



**Austin ISD Special  
Education Family  
Advisory  
Committee (SEFAC)**

## Minutes for February 24, 2026

**Opening Statement:** The Special Education Family Advisory Committee met virtually on February 24, 2026.

### Meeting Details:

- **Meeting Date:** February 24, 2026
- **Meeting Time:** 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- **Meeting Location:** Virtual on Google Meets

### SEFAC Members (Attendance)

Name	Member Type	Vertical Team	Status (P/NP)
Ricardo Bentin	Parent	Bowie HS	P
Molly Barker	Parent	Crockett ECHS	NP
Sarah Blyth	Parent	McCallum HS	P
Alasin DeVeney	Elem SpEd Teacher	Joslin ES	NP
Nikki Hempe	Parent	Akins HS	P
Natalie Johnson	Parent	McCallum HS	P
Jami Kirkland	MS SpEd Teacher	Burnet MS	NP
Dr. Cherry Lee	Interim Asst Sup SpEd	District	P
Allyson Mangum	Parent	Unique Vert Team	P
Kellie Marino	Supervisor of SpEd	District	P
Elexa Martinez	Parent	Ann Richards	P
Dr. Mary Anne Maxwell	Asst Sup K-12 Acad	District	NP
Heather Merrit	Sec Asst Principal	Travis HS	P
Vanessa Morgan Valdovinos	Parent	McCallum HS	NP
Beth Pasko	Parent	Akins HS	P
Bree Rolfe	Family Engage Spec	District	P

<b>Randi Shade</b>	Parent	Unique Vert Team	P
<b>Tammy Thompson</b>	Elementary Principal	Gullett ES	P
<b>Deborah Trejo</b>	Parent	Austin HS	P
<b>Trasell Underwood</b>	Parent	LBJ HS	P
	Parent - VACANT		NP
	Parent - VACANT		NP
	HS SpEd Teacher - VACANT		NP

**Visitors/Community Members/AISD Staff**

- Oscar Rodriguez - Austin ISD Chief Technology Officer

**Meeting Agenda and Discussion**

**1. Call to Order, Attendance, Quorum (6:03 PM)**

- 1.1. Call to Order: Deborah C. Trejo called the committee to order at 6:03 PM.
- 1.2. Quorum: A quorum was met.
- 1.3. Approval of the Minutes: Minutes from the December 2, 2025, meeting were approved. (Motion: Bree Rolfe, Second: Randi Shade).

**2. Member Comments / Public Comments**

- 2.1. Member Comments: Deborah Trejo noted significant improvements in the SpEd newsletter.
- 2.2. Public Comments: Rebecca Sylvia Kramer reported that the SEFAC member application link was invalid.
  - **Action:** Kellie Marino updated the application to a Google Form and corrected the link on the website.

**3. Membership Updates**

- 3.1. New Members: The committee welcomed Heather Merritt (Asst. Principal, Travis ECHS) and Tammy Thompson (Principal, Gullett ES).
- 3.2. Vacancies: Parent positions remain open for Northeast, Navarro, Travis, and Anderson vertical teams. A SpEd teacher position for any high school is also vacant.

**4. Special Education Announcements**

- 4.1. Family Survey Update: The annual family survey is shifted to May 2026 to avoid

overlap with the TEA cyclical monitoring survey running through March .

- 4.2. TEA Agreed Order: AISD was officially released from the TEA agreed order after completing all 99 required actions.
- 4.3. SEFAC Name Change: Deb Trejo recommended changing the committee name back to "Special Education Advisory Committee" to be more inclusive of staff and community members .
- 4.4. Training & Sustainability: Dr. Cherry Lee announced a new 6-hour "Administrator's Backpack" training for new LEA representatives and a similar onboarding process for new SpEd teachers starting Summer 2026 .
  - Tammy Thompson, Gullett Principal, recommended that we continue to train new general and special education teachers foundational special education training. She also noted that the training was important for level-setting.
  - Heather Merritt, Assistant Principal at Travis HS, said the training was important, as well, and the department is providing focused training for instruction and IEP development, and continued required training is important.

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## 5. Technology Subcommittee Report

- 5.1. Frontline: Ricardo Bentin and Oscar Rodriguez discussed system challenges, specifically issues with asynchronous editing where multiple users overwrite each other's work.
- 5.2. Recommendations: Suggested a "parent self-serve" application for document access and signatures.
  - **Action:** The committee recommended forming focus groups of practitioners (teachers and SLPs) to provide direct feedback on Frontline system usability .
- 5.3. Comments in Chat: Members recommended ease of access to documents for families and staff supporting students receiving special education.

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## 6. Discussion: Problem-Solving Guide for Meaningful ARD Participation

- 6.1. Problem-Solving Guide: Members reviewed the draft guide for meaningful participation and provided asynchronous feedback prior to the meeting
- 6.2. Discussion Points & Feedback:
  - Concerns were raised regarding schools setting meeting times without parent input and the lack of familiar general education teachers at meetings.
  - Randi Shade emphasized that family engagement strategies must differ between elementary, middle, and high school levels, as the dynamics and staff-to-family relationships change significantly as a student gets older.
  - Beth Pasko suggested that the guide should headline a "no surprises" policy, meaning no new information should be introduced for the first time during an ARD meeting; all significant points should be discussed beforehand to prevent arguments and derailment.
  - A recommendation was made to clearly distinguish between "suggestions" for

building relationships and "non-negotiables" (required actions) so that campus staff understand exactly what is expected of them.

- Deborah Trejo proposed a goal of sending the draft IEP to parents **seven days prior** to the meeting to allow for thorough review and more collaborative discussion, rather than forcing parents to read long documents during the meeting.
- The committee discussed the need for teachers to have dedicated time in their daily schedules to build these family relationships and write goals, rather than doing so at home after hours.
- 6.3. Specific Suggestions for Revision:
  - The district will change the term "pre-ARD" to "meetings or staffings before" in the guide to align with current administrative feedback.
  - Consider adding sections to the guide specifically focused on elementary school foundational engagement.
  - Develop family sample scripts and scenarios tailored for elementary, middle school, high school, and transition levels to be included in the guide .

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## 7. Future Agenda Items, Closure, and Adjourn

- 7.1. Future Agenda Items: Discussion on lack of digital access and solutions for disadvantaged community members. Committee reports will be a primary focus next meeting.
  - Ricardo Bentin highlighted the lack of digital and internet access for families in East Austin, making virtual-only participation a barrier.
- 7.2. Closure: Next meeting is scheduled for April 2026.
  - **Action:** Committee leads are requested to provide post-meeting reports before the April meeting.

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**8. Adjournment** The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 PM.