



**Saint Paul Public Schools
Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)
2018-19 End of the Year Report**

A. Purpose:

The Special Education Advisory Council provides information, advice and assistance to the Saint Paul Public Schools District and Assistant Superintendent of Specialized Services on issues related to special education. The Saint Paul Public Schools Special Education Advisory Council was established in accordance with Minn. Stat. sec. 125A.24, sec. 8 (mandates that school districts ensure that parents of students with disabilities are able to share their unique perspective and to be involved in district policy making and decisions). The first Saint Paul Public Schools SEAC was convened in 1973.

B. SEAC Membership:

Saint Paul Public Schools Special Education Advisory Council is an engaged and active group that meets monthly from September through June. SEAC meetings are held at the Administration Building on the first Monday of the month. Members and guests share a meal from 5:30-6:00 p.m. to get to know one another and share experiences. Meetings are held from 6-8 p.m.

SEAC is a council of 17 dedicated members that have served between 1 and 6 years. There are 12 parent/grandparent members, 3 community members, 1 self-advocate and 1 staff. There are many guests that attend SEAC meetings each year. The Council strives to have membership reflective of SPPS' demographics: different areas of the district, age of student, race, culture, gender and disability. The perspectives SEAC members currently bring to the table are: Developmental Disability, Global Delay, Physical Impairment, Learning Disability, mental health, Twice Exceptional, Speech Language, Autism, A.D.H.D. and F.A.S.D. Although members come with their own life experience we strive to share perspectives while considering all student needs.

C. Report:

The topic for the 2018-19 School year was Special Education transition services: whether there were gaps, what the gaps were, and what could be done to improve service delivery and outcomes for students and families in Saint Paul Public Schools. SEAC decided to tackle this topic after receiving data about the problem from the Ramsey County Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Citizens Advisory Committee

(IDD Committee) in June 2018. The IDD committee shared its report on gaps found in Special Education transition services, as well as recommendations to improve the transition planning process for Ramsey County residents. SPPS SEAC was one of several SEACs the IDD Committee presented findings to at the request of the Ramsey County Board.

The IDD Committee reported key gaps in:

1. Lack of information for young adults & families regarding:
 - What choices are available, who makes those choices & when?
 - Critical decisions & timelines (knowing what the impact is)?
 - Potential challenges upon leaving the school system?
2. Lack of consistency in the delivery of information and in offering services.
3. Funding for state & county level resources, for public schools & transition programs is sorely lacking which impacts the quality and level of services for all stakeholders.
4. Gaps in understanding by teachers, social workers, other staff regarding:
 - Who begins the conversation: family or caseworker?
 - Clearly defined roles & responsibilities for each stakeholder.
 - Clear guidelines about the process & decision-making.

Several SEAC members had inconsistent experiences with knowledge and delivery of transition services in middle and high school so the IDD findings resonated. The SEAC chose Special Education Transition as their topic for the 2018-19 school year with the goal of learning about the process in SPPS, identifying any gaps and informing any policy changes to improve outcomes for students and families.

SEAC heard presentations from the following groups as they sought to become better informed of Special Education transition services within SPPS. The following departments and programs presented to SEAC:

- Special Education program updates
- Office of College and Career Readiness (OCCR)
 - K-12 Counseling
 - Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Talent Development and Acceleration Services
- AVID program
- OSS -Special Education Transition services
- Check & Connect Program
- Saint Paul Public Library Services
- Focus Beyond Transition Services
- Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)

- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Saint Paul 3 K Initiative

The presentations were very informative, and the exchange of information during some presentations, especially in the fall of 2018, in conjunction with the hiring of Assistant Superintendent of Specialized Services, Marcy Doud, in December, 2018, has already resulted in positive changes around how counselors and special education teachers collaborate to support students who access specialized services, and the roll out of graduation pathways with trainings at all the high schools has already been completed.

D. Observations/Findings:

Gaps identified were similar to the Ramsey County IDD committee's findings as well as gaps specific to SPPS in communication, resources and understanding.

The biggest gap in SPPS is a lack of consistency in the delivery of information and the offering of services, as well as a lack of knowledge of some case managers and counselors. For example, OSS described the law and process for delivery of services, but this has not been the experience of many parents on SEAC.

