

Date: September 7, 2023

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Contact Person and Email: Leah Voorhies, USBE Asst. Supt. of Student Support;
leah.voorhies@schools.utah.gov.

This document was unanimously approved for submission to the USBE by USEAP in their May 12, 2023 meeting.

Utah Special Education Advisory Panel (USEAP)
Thank You to the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) on the
Promotion of Meaningful Inclusionary Practices for Students with Disabilities

The Utah Special Education Advisory Panel (USEAP) wants to express our appreciation for the Board's commitment to promoting inclusionary practices for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities really are general education students first and should be considered when planning and implementing any state or school policies or procedures. Like all students, they learn best when they are able to be immersed in the general education process. "Meaningful inclusive practices" anchor a student with a disability's education, whenever possible, in the general education setting.

As you know, USEAP is tasked with recommending and commenting on Board policies that improve the educational system for students with disabilities. The focus is not from solely a legal requirement under IDEA, but on evidence-based practice to providing a quality education to students with disabilities. One such evidence-based practice is the meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities in general education which means having access to instruction in the age- and grade-appropriate Utah Core Standards from a content expert while learning side by side with their non-disabled peers.

We really appreciate the recent efforts by the Board to support and scale up meaningful inclusive practices. Some of these steps include supporting a recent trip, by many of the leaders at the Utah State Board of Education (USBE), to Washington State for firsthand observations of their state's implementation of inclusive practices for students with disabilities. A Board member and a few representatives of this advisory panel were also able to attend. The trip was transformative in gaining a vision of the challenges, but also the great opportunities and rewards of implementing inclusionary practices. Further, educators and parents across the state have had access to high quality professional learning, resources, and materials this summer as USBE staff rolled out the Portrait of Meaningful Inclusion (POMI). The high level of registration is also testament to the commitment of all school personnel to better understand and better implement inclusive practices for students with disabilities.

The Board's actions over the years, in thoughtfully considering and often adopting USEAP's recommendations, inspire, and motivate us. Thank you. As the Board and USEAP each move forward in working for students, we are grateful for the Board's efforts and ask that you continue to keep in mind, in all that you do, the challenges and opportunities that arise in supporting students with disabilities. Please continue to support the development and dissemination of professional learning, technical assistance, resources, and materials to support

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and scale up the meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities as we know that such efforts will improve educational and postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities.

Please also do not hesitate to reach out to us on the best ways that we, as your special education advisory panel, can provide support or information for your responsibilities on the Board.