



# **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Handbook**

## **Greater Essex County District School Board**

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MANDATE**

Under Ontario's Education Act, every exceptional pupil is entitled to special education programs and services, which meet their needs. In the Greater Essex County District School Board, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) plays a vital role in ensuring that exceptional pupils receive appropriate educational services. (***Education Act Section 8. (3) Section 57. (1)***)

SEAC Members have an obligation once appointed to provide advice which is in the best interests of the Greater Essex County District School Board and its provision of special education services to all exceptional students. In order to meet this obligation, SEAC Members must become knowledgeable about the education-related needs of each exceptionality and consider how the GECDSB may support and accommodate all such needs.

### **Powers of the Committee**

A Special Education Advisory Committee of a board may make recommendations to the board in respect of any matter affecting the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the board.

The SEAC's responsibilities are:

- to participate in the board's annual review of its special education plan;
- to participate in the board's annual budget process as it relates to special education;
- to review the financial statements of the board as they relate to special education;
- and provides information to parents/guardians, as requested.

### **SEAC MEMBERSHIP**

In accordance with Reg. 464/97, the GECDSB can appoint a maximum of 12 representatives from locally run associations or organizations within the Board's boundaries in addition to two Trustees. These 14 members will be voting members.

In accordance with O. Reg. 464/97, where there are more than 12 local associations within the jurisdiction of the Board, the Board shall select the 12 local associations that shall be represented.

"Local association" means an association or organization of parents that operates locally within the area of jurisdiction of a Board and that is affiliated with an association or organization that is not an association or organization of professional educators but that is incorporated and operates throughout Ontario to further the interests and well-being of one or more groups of exceptional children or adults.

The Special Education Advisory Committee that shall consist of:

- one representative from each of the local associations that operates locally within the area of jurisdiction of the Board, as nominated by the local association and appointed by the Board, who must be;
  - a resident within the area of jurisdiction of the board;
  - qualified to vote for members of the school board (A designated public school (English) elector);
  - and not employed by the board in which the member resides;
- one or two persons to represent the interests of First Nations, Métis and Inuit pupils. One representative must be recommended by the GECDSB Indigenous Education Advisory Committee (IEAC).
- one alternate for each association representative appointed and nominated by the local association and appointed by the Board as noted above;
- two trustees, as appointed by the Board;
- one alternate trustee, as appointed by the Board from among its own members;
- in addition to the criteria above, the board may appoint one or more additional members who are not representative of a local association and are not members of the board or of a committee of the board.

**Note:** The Greater Essex County District School Board, in addition, includes on its SEAC representatives from the elementary and secondary school principal panels. The GECDSB also includes the Supervising Principal of Special Education and the Supervisor of Psychological and Speech Language Services.

### **Committee Selection**

The Selection Committee (The Director of Education and the Superintendent of Education/Special Education Programs and Services) will review the applications to **determine the eligibility of the associations:**

- Local association represents children or adults who are exceptional
- Local association operates within the GECDSB jurisdiction
- Association that “represents the interests of First Nations, Metis and Inuit.” (Reg. 464/97, 2 (1)(e))
- Local association is not a duplicate association represented on the current complement of SEAC members
- If there are associations that represent the same exceptionality, one association will be chosen by random selection and the other association will be set aside for reconsideration.

## **Term of Office**

The persons appointed to the SEAC will hold office for the same timelines as the members of the Board of Trustees (four years).

## **Vacancies**

Prior to the beginning of the new four-year term, the GECDSB will strive to fill all 12 seats by:

- Inviting the current associations to reapply for membership, and
- Inviting the broader community via Board website and other media venues to apply for membership.

If the full roster of 12 associations is not filled, then the GECDSB will advertise every fall via website and free media venues. If an association applies for membership within the four-year term and there is a vacancy, the Selection Committee will determine if the local association represents an exceptionality that is not represented on the current complement of SEAC members. If a seat becomes vacant during the term, then the GECDSB will advertise via website and free media venues at that time, then will continue to advertise as noted above.

From Ontario Regulation 464/97, Section 8(1), If a seat or position on a special education advisory committee becomes vacant, the board that appointed the person whose seat or position has become vacant shall appoint a qualified person to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the term of the person whose seat or position has become vacant.

## **Disqualifications**

A member or alternate of the SEAC loses their seat if they:

- are convicted of an indictable offence;
- are absent from three consecutive regular meetings without authorization by resolution entered in the Minutes, or in the case of an alternate from three consecutive regular meetings for which the alternate received a notice to attend; and/or
- cease to hold the qualifications to be appointed to the committee.

