**Members:** • Association for Bright Children • Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada • Community Living Ontario • Down Syndrome Association of Ontario • Easter Seals Ontario • Epilepsy Ontario • Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario Network of Expertise • Inclusion Action in Ontario • Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario • Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders • Ontario Brain Injury Association • Parents for Children’s Mental Health • VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children

**Affiliate members:** • Association Francophone de Parents d'Enfants Dyslexiques ou ayant tout autre trouble d'apprentissage • Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy • Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario• Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada • VIEWS for the Visually Impaired

**Tip Sheet**

**Effective Practices for Recruitment of Local Association Members for SEAC**

The membership of SEAC and eligibility is based on [Regulation 464/97 Special Education Advisory Committee.](about:blank) The role of SEAC members is to improve the education and outcomes of students with special education needs in their board.

PAAC on SEAC encourages Boards to ensure they have membership that provides parents’ voices on issues around special education.

Regulation 464/97 recognizes the following categories of membership:

* Local association or organization of parents,
* Trustee(s), representative(s) for
* ‘First Nations’ (Indian pupils’) and
* Additional members.

This document is focused on recruitment and qualifications of local association members.

In Regulation 464/97, Section (1) a “local association” is defined as: “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.”

**Eligibility for SEAC Membership:**

To be eligible for nomination as a SEAC member the nominee must be:

* At least 18 years old
* A Canadian Citizen
* A resident of the school board or authority jurisdiction
* An elector or taxpayer for the school board
* A SEAC member cannot be an employee of the school board or authority

Every member of SEAC, including additional members, should meet these criteria. This also means that an individual can only sit on one SEAC. Under the regulation it is ultimately the local school board that is responsible to ensure that all SEAC members are in compliance and adhering to the regulation.

1. **Local Association Membership**

In Regulation 464/97, Section (1) a “local association” is defined as:

“*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 wellbeing of one or more groups of exceptional children or adults.”*

There are three key concepts in this definition.

1. The local association of parents must operate locally within the school board jurisdiction.
2. The local association must be affiliated with an incorporated provincial organization that works on behalf of one or more group of exceptional students.
3. The local or provincial association cannot be an association or organization of professional educators.

PAAC on SEAC strongly believes that the local association members of SEAC should be associations that can effectively represent the perspective of parents and families of students with one or more categories of exceptionality.

The Ministry of Education document [“Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2017)”](about:blank) provides school boards with further guidelines (see section A: Advisory Committees on Special Education)

PAAC on SEAC recommends the following:

1. The SEAC seats for representatives of local associations should be used to bring to the committee the perspective of parents of children with a wide range of exceptionalities and approaches to educating children with special needs.
2. The ministry provides school boards with definitions of exceptionalities for use in the identification, placement, and review process. As many as possible of these exceptionalities should be represented but SEAC should not be constrained by the ministry’s list as some exceptionalities can be listed under multiple identifications and some identifications can cover multiple disabilities.
3. Representatives of local associations should be persons who can express the concerns of the parents of the exceptional pupils of the board and be proficient in understanding the needs of that exceptionality or related disability.
4. Representatives of local associations should bring the perspective and resources of a provincial or a national association that is incorporated and that operates throughout Ontario to further the interests of one or more groups of exceptional pupils.
5. The representative of the local association appointed by the board is normally the person the person nominated by the association.
6. If the local association selects as its representative a member who lives within the jurisdiction of the board, the actual address of the “branch” of the association should not be significant.

**Effective Practices to identify qualified local associations include:**

* 1. Finding out the names and contact information for provincial associations that represent the interests of exceptional students from the PAAC on SEAC website or on the Ministry of Education Website.
  2. Contacting provincial parent associations to identify local groups or chapters within the school board boundaries and/or to request nomination of eligible members of local associations or chapters.
  3. Maintaining an up-to-date list of local organizations that provide support to families of exceptional children or adults.

**Selection of Local Associations on SEAC**

The maximum number of local association representatives that can be appointed is 12 (Regulation 464/97, Section 2 (2)) and in many school board jurisdictions there are many more than 12 eligible local associations.

**Effective Practices for when a school board has received more than 12 nominations for appointment as local association representatives include:**

1. Selecting from within the list of nominees to ensure that there is a representative for each of the exceptionalities.
2. Asking representatives from similar groups, who represent the same group(s) of exceptional children or adults, to consider working together and nominating a single representative.
3. Developing a policy or process to allow additional associations to be nominated to SEAC when a vacancy occurs within the four year term of SEAC.

