

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and Special Education Support for Parents

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What is SEAC?

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC):

- makes recommendations to the board with respect to any matter affecting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services within the board;
- participates in the board's annual review of its special education plan;
- participates in the board's annual budget process as it relates to special education;
- reviews the financial statements of the board as they relate to special education;
- provides information to parents, as requested.

Roles and Responsibilities in Special Education

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/shared.pdf>

The student:

- complies with the requirements as outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and policy documents, including policy/program memoranda;
- complies with board policies and procedures;
- participates in Identification, Placement, and Review Committees (IPRCs), parent-teacher conferences, and other activities, as appropriate.

Parents:

- familiarize themselves with board policies and procedures in areas that affect their child; participate in IPRCs, parent-teacher conferences, and other relevant school activities;
- participate in the planning of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP);
- become acquainted with the school staff who work with the student;
- support the student at home;
- work with the school principal and teachers to solve problems;
- are responsible for the student's attendance at school.

The teacher:

- carries out duties as outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and policy documents, including policy/program memoranda;
- follows board policies and procedures regarding special education;
- works with the special education teacher to acquire and maintain up-to-date knowledge of special education practices;
- where appropriate, develops the IEP with special education staff and parents for a student with special education needs;
- provides the program for the student with special education needs in the regular class;
- communicates the student's progress to parents;
- works with other school board staff to review and update the student's IEP.

The special education teacher (in addition to the responsibilities listed above for teachers):

- holds qualifications, in accordance with the regulations under the Education Act, to teach special education;
- monitors the student's progress with reference to the IEP and modifies the program as necessary;
- assists in providing educational assessments for exceptional pupils.

The school principal:

- carries out duties as outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and policy documents, including policy/program memoranda and board policies;
- ensures that appropriately qualified staff are assigned to teach special education classes;
- communicates ministry and board policies and procedures about special education to staff, students, and parents;
- ensures that the identification and placement of exceptional pupils, through an IPRC, is done according to the procedures outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and board policies;
- consults with school board staff to determine the most appropriate program for students with special education needs;
- ensures the development, implementation, and review of a student's IEP, including a transition plan, according to provincial requirements;
- ensures that parents are consulted in the development of their child's IEP and that they are provided with a copy of the IEP;
- ensures the delivery of the program as set out in the IEP;
- ensures that appropriate assessments are requested and that, if necessary, appropriate consents are obtained;
- consults with school board staff to determine the most appropriate program for students with special education needs;

Special Education Resources

Special Education Advisory Committee:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/seac/>

Parent Supports:

<http://www.bwdsb.on.ca/stserv/>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html>

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/Questions_and_Answers_Parents_English.pdf

<http://www.ldao.ca/wp-content/uploads/A-Parents-Guide-to-Special-Education.pdf>

<http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/special-education-2014-WEB.pdf>

Other Links:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/seac/links.html>

Questions for Parents to Ask During Parent-Teacher Interviews:

<https://www.care.com/a/20-questions-to-ask-during-a-parent-teacher-conference-1309201640>

Child Information

Start the conversation by talking about the most important topic: your child.

1. **May I Tell You About My Child?**
No one knows your child better than you do, so it's your job to help your child's teacher learn more - what motivates your child, likes and dislikes, special skills, strengths and weaknesses.
2. **May I Tell You About What's Going on at Home?**
Situations like illness, divorce or a new baby may affect your child's school experience, so inform your child's teacher of such circumstances.
3. **How Is My Child Doing Socially?**
How the child functions socially in the class is a topic that should be addressed at a conference, so inquire about your child's peer relations.
4. **How Is My Child Doing Emotionally?**
It is also important to ask about your child's emotional health at school. For example, is your child generally happy?
5. **In What Areas Does My Child Need Improvement?**
Your child's teacher sees him/her from a different perspective than you do. Ask the teacher what personal weaknesses your child needs to work on, and listen to the response with an open mind.
6. **What Do You Think My Child Is Particularly Good at?**

- ensures the development, implementation, and review of a student’s IEP, including a transition plan, according to provincial requirements;
- ensures that parents are consulted in the development of their child’s IEP and that they are provided with a copy of the IEP;
- ensures the delivery of the program as set out in the IEP;
- ensures that appropriate assessments are requested and that, if necessary, appropriate consents are obtained.

The district school board or school authority:

- establishes school board policy and practices that comply with the Education Act, regulations, and policy documents, including policy/program memoranda;
- monitors school compliance with the Education Act, regulations, and policy documents, including policy/program memoranda;
- requires staff to comply with the Education Act, regulations, and policy documents, including policy/program memoranda;
- provides appropriately qualified staff to deliver programs and services for the students with special education needs in the board;
- reports on the expenditures for special education;
- develops and maintains a special education plan that is amended from time to time to meet the current strengths and needs of the students with special education needs in the board;
- reviews the plan annually and submits amendments to the Minister of Education;
- provides statistical reports to the ministry as required;
- prepares a parent guide to provide parents with information about special education programs, services, and procedures; establishes one or more IPRCs to identify students with special education needs and determine appropriate placements for them;
- establishes a Special Education Advisory Committee;
- provides professional development to staff on special education.