## **Notification of Disqualification**

When a SEAC member or alternate is subject to disqualification under Regulation 464/97, the following notification process shall be followed to ensure transparency, fairness, and continuity of representation:

### **1. Initial Review**

The SEAC Chair and the Superintendent of Special Education shall review the circumstances leading to the potential disqualification. This includes verifying attendance records, eligibility status, or any other relevant criteria.

2. Written Notification to Member

The member shall be notified in writing, by the SEAC Chair, of the concern and the potential disqualification. The member will have a chance to respond within a reasonable timeframe (e.g., 10 business days).

3. Notification to the Local Association

If the member represents a local association, the association shall also be notified in writing. The association may:

- Provide input regarding the member's status.
- Nominate a replacement if the seat is vacated.

4. Final Determination and Resolution

After considering any responses, the SEAC Chair shall present the matter to the committee for resolution. If disqualification is confirmed, the seat shall be declared vacant.

5. Filling the Vacancy

The Board shall initiate the process to fill the vacancy in accordance with Regulation 464/97. The local association may re-nominate a representative or the Board may seek new applications if necessary.

6. Documentation and Transparency

All correspondence and decisions related to the disqualification shall be documented and retained. A summary may be included in SEAC meeting minutes, respecting privacy and confidentiality.

## **FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE**

### **Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

At the December meeting elections will be conducted for the Chair and Vice-Chair. The chair and vice-chair positions are rotated annually between a community member and a Trustee.

### **Duties of the Chair**

The duties of the Chair shall include:

- presiding over SEAC meetings;
- ensuring the development of meeting agendas which reflect the priorities and responsibilities of the committee;
- communicating with the Board, as authorized by resolution of the committee; and
- such other duties as may be assigned by the committee.

During debate of a motion, the Chair shall remain impartial, and shall ensure that:

- no Member or Alternate shall speak unless recognized by the Chair; and
- a vote shall not be called until all Members who want to speak to the motion have had a fair opportunity to do so.

### **Duties of the Vice Chair**

The duties of the Vice Chair shall include:

- presiding over SEAC meetings in the absence of the Chair; and
- assisting the Chair with duties as required.

The Chair and Vice Chair shall be voting members of SEAC.

### **Voting**

Each appointed member of the SEAC is entitled to one vote. Alternate members may not vote if the appointed member is present at the meeting. The chair may vote with the other members of the committee. A tie vote means the motion is defeated.

### **Meetings**

SEAC shall meet at least 10 times in each school year. SEAC generally meets the second Wednesday of every month as approved by the committee. It is common practice to schedule ten regular meetings per year from September to June.

Dates and times of SEAC meetings are publicized on the board's website.

Meeting agendas shall be developed by the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Superintendent for Special Education – Programs and Services, considering any requests from SEAC Members.

Agendas may include items for training, discussion, information, decision, and follow-up from previous meetings.

In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Personal Health Information Protection Act, SEAC is prohibited from discussing the personal information or circumstances of any student or staff person.

Meetings shall be open to the public, except where Section 207 of the Education Act allows that the committee to be closed to the public. The Committee will meet in Private Session, closed to the public when the subject under consideration involves:

- the security of the property of the Board;
- the disclosure of intimate, personal or financial information in respect of a member of the Board of Trustees, or a member of a Statutory or Advisory Committee, a current or prospective employee, a student, parent or guardian of the student;
- the acquisition or disposal of a school site;
- decisions in respect of negotiations with employees of the GECDSB;

- an ongoing investigation under the Ombudsman Act respecting the GECDSB;
- litigation affecting the Board; or
- as necessary to comply with the Youth Criminal Justice Act of the Municipal Freedom of Information Act, including solicitor and client privilege.

Ontario Regulation 464/97 does include provisions related to electronic meetings for Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC). Specifically, Section 10(1) states: The board shall make available to its special education advisory committee the personnel and facilities that the board considers necessary for the proper functioning of the committee, including the personnel and facilities that the board considers necessary to permit the use of electronic means for the holding of meetings of the committee in accordance with the regulation.

If a member of SEAC cannot attend a meeting then their first step is to notify the alternate, if the alternate is also unable to attend then the member can propose to participate in the meeting by electronic means. The member shall submit a request to the administrative assistant of the Superintendent of Special Education, at least 3 hours in advance, where possible, of a meeting.

### **Quorum**

A majority of the members of the SEAC is a quorum, and a vote of a majority of the members present at a meeting is necessary to bind the committee. Every member present at the meeting, or their alternate, when attending in the member's place, is entitled to one vote.

