

PAaC

Provincial Parent Associations Advisory Committee

on SEAC

Special Education Advisory Committees

PAAC on SEAC

Effective Practices Handbook

for SEAC Members

2010

PAAC on SEAC

Effective Practices Handbook for SEAC Members

This handbook has been created with support from a Ministry of Education Parent Engagement Office Parents Reaching Out Grant. The views and ideas included in the handbook belong to the members of the Provincial Parent Associations Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEAC) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Education.

The PAAC on SEAC Effective Practices Handbook is available electronically, in both English and French, from any of the member associations.

Published for PAAC on SEAC

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Introduction

The Provincial Parent Associations Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEAC) was established in 1983 to provide a forum for parent associations, whose members are eligible to sit on SEAC, to share ideas, compare strategies and address common concerns related to SEACs across the province. The provincial parent associations and their representatives are valuable resources not only to each other and to SEACs but also to the Ministry of Education, school board officials, education and service providers, parents and the community at large.

Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) play an important role in the delivery of special education across Ontario. Each school board is required by law to establish SEACs to advise it on special education matters. SEAC members are important community volunteers whose contributions should be recognized and supported. Parents have been involved in SEACs since they were first established in the 1970s and their contributions have demonstrated the value of parent involvement in education.

This handbook has been made possible by a Parents Reaching Out grant from the Ministry of Education, Parent Engagement Office. The handbook was written in response to the results of a PAAC on SEAC Survey of SEAC members in the fall of 2009, and builds on the *Handbook for Members of Special Education Advisory Committees* produced by PAAC on SEAC in 1985 and 1995, and the work by Marilyn Dolmage, Derryn Gill, Eva Nichols, Diane Wagner, Lynn Ziraldo and others, who have developed PAAC on SEAC and SEAC training resources. Analysis of the 2009 survey has helped to identify issues and concerns of SEAC members. A review of the previous PAAC on SEAC handbooks, and the SEAC resources developed by the different parent association members, has helped to identify practices that have been demonstrated to improve the effectiveness of SEACs and support the engagement of members.

This handbook was designed for SEAC Members and Alternates who represent local associations and are affiliated with a provincial parent association. The handbook should also be helpful for all SEAC members and could be used by SEACs to evaluate their current practices and consider effective practices used by other SEACs. The handbook does not reflect any particular philosophy or exceptionality. SEAC members are encouraged to contact local association and/or provincial parent associations for further information regarding specific exceptionalities or disabilities, and for orientation and training supports.

Section 1: Background

The Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEAC) was founded in 1983, at a time when the roles and responsibilities of school board Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) were being increased. Bill 82, *An Act to Amend the Education Act*, was passed in 1980 and required school boards to provide special education programs and services to exceptional pupils, or purchase the services from another school board. School boards were given five years to implement Bill 82, and establish special education plans, in consultation with their SEACs.

PAAC on SEAC was established to provide a forum for representatives from provincial parent associations to share ideas and strategies and address common concerns related to SEACs throughout the province. PAAC on SEAC is an informal group and the fact that it has lasted almost 30 years is a testament to the passion and dedication of the volunteers and leadership from the parent associations.

Throughout the 30 years, PAAC on SEAC has maintained a relationship with the Ministry of Education, and continues to be invited to government consultations on matters concerning special education. Representatives from the Ministry of Education Special Education Policy and Programs Branch regularly attend PAAC on SEAC meetings. Membership of PAAC on SEAC has varied over the years and continues to evolve. There are currently 12 provincial parent association members, and new members are welcome. (See section 1.1 for current membership information.)

Over the years the expectations of school board SEACs have also changed. Most significantly, the provincial government amalgamated school boards and changed the way education is funded in 1998. The Ministry of Education has issued numerous Regulations, Policy/Program Memorandums and Resource Guides that pertain to special education, and of particular significance is Regulation 464/97 regarding Special Education Advisory Committees. (See Appendix 1 for a complete copy of Regulation 464/97) This Regulation consolidated successful practices and mandated many aspects of SEAC including:

- Membership Eligibility
- Number of Meetings
- Election of Chair and Vice Chair
- Roles of SEAC
- Expectations of school board

PAAC on SEAC has developed numerous resources to support SEAC members and this new handbook incorporates many of the effective practices cited in earlier PAAC on SEAC documents, along with new recommendations that reflect the additional expectations and responsibilities of SEACs today.

