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# Special Ed Advisory Committees in Virginia

## Special Education Advisory Committees in Virginia

By Cynthia Rosacker Glimpse

Parents of children with disabilities call PEATC frequently asking about support groups in their area. We maintain a list of support groups but there is a group in each school district that is required by the Virginia Special Education Regulations. This group is the local advisory committee, which is frequently referred to as Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). Here are eight things you should know about the SEAC.

1. What is the SEAC: Each local school board must appoint a local advisory committee for special education. This committee advises the school board through the division superintendent.
2. Who Makes Up the Committee: The committee includes parents of children with disabilities, older students with disabilities, and other concerned citizens. Local school division personnel shall serve only as consultants to the committee.
3. A Great Reason to Serve on the Committee: This committee offers a way to get to know other parents, be better informed about what is going on in your local schools, and contribute to the community.



4. What Does the Committee Do: The functions of the local advisory committee are as follows:
  - Advise the local school division of unmet needs educating children with disabilities;
  - Assist the local school division in the formulation and development of long-range plans designed to provide needed educational services for children with disabilities;
  - Participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities;
    - Submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of children with disabilities to the division superintendent for transmission to the local school board;
    - Assist the local school division in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services.
1. How to Get Involved: An annual public notice is published listing the names of committee members and includes a description of ways in which interested parties may express their views to the committee.
2. When Are the Meetings: Meetings are held at least quarterly and are open to the public.

3. **One Important Meeting:** One meeting is designated specifically for the review of the annual special education plan/report and funding applications prior to submission to the local school board.
4. **Another Way to Get Involved:** If you are interested in knowing more about SEAC call your school board and ask when and where the meetings are held. The meetings are open to the public. If this is a group that you would like to be a part of, ask how to join. It is a way to getting connected; something we all need.

I have served on my SEAC for four years. I have met other parents, gotten to know more about our public school system, met people in the administration, and learned about special education. I feel connected to the special education community in a new way. We meet monthly except for July and August, but each school district conducts their meetings in different ways. A few even have minutes of their meetings available through their school district's web page. There are many differences; but a common mission to make sure

that each student receives a free, appropriate, public education.

Federal law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]) requires that parents be involved in decision-making meetings that effect their child's education. The role of parents at the local school level on the SEAC insures that parents know what is going on and that they also get to know school officials. The school people get to know the parents and their concerns as well. An opportunity is created for everyone to work together to create quality educational opportunities for all students. We are drawn together for many reasons but our focus is on the children.

Call your school board and find out what your local SEAC is doing. Visit them and consider joining.



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PEATC  
6320 Augusta Drive #1200  
Springfield, VA 22150  
703-923-0010 (Voice/TTY)  
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800-869-6782 (VA parents only)  
703-923-0030 (Fax)  
E-mail: [partners@peatc.org](mailto:partners@peatc.org)  
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