



**Special Education**

A Grand Erie Program

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(SEAC)

MEMBER ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

*SUCCESS* for Every Student

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For more information about the Grand Erie District School Board SEAC, contact: the Chair of SEAC at [SEACchair@granderie.ca](mailto:SEACchair@granderie.ca), or

**Principal Leader of Special Education**

**519-756-6306, ext. 287214**

**or**

**Program Coordinator of Special Education**

**519-756-6306, ext. 287217**

You may also wish to visit <http://www.granderie.ca/board/elementary/special-education/special-education-advisory-committee>.

## Introduction

The members of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) for the Grand Erie District School Board have prepared this orientation handbook to assist you in understanding and performing your role as a SEAC member. SEAC is a committee of the Board that includes:

- trustees
- special education staff
- representatives of community agencies serving individuals with special needs
- representatives of parent organizations advocating for children with special needs
- representatives of the community at large who have an interest in special-needs education.

Most learners are successful in the regular classroom; however, some students have exceptional needs and may require special programs and services. A learner with exceptional needs is a student whose behavioural, communicative, intellectual or physical exceptionalities are such that special education support is required.

## What is SEAC?

Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) were established by Ontario's Education Act, Section 206, Subsection (2), to make recommendations to their Boards about any matter related to the establishment and development of special education programs and services for students with exceptional needs. Each SEAC is responsible for examining, reviewing and making recommendations regarding the provision of special education programs and services in an advisory capacity. Some areas of focus are: philosophy and goals, policies and procedures, organizational structures, program delivery methods, services and facilities, funding, and the annual review of the Board's Special Education Plan.

SEAC members are welcome to bring the more general concerns of parents to the attention of the Board staff and trustees. All these groups work together to find solutions which meet the needs of our exceptional students. SEAC does not deal with specific questions about individual situations, which should be addressed to the child's teacher or the special education resource staff working with the child.

## SEAC Meetings

Ontario Regulation 464/97 provides direction on SEAC meetings requiring SEAC to meet at least ten times each year. Grand Erie DSB SEAC meets from September to June of each school year.

Most SEAC meetings take place at the Grand Erie DSB Education Centre located at 349 Erie Avenue in Brantford, usually on the third Thursday of the month, commencing at 6:00 p.m. Meetings may occasionally be scheduled to accommodate other special events, or rescheduled due to inclement weather.

SEAC meetings are open to the public, although members of the public wishing to present to SEAC must approach the committee Chair ahead of time, via the contact information provided on the second page of this handbook.

Community members may also approach any SEAC representative with a question or concern; contact information for SEAC members is provided on the Grand Erie DSB website. <http://www.granderie.ca/board/elementary/special-education/special-education-advisory-committee>

## SEAC Roles and Responsibilities

For a description of SEAC's makeup, roles and responsibilities under Ontario legislation, see Regulation 464/97, Education Act 1998. A link to this Regulation is available in the "Additional Resources" section of this document.

A summary of SEAC's roles and responsibilities include:

1. To make recommendations to the Board regarding the establishment, development and delivery of Special Education programs and services.

SEAC activities which support this role include:

- participating in program reviews;
- receiving and responding to reports about Special Education programs and services;
- discussing program recommendations that are presented by staff and/or subcommittees;
- bringing forward issues for discussion and recommendations for action by administration and/or the Board; and
- sharing information about association/agency activities and issues as relating to Grand Erie DSB Special Education programs.

2. To participate in the annual review of the Special Education Plan.

SEAC activities which support this role include:

- reviewing and discussing parts of the Special Education Plan; and
- reviewing changes to the plan and providing feedback to staff and the Board.

3. To participate in the annual budget process for Special Education.

SEAC activities which support this role include:

- receiving presentations from administration about the budget process and key issues;
- taking the opportunity to ask questions, offer suggestions and provide feedback throughout the budget process; and
- taking the opportunity to make presentations to the trustees about proposed expenditures or funding allocations.

4. To communicate with parents and members of the public about Special Education programs and services, and the activities of SEAC.

SEAC activities which support this role include:

- holding open meetings which members of the public can attend;
- developing and distributing information about Special Education and SEAC;
- distributing information and consulting with members of the associations/agencies represented by SEAC members;
- participating in consultation between individual SEAC members and their respective provincial associations;
- providing input to the Grand Erie DSB website and publications which provide information about Special Education; and
- increasing awareness of Ministry of Education special education resources, including the Ministry of Education and SEAC websites.

5. To interact with other ministries, community partners and agencies.

SEAC activities which support this role include:

- responding to Ministry of Education consultations on Special Education policy and procedures;
- responding to government consultations on programs and policies which may affect students who require Special Education programs and services; and
- consulting and collaborating with other ministries, community partners and agencies regarding the development of changes in services and programs which may affect students who require special education.

