

AAIDD Interest Network Annual Plan & Yearly Report

Planning and reporting on Interest Network activities designed to fulfil their purpose.
(See the AAIDD *Interest Networks Leadership Manual* for the purpose of the Interest Networks.)

Interest Network: Education Interest Network

Lead Contact Person(s): Katie Brendli Brown, Chair: kb726@cornell.edu
Secondary contact person, Vice Chair: Kathryn S. Stiefel, kathryn.stiefel@maine.edu

During the 2025-26 year, our board consists of the following leadership members:

- **Chair:** Katie Brendli Brown, PhD, Research and Evaluation Associate, Cornell University
- **Vice Chair:** Kathryn S. Stiefel, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Maine at Farmington
- **Secretary:** Kristina Rios, PhD, Assistant Professor, California State University, Fresno

Please list all three names above as the board members for the AAIDD Interest Network website, with communications directed to Dr. Katie Brendli Brown.

Given that the EIN uses three-year term commitments, Andrew Wojcik, PhD, is no longer on the board.

Next Scheduled Election & Leadership Position(s) that will be Open for Nomination: June 2026, Secretary. Our interest network uses three-year term commitments (Secretary, then Vice Chair, then Chair).

2024-2025 Report

For the year that **just ended** (July 1-June 30), indicate objectives met, activities completed, and funds used. In addition, please note if/how any activities enhanced diversity, equity, inclusion, or justice.

Goal for 2024-25: The Education Interest Network will be a dynamic and useful network for AAIDD members and potential AAIDD members.

- **Objectives: Disseminate information and research on education of children and youth with IDD.**

Across two academic years (2024-25, 2025-26), we had proposed the BRAAIN Panel Series, where BRAAIN stands for Bridging Research & Application Across Interest Networks (BRAAIN). This series showcased the overlap between EIN and OTHER INTEREST NETWORKS by inviting other interest network members to serve as expert panelists for their network topic area.

During the 2024-2025 year, we held four webinars in collaboration with other AAIDD interest networks for our Bridging Research and Applications Across Interest Networks (BRAAIN) Panel Series: Legal Process and Public Policy (in collaborating with the Legal Process and Public Policy Interest Network), Extending Beyond the IEP (in collaborating with the Families Interest Network), Helping Students Develop Healthy Social Relationships (in collaboration with the Social and Sexual Relationships Interest Network), and Supporting Communication (in collaboration with the Communication Disorders Interest

Due August 1, 2025

AAIDD Interest Network Annual Plan & Yearly Report

Network). Members attended each of these webinars and recordings were shared afterward for members who could not attend live.

- **Objective: Increase awareness of and involvement in the Education Interest Network**

For the EIN Facebook page, this year we have grown to over 160 likes and over 200 followers. We have made 8 promotional posts for BRAAIN Panel Events, and have begun to share posts from AAIDD, other interest networks. From the administrative side, we have also followed related organizations (like Think College, regional alliances, disability rights organizations, and nonprofits) in order to connect the interest network with other groups using social media.

On the EIN X/Twitter page, we have grown to 46 followers. This year, we made 7 promotional posts, which ranged from up to 766 views. However, there was little engagement with these posts, with many posts receiving between 0-2 likes or retweets. Monitoring the decline of engagement on this platform since November 2024 and looking ahead to next year, we believe that targeting our social media efforts on Meta platforms will be more likely to engage interest network members. We will continue to set goals related to social media goals using Facebook and (depending on input and demand from interest network members) Instagram.

During the 2024-25 year, we used available funds to award poster presenters SeoJin Lee a scholarship, and Sherish Shikarpurya an extra lunch ticket at the AAIDD 2025 conference. The title of SeoJin Lee's presentation was "A Systematic and Quality Review of Technology-Based Mathematical Interventions for Students with Developmental Disabilities," and the title of Sherish Shikarpurya's presentation was "Exploring the Post school Employment and Educational Trajectories of Immigrant Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities."

At the end of this year, our network elected a new Secretary, Dr. Kristina Rios, see biography below.