The Ministry of Education:

- sets out, through the Education Act, regulations, and policy documents, including policy/program memoranda, the legal obligations of school boards regarding the provision of special education programs and services reviews the plan annually and submits amendments to the Minister of Education;
- provides statistical reports to the ministry as required;
- prepares a parent guide to provide parents with information about special education programs, services, and procedures;
- establishes one or more IPRCs to identify students with special education needs and determine appropriate placements for them;
- establishes a Special Education Advisory Committee; provides professional development to staff on special education;
- sets out, through the Education Act, regulations, and policy documents including policy/program memoranda, the legal obligations of school boards regarding the provision of special education programs and services;
- prescribes the categories and definitions of exceptionality;
- requires school boards to provide appropriate special education programs and services for their students with special education needs;
- establishes the funding for special education through the structure of the funding model;
- requires school boards to report on their expenditures for special education;
- sets province-wide standards for curriculum and for reporting achievement;
- requires school boards to maintain special education plans, review them annually, and submit amendments to the ministry;
- requires school boards to establish Special Education Advisory Committees;
- establishes the Ontario Special Education (English and French) Tribunals to hear disputes between parents and school boards regarding the identification and placement of exceptional pupils;
- establishes a Minister’s Advisory Council on Special Education to advise the Minister of Education on matters related to special education programs and services;
- establishes a Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees;
- operates Provincial and Demonstration Schools for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf-blind, or who have severe learning disabilities.

Ask about personal strengths that will extend beyond school.

Academic Performance

7. Is My Child Performing on Grade Level?

At a conference, parents should expect to see examples of their child's work. Ask "how this compares to grade-level expectations, but do not try to compare your child to other students. Each child is different and has different strengths and learning abilities.

8. What Do These Assessment Results Really Mean?

When it comes to standardized testing and other assessment results, ask 'What does this really mean?' Increasingly, assessments are given for school-level progress-monitoring purposes, and it is best not to get too focus overly on interpreting every detail.

9. Is My Child Doing His/Her Best?

No matter where your child ranks in relation to grade-level, one important analysis of his/her performance is whether he's/she's putting forth his best effort. Does the teacher get the sense that your child is "slacking off" or not focusing?

10. Does My Child Need Extra Help in Any Areas?

Your child's teacher can tell you if your child is falling behind in a skill or a subject. Armed with that information, you can create a plan with your child to work harder in that area, before it gets too late.

11. What Can We Do to Provide That Extra Help?

It is important to work with your child's teacher to create a plan to help your child progress well in school. There may be specific things that you can do at home to help, such as hiring a tutor or helping with homework.

Special Needs

If your child has special needs, ask need-specific questions.

12. Have You Read the IEP?

All students who receive special education or related services must have an Individualized Education Plan in place, which outlines the goals for that child's schooling and how those goals are to be achieved. If you have a child with special needs, advocate for your child. It is not inappropriate for a parent to ask, "Have you read the IEP?"

13. What Accommodations Are Being Made for My Child?

Inquire early in the school year about how the IEP is being carried out.

14. What Is the School's Process for Dealing With Special Needs?

If your child does not yet have an IEP, "Ask what the review and assessment process involves, and ask about the timeline. After discussing this with your child's teacher, ask in writing to initiate that process. Start early.

Tricky Situations

If your child is having problems in school or with the teacher, address them head-on.

15. May I Share a Concern?

If you are worried about a situation at school, bring it up with the teacher. The worst thing parents can do is just wait and wait and wait. Teachers usually appreciate when parents bring an issue to their attention, as long as it is done with respect.

16. Can You Fill Me in on This Situation?

When your child has complaints about what is going on at school, ask for clarification from the teacher; often your child's side is the only side you have heard.

17. Can You Tell Me About Your Teaching Method?

If you have an issue with the teacher's method, ask her to help you understand it. Ask your child's teacher for more information about the teaching method, how it can help your child and what the teacher can and will do if the method does not work with your child.

18. Do You Have Any Advice?

If you need help with an issue your child is having, ask the teacher for input. Teachers have worked with dozens or hundreds of students, and many have sage advice to share.

General Information

End the conference with these useful queries.

19. How Can I Help?

Ask, "What can I do to support you in the classroom?" There might be prep work you can do at home or other ways you can assist/volunteer in the classroom.

20. How Can I Contact You?

It is good to know how to get in touch with your child's teacher, so find out whether he or she prefers emails, phone calls or written notes.

Get ready for a parent-teacher conference or communication by making a list of the questions you want to ask. A prepared parent with a positive attitude and an open mind is on the right track for creating a successful, year-long partnership with his/her child's teacher.