

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(SEAC)**

Waterloo Region District School Board

Information Handbook

Revised October 2015



**Waterloo Region
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The Members of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) have developed this booklet to assist families and special needs students within the WRDSB. SEAC is a committee of the WRDSB that includes Trustees, Senior Special Education staff and representatives of the Community Associations who represent students with special needs.

Most learners are successful in the regular classroom; however, some students have exceptional needs and may require special programs and services. A learner with exceptional needs is a student whose behavioural, communicative, intellectual or physical exceptionalities are such that special education support is required.

In this booklet we identify SEAC and its role. We examine two procedures, which have been designed to help special needs students receive an appropriate education. These are known as the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Procedure and the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The Community Associations and their mandates are introduced. The majority of the individuals who represent these Community Associations are volunteers – parents with their own special needs children who are being educated within the Board. Finally, some sources of useful definitions and a list of advocacy resources are provided.

What is SEAC?

SEAC was established to make recommendations to the WRDSB about any matter related to the establishment and development of special education programs and services for students with exceptional needs. This is in accordance with the Education Act, Section 206, Subsection (2): “Every school board shall establish a Special Education Advisory Committee.” SEAC is responsible to the WRDSB for examining, reviewing and making recommendations regarding the provision of special education programs and services in an advisory capacity. Some areas of focus are philosophy and goals, policies and procedures, organizational structures, program delivery methods, services and facilities, funding, and the annual review of the Special Education Plan.

SEAC does NOT deal with individual problem situations. SEAC members are able to bring the more general concerns of parents to the attention of the WRDSB staff and Trustees. All these groups work together to find solutions, which meet the needs of our exceptional students.

SEAC Meetings

Members of the community are welcome to attend and observe any of the ten SEAC meetings held throughout the year. Community members may request agendas in advance of meetings by calling the Education Centre at 519-570-0003, extension 4235. Minutes from past meetings are also available at www.wrdsb.on.ca.

Public requests to make a presentation at a SEAC meeting must be submitted ahead of time in writing to the chairperson. Please call the telephone number listed above for more information on how to schedule a presentation to SEAC.

Community members may approach any SEAC representative with a question or concern. It is not necessary to belong to one of the member associations (see section entitled Community Associations).

SEAC member associations are available to provide specific information, make recommendations and assistance to parents/guardians whose children may require additional support. As a result parents are encouraged to contact the local association that best represents the special needs of their child. The organization may in turn pass on the question or concern to the SEAC representative.

Meetings are usually held on the second Wednesday of each month starting at 7:00 p.m. at the Education Centre, 51 Ardelt Avenue, Kitchener. Check www.wrdsb.on.ca to confirm meeting times.

The Superintendent responsible for Special Education may be reached at 519-570-0003, extension 4334.

Sample Use of SEAC - See Appendix.

Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs)

The IPRC Process is a formal process, which identifies children as exceptional and makes decisions about appropriate programs and services. This is called the IPRC process.

Students with special needs may find that this process assists them by helping them understand their unique needs and how these might be addressed in the school system. The WRDSB has published a document entitled “Understanding the IPRC Process” which is available on the Board website www.wrdsb.on.ca.

The IPRC process is a formal, legal process that is held at the school. It is generally chaired by the principal of the school and attended by at least two other school staff members, special education staff and the student’s parents. An IPRC process can be initiated by a parent or by a student age 16 and older or by the principal. Parents and older students must send a written request to the principal.

The Ministry of Education states that within 15 days of receiving a written request, or giving the parent notice, the principal must provide a copy of the board’s “Understanding the IPRC Process: A Parent Guide.” This accompanies an acknowledgement of the parent’s request and a written statement of when the IPRC will meet.

During the IPRC meeting the student’s strengths and needs will be discussed, as will various strategies to meet these needs. The meeting is intended to be cordial and collaborative. Parents and staff are encouraged to listen to each other’s views and to treat each other with respect.

The result of the IPRC meeting will be a determination as to whether or not the student is to be identified as ‘exceptional’ and if so whether the exceptionality is behavioural, physical, intellectual, communicational or if there are multiple exceptionalities. Next, there will be a decision on the best ‘placement’ for the student. Should the parent and the committee be unable

to agree, there is an appeal process. Finally, the committee must meet to review these decisions within a year and parents are encouraged to attend these annual reviews.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

The IPRC is a formal process that sets an overall framework for special needs students. There is another process called the IEP process, which is less formal and related more to the day-to-day teaching of the student. An IEP must be developed for a student who is identified as exceptional after an IPRC meeting. An IEP may also be provided for any student it is reviewed three times per year (At or just prior to the first progress report, at the end of term 1/semester 1 and in the spring during planning for the upcoming school year.

The IEP is an educational plan to meet the learning needs of a student and it includes:

- Specific long and short term educational expectations/goals
- An outline of the special education programs, services and other strategies, which will be used to support the student
- A detailed plan outlining how a student's progress will be reviewed

The IEP will be most successful if the classroom teacher prepares it with input from the student and his/her parents.