### **Role of Board Personnel**

The board will make available to its SEAC the personnel and facilities that the board considers necessary for the proper functioning of the committee:

- provide administrative support to SEAC, including distributing notices of meetings, agendas and supporting materials, minutes, and other communications to SEAC Members, and Alternates as appropriate;

The board shall provide to new members and alternate members, within a reasonable time after appointment, information and orientation respecting:

- the role of the committee and the board in relation to special education;
- Ministry and board policies relating to special education;
- a schedule of meetings of the standing committees of the board.

Ensure SEAC Members have timely and sufficient access to information to make informed advice and recommendations to the Board.

## **THE ROLE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The members of a SEAC represent all students with exceptionalities, and it is important that members respond to the needs of all exceptional students within the Board. Thus, individual members need to increase their awareness and understanding of the various exceptionalities. On an annual basis, SEAC members participate in reviewing their personal goals for sitting on the committee as well as reviewing the goals of the SEAC committee.

### **Providing Advice**

SEAC may communicate its advice to the Board by the following means:

- **Special Education Plan**  
The Board shall ensure SEAC has the opportunity to participate in the Board's annual review of the Special Education Plan.
- **Board Budget and Financial Statements**  
The Board shall further ensure that SEAC is provided with the opportunity to participate in the Board's annual budget process, as it relates to special education, and to review the Board's financial statements, as those statements relate to special education.
- **SEAC Minutes**  
The Board shall receive the approved minutes of SEAC meetings for information. SEAC Trustee Members or Alternates may, if so directed by SEAC or the Board, provide background information regarding discussion at SEAC meetings.
- **SEAC Recommendations**  
SEAC has the right to make recommendations to the Board regarding the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services. Any such recommendation must be approved by resolution of the committee.

Approval of a resolution requires a vote in the affirmative by a majority of the Members present.

SEAC shall consider a motion to resolve approval of a recommendation to the Board in accordance with this Procedure and the Board's Governance By-Law provisions relating to rules of procedure, as may be amended from time to time.

The Chair shall ensure that any SEAC recommendation approved by resolution of the committee is forwarded to the Board. SEAC may at its discretion approve that a report providing the background and rationale accompany the recommendation.

Any Trustee may move that the Board approve a resolution to adopt a SEAC recommendation.

Before making a decision on a recommendation from SEAC, the Board shall provide SEAC an opportunity to be heard by the Board, and any committee of the Board to which the recommendation is referred.

The Board shall provide the SEAC Chair with written acknowledgement of receipt and consideration of any SEAC recommendation, and the Board's disposition of the recommendation, if any, copying the relevant section of the minutes from the Board meeting at which the matter was considered.

### **Delegations**

As per Board Governance By-Laws, Section 6.3.4 - Delegation presentations will not be received: (a) at Board Meetings (except by the Special Education Advisory Committee, as prescribed in Regulation 464/97, 11(2).

### **Minority Reports**

A report, including recommendations, which has not been approved by a resolution of the committee may nevertheless be submitted to the Board, provided that it is designated as a "Minority Report".

A Member intending to submit a Minority Report to the Board must provide a copy of the report to the SEAC Chair on or before the date the report is submitted to the Board.

The Board shall provide the author(s) of the Minority Report with written acknowledgement of receipt, and shall append the Minority Report to the Special Education Plan.

### **Public Communications**

As an advisory committee, SEAC may communicate its recommendations to the Board in any of the means described above. Neither the SEAC Chair nor any SEAC Member or Alternate may communicate publicly on behalf of SEAC, GECDSB or the Board of Trustees.

### **Expectations of the Committee**

The guiding principle of SEAC is rooted in collaboration, positivity, trust, and mutual respect. It is essential for SEAC members to work together to support the Board in providing programs for all exceptionalities.

### **Each member is expected to:**

- Respect the role of SEAC as an advisory committee and respond to the needs of all exceptional pupils within the Board.

- Respect the right to privacy of individual exceptional pupils by avoiding discussion of individual cases.
- Acquire and maintain a working knowledge of the special education programs and services provided by the Board.
- Represent and inform the committee about the exceptionality they represent.

