



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SEAC Handbook

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
Special Education Advisory Committee





OTTAWA-CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Written by OCDSB Special Education Advisory Committee



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Purpose of SEAC

SEAC stands for Special Education Advisory Committee. It is a mandatory committee of every Ontario school board. The Ottawa Carleton District School Board has a designated SEAC. The role of the SEAC is to make recommendations to the Board. The recommendations help ensure that exceptional pupils served by the Board receive the special education programs and services that meet their needs.

In a nutshell, here are the areas in which the SEAC can take on responsibilities or offer recommendations to the OCDSB:

- Any matter that affects the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services for pupils of the Board
- Participation in the Board's annual review of its *Special Education Report* and the *Board Improvement Plan*
- Participation in the Board's annual budget process as it relates to special education
- Review of the financial statements of the Board as they relate to special education
- Sharing of information with parents

The OCDSB SEAC has developed and adopted a matrix that details its roles and responsibilities. This matrix delineates areas where the OCDSB SEAC considers itself to be "responsible", "accountable", "consulted" and/or "informed". Please see Appendix 1 for this Matrix.

The Derivation of SEAC's Authority

At the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is one of the mandatory committees that Ontario legislation dictates for the Board. Ontario's Education Act stipulates that every exceptional pupil is entitled to special education programs and services which meet that pupil's needs.

Who are the Members of OCDSB SEAC?

There are certain basic requirements that every potential SEAC member must fulfill:

- Canadian citizen
- At least 18 years old
- A resident in the Board's jurisdiction
- A public school tax supporter of the OCDSB

- NOT employed by the OCDSB

Here are some other guidelines that help determine who is appointed by the Board to become voting members of the OCDSB SEAC

- One representative from each local association/chapter that supports exceptional pupils and their families. The number of associations must not exceed twelve. A member is nominated by their association for appointment by the Board. Each association can also nominate an alternate to be appointed by the Board.
- One to three "community representatives" who are NOT representatives of a local association, a Board member or a Board committee member. The OCDSB has chosen to have 3 community representatives.
- Three Trustee representatives.

Here are some other things to keep in mind about membership on the SEAC

- An association not currently represented on the SEAC can ask the Board for representation. If the maximum of twelve associations has already been reached, the Board will decide which twelve local associations shall be represented.
- The OCDSB also includes non-voting representatives of
 - ◆ Council for Exceptional Children
 - ◆ Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation
 - ◆ Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
 - ◆ Professional Student Services Personnel
 - ◆ Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators' Network
 - ◆ Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee
 - ◆ Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation -Educational Assistants
- The OCDSB supports SEAC by having the Superintendent of Learning Support Services or designate, Board Services Committee Co-ordinator and relevant District staff attend meetings.

Each SEAC representative is normally appointed for a four-year term, the same term as trustees are. If a vacancy occurs, the Board will appoint a qualified person for the remainder of the term. If an association representative vacancy occurs, an additional association may be nominated to the SEAC of the OCDSB.



What is the Relationship Between the SEAC and the OCDSB?

The first thing to remember is that the SEAC is an advisory committee to the School Board, legislated by Ontario. That means that, within the parameters of that legislation, the SEAC can offer advice and make recommendations to the Board. (Please see Section 1 for specifics.)

Here are some of the ways that the OCDSB offers support to the SEAC in its work:

- The Board prepares an agenda, in consultation with the SEAC Chair, for distribution, and records and distributes the minutes of each meeting in a timely fashion. This allows SEAC members to prepare for each meeting and review any necessary material.
- The Board provides information about its activities in special education, as well as about the Ministry and Board policies, to SEAC members within a reasonable time frame.
- The Board provides a schedule of the SEAC's upcoming meetings

Here are some other supportive actions that Board Personnel provide to the SEAC:

- Provide ongoing presentations to SEAC about the Board's special education programs and services
- Invite District staff to attend SEAC meetings as needed.
- Respond to requests from SEAC for information

How Does SEAC Operate?

As mentioned previously in this document, every school board in Ontario is required to constitute a SEAC to provide it with feedback, advice and recommendations on special education activities and policies. The OCDSB is no exception.

