

Section 6: Provincial and Local Parent Associations

All local association SEAC members should be affiliated with both a local group or chapter and a provincial parent association. Local associations and provincial parent associations vary considerably in the programs and services they offer, and whether they have a staff or volunteer responsible for providing SEAC support. Regardless of the organizational structure, the SEAC member, who is a local association representative, has a responsibility to both report about SEAC to the local association, and/or provincial parent association, and to share information from the local association and provincial parent association with other SEAC members.

6.1 Local and Provincial Parent Associations Support

A local association member is nominated to SEAC as a representative for a particular association, which may represent families of children with one or more specific exceptionalities. However, a member of SEAC is expected to consider special education programs and services and make recommendations that are in the best interests of all students with special education needs. This requires the members to both understand the unique needs of a specific group of children and be able to consider and make recommendations in the interests of all students with special education needs.

Effective Practices for the local parent association to provide support to SEAC members include:

- a. Identifying a contact within the local association that will be a liaison for the SEAC member.
- b. Providing the SEAC member with an outline of their responsibilities to the local association and/or to the provincial parent association.
- c. Providing the SEAC members with a forum to share information with local association members.
- d. Sharing a report from the SEAC member in a section of the local association newsletter or bulletin.
- e. Providing the SEAC member with the opportunity to provide a report at local association meetings.
- f. Holding a regular or annual meeting of members focused on special education and SEAC.
- g. Providing SEAC members with an opportunity to gather input from local association members, when necessary, through a survey or meeting of members.

PAAC on SEAC recommends that the SEAC member, representing a parent association, should be provided with training and orientation by the local association and/or the provincial parent association. The training and resources should include copies of all of the relevant association special education policies and position statements of the parent association.

Effective Practices for provincial parent associations to provide support to SEAC members include:

- a. Designating a staff or volunteer, within the parent association, to communicate with SEAC reps, and provide administrative support for nomination process, orientation and training.
- b. Developing a screening process to determine the eligibility of volunteers to be SEAC representatives and assess the volunteer's skills and knowledge related to special education and working on a committee.
- c. Describing the expectations for SEAC members, and the consequences for failure to meet expectations, in the SEAC member recruitment documents and process.
- d. Providing an orientation manual or program to help the volunteer understand the role of SEAC and the parent association.
- e. Providing a training program or resources to help the SEAC member be informed about special education, the exceptionality or group of exceptionalities they represent, and their roles and responsibilities as a SEAC representative.
- f. Providing a dedicated section of the parent association website for information on special education. Considering a password protected site for SEAC members to exchange information and network.

Each provincial parent association that is eligible to nominate SEAC members, has a responsibility to develop the capacity to support local associations and their SEAC members. **PAAC on SEAC recommends that each provincial parent association develop mechanisms to provide information and training to the SEAC members who represent them.** The structure and organization of the provincial parent association may vary, but each provincial parent association needs the capacity to provide SEAC members with up to date information about the students they represent; the latest changes in special education at the provincial level; and be able to collect and use the information from SEAC members.

Effective Practices for the provincial parent associations to obtain up to date information relevant to SEAC members include:

- a. Establishing a SEAC or education advisory committee, within the parent association, to support SEAC members, develop position papers and provide input on education consultations.
- b. Providing parent association contact information to the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) to be included as a recognized stakeholder for students with special education needs.
- c. Applying for membership on PAAC on SEAC to obtain updates and network about common issues and concerns.
- d. Providing SEAC members with regular updates on new initiatives and resources at the Ministry of Education and within the provincial parent association.
- e. Providing SEAC members with information about on-line resources including:
 - i. SEAC E-learning website
 - ii. Ministry of Education Website section on Special Education
 - iii. Ministry of Education Memo Website
 - iv. Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education Repository with Ministry of Education Special Education Updates, MACSE Meeting Minutes and Annual Report
 - v. PAAC on SEAC resources, such as this handbook

(See the References section for websites and additional resources)

6.2 Representing the Local and Provincial Parent Association

The local association SEAC representatives have an obligation to provide information about the SEAC meetings and activities to the local association and/or provincial parent association. The SEAC member is expected to attend 10 regular SEAC meetings each year, and to be involved in the development of the Special Education Report and the review of the special education budget. This is a lot of information and the SEAC member may need guidance from the local association and/or provincial parent association about what must be reported and how.

Effective Practices for the SEAC member to represent the provincial parent association at SEAC include:

- a. Sending regular updates about the SEAC meeting to the local association or chapter and/or provincial parent association.
- b. Using e-mail to quickly send a short summary of the meeting or recent activities to local members and/or provincial parent association.
- c. Forwarding copies of the most recent SEAC meeting Minutes to the local association and/or provincial parent association with sections or key items highlighted.
- d. Requesting adequate time from SEAC for consultation with local association and/or provincial parent associations when critical changes or decisions are to be made. This includes clarifying which information is public and can be shared, and requesting that the SEAC Agenda be adjusted to allow adequate time for responsive and responsible feedback.
- e. Listing parent association reports as a regular item on the SEAC agenda. (See Table 11 for sample report form for local association report).
- f. Requesting an opportunity annually, or within each SEAC term, to provide a presentation about the parent association and/or the exceptionality(s) at a SEAC meeting.
- g. Making presentations about SEAC, and special education, to members of the local association, group of chapter, on a regular basis.
- h. Submitting articles about SEAC, and key special education issues, to be included in local association and/or parent association newsletters.
- i. Developing a mechanism to connect individual parents within the local association, and/or provincial parent association, with SEAC members, which protects the privacy and confidentiality of both parties.

Table 11: Sample Report Form for a Local Association Representative

Table 9: Report from a Local Association Representative	
Name of Association: _____	
SEAC Member : _____	
Date of Meeting: _____	
Association Activities:	
Upcoming Meetings or Conferences:	

New programs or services:	

Other information:	

Copies of the association newsletter are attached.	