To this end, members should:

- ensure that they are expressing the concerns of the association and not their own concerns;
- keep informed and identify needs by speaking with individuals within the local association who take the parent/guardian calls about issues of concern to parents/guardians and by seeking out information and input in relation to issues or concerns pertaining to special education;
- encourage their association members to attend SEAC meetings;
- report to the members of the local association or chapter at general meetings and/or disseminate relevant information, such as discussing activities at SEAC meetings, and positive outcomes that result;
- provide the association with a formal report on relevant SEAC proceedings to be included in the local association's annual report and to be shared with the SEAC;
- be prepared for all SEAC meetings, suggest items to be placed on SEAC agenda, participate in discussions, suggest education topics, and present motions and;
- set individual annual goals and objectives as well as those for the local association and for the SEAC.

### **Non-Compliance with Committee Expectations**

SEAC members are expected to uphold the principles of collaboration, respect, and informed advocacy as outlined in the committee's expectations. When a member fails to meet these expectations, the following process is recommended:

#### **1. Informal Resolution**

- The SEAC Chair, in consultation with the Superintendent of Special Education, will initiate a conversation with the member to clarify expectations and address concerns.
- The goal is to resolve the issue through dialogue, support, and guidance, recognizing that some breaches may be due to misunderstanding or oversight.

#### **2. Written Concern**

- If informal resolution is unsuccessful or the concern is significant (e.g., repeated breaches, public misrepresentation of SEAC), the Chair may issue a written notice outlining:

- The specific expectation not met.
- The impact on the committee's functioning.
- A request for corrective action or clarification.

### 3. Notification to the Association

- If the member represents a local association, the association will be notified of the concern and may be asked to:
  - Provide input or context.
  - Support the member in addressing the issue.
  - Consider nominating a replacement if the issue persists.

### 4. Review and Recommendation

- The SEAC Chair and Superintendent may bring the matter to the full committee for discussion.
- If the committee determines that the member is unable or unwilling to meet expectations, a recommendation for disqualification may be made to the Board.

### 5. Board Action

- The Board will review the recommendation and determine whether to declare the seat vacant.
- The vacancy will be filled in accordance with Ontario Regulation 464/97.

### 6. Documentation

- All steps taken, including communications and decisions, will be documented and retained for transparency and accountability.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Sample Agenda

Appendix B: Association Report

Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions

**GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (Appendix A)  
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Agenda**

**(Date)**

**(Location – 451 Park St. W, Windsor, ON. N9A 6K1)**

**1:00 PM**

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Land Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that we are on land and surrounded by water, originally inhabited by Indigenous Peoples who have travelled this area since time immemorial. This territory is within the lands honoured by the Wampum Treaties; agreements between the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-e-naa-bay), Haudenosaunee (Hoe-den-oh-show-nee), Leni (Len-eh) Lenape (Le-naw-pay) and allied Nations to peacefully share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Specifically, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the Huron/Wendat (Wen-dat) Peoples and the Three Fires Confederacy Ojibwe (Oh-jib-way), Odawa (Oh-dah-wah), Potawatomi (Paw-taw-watt-ohme). We are dedicated to honouring Indigenous history and culture while remaining committed to moving forward respectfully with all First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

**3. Attendance**

**4. Approval of Agenda Action**

**That SEAC Approve the agenda of the SEAC meeting of... Action**

**5. Declaration of conflict of interest**

**6. Approval of Minutes Action Action**

**That SEAC approve the minutes of the SEAC meeting of...**

**7. Business Arising as a Result of the Minutes**

**8. Special Education Reports Information**

**9. Items for Future Agendas**

**10. Association Reports Information**

**11. Distribution**

**12. Adjournment**

**NEXT MEETING, (Date)**

**Board Meeting Minutes available on GECDSD website.**

**Vicki Houston, Director of Education**

**Chris Mills, Administrative Liaison**

**Ministry SEAC website**

**ASSOCIATION REPORT  
(Appendix B)**

**NAME OF ASSOCIATION:**

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**REPRESENTATIVE:**

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**DATE OF MEETING:**

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**UPCOMING MEETINGS, ACTIVITIES OR CONFERENCES:**

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**NEW INITIATIVES:**

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**OTHER INFORMATION:**

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## **Actions for SEAC Members (Appendix B)**

**Prepare in Advance:** Review the meeting agenda and any supporting documents. Understand the topics to be discussed and formulate questions or comments.

**Stay Informed:** Keep up-to-date with the GECD SB Special Education Plan and relevant policies. Be aware of current issues and developments in special education.

**Engage in Discussions:** Actively participate in discussions and share insights. Listen to and respect other members' perspectives and build on their points.

**Ask Questions:** Seek clarification on any unclear points. Ask questions that help the committee explore issues in depth.

**Provide Recommendations:** Suggest actionable recommendations based on the discussion.  
Ensure recommendations are clear, concise, and feasible.

**Represent Your Association:** Communicate the concerns and needs of the association you represent. Ensure that you are expressing the association's views, not personal opinions.

**Collaborate with Other Members:** Work together with other SEAC members to achieve common goals. Support and respect each other's contributions.

**Follow Meeting Protocols:** Adhere to Roberts Rules of Order and GECD SB by-laws. Respect the procedural rulings of the chair.

**Focus on the Agenda:** Stick to the agenda items and avoid off-topic discussions. Ensure that all agenda items are addressed within the meeting time.

**Set Goals:** Set individual and association goals for your participation in SEAC. Review and adjust these goals annually.

**Communicate Effectively:** Clearly articulate your points during discussions. Avoid personal comments and focus on the issues at hand.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (Appendix C)**

### **Q: What is the mandate of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)?**

A: SEAC ensures that exceptional pupils receive appropriate educational services as mandated by Ontario's Education Act. It advises the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) on the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services.

### **Q: Who can be a member of SEAC?**

A: SEAC can have up to 12 representatives from local associations, two trustees, and additional members representing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit pupils. Members must be Canadian citizens, at least 18 years old, residents within the board's jurisdiction, public school electors, and not employed by the board.

### **Q: What are the responsibilities of SEAC members?**

A: SEAC members make recommendations to the board, participate in the annual review of the special education plan, engage in the budget process related to special education, review financial statements, and provide information to parents/guardians.

### **Q: How are SEAC members selected?**

A: The Director of Education and the Superintendent of Education/Special Education Programs and Services review applications to determine eligibility based on criteria such as representation of exceptional pupils and operation within GECDSB jurisdiction.

### **Q: What happens if a SEAC member misses meetings?**

A: If a member misses three consecutive meetings without authorization, they may lose their seat. If an association is without representation for six months, it may lose its membership and need to reapply.

### **Q: How does SEAC make decisions?**

A: SEAC follows Roberts Rules of Order and GECDSB by-laws. Decisions are made through motions, and a majority vote is required for approval. If the vote is tied, the motion fails.

### **Q: How does SEAC communicate its recommendations to the GECDSB?**

A: SEAC can communicate its advice through the Special Education Plan, participation in the budget process, review of financial statements, and approved minutes of SEAC meetings. Trustee members, in consultation with the Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), will provide an update at each board meeting, either orally or in writing, regarding the committee's activities. Recommendations must be approved by resolution and forwarded to the board.

**Q: What is the role of SEAC alternates?**

A: Alternates can become voting representatives if the SEAC member is unable to attend meetings. They need to stay informed on issues and attend meetings whenever possible.

**Q: How can SEAC members get more detailed information?**

A: Members can refer to online resources such as the [Ontario Ministry of Education](#) website, the [PAAC on SEAC Effective Practices Handbook](#), and the [SEAC section on the GECDSB website](#).

**Q: What is the term of office for SEAC members?**

A: SEAC members hold office for the same term as the Board of Trustees, which is four years.

**Q: How are vacancies on SEAC filled?**

A: If a seat becomes vacant, the GECDSB will advertise the vacancy via its website and other media venues. The Selection Committee will determine if the local association applying represents an exceptionality not currently represented on SEAC.

**Q: What are the duties of the SEAC Chair and Vice-Chair?**

A: The Chair presides over meetings, develops meeting agendas, communicates with the Board, and ensures fair debate. The Vice-Chair assists the Chair and presides over meetings in the Chair's absence.

**Q: How often does SEAC meet?**

A: SEAC meets at least 10 times each school year, typically on the second Wednesday of every month from September to June. Meeting dates and times are publicized on the board's website.

**Q: Can SEAC meetings be closed to the public?**

A: Yes, SEAC meetings can be closed to the public if the subject matter includes issues such as the security of board property, personal or financial information, acquisition or disposal of school sites, employee negotiations, or litigation affecting the board.

**Q: What is the quorum for SEAC meetings?**

A: A majority of the SEAC members constitutes a quorum. A vote of the majority of members present at a meeting is necessary to bind the committee.

**Q: How does SEAC ensure the privacy of students and staff?**

A: SEAC is prohibited from discussing the personal information or circumstances of any student or staff person in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

**Q: What is the role of SEAC in the Board's budget process?**

A: SEAC participates in the Board's annual budget process as it relates to special education and reviews the financial statements of the board as they relate to special education.

**Q: How can parents/guardians get involved with SEAC?**

A: Parents/guardians can attend SEAC meetings, provide feedback, and communicate with SEAC members. They can also apply for membership if they are part of a local association representing exceptional pupils.