SEAC performs its mission in a number of ways:

1. SEAC holds monthly meetings of its members and may have meetings in between as needed. These meetings are public. The agenda is published in advance. District personnel, both in administrative and in professional capacities, support these monthly SEAC meetings. SEAC members participate on Standing Committees of the Board, and may have standing on Ad Hoc Committees.
2. SEAC members participate in sub-committees and working groups of the SEAC. Examples of these include the Communications Sub-Committee and the Chair's Working Group.
 - a) The Communications Sub-Committee's role is to support and enhance SEAC internal communications, as well as to increase parental knowledge and School Council awareness of SEAC and its role. It also works to increase awareness of Special Education services available to students within the OCDSB and to review Board special education communications vehicles and make recommendations for enhancements.
 - b) The Chair's Working Group meets whenever needed. Its key roles are:
 - ◆ To discuss priorities for SEAC throughout the school year and bring back to SEAC for discussion and approval
 - ◆ To deal with issues which may arise between regular monthly SEAC meetings
 - ◆ To review, analyze and prepare recommendations for SEAC consideration and action

Other SEAC Working Groups, Task Forces, etc may be created.



What Happens to SEAC Discussions and Recommendations?

For a start, the discussions, the recommendations and the votes of every SEAC meeting are captured in the minutes of the meeting. Those minutes are posted to the OCDSB web site for every parent and the public to read.

Recommendations to the Board of Trustees are sent on for further discussion and possible action. These too are posted on the OCDSB web site.

SEAC members who are representing an Association will likely have consulted with their Association in advance of an important discussion and will report back to their Association following a SEAC meeting.

Trustees who sit on the SEAC may also decide to include the information of SEAC discussions in their work on the Board of Trustees.

Information from Board Personnel in response to questions from SEAC are included with minutes of meetings and form part of the public record on the OCDSB web site.

How Does SEAC Communicate With the Ottawa Community and how Does the Community Communicate With SEAC?

The primary functions of the OCDSB SEAC in communicating with parents and the public are several-fold:

- To provide advice and recommendations on special education to the Board. This advice should not focus on specific cases but rather on the overarching needs. In the case of Association members, they bring their perspective and understanding of the exceptionality and the pupils affected by it. In the case of Community members, this comes from consulting widely with members of the OCDSB community and reflecting the results back to the SEAC
- To listen to and respond to Presentations and Delegations from members of the public. The knowledge gained from these Presentations and Delegations is often reflected in advice and recommendations provided to the Board of Trustees. It is always reflected in SEAC discussions.
- To follow up on each set of SEAC minutes by ensuring that Association membership and the broader OCDSB electorate understand what recommendations have been made to the

Board of Trustees, so that progress can be followed and further action taken when needed.

The primary methods that parents and the public can use to communicate with SEAC or SEAC members are as follows:

- If you are a member of an Association represented on SEAC, stay in touch with your SEAC representative
- If your Association is not currently represented on SEAC and you feel that it should be, consider writing a letter to the Director of Education/Secretary of the Board and request representation
- Be aware of the SEAC Agenda and Minutes which are posted on the Board's web site
- Take advantage of the opportunity to appear at a SEAC meeting with a Delegation or a Presentation, if you believe the issue warrants this format
- Remember that SEAC meetings are public and you can attend if you wish
- There is a way to contact any and all SEAC members right on the OCDSB web site.

Finally, SEAC itself has its own page on the OCDSB web site. All SEAC members can encourage people to check it often, and to let us know what other information we can provide.

Regulations and Policy Statements Relevant to Special Education

Knowing what your role is as a SEAC member is crucial. Now you need to know what some of the key underlying legislation is that SEAC members use to guide them. First we'll look at some of the Special Education Regulations that are part of the Education Act. Then we'll point to some of the key Policy Statements that the Ontario Ministry of Education publishes that explain the expectations for school boards in the province, including the OCDSB. Finally, there are some key OCDSB policies and procedures related directly to special education that are helpful to be aware of.



Education Act and Regulations

The Education Act provides the framework for the provision of special education programs and services for pupils. It also gives us the overall framework for the identification and placement of exceptional pupils.

The key sections that SEAC members need to know about include the following:

- The definition of exceptional pupil, special education program and special education services
- The government's commitment that all exceptional children in the province have appropriate special education programs and services available to them and a description of how that program or service will be made by the Board
- The right of parents and guardians to appeal an identification and/or placement if they don't believe it appropriate and the right to have information made readily available to them on the mechanisms for filing an appeal.

Key Regulations that arise out of the Act relate to the following:

- The identification and placement of exceptional pupils, the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) review, appeal procedures, the role of parents and guardians in these processes and the creation and maintenance of the Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- The requirement for each school board to maintain a Special Education Report that describes the board's programs and services and how they are delivered. This regulation also sets out the authority for the Minister of Education to require a school board to amend its plan if necessary.
- The rules and scope of activities of the SEAC in each board.