To initiate this process, parents should approach their student's classroom teacher.

Categories of Exceptionalities

(For complete definitions see the publication "Understanding the IPRC Process")

- Behaviour
- Communication (Autism, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Language Impairment, Speech Impairment, Learning Disability)
- Intellectual (Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability, Developmental Disability)
- Physical (Physical Disability, Blind and Low Vision)
- Multiple Exceptionalities

Community Associations

SEAC includes members from Community Associations. A brief description of each of these Associations is included below. For more information about a particular association, you should contact that association directly.

The WRDSB SEAC includes the following associations:

Association for Bright Children of Ontario

Works to increase the understanding and acceptance of bright and gifted children at home, at school and in the community, and encourages appropriate educational programs.

Website: www.abcontario.ca

Autism Ontario, Waterloo Region

Dedicated to providing support, raising awareness, and developing goals to ensure a secure future for those with autism and pervasive developmental disorders.

Website: www.autismontario.com/

Carizon Family and Community Services

Carizon Family and Community Services is an organization that provides a source of hope for our community. When children, youth, adults, couples or families face life's challenges Carizon programs and services provide the care and compassion to help them achieve wellness. Carizon specializes in children's mental health, youth engagement and development, family violence services, individual and family counselling, parental support and education, credit counselling, workplace resilience, settlement support and community wellness.

Website: <http://www.carizon.ca>

Easter Seals Ontario

Works to support children and youth with physical disabilities, by assisting families with the purchase of equipment, as well as providing summer camp opportunities.

Website: www.easterseals.org

Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region

Family and Children's Services is the Children's Aid Society for the Regional Municipality of Waterloo. The purpose of the agency is laid down by the Child and Family Services Act of Ontario which can be summarized as acting to protect children who are exposed to or at risk of the harms defined in Section 37(2) the Act, or acting to prevent circumstances which could lead to children being in need of protection. The agency strives to fulfill its purpose through an extensive range of services which include investigation and assessment, counselling, residential care, and adoption.

Website: www.facswaterloo.org/

FASD ONE (Ontario Network of Expertise)

FASD ONE is an organization of volunteer FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) Experts who are dedicated to the prevention of FASD and to the diagnosis and effective support of individuals with FASD.

Website: www.fasdontario.ca

Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy

A support group, affiliated with the Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy, for parents that provides a service of communication, support, and advocacy through networking, presentations and workshops.

Website: www.ofcp.on.ca

Parents for Children's Mental Health – Waterloo Region

Is a parent led organization helping families affected with children or youth mental health challenges by providing support, education and advocacy.

Website: www.pcmhwaterloo.com

Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada

Supporting families affected by Tourette Syndrome and its associated disorders through programs of education, self-help, advocacy and the promotion of research.

Website: www.tourette.ca

VIEWS – Blind/Low Vision

A group of parents affiliated with a provincial group called VIEWS whose children are CNIB clients. Dedicated to providing support and to enhance the children's lives.

Website: www.cnib.ca/en/ontario/programs-services/

VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children

VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children offers programs and services for families and professionals who support students with hearing loss. In addition to providing parent to parent mentoring, workshops, conferences and resource publications, including an IEP Guide for Parents, VOICE offers a professional development mentorship program in the auditory-verbal approach funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Website: www.voicefordeafkids.com

Waterloo Regional Down Syndrome Society

Provides information, networking and support to families and friends of individuals with Syndrome and encourages change in community attitudes to improve the quality of life.

Website: www.wrdss.ca

Waterloo Region Family Network

The Waterloo Region Family Networking is a not-for-profit, family-driven resource centre dedicated to providing the support, knowledge and assistance families need in order to make informed decisions. The Network assists all families of children (all ages) with special needs, regardless of diagnosis or lack thereof.

Website: www.wrfn.info/

SEAC is committed to:

- The most enabling environment for all exceptional pupils
- A range of placement options in response to student needs, in consultation with parents
- The provision of resource staff to support the development and delivery of high quality programs for exceptional students
- Collaborative planning among special education resource staff, regular staff, students and families
- Providing parents with the information they need to make appropriate choices.

Appendix

Sample Use of SEAC

This is one example of how a parent's question may be presented at a SEAC meeting.

A parent of a developmentally challenged child wanted to know the age at which her son would have to leave the school system. The parent had conflicting information. She asked a SEAC representative to clarify the issue.

The question was asked as a policy issue: What is the policy of the school board and Ministry of Education regarding students with developmental disabilities? No personal names were mentioned.

The answer was very clear. The Education Act stipulates that developmentally challenged students may remain in the school system until the last school day in June of the school year when they turn 21. See the Education Act, section 49, subsection 2 (1). Developmentally challenged students are not mandated to remain in class right up until the day they turn 21, as this parent had thought.

In this particular case, the student's 21st birthday will be in October. He may stay in school until the last day in June of that calendar year. He would still be 20 years old at that point.