

General Themes from PAAC on SEAC Effectiveness Survey 2009

SEAC is respected and has an active role

- School Board very much respects the role of SEAC in our Board and we are a very proactive and active SEAC. We have always had an association rep as Chair and are very much in control of our committee. Our Board not only respects our role within the Board but we feel our voices are very much heard, we feel we are always consulted on pertinent and important areas involving special ed in our Board and when suggestions or recommendations are made - we always feel it is most welcome and appreciated.
- I feel we have a well organized and active SEAC. I also feel that our voice is heard and respected at the board, and with Trustees; and we work collaboratively as a group towards improvements for each and every student.
- I am pleased with the great efforts our board is taking to welcome and value our input and the input of our community. We sit at our SEAC table as a group not as us and them.
- We have a great relationship with the school board and the meetings are usually very positive and upbeat. We are kept well informed and enjoy going to the meetings.
- Our SEAC is alive and well and participates in everything it should be. We have yearly SEAC training.
- The members of SEAC consider themselves to be partners with the school board in the provision of special education. We are not shy about expressing our opinions on any matters concerning education and the Board has always shown respect for our right to do so.
- Overall, our SEAC is quite transparent and open to information, questions, involvement, and suggestions.
- We have an active budget sub-committee comprised of SEAC members and board staff - we are very much part of the process and always welcome to present our budget concerns to the Board annually.

Examples of effective practices

- We've recently implemented small group time in every meeting so people are more comfortable and then we debrief.
- We've also developed a response sheet to presentations by board staff or others.
- We have various sub committees within our SEAC including budget and ABA Advisory.
- We have a SEAC representative sit on the Budget Council for our board – right from the outset of deliberations every year.

- We have an active budget sub-committee comprised of SEAC members and board staff.
- We often get much appreciated recognition for our efforts from our Director of Education and Chair of the Board.
- We've been undergoing facilitation sessions to build bridges and rebuild trust.
- We have an alternating system - one year (the Chair) is a trustee and the next, it is an association representative.

SEAC is functional but not proactive

- 95% of topics, discussions, presentations are driven by board, association information is respected, encouraged but there is very little participation.
- Each month, presentations are made on various topics related to special education. We also review the special education plan, where we do make the odd amendment.
- SEAC has allowed the Board to determine what is to be done, how it is to be done, why it is to be done, because it suffers from a lack of knowledge and lack of courage to speak up.

SEAC's role is improving

- Our SEAC is insisting that instead of being presented things like the Safe Schools policies after they have been done, the board ask us for input first. We are asking questions more and the board is more willing to accommodate us as well as providing training opportunities for all so that we all may become more effective.
- Our SEAC has been badly battered in the past 2 years, and many people have left as a result of mistrust of school board staff and trustees, and a feeling of ineffectiveness. Over the past 6 months, we've been undergoing facilitation sessions to build bridges and rebuild trust. It's a very slow process, and we've a long way to go. But I feel we're in a process of renewal, hopefully.
- Overall, our school board (staff) is receptive to SEAC input -- this has greatly improved over the years.

SEAC members need more training

- Since joining I have received no training.
- I've never read the regulation and I've never received training
- With me being new, I would like to know more on all the tasks I should do as a new SEAC member.

- What is a minority report?
- Not sure what the October report is ...
- I am unfamiliar with Regulation 464/98

There is poor awareness of SEAC

- Individual schools update their own websites - the quality varies tremendously from one school to the next. Generally our board website is often not completely up to date.
- I have never seen a SEAC brochure or a Board newsletter or presentation mentioning SEAC.
- Whenever I speak to people, they have no idea what a SEAC is, they've mostly never heard of it. So if there is info, it is buried or there is very little of it. We are in the process of looking at how we can raise awareness of SEAC and its role.
- We are currently working on a SEAC fact sheet.

SEAC recruitment is a challenge

- Difficult to find new reps or alternates. Several key parent associations are not represented on our SEAC due to volunteer shortage.
- Our numbers are dwindling - lack of interest from associations because we don't feel that we can make a difference.
- This is an ever increasing problem... recruiting is difficult and keeping new members is also very difficult - we don't have all positions filled with association members and have taken members from the community to fill.
- Being a very large, rural it is very hard to recruit members and we find that we have more members at large than association reps at times just because we are trying to get bodies in the seats. Another problem is that those who sit on SEAC mostly come from the area close to the board office because of distance of travel it is hard to get members to join from the outer areas of the board.
- Our biggest challenge on SEAC is the ratio of parents to staff of community organizations. We have approximately four parents, and the other eight members are staff of organizations.

SEAC's advisory role is not always respected

- At SEAC, members feel that the Consultants and Sp Ed Principal, Dir of Sp Ed decide on programming and we pretty much have no say in any developments. Meetings have been very frustrating!

- Most times SEAC is there to hear what the Special Education department is doing and to rubber stamp the plan. If questions are asked or inquired it is sometimes met with resistance and negative.
- This Board's process with regard to SEAC is backwards. The staff make the plan, pass it on to the Trustees and then after decisions are made it comes to SEAC.
- We are not involved or consulted at the start of the development of special education programs and projects. Our input seems to be after the fact and does not affect changes. We are not contributing or truly advising in an effective way. We have tried time and time again to get the board to make the schools and principals accountable for the neglected special education programs and policies in their schools.
- Unfortunately, most decisions are made prior to SEAC having an opportunity for input. We are merely informed as an information item, of new items or changes after they have been implemented.
- SEAC has limited power to make changes to the education plan and budget. We can suggest, but our suggestions can be ignored and often are.
- It is my feeling that our SEAC is viewed as often a hindrance to staff in the performance of their jobs. I do not feel that there is interest in us providing advice. I feel that our role should be less defensive and more consultative. We are often told information rather than asked questions.

SEAC is seen as dysfunctional

- My board has a low regard for our SEAC and the value that it can bring. The frustration felt by the members of my SEAC cannot be overstated.
- The current environment at the SEAC is dysfunctional. It is not felt by association reps that they have the support of staff in planning for and meeting the needs of exceptional children.
- SEAC is very dysfunctional and cannot in its current configuration fulfill its role as an advisory committee.