Policy and Program Memorandum (Ppm) Statements (Provincial Level)

There are two main things for SEAC members to know about PPM Statements:

- These are the Ontario Ministry of Education's policy expectations for school boards
- They are developed to help school boards to deliver Ministry policies and procedures

Here are some important PPM Statements to know about:

- The definitions of learning disabilities and information on identification processes, programming, and resources available to school boards (PPM No. 8)
- The requirements for procedures for early identification of children's learning needs (PPM No. 11)
- The psychological testing and assessment of students and the principles upon which school boards should base decisions regarding the use of these. (PPM 59)
- Provincial Secondary School Literacy Test and when to accommodate, defer or exempt students who need to take the test (PPM 127)
- Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) into programs for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (PPM 140)
- Bullying Prevention and Intervention related to exceptional students (PPM 144). There are some clear expectations in PPM 144 in addition to some other related documents
- Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour advises principals to take into account some factors of exceptionality in deciding on suspension (PPM 145)



OCDSB Policies And Procedures

School board policies and procedures may expand and clarify provincial regulations and put them into a local context.

At the OCDSB there are four Policies and six Procedures that relate directly to Special Education. Many of the other policies and procedures that relate to all students also are applicable to identified students.

These Policies and Procedures are available on the board web site - www.ocdsb.ca

The over arching policy for Special Education is P.096.SES – Special Education Programs and Services. This policy contains the objective, definitions, and guiding principles of special education for this Board. It also has specific directives including a key one for parents stating that “The Board’s basic objective is to ensure that parents/guardians of each exceptional student are consulted with regard to the assessment, identification, placement and review of each student.”

This policy is currently under revision.

The other two policies are:

P.117.SES - Special Education Appeal Board - deals with the appeal process if parents disagree with IPRC placement

P.120.SES - Privately-Paid Professionals, Paraprofessionals, and External Agencies - outlines how the board will collaborate with privately-paid professionals, paraprofessionals and partnerships with external agencies.

Procedures lay out how policies will be implemented by the board. The five are:

PR 587 - Student Specialized Equipment Purchased with Ministry Special Equipment Amount (SEA) Funding

PR 626 - Use of Physical Restraints and Time-Out Rooms

PR 654 - Special Education Appeal Board

PR 657 - Access and Services Provided by Privately-Paid Professionals and/or Paraprofessionals in Schools

PR 658 - Partnerships with External Agencies



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How should a SEAC member – especially one who represents an association – deal with the different roles that s/he has to play? Part of the difficulty arises from the fact that SEAC members nominated by their association are wearing three distinct hats. A SEAC member representing the community as a whole wears two:

- As an association representative on SEAC, representing association views
- As an association member, advocating on behalf of individual parents and their children
- As a parent ensuring the best interests of his/her child

A. It often is a balancing act but here are some basic guidelines that SEAC members adhere to when wearing their SEAC hat:

- A SEAC member is there to represent the concerns of the association and the exceptionality being represented.
- A SEAC member should be communicating and consulting about issues regarding special education. This can mean speaking with parents, guardians, other SEAC members and Board staff and trustees, while respecting confidentiality of individuals.
- A SEAC member can provide information to the family of an exceptional student in their capacity as a SEAC member, but not at the SEAC table.
- A SEAC member is not there to advocate for his/her own child or on behalf of a specific parent/child in their capacity as SEAC rep. Such advocacy would be undertaken in one of their other capacities - e.g. as an association member.

Q. If I am a SEAC alternate, what should I expect my role to be?

A. Being an alternate is a really important role. You can be asked to become the voting representative of your association at any time, if the SEAC member is unable to attend a meeting or unable to continue with the responsibilities. That means you need to keep informed on issues, discuss them with the SEAC member and, whenever possible, attend the SEAC meeting.

Q. If I am a SEAC member (or alternate), what information should I be concentrating on?

A. That's a really good question because there is so much information to absorb. Here are some suggestions for key information to concentrate on:

- The expectations set out for SEAC by legislation
- The OCDSB's Special Education Report
- The ongoing work of SEAC. Rely on your SEAC colleagues and your association predecessor for help with this
- The regulations and important policies that will help you understand the funding and delivery of services to all exceptional pupils. (Check the regulations and policies sections of this handbook for some help.)
- Definition of terms used by this Board in the special education sphere. (Hint: acronyms are used a lot but you will get to know those in time. There is a separate document that details the acronyms used at OCDSB's SEAC)
- An overview of the Board's budget, especially the details dealing with special education. (Hint: some SEAC members are great at this and you can ask them questions.)

