

# **Suffolk Public Schools**

## **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Annual Report**

**2021-2022**

Prepared for:  
School Board  
Suffolk Public Schools

By:  
Katie Morse, Chair (2022-2023)

## **Purpose**

The Special Education Advisory Committee for Suffolk Public Schools is organized and functions in accordance with Sections 300.650-300.653, Rules and Regulations for the administration of Public Law 105-17. The Committee's functions are as follows:

1. To advise the Suffolk Public Schools of needs in the education of children with disabilities;
2. To participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities;
3. To submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of children with disabilities to the Suffolk Public Schools' superintendent for transmission to the local school board;
4. To assist the Suffolk Public Schools in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services;
5. To review the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services prior to submission to the local school board;
6. To participate in the review of the Suffolk Public Schools' annual plan, prior to the submission to the School Board.

## **Membership**

The Committee is composed of representatives of stakeholder groups that have a common interest in meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities. While some of the members are community service providers, most of the membership is comprised of parents of students currently receiving services in our division. As required by the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia*, one teacher serves as a voting member on the Committee. The membership is reviewed and appointed by the school board at the beginning of each school year, with recommendations provided by the Committee in the form of a list of nominated members. During the 2021-2022 school year, the Director of Special Education and the Supervisors of Special Education served as consultants.

## **Organization**

The activities of SEAC are governed by a set of bylaws which were last revised in December 2009 and approved by the SPS School Board. Subcommittees are assigned as needed to monitor the recommendations and concerns of the Committee and to work toward its goals.

## **Meetings**

The Special Education Advisory Committee meets in regular session six times a year. Subcommittees meet as necessary to fulfill their responsibilities. All regularly scheduled meetings are in-person and open to the public. Prior notice is advertised in various publications of the school community. Time is allotted for public comment and subsequent review during each scheduled meeting of the full SEAC Committee. Due to continuing COVID-19 precautions, all scheduled meetings were made available virtually, as well as in-person. SEAC plans to continue to offer virtual attendance at all scheduled meetings for the foreseeable future.

## **SEAC Accomplishments for 2021-2022**

Your SEAC committee continued to provide an opportunity for families with special needs to access resources and support throughout the 2021/2022 school year. In conjunction with the Special Education Parent Resource Center (PRC) Liaison, Mrs. Vivian Evett, SEAC provided guidance and assistance to address the many challenges of providing special education support to families post pandemic.

### **Guest Speaker**

SEAC invited Mrs. Irhonda Ricks, Intellectual Disability/Developmental Disability (ID/DD) Program Manager at Western Tidewater Community Services Board (WTCSB), to discuss the Medicaid Waiver process at the November 2021 meeting. Ms. Ricks provided attendees and committee members a detailed report on the different waivers available and the various services WTCSB provides. She discussed the steps to take to apply for each particular waiver.

### **Disability Awareness**

The Committee, along with representatives from each school, is tasked with raising public awareness of the impact of disabilities, as well as resources available to assist parents and students. The Committee also provides parents with an understanding of the special education process, as well as the functions of SEAC.

SEAC participated in the Disability Awareness Committee Meeting with school representatives to discuss the importance of an inclusive school environment and recommend awareness activities within schools.

The Committee participated in the SPS Disability Awareness and Resource Fair in April 2022. Our committee provided various resources for parents and caregivers of students receiving special education services in SPS. SEAC members hosted a booth to provide counseling to families of students with special needs.

## **Little Feet Meet**

SEAC supported the Little Feet Meet event in participating schools on May 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. This event, hosted by SPS and Special Olympics, partnered elementary-age students with intellectual and developmental disabilities with typically developing peers to promote an inclusive school environment. This event was a success and SEAC will support the next Little Feet Meet planned for the 2022/2023 school year. SEAC also supported the Big Feet Meet on October 27<sup>th</sup> at King's Fork High School.

## **Special Education Parent and Partner Night Meetings**

SEAC participated in the Special Education Parent and Partner Night in April 2022. The theme of this first meeting was Understanding Special Education. Saul Godinez, 2021/2022 SEAC Chair, led the meeting to address concerns from attending families of students with disabilities. This parent support meeting will take place every three months. SEAC will continue to actively support these meetings. A subsequent Parent and Partner night meeting was held in August. The SEAC Chair, along with other members, actively participated in answering a variety of Special Education topics to parents from within the community.

## **Data and Assessment**

The Committee monitors testing data and assessments that impact students receiving special education services in SPS. The Committee also reviews graduation and/or exit data and discusses accreditation issues within the district. SEAC received a detailed presentation from Steven Edwards, SPS Coordinator of Research & Testing, including a comparison of the 2018/2019 and 2020/2021 Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) results, the Virginia Alternative Assessment Program (VAAP) results, and graduation data from Spring 2020 in November 2021. All assessed areas indicated a marked decrease. Graduation rates indicated decreases as well. The Committee discussed SPS efforts to raise achievement levels post-pandemic. Our committee will continue to monitor and review this data.

## **Communication**

The Committee discussed methods to improve communication between parents of students receiving special education services and schools, including school event notices. SEAC continues to support and maintain a Facebook page to allow for better communication with our stakeholders. The Committee is also working with the Special Education Parent Resource Center (PRC) to distribute resource information to the community. The committee is also looking at introducing other social media platforms in order to raise SEAC interest.

