



Handbook for the York County Special Education Advisory Committee

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This handbook was developed for members of the York County Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) as well as others interested in the roles and responsibilities of this group. This booklet defines the roles and responsibilities of SEAC members, but it also defines the responsibilities of the Committee as a whole as they are defined in the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* (effective January 25, 2010).

Members of the committee are appointed based on the valuable knowledge and experience that comes from being a parent of a student with a disability and/or living and learning with a disability. Although the Committee is designed to benefit the students with disabilities who attend York County public schools, members also benefit by learning more about the services provided in the school division and about different aspects involved with delivering services to students with disabilities.

The success of the SEAC depends on the commitment of each member to attend meetings, to learn about the array of services provided in the school division, to be accessible to the community, and to work with the school division to prioritize needs related to services for students with disabilities. Effectiveness also requires an understanding of general education priorities and parameters in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in relation to expectations set for all students within the school division.

The York County School Division appreciates the time and efforts of those who serve on the SEAC and looks forward to the continuous improvement of its services to all students including students with disabilities.

The York County School Division does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability in its educational programs or employment practices.

The Purpose of a Local Special Education Advisory Committee

The SEAC is a fact finding group whose primary role is advisory in nature, based on information provided to them. The SEAC's role is not administrative or policy making. The Committee's primary function is to advise and assist in program planning, not to establish or direct policy.

Reasons for Serving on the York County SEAC

Advisory Committee service:

- recognizes the experience and knowledge that members may bring to the school division as well as their interest in special education and
- offers members the satisfaction of being involved with the education of children, youth, and young adults enrolled in the York County School Division

Responsibilities of SEAC Members

Each member is expected to:

- Attend meetings regularly, including public meetings, executive planning meetings, and other meetings called by the Committee Chair or the Director of Accountability and Instructional Services
- Participate in the advisory committee discussions;
- Refrain from discussing specific students during meetings;
- Respect the confidentiality of parents, students, and other Committee members; and
- Participate in the development of periodic reports to the Superintendent

Because of the importance of participation in meetings, after 3 consecutive absences, the Committee may decide to recommend to the Director of Accountability and Instructional Services that the individual be dismissed from the Committee.

SEAC Meetings

Public SEAC meetings are held at least quarterly. Public notice of each meeting is provided via the web-site, the government access television channel, and through notices sent home with students with IEPs. These meetings may also be announced using other mechanisms such as newsletters and local newspapers.

Each meeting provides an opportunity for public comment. Committee members listen to comments, record issues addressed in comments, and may refer the person to an appropriate party within the school division to assist with issues that may be raised.

Meetings may also include presentations on topics requested by the SEAC, based on issues, concerns, as well as topics that they feel may be of interest to families of students with disabilities. One meeting each year is designated specifically for the review of the updated Special Education Annual Plan and the Application for Federal Funding prior to submission to the local school board.

The York County School Division's Responsibilities Related to the SEAC

The Office of Accountability and Instructional Services will:

- advise the committee on school regulations that might affect their responsibilities,
- provide the committee with all the necessary background information before the members discuss a school problem,
- have a thorough knowledge of all problems presented to the committee and discuss them with the members,
- seek out and listen to the advice and opinions of members, and
- advise the committee on the status of its suggestions.

**YORK COUNTY SCHOOL DIVISION
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
BY-LAWS**

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of local Special Education Advisory Committees are provided in the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* (effective January 25, 2010 at 8 VAC 20-80-90 E.) These regulations state that “a local advisory committee for special education, appointed by each local school board, shall advise the school board through the division superintendent. The composition of the committee shall include parents of children with disabilities and persons with disabilities.”

II. FUNCTIONS

The *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* (effective January 25, 2010 at 8 VAC 20-81-230 D) state that the functions of local advisory committees are to:

- A. Advise the local school division of needs in the education of children with disabilities;
- B. Participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities;
- C. Submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of children with disabilities to the division superintendent for transmission to the local school board;
- D. Assist the local school division in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services;
- E. Review the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services prior to submission to the local school board and the Virginia Department of Education.
- F. Participate in the review of the local school division’s annual plan, as outlined in 8 VAC 20-81-230.

III. MEMBERSHIP

- A. The committee shall include one teacher.
- B. All members other than the teacher must either have a disability or have a child with a disability who is served through an IEP in the York County School Division.
- C. When an opening occurs, interested parties must apply to the Director of Accountability and Instructional Services who will make a recommendation to the Superintendent. The Superintendent forwards his recommendation to the School Board.
- D. Membership on the York County Special Education Advisory Committee shall be appointed by the York County School Board.
- E. Term of Office – The term of office shall be for a period of two years. Vacancies shall be filled by appointment to serve the term of office of the vacated membership. Members may serve for more than one term, depending on the interest of others in the community.
- F. An attempt will be made to appoint membership representing a variety of disabilities.
- G. The Director of Accountability and Instructional Services and other school division personnel may serve only as consultants to the committee.
- H. Public notice shall be published annually listing the names of committee members and including a description of ways in which interested parties may express their views to the committee.

IV. ADVISORY COMMITTEE OFFICERS AND DUTIES

- A. The officers shall consist of a chair, a vice-chair, and a protocol coordinator, elected from the membership.
- B. Duties
 - a. The chair shall call meetings, plan the meeting agenda in cooperation and collaboration with the Director of Accountability and Instructional Services, and preside at meetings.
 - b. The vice-chair shall preside at meetings in the absence of the chair and coordinate presentations and speakers.

- c. The protocol coordinator will be the central point of contact for committee members, disseminate information, and ensure compliance with by-laws.
- d. Minutes of meetings must be taken and copies provided to the SEAC members for approval. These minutes must include: the date, time, and location of the meeting; the members of the SEAC Committee who are present and absent; a summary of the matters discussed; and a record of any votes taken.

V. MEETINGS

The SEAC will meet as necessary to complete its functions which include periodic reports to the Division Superintendent. SEAC meetings will be held at least quarterly at which time the SEAC will hear public comments. All open meetings require public notice, are open to the public, and require that minutes be taken and preserved.

Under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, a “meeting” is defined as “meetings including work sessions, when sitting physically, or through telephonic or video equipment as a body or entity, or as an informal assemblage of (i) as many as three members or (ii) a quorum, if less than three, of the constituent membership, wherever held, with or without minutes being taken, whether or not the votes are cast, of any public body where the business of the public body is being discussed or transacted.”