Kristina Rios is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at California State University, Fresno. Her research interests include parent advocacy for Latinx families of children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Dr. Rios' research examines how Latinx parents advocate for services for their children with disabilities. Additionally, Dr. Rios conducts research examining the impact of special education on parental stress and well-being. To address this gap in the literature, Dr. Rios developed a dedicated research program on Latinx families of children with significant disabilities, the systemic barriers they face in the education system, and interventions geared at mitigating disparities and

improving outcomes in this demographic. Specifically, Dr. Rios conceptualized and implemented a 12-hour advocacy training intervention: *Familias Incluidas en Recibiendo Mejor Educación Especial (FIRME)*, also known as *Families Included in Receiving Better Special Education*, a training program for Latinx families of children with disabilities. The purpose of this advocacy program is to help Latinx parents increase their special education knowledge, advocacy, empowerment, receipt of services, and decrease

AAIDD Interest Network Annual Plan & Yearly Report

stress. Dr. Rios' line of research, teaching and practice reflects her teaching experience in the Central Valley. Previously, Dr. Rios was a special education teacher in Delano, CA.

2025-2026 Plan: Goals, Objectives, Activities, and Strategies

For the **coming year** (July 1-June 30), describe the planned objectives, activities, and proposed expenditure of funds. In addition, please note if/how any activities will address diversity, equity, inclusion, or justice.

This year our board consists of the following leadership members:

Chair: Katie Brendli Brown, PhD, Research and Evaluation Associate, Cornell University

Vice Chair: Kathryn S. Stiefel, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Maine at Farmington

Secretary: Kristina Rios, PhD, Assistant Professor, California State University, Fresno

Given that the EIN uses three-year term commitments, Andrew Wojcik, PhD, is no longer on the board. Communications should be directed to: Dr. Katie Brendli Brown.

Goal for 2025-26: The Education Interest Network will be a dynamic and useful network for AAIDD members and potential AAIDD members, through (a) widely disseminating information and research on education of children and youth with IDD and (b) encouraging knowledge sharing and networking connections within the interest network.

Our **objectives** for the coming year (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026) include:

- (a) **BRAAIN Series:** We will continue hosting the BRAAIN Panel Series, which stands for Bridging Research & Application Across Interest Networks (BRAAIN). The purpose of BRAAIN is to foster stronger connections across AAIDD's diverse interest networks, while promoting the exchange of high quality research and practice. By highlighting a wide range of perspectives—including those that are often underrepresented—we aim to deepen understanding and collaboration across disciplines and identities. As part of BRAAIN, we invite guest speakers from AAIDD's interest networks as well as other experts whose work reflects diverse lived experiences, cultural backgrounds, and professional expertise. This series is broadcasted for free to encourage broad participation, amplify inclusive voices, and support knowledge sharing across the field. Two BRAAIN panels will take place in Fall 2025 and two in Spring 2026.
- (b) **Connect & Collaborate Sessions:** We will host two sessions for EIN members (one in Fall 2025, one in Spring 2026) to encourage networking and the identification of shared research or practice interests within the network. These sessions are designed to foster member engagement by creating spaces where all members feel welcomed, heard, and valued. To ensure broad representation of perspectives and experiences, we will begin by identifying common interest areas among board members and using that information to support the creation of self-selected breakout rooms. These rooms will focus on shared themes that reflect the diverse expertise and priorities of our members. Each session will include small group discussions guided by pre-determined questions that encourage reflection on current research and practices, followed by whole group sharing to amplify a range of voices and insights.

AAIDD Interest Network Annual Plan & Yearly Report

- (c) **Establishment of a Writing Group:** Looking ahead to the 2025-2026 school year, we sought input from members via survey about their wants and needs from the EIN. For education researchers, some expressed interest in a writing group. To support networking, collaboration, and development of research related to the education of children, youth, and young adults with IDD, we seek to coordinate a writing group for the upcoming year that will be held once per week during the academic year via zoom.

Our proposed expenditure of funds include:

- We will use funds for granting scholarship opportunities to early career professional(s) presenting at the AAIDD 2026 conference or self-advocate(s) who have made significant contributions to the IDD community in current practice.