**Local Association Recruitment Strategies**

In some areas of the province boards have had difficulty recruiting SEAC members who represent local associations. Strategies to recruit local association could include:

* Board wide communications, emails, newsletters to parents, the board website
* Parent Involvement committees
* Special education fairs or events
* Personal contacts
* Ask SEAC members of co-terminus boards if they can suggest a member from their association.
* Approach coordinating agencies in the community for parent associations

PAAC on SEAC suggests approaching some of the provincial organizations and associations below to find out if they have a qualified nominee. These are some of the provincial organizations or associations that the school board could contact:

* Association of Bright Children
* Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario
* Autism Ontario
* Canadian Hearing Services
* Canadian Mental Health Association
* Canadian National Institute for the Blind
* Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada
* Community Living Ontario
* Cystic Fibrosis Canada
* Down Syndrome Association of Ontario
* Dyslexiques ou ayant tout autre trouble d'apprentissage
* Easter Seals Ontario
* Epilepsy Ontario
* FASD ONE
* Hydrocephalus Canada
* Inclusion Action Ontario
* Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
* Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communications Disorders
* Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy
* Ontario Brain Injury Association
* Parents for Children’s Mental Health
* Rural FASD
* Société franco-ontarienne de l'autisme
* Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada
* VIEWS for the Visually Impaired
* VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children

**This list is not a comprehensive list as there are many other organizations that could nominate SEAC members.**

**2. Alternate Members**

Within Regulation 464/97 it is recommended that the board appoint alternate members for SEAC members who are local association representatives, Trustees and First Nations representatives. Alternate members can ensure that a voting member is available in the absence of the SEAC member and can assist the SEAC member in preparing for meetings and connecting with the local association and provincial parent association.

**Effective Practices to involve alternates in SEAC activities include:**

1. Providing all communications and meeting resources to the alternate members.
2. Making it clear during training that the SEAC member is responsible to provide information to the alternate and to be in regular communication.
3. Encouraging all alternate members to attend every SEAC meeting.
4. Nomination, by local associations, of an alternate member who is able to extend the reach of the SEAC member by covering a different geographical area, or bringing specific knowledge or skills.
5. Nomination, by local associations, of alternative members who have an interest in becoming the SEAC member in the future.
6. Having the SEAC member and alternate maintain an on-going relationship with the local association to highlight the value of the SEAC role and increase parent awareness about opportunities to become a SEAC member or alternate.
7. Alternates should be encouraged to volunteer to be on any SEAC subcommittees or working groups. This enables the Alternate to increase their knowledge about special education and to prepare them for replacing the SEAC members.
8. **The School Board SEAC Membership Nomination Process**

The term of SEAC is the same as the term of the elected Trustees, which is four years. Election of Trustees occurs during the municipal election process held every four years, usually in October. The SEAC membership is appointed by the newly elected Trustees at one of their first official meetings

The process for inviting nominations and appointing SEAC members varies between school boards. Some school boards invite nominations as early as September of an election year. Other School boards ask fornominations after the Trustees hold their first meeting and others accept nominations for several months following an election.

PAAC on SEAC recommends that School boards should develop a recruitment process for the new SEAC term in the spring of the municipal election year. This will enable the school board to promote the need for nominations for the new SEAC over the summer and in early fall.

**Effective Practices to solicit nominations for local association representatives include:**

1. Sending letters regarding the nomination process to all eligible local and provincial parent associations that represent exceptional students.
2. Providing community groups, or organizations that support children who have special education needs, with information about SEAC eligibility, and the nomination process.
3. Posting information about SEAC and the nomination process on the school board website.
4. Advertising for SEAC nominations in the local or community newspapers.
5. Sharing information about SEAC and the nomination process with school councils and home and school associations.
6. Increasing awareness about SEAC with the development of a SEAC brochure or fact sheet.
7. Making the SEAC brochure available at every school, or providing copies to all parents of students who have an Individual Education Plan, or who receive special education programs and services.

PAAC on SEAC also recommends that additional local associations should be able to nominate outside of the normal nomination period if vacancies exist on their SEAC and the applicant meets all other qualifications.

As many executives of local associations and some of the provincial parent associations are unpaid volunteers, PAAC on SEAC recommends that School Boards adopt a flexible approach in accepting nomination letters if the letters include the elements noted below in effective practices.

**Effective Practices to Support Nomination Letters from Local Association Members include:**

1. Providing clear information about:
   * Where the letter of nomination should be sent
   * To whom the letter should be addressed
   * Timelines for nomination process
   * Deadline for letters to be received
2. Defining the elements of an acceptable nomination letter as:

* Name of the association and what exceptionality it represents
* Term covered by the nomination, usually 4 years or until the next municipal election
* Name of the nominee and/or alternate nominee
* Statement that the nominee and/or alternate meets the qualifications defined in Regulation 464/97, Section 5 in Appendix 1, including that the nominee is:
  + A Canadian Citizen
  + Over the age of 18 years
  + A Resident in the jurisdiction of the school board
  + A supporter of the school board
* Statement that the nominee and/or alternate is not an employee of the Board
* Basic contact information for the nominee and/or alternate nominee, consistent with privacy legislation
* Signature and title of the officer of the local or provincial association

1. Providing additional contact information about the approved SEAC member and/or alternate, as required by the school board and consistent with privacy legislation, to the school board administration prior to the first meeting
2. Appointing as local association SEAC members only those individuals who are nominated by the local association and/or the provincial association
3. If a SEAC nominee is unable to provide proof of their membership/affiliation with the local association and/or provincial association they should not be considered for local association positions, but rather as Additional Members ( See Regulation 464/97 Section 2 Clause 5 in Appendix 1)