1.1 PAAC on SEAC Membership

(updated November 2013)

Association for Bright Children

Website: www.abcontario.ca
SEAC Coordinator seac@abcontario.ca
General Email Inquiries –
abcinfo@abcontario.ca

Community Living Ontario

Phone: 416-447-4348
Toll Free: 1-800-278-8025
Website: www.communitylivingontario.ca
E-mail: info@communitylivingontario.ca

Down Syndrome Association of Ontario

Phone: 905-439-6644
Website: www.dsao.ca
Email: info@dsao.ca

Easter Seals Ontario

Phone: 416-421-8377
Toll Free: 1-800-668-6252
Website: www.easterseals.org
E-mail: info@easterseals.org

Epilepsy Ontario

Phone: 905-474-9696
Toll Free: 1-800-463-1119
Website: www.epilepsyontario.org
E-mail: info@epilepsyontario.org

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario

Network of Expertise (FASD ONE)
Website: www.fasdontario.ca
E-mail: info@fasdontario.ca

Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community

Phone: 519-624-5195
Website: www.integration-inclusion.com/

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

Website: www.LDAO.ca
E-Mail: info@LDAO.ca
Phone: 416-929-4311

Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD)

Phone: 519-290-1763
Website: www.oafccd.com

Ontario Brain Injury Association

Website: www.obia.on.ca
E-Mail: obia@obia.on.ca
Phone: 905-641-8877
Toll free 1-800-263-5404

Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy

Website: www.ofcp.ca
E-Mail: info@ofcp.ca
Phone: 416-244-9686
Toll Free: 1-877-244-9686

Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Assoc. of Ont.

Website: www.sbhao.on.ca
E-Mail: provincial@sbhao.on.ca
Phone: 416-214-1056
Toll Free 1-800-387-1575

Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada

Website: www.tourette.ca
E-Mail: tsfc@tourette.ca
Phone: 905-673-2255
Toll Free: 1-800-361-3120

VIEWES Supports and Advocates for Children who are Blind or Low Vision

Website: www.viewson.ca
E-Mail: contact@viewson.ca
Phone: 519-616-4397

VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children

Website: www.voicefordeafkids.com
E-Mail: info@voicefordeafkids.com
Phone: 416-487-7719
Toll Free: 1-866-779-5144

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1.2 PAAC on SEAC Survey

PAAC on SEAC members meet regularly and have the unique ability to quickly collect or disseminate information that is relevant to members of Special Education Advisory Committees across Ontario. In the fall of 2009, PAAC on SEAC members developed a survey of SEAC members regarding SEAC effectiveness. The survey questions were similar to previous surveys by PAAC on SEAC. The Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada offered to support the survey by providing SurveyMonkey as a tool for obtaining SEAC responses. (See Appendix 2 for a copy of the survey questions and Appendix 3 for highlights of the survey results)

The survey link was made available to SEAC reps by all of the PAAC on SEAC members. The survey was open for approximately 6 weeks in November and December 2009. A total of 208 individuals accessed the survey, with 136 responding to all of the questions. These respondents represent about 20% of the 883 SEAC members identified in a 2009 PAAC on SEAC Membership survey and almost half of the SEAC members who are affiliated with PAAC on SEAC members.

From the answers to the questions about school board and association affiliation it would appear that the demographics of the survey respondents are representative of the distribution of SEAC reps. Survey respondents were from a cross section of school boards in the province, large and small boards, urban and rural, catholic and public and four French boards. There also appears to be proportional representation from the provincial parent associations reflecting the relative size of each association's number of SEAC members. Although the answers to the question about their number of years on SEAC were unclear, due to inconsistent responses, it would appear that slightly more than half were in their first SEAC term and almost 20% had been on SEAC for more than 10 years.

PAAC on SEAC members believe the responses to the survey to be representative of the issues and concerns they have heard from SEAC reps in other ways. Of great interest to the PAAC on SEAC members were the comments and the sharing of information about effective practices. (A detailed breakdown of the answers to the survey questions can be found in Appendix 3.)

In developing this handbook the key issues have been organized into five topics:

- Membership
- SEAC Roles and Responsibilities
- Information and Knowledge Transfer
- SEAC Meeting Processes
- Provincial and Local Parent Associations

For each topic in the handbook, PAAC on SEAC has provided recommendations and list of effective practices. A statement, **PAAC on SEAC recommends that the following action**, is highlighted through bolding and indicates that members of PAAC on SEAC strongly encourage the action or activity.

The effective practices lists have been generated from the experience of provincial parent associations and SEAC members across the province. Each list includes examples of potential activities for consideration. Each SEAC member, or each school board SEAC, is encouraged to look at the list of examples and consider whether they could improve SEAC effectiveness by adopting the practice.

The handbook has been deliberately written in a generic style and specific school board or parent association examples have not been identified.

The information, recommendations and effective practices included in this handbook belong to the members of the Provincial Parent Associations Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEAC) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Education.