In many cases, there is a lack of knowledge around individualizing the transition evaluation to ensure meaningful goals unique to the student and measurable over time.

VRS counselors are available to attend IEP meetings and be involved but they are often not involved before the student is a junior in high school and then it can fall on the parent to know to contact VRS.

It is not clear how transition goals are being monitored (other than simply reporting on goals on the annual IEP).

Some case managers are more likely to report on academic goals, rather than social emotional, employment, or independent living goals.

No doubt there are case managers in the district who do well with delivery of transition services. However, there does appear to be a need for data gathering to further quantify gaps and help inform solutions and track improvements once solutions are implemented.

While a graduation pathway system has been designed and implemented to address gaps in academic information, there is work to be done to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, can access all pathways to competitive employment.

E. SEAC Accomplishments:

1. SEAC made recommendations for Special Education Family Engagement
 - Field trip to Groves Academy LD/ADHD College & Postsecondary Fair, 50 total people attended of which 42 were students from Harding, Johnson, Creative Arts and Highland Park Senior.
 - Special Education Family Resource Fair hosted at Benjamin E. Mays school. 106 people attended. Fifty organizations hosted tables with resources and program information, families could attend sample classes, create make and takes, explore a sensory room and assistive technology.
2. SEAC requested students with disabilities are represented in SPPS marketing materials. The communications department and SEAC hosted a photo shoot in November. Students and families want to see themselves represented in SPPS images.
3. SEAC provided input into the hiring of the Permanent Assistant Superintendent of Specialized Services hired in December 2018 after two and a half years of interim positions.
4. SEAC created an ad hoc legislative committee to help address special education funding and to respond to legislative policy proposals around transition and other special education issues.
5. SEAC has participated in All PAC meetings around the Strategic Plan.

F. Recommendation: SEAC offers the following recommendations and goals:

1. District continue to commit to collaborate with Ramsey County or other relevant organizations to improve service delivery for SPPS students who happen to need Special Education transition services.
2. District to prioritize and approve professional development for case managers, counselors, and other related professionals around delivery of transition services in SPPS.
3. District ensure parents whose students need specialized services are represented on any district or other related groups in order to promote full inclusion of all students.
4. District ensure that all students have access to all pathways and best postsecondary outcomes, whether college or competitive employment in their chosen field.
5. District and Assistant Superintendent of Specialized Services continue to complete an environmental scan of how Special Education transition services are delivered in

SPPS, including data gathering to further identify gaps and inform solutions. Consider requiring every student be told in 8th grade about VRS counselor services, and Ramsey County services where applicable, and that OSS design an opt in method for parents who want to share information with each other.

6. SEAC collaborate with District and Assistant Superintendent to develop resources about Special Education transition services over the 2019-2020 school year. Create a central location for resources about in school, out of school time and peer to peer resources. Create a method of communicating about resources to families. Make sure families are informed and aware of resources. Consider a Transition Road Map or Tool kit for families and staff.
7. All work together to increase communication between general education and special education, and staff, parents and communities. Continue to identify areas of mismatched perspectives, system wide concerns related to delivery of transition services that can be easily remedied to improve outcomes for students and families.
8. Include students with disabilities to a greater extent in SPPS communications and marketing materials. Students of different cultures, race AND abilities should be represented.

Saint Paul Public Schools Mission:

To **inspire** students to **think critically**, pursue their **dreams**, and **change the world**.

Saint Paul Public Schools **SEAC**

Vision:

Education where all children feel good about themselves like school and receive an education that meets their needs in a way that promotes the outcome of happy healthy adults leading meaningful lives filled with joy and contributing to society.

Mission:

The purpose of the Saint Paul Public Schools' Special Education Advisory Council is to collaborate with the District's Office of Specialized Services to:

- Address the unique needs of diverse learners so they can meet their maximum potential.
- Promote an attitude of respect toward all students and a welcoming environment for all families.
- Build strong relationships between families, schools, community partners, and district decision makers to influence policy making.
- Empower and support parents to effectively advocate for children.

We do this by:

- Informing and educating parents, school staff, students and community members through workshops, websites, and printed materials.
- Providing opportunities for parents and caregivers to connect with the schools, community resources and each other.
- Promoting collaboration as a means to improve the education process for all learners.
- Influencing change, policy and procedures through researching needs and advocating