

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, Chair: Kathryn Sheridan (kathryn.sheridan@maine.edu) Secondary Contact Person, Vice Chair: Kristina Rios (krios@mail.fresnostate.edu) Secretary: Lora Murphy (lcmurphy@uark.edu) <i>During the 2026-27 year, our board consists of the following leadership members:</i> ● Chair: Kathryn Sheridan, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Maine at Farmington ● Vice Chair: Kristina Rios, PhD, Assistant Professor, California State University, Fresno ● Secretary: Lora Murphy, M.S., CCC-SLP, Leaders for Transition Scholar and Lecturer at the University of Arkansas <i>Please list all three names above as the board members for the AAIDD Interest Network website, with communications directed to Dr. Kathryn Sheridan. Given that the EIN uses three-year term commitments, Katie Brendli Brown, PhD, is no longer on the board.</i>	
Next Scheduled Election & Leadership Position(s) that will be Open for Nomination: June 2027, Secretary. Our interest network uses three-year term commitments (Secretary, then Vice Chair, then Chair).	
2025-2026 Report For the year that just ended (July 1-June 30), indicate objectives met, activities completed, and funds used. During the 2025-2026 year, the Education Interest Network set two goals: (1) widely disseminating information and research on education of children and youth with IDD and (2) encouraging knowledge sharing and networking connections within the interest network. Our objectives to achieve these goals included: (a) Hosting quarterly panels to continue the Bridging Research and Applications Across Interest Networks (BRAAIN) Series: This year we held four BRAAIN Panel sessions, each highlighting an AAIDD Interest Network. First, our session entitled Assistive Technology and Artificial Intelligence in Education featured the Technology Interest Network; we were joined by Vincent Bemmell, Ph.D., Katie Abrams, Ph.D., Don McMahon, Ph.D., and Brianna Grumstrup, Ph.D. Next, our session on Mental Health Education and Trauma-Informed Care highlighted the Psychology Interest Network and we were joined by Adene Karhan, LMSW, Staci Carr, Ph.D., Ruth Brown, Ph.D., and Timothy Barksdale, Ph.D. Third, our session on Creative Arts Education was presented in partnership with the Creative Arts Interest Network and featured Samantha Brophy, ATR-BC, LPC, Tamara Shetron, Ph.D., Yumi Shirai, Ph.D. Lastly, our session on Educating Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students and Immigrant Students highlighted the Multicultural Concerns and International Interest Networks, and featured Ellis Morgan, Ph.D., Stefania Petcu, Ph.D., and Kristina Rios, Ph.D. Throughout the year, we	

Due July 31, 2026

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received positive feedback from Education Interest Network members following these webinars, which were recorded and shared with members through our shared member access folder on Google Drive. Given the continued success of the BRAAIN Panels, the leadership team plans to continue this series for the upcoming year.

- (b) **Connect & Collaborate Sessions:** We hosted 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 were designed to foster member engagement by creating spaces where all members feel welcomed, heard, and valued. In September 2025, our virtual Connect & Collaborate session was held via Zoom; members shared interests with others and discussed projects and potential opportunities for collaboration using breakout rooms. In June 2026, we hosted an in-person Connect & Collaborate event in collaboration with the Student and Early Career Professionals (SECP) Interest Network at the AAIDD Annual Meeting. While we had prepared conversation starters for members who attended this event, we were happy to see conversations flowing naturally and members across both interest networks identifying common interests and professional goals.
- (c) **Establishment of a Writing Group:** Over this past year, we established a writing group that met two to three times per week, fostering a space where EIN members could set and track goals, work collaboratively, and celebrate successes throughout the writing process. Members logged over 170 hours of writing throughout the year.

Our proposed expenditure of funds include:

- We used EIN funds to award two scholarships for attendees of the AAIDD Annual Meeting. In evaluating proposals, we sought to prioritize research projects that meaningfully included individuals with IDD as leaders in the research process, as well as projects that focused on technology.
- We also submitted to use EIN funds for reimbursement of our two poster presentations at this year's Annual Meeting.

2026-2027 Plan: Goals, Objectives, Activities, and Strategies

For the **coming year** (July 1-June 30), describe the planned objectives, activities, and proposed expenditure of funds.

For the 2026-2027 year, the Education Interest Network will:

1. **Promote broad access to research, resources, and emerging knowledge on the education of children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).**
2. **Foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and meaningful connections across the interest network.**

Our **objectives** to achieve these goals included:

- (a) **Connect & Collaborate:** At the beginning of the Fall 2026 semester, we will host a virtual Connect & Collaborate session via Zoom, where members can share their interests, discuss current projects, and explore potential opportunities for collaboration through facilitated breakout room discussions. At the beginning of the Spring 2027 semester, we will offer a second virtual Connect & Collaborate

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session to reconnect members, welcome new participants, and continue fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across the network. In June 2027, we will conclude the year with an in-person Connect & Collaborate celebration at the AAIDD Annual Meeting, providing members with an opportunity to strengthen existing connections, celebrate collaborations developed throughout the year, and engage in meaningful conversations with colleagues across the network.

- (b) **BRAAIN Panel Series:** Given the success over the past several years of the Bridging Research and Applications Across Interest Networks webinars, we plan to continue this series and highlight additional interest networks. Based on input from members at the 2026 Annual Meeting, we have identified the Health and Wellness Interest Network and Legal Process & Public Policy Interest Network as potential partners for this work. Upon approval of our action plan, we will work to coordinate with the leadership teams for these networks. At our September Connect & Collaborate session, we will identify additional interest networks with whom we can partner. We will strive to be responsive to the input of members and coordinate virtual events that focus on intersections between research and practice across the many interest networks of AAIDD.
- (c) **Writing Group:** For the 2026–2027 year, we will continue to support the EIN Writing Group as a collaborative and accountability-focused space for members working on teaching, research, service, and other scholarly projects. The group will meet twice per week, with meeting days and times determined through a poll of EIN members to maximize accessibility and participation across the network. These sessions will provide opportunities for members to set writing goals, make progress on individual and collaborative projects, share updates, and celebrate milestones throughout the writing process. Consistent with the group's purpose, the writing sessions will foster both individual productivity and a strong sense of connection and mutual support among EIN members. Members will also continue to have the option to track goals and monitor progress using a shared check-in and goal-tracking spreadsheet.
- (d) **Social Media Outreach:** We will continue to build social media pages that will allow members to stay connected throughout the year through Facebook and LinkedIn. We will use these platforms to provide updates on upcoming events, webinars, networking opportunities, as well as resources relevant to research, practice, teaching, and service in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities. By following and engaging with the EIN online, members will be able to remain informed, share opportunities and resources, and connect with colleagues across the network.

Our proposed expenditure of funds include:

- We will use funds for granting scholarship opportunities to early career professional(s) presenting at the AAIDD 2027 conference or self-advocate(s) who have made significant contributions to the IDD community in current practice.
- We plan to submit poster proposals for the 2027 Annual Meeting; if these are accepted, we will request that EIN funds cover printing costs, allowing us to disseminate our work and highlight the EIN to a broader audience of AAIDD members.