## SEAC Terms of Reference

Each board creates the Terms of Reference for its SEAC. For the complete list of Grand Erie DSB SEAC's Terms of Reference, see the SEAC section of Grand Erie District School Board Bylaw 8, available at:

[http://granderie.ca/application/files/8215/1741/8412/BL8\\_Committees\\_of\\_the\\_Board\\_and\\_Terms\\_of\\_Reference.pdf](http://granderie.ca/application/files/8215/1741/8412/BL8_Committees_of_the_Board_and_Terms_of_Reference.pdf)

The Terms of Reference cover factors including:

- purpose and responsibility of SEAC
- composition of the committee
- operating procedures and scope
- role of the Board
- role of SEAC
- making recommendations to the Board

## Additional Resources for SEAC Members

- Ontario Education Act Regulation 464/97 regarding SEACs:  
[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_970464\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_970464_e.htm)
- Standards for School Boards' Special Education Plans  
On January 27, 2000, the Minister of Education announced the government's plans for improving the quality of special education programs and services in Ontario, and for ensuring greater accountability in the area of special education. The document describes the new province-wide standards that school boards must meet when developing their special education plans. The document can be found at:  
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/iepstand/iepstand.pdf>
- Ministry of Education Standards for the Planning, Development and Implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) (2000) and the Ministry of Education Transition Plan Resource Guide (2002) are now both included in the Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy and Resource Guide 2017  
[http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/onschools\\_2017e.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/onschools_2017e.pdf)
- Grand Erie District School Board Policy P1 on Special Education Guiding Principles:  
[http://www.granderie.ca/application/files/6315/0102/0454/P1\\_Special\\_Education\\_Guiding\\_Principles.pdf](http://www.granderie.ca/application/files/6315/0102/0454/P1_Special_Education_Guiding_Principles.pdf)

- Special Education section of Grand Erie District School Board website: <http://www.granderie.ca/board/elementary/special-education>, including:
  - Special Education Plan
  - List of SEAC Representatives
  - Parent’s Guide to Special Education and the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)
  - Glossary of Special Education Terms
- Minister’s Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) [www.macse-on.ca](http://www.macse-on.ca)
- Ministry of Education Special Education Overview [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html)
- Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee (PAAC) on SEAC Handbook [www.paac-seac.ca](http://www.paac-seac.ca) , which includes:
  - SEAC Effective Practices Handbook for SEAC Members <http://www.paac-seac.ca/home/paac-on-seac-effective-practices-handbook-for-seac-members/>
  - Surveys of SEAC Effectiveness
  - Regular updates on topical issues concerning SEAC roles and contributions

## Communication Tips

- If you are unclear about what has been said, or unfamiliar with an acronym or a regulation or policy – ask!!
- Issues involving your child carry a lot of emotional weight. Ask yourself if your feelings are getting in the way of communicating positively.
- Use concrete, specific words rather than abstractions, when describing situations or making requests.
- Avoid extreme language, such as “always” and “never” and “totally”, etc.
- Consider the context of anything that is said. Tune in to gestures, expression, tone of voice and body language.
- Work as hard on your listening as you do on expressing yourself.
- Plan what you are going to say, with the goal of being received, understood and remembered.

## Guiding Principles to Promote a Positive Discussion Environment

- Show respect for all people
- Treat everyone as well-meaning and holding positive intentions
- Demonstrate honesty and ethical behaviour
- Be aware that everyone has a perspective and unique knowledge to contribute
- Set a good example
- Show a warm and caring attitude
- Collaborate, compromise, discuss
- Enjoy the chance to hear other perspectives
- Recognize that we are all working towards success for special-needs children
- Celebrate successes!

## Basic Format for Meetings

- Arrival: arrive, and pick up and display your name card.
- Call to Order: the Chair will call the meeting to order.
- Roll Call: note is made of any members who are absent; if you cannot attend, please notify the SEAC Recording Secretary (Assistant to the Superintendent of Special Education), via email or via phone (519.756.6306, ext 281173)
- Confirmation of Agenda: if the agenda is amended, it must be moved and seconded.
- Approval of Minutes: motion for approval of minutes as provided (or, as provided and then amended) should be made and seconded.
- Timed presentation(s): this is an opportunity to have a guest speaker who educates SEAC in some topic pertaining to SEAC's areas of interest (e.g. special education budget, specific special education programs and classrooms, etc.)
- Other agenda items: as provided and presented by various members of SEAC and/or Board personnel
- Motions: must be made and seconded
- Recommendations to Board: must be made, seconded, and communicated per Board bylaws
- Correspondence: as received by SEAC, for sharing with its members
- Updates: SEAC members can bring forward items of interest from their various communities/special needs subjects
- Next meeting date/time: confirmed at end of meeting
- Future agenda items: noted on agenda
- Adjournment: motion to adjourn must be made and seconded