Q. What happens if I miss a meeting?

A. Missed meetings can happen. That's why you have an alternate who can take your place at the table and vote. But if you miss three consecutive SEAC meetings without prior authorization and your alternate is not there to replace you either, you will lose your seat at the SEAC table.

Further, if your association is without representation for six months, the association will lose its membership on SEAC and would need to re-apply at a later date for renewed membership.

Upon request, the OCDSB can authorize an extended absence if you need to miss two or more meetings.



Q. What is the difference between a community representative to SEAC and an association representative in terms of how they are appointed to SEAC?

A. An association representative is nominated by members of a specific association to represent them at SEAC. The OCDSB then appoints the nominees to SEAC. Community members apply directly to the Board to represent the community as a whole. The OCDSB has decided to have the maximum of three community members to represent the community.

Q. How does SEAC make its decisions?

A. Now we get into a bit of process. It's important process because it helps SEAC members to shape its decision-making. Here are the key elements:

- The SEAC Chair and Vice-Chair are elected each December from among the voting associations and community representatives
- At the same time, a SEAC member and alternate are chosen for SEAC sub-committees and OCDSB Standing Committees
- If you have a majority (50% plus one) of voting SEAC members, you have quorum. You need quorum for SEAC meetings to take place and continue.
- SEAC follows Kerr and King meeting procedures. It also follows the by-laws of OCDSB. You can find them at the OCDSB web site at <http://www.ocdsb.ca/ab-ocdsb/bm/b-l/Documents/Bylaws%20Standing%20Rules.pdf>

Q. How does SEAC tell the OCDSB what it thinks or recommend what action it wants the trustees to take?

A. If a SEAC member believes that there is an issue that SEAC as a whole should move ahead, that's the time to table a motion. When voting on the motion, if the vote is tied, the motion fails.

Q. How do I get more detailed information?

A. There are a number of online resources to learn more about the issues described in this document. Start with the Ontario Ministry of Education website. You'll find links to regulations, special education resources and the SEAC Information Program which includes a SEAC Learning section. The "Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees" (PAAC on SEAC) has produced a "PAAC on SEAC Effective Practices Handbook" (2010). Finally, don't forget to check out the SEAC section on the OCDSB website.



Appendix A: SEAC's Responsibilities

Legend: R = Responsibility A = Accountability I = Informed C = Consulted	SEAC Community Association Members	SEAC Community Representatives	Chair & Vice-Chair	Trustee Members	SEAC non-voting members	Staff	The Board	Ministry
Represent the Mission Statement, Philosophy, vision and values of their Community Association / Agency / Organization and in the case of Community Representatives, their broader community constituency	RA	R	N/A					
Report SEAC progress to Community Associations, Agencies, Groups and Organizations	R	R	N/A					
Stay informed	R	R	RA	R	R			
Provide informed advice to Staff and Trustees	R	R	RA	R	R	I	I	
Provide context to SEAC representatives	I	I	RA		I	R	R	
Policy development	C	C	CI	R	C			
Policy Review and revisions	C	C	C	R	C			
Policy Implementation	C	C	C			RA	RA	R
Understand the context under which the Board delivers programs and services (*SEAC framework and context: all aspects of special education programs and services delivered by OCDSB)	R	R	R	R	R			
Participate in the Process (debate, engage, decision-making) and Vote during SEAC meetings	R	R	R	R	I	I	R	
Provide Strategic thinking	RC	RC	RI	R	RC	RC	R	
Help SEAC advance its agenda (i.e., move forward)	R	R	RA	R	R	I		
Represent the horizontal community of interest	R	R	N/A	R				
Represent the vertical community of interest	RA	RA	RA		RA			
Broadly speaking – advise parents in navigation of the system	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	
Keep informed on the issues concerning SEAC	R	R	RI	R	R	R	R	
Review date	R	R	RA	R	R	R	R	
Interpret data	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	
Seek and request information from the Board and various other sources and stakeholders	R	R	RA	R	R	CI	CI	CI
Provide some “missing components” (or balance) to SEAC	R	R	RA	R	C			
Identification of Issues of common concern	R	R	RAI	R	I			
Engage in, and support the Committees of the Board processes	R	R	RAI	R	I			
Take into consideration the needs of all Parents and Students**	I	I	I	R	I			
Take into consideration the needs of all Special Education Students in the Board	R	R	RA	R	I			



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