## **Resources**

The Committee endeavors to improve resources available to parents of students receiving special education services. Our committee continues to provide recommendations for new materials to improve the Special Education Parent Resource Center and assists the Parent Resource Liaison in disseminating new resources to parents. Of note, the PRC is making a vast number of resources available in Spanish, to address our Spanish-speaking community members' needs.

## **Individualized Education Program (IEP) Software**

With Suffolk Public Schools' adoption of new IEP software, the SEAC Committee will continue to monitor IEP software issues and their impacts on our stakeholders this year.

## **Budget Review**

As mandated, SEAC reviewed SPS's proposed budget for the next school year to consider any impact on special education services and discussed any questions/concerns with the Special Education Director. No particular funding deficiency was noted. Your SEAC serves as a vehicle to request and promote SPS funding deficiencies when addressing the city of Suffolk council members.

## **Public Comment**

SEAC did not receive public comments during its meetings for the 2021-2022 school year. This indicator may be viewed as a feedback mechanism from the community. As such, it could be construed as a positive response. The Committee will continue to provide a public forum to address the needs of all stakeholders.

## **School Board Policies**

The Committee reviews school policies impacting students receiving special education services and their representation in the student and staff manuals. No issues or errors were found this year.

## **Membership**

### **Voting Members**

**Chair** – Saul Godinez – saulg9962@gmail.com

**Vice Chair** – Katie Morse – kmorse.seac@gmail.com

**Teacher** - Holly Boyce - hollyboyce@spsk12.net

Angela Bickerton

Regina Hall

Deborah Kliche

Shawynee Love

Kirstyn Oneill

Leslie Schiefer

Amy Sroka

## **Consultants**

Stephanie Whitley - Special Education Director - [stephaniewhitley@spsk12.net](mailto:stephaniewhitley@spsk12.net), 925-6764

Julie Masters - Special Education Supervisor Instruction and Compliance Special Programs –  
[juliemasters@spsk12.net](mailto:juliemasters@spsk12.net), 925-6764

Kelly MacPherson - Special Education Supervisor Instruction and Compliance Secondary -  
[kellymacpherson@spsk12.net](mailto:kellymacpherson@spsk12.net), 925-6764

Jamillah Silver - Special Education Supervisor Instruction and Compliance Elementary -  
[jamillahsilver@spsk12.net](mailto:jamillahsilver@spsk12.net), 925-6764

Vivian Evett – Special Education Parent Resource Liaison, [vivianevelt@spsk12.net](mailto:vivianevelt@spsk12.net), 925-5785

## **SEAC 2022-2023**

### **Membership**

Katie Morse (parent) will serve as Chair this year. The Vice Chair and Secretary will be elected at the next meeting. Holly Boyce will continue to serve as the teacher representative and Theresa Pope and Donna Boykins will share responsibilities as the representatives for the Western Tidewater Community Services Board (WTCSB). Additionally, the School Board has approved or appointed the following members: Angela Bickerton (parent), Charlotte Brooks-Dale (parent), Sierrah Chavis (parent), Regina Hall (parent), and Jamilia Heredia (parent).

### **Voting Members**

**Chair** - Katie Morse - kmorse.seac@gmail.com

**Vice Chair** – TBD

**Secretary** – TBD

**Teacher** - Holly Boyce - hollyboyce@spsk12.net

Angela Bickerton – angelab121136@gmail.com

Charlotte Brooks-Dale – jacha00@yahoo.com

Sierrah Chavis – sierrah-chavis@wichange.org

Regina Hall – dinkredkel77@yahoo.com

Jamilia Heredia – jheredia080316@gmail.com

### **Consultants**

Stephanie Whitley - Special Education Director - stephaniwhitley@spsk12.net, 925-6764

Julie Masters - Special Education Supervisor Instruction and Compliance Special Programs – juliemasters@spsk12.net, 925-6764

Kelly MacPherson - Special Education Supervisor Instruction and Compliance Secondary - kellymacpherson@spsk12.net, 925-6764

Jamillah Silver - Special Education Supervisor Instruction and Compliance Elementary - jamillahsilver@spsk12.net, 925-6764

Vivian Evett – Special Education Parent Resource Liaison, vivianevelt@spsk12.net, 925-5785

## Goals for 2022 – 2023 SEAC Year

SEAC is finalizing specific committee goals for this year. Those goals will be presented to the School Board for your review and approval once fully developed. In addition, SEAC will continue to focus on how the following areas impact students with disabilities:

- Student Academic Performance
- Special Education Graduation Rates
- Special Education Diploma Options
- SOL Testing and Alternate Assessments
- Transition Services
- Transportation
- Disability Awareness
- Disability Harassment
- Physical Restraint and Seclusion
- Special Education Parent Resources
- Special Education Budget

## Meeting Dates for 2022 - 2023 SEAC Year

September 21, 2022	March 15, 2023
November 16, 2022	May 17, 2023
January 18, 2023	July 19, 2023

All in-person scheduled meetings will be held at King’s Fork Middle School,  
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

## Events so far this year

In addition to following Virginia state mandates and Committee bylaws, SEAC continues to provide private, confidential consultations and guidance to families of students with disabilities in SPS.

SEAC has supported and/or participated in the following events so far this year:

- National Night Out – August 2022
- Second Parent and Partner Night Meeting – August 2022
- SPS Disability Resources and Awareness Fair – October 25, 2022
- Big Feet Meet – October 27th