice focused on supporting students with complex communication needs; three additional communities of practice meetings have been scheduled.
  - b. Provided grants to four consultants who will support any public school district requesting support in assistive technology/augmentative alternate communication (AT/AAC) assessments, procurement of communication systems, staff/parent trainings, and/or implementation.
2. Training was provided on instructional design and planning for:
  - a. students with significant cognitive disabilities,
  - b. students who are gifted or advanced,
  - c. students in inclusive general education settings,
  - d. students receiving reading or math intervention,
  - e. students displaying characteristics of dyslexia,
  - f. students ages 3-5 in a continuum of settings, and
  - g. students requiring related services.
3. Trained special educators on instructionally appropriate IEPs, including focused sessions on the IAIEP rubric, present levels of educational performance and measurable annual goals.

## ***Goal Five***

Promote **sufficient funding for special education services** and encourage the equitable distribution and utilization of funds to promote best practices for students with special needs.

### ***Department Work Related to Goal Five***

1. Participated in discretionary grant review for districts and provided feedback to promote stronger allocation of resources.
2. Information was presented to the BEP review committee relating to special education caseloads and class sizes.
3. Information was presented to the BEP review committee relating to the staffing of school based mental health professionals.

## ***Goal Six***

Promote improved **use and application of State and local data** related to special education to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

### ***Department Work Related to Goal Six***

1. Local determinations were completed for the Annual Performance Report (APR) to determine whether districts were effectively supporting students with disabilities.
  - o Onsite visits were completed for those districts with highest need to offer technical assistance and professional development opportunities to support educators of students with disabilities.
  - o District improvement plans were reviewed to ensure that needs identified through the APR determinations were adequately addressed by the district.
  - o A data review process was implemented to assist districts with understanding their data.
  - o Districts were provided with a self-assessment tool to assist with root cause analysis and the development of improvement plans.
2. Guided reviews were conducted with all districts identified with significant disproportionality issues and provided technical assistance for the use of comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (CCEIS).
  - o State data was used to have in person meetings regarding significant disproportionality.
  - o TA assistance was provided for completion of the CCEIS section in district plans.
  - o The review of the CCEIS sections for district plans was collaborated upon and feedback for revisions was provided.
3. Technical assistance and follow-ups were provided to districts who were flagged for under-representation or disproportionality within their gifted services.



## ***Goal Seven***

Promote **enhanced communication** among the community, educators, the state education agency (SEA), and other stakeholders on special education services.

### ***Department Work Related to Goal Seven***

1. The department collaborated with and solicited feedback from the Dyslexia Advisory Council on matters related to reading intervention and the “Say Dyslexia” Law implementation.
2. The Arc TN was assisted in the development of parent-friendly, one-page guidance documents.
3. Department members attended Special Education Supervisor Study Council meetings in all regions, soliciting feedback and providing information to the groups.
4. Monthly emails were provided to special education supervisors to highlight important information.
5. Sessions were presented at a variety of conferences, including TAASE, PIE, regional special education supervisors’ conferences, and the state-wide special education supervisors conference.
6. The department continued quarterly Gifted Focus Group meetings to identify strengths and areas of improvement for students who are gifted.
7. The state association for school psychology was collaborated with to address statewide needs and concerns.
8. The department participated in the school based mental health collaborative with state associations and agencies to help develop resources for school based mental health professionals.
9. The department was represented on the traumatic brain injury advisory council in order to communicate regarding educational services and inform practices
10. Advocacy and stakeholder feedback was solicited for ESL (English as a Second Language) Policy 3.207 regarding the exit criteria for English learners with disabilities participating in the WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment.
11. Collaborated with numerous agencies with regard to transition and post-secondary outcomes.

## ***Goal Eight***

Encourage implementation of **RTI<sup>2</sup>** to promote **positive behavior support** including planning, collaboration, and development of best practices that create a positive learning environment and successful experiences for students with disabilities.

### ***Department Work Related to Goal Eight***

1. RTI-B training and implementation was continued in collaboration with the Tennessee Behavior Supports Project (TBSP):

- Training was conducted on least restrictive environment (LRE) planning for students with complex behavior and/or needs.
  - Model of demonstration schools were identified in the implementation of RTI<sup>2</sup>-B.
    - An invite-only session was provided at the Partners in Education conference for the model of demonstration schools.
  - Technical assistance and training was provided to districts across the state on providing appropriate positive behavior supports.
  - Professional development was presented and developed for special education providers on functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans.
  - Requirements related to the use of positive behavior intervention supports were incorporated into restraint and isolation professional development sessions.
2. Guided reviews were conducted with districts identified as having significant disproportionality in the area of discipline and provided technical assistance on the development of positive behavior support systems and restorative practices.
  3. The coordination of services was addressed to meet the needs of the whole student during Title I conference sessions and at the multi-district collaborative.

## Part Two

The table below provides a snapshot count of students with disabilities ages 3–21+ receiving services as of December 1 of each school year. This data does not contain duplications and since used in a federal report, does not include the state-defined exceptionality categories of intellectually gifted and functionally delayed.

School Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Specific Learning Disability	48,115	44,582	41,952	39,370	37,633
Speech or Language Impairment	32,903	33,064	32,578	32,292	31,960
Other Health Impairment	15,472	16,048	16,898	17,941	18,923
Intellectual Disability (formerly Mental Retardation)	7,672	7,945	8,181	8,389	8,747
Developmental Delay	9,407	9,990	10,602	11,307	12,225
Emotional Disturbance	3,214	3,239	3,259	3,196	3,394
Autism	8,652	9,421	10,432	11,447	12,587
Multiple Disabilities	2,232	2,159	2,146	2,173	2,132
Hearing Impairment	1,431	1,347	1,319	1,289	1,233
Orthopedic/Physical Impairment	645	644	597	580	576
Visual Impairment	630	590	592	580	568
Traumatic Brain Injury	343	341	366	361	331
Deaf-Blindness	13	16	14	14	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130,729</b>	<b>129,386</b>	<b>128,936</b>	<b>128,939</b>	<b>130,326</b>

# Statewide SWD Population Data (as of 12/1/2018)

Ages 3-5

**Total by Grade**

Grade	Student Count
1	3
K	5083
P3	3263
P4	6243
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>14592</b>

**Total by Gender**

Gender	Student Count
F	4507
M	10085
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>14592</b>

**Total by Environment**

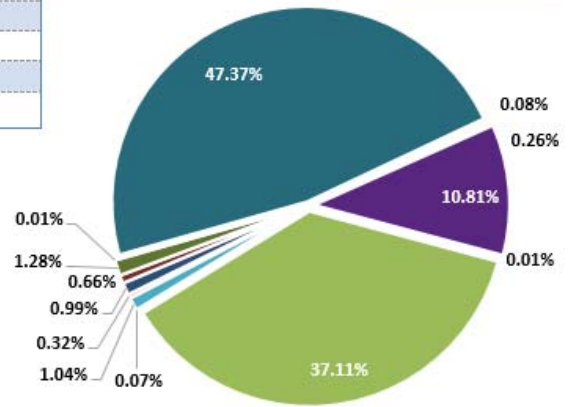
Environment	Student Count
Attend Regular Early Childhood Program at Least 10 Hrs/Week - Receiving Services in EC Loc.	3585
Attend Regular Early Childhood Program at Least 10 Hrs/Week - Receiving Services in Other Loc.	4459
Attend Regular Early Childhood Program Less than 10 Hrs/Week - Receiving Services in EC Loc.	293
Attend Regular Early Childhood Program Less than 10 Hrs/Week - Receiving Services in Other Loc.	330
Home	51
Separate Class	4617
Separate School	111
Residential Facility	2
Service Provider Location	1144
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>14592</b>

**Total by Disability**

Disability Category	Student Count
Autism	1577
Deaf-Blindness	1
Developmental Delay	5415
Emotional Disturbance	10
Hearing Impairments	152
Intellectual Disability	47
Multiple Disabilities	145
Orthopedic Impairments	96
Other Health Impairments	187
Specific Learning Disabilities	1
Speech/Language Impairments	6912
Traumatic Brain Injury	11
Visual Impairments	38
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>14592</b>

**Disability %**

- AUTISM
- DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY
- HEARING IMPAIRMENTS
- MULTIPLE DISABILITIES
- OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENTS
- SPEECH OR LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS
- VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS
- DEAF-BLINDNESS
- EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE
- INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY
- ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENTS
- SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES
- TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY



# Statewide SWD Population Data (as of 12/1/2018)

Ages 6-21

**Total by Grade**

Grade	Student Count
P3	8
P4	49
1 – Trans.	3
K	3528
1	9885
2	9757
3	9692
4	9708
5	9726
6	9499
7	9264
8	9107
9	9319
10	9080
11	8213
12	8799
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>115637</b>

**Total by Environment**

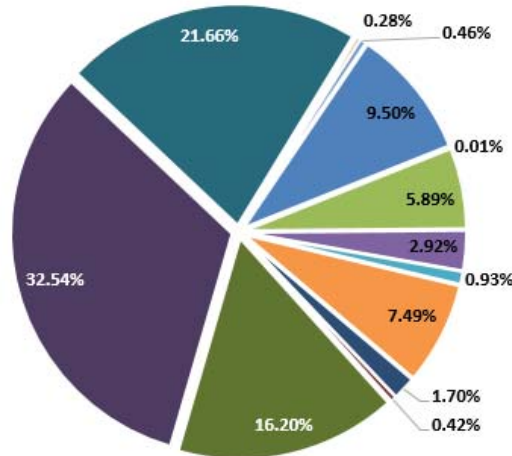
Environment	Student Count
Correctional Facilities	49
Homebound/Hospital	688
Inside reg. class 40%-79% of day	17449
Inside reg. class 80% or more of day	81958
Inside reg. class less than 40% of day	13161
Parentally Placed in Private School	1158
Residential Facility	305
Separate School	869
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>115637</b>

**Total by Disability**

Disability Category	Student Count
Autism	10988
Deaf-Blindness	16
Developmental Delay	6810
Emotional Disturbance	3381
Hearing Impairments	1079
Intellectual Disability	8656
Multiple Disabilities	1967
Orthopedic Impairments	480
Other Health Impairments	18734
Specific Learning Disabilities	37630
Speech/Language Impairments	25047
Traumatic Brain Injury	319
Visual Impairments	530
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>115637</b>

**Total by Gender**

Gender	Student Count
F	38971
M	76666
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>115637</b>



**Disability %**

- AUTISM
- DEAF-BLINDNESS
- DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY
- EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE
- HEARING IMPAIRMENTS
- INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY
- MULTIPLE DISABILITIES
- ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENTS
- OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENTS
- SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES
- SPEECH OR LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS
- TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY
- VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

## Part Three

All agendas and minutes for the fiscal year 2019 Council meetings can be found on the department's website ([here](#)). Meetings were convened on:

- July 16, 2018
- October 15, 2018
- January 14, 2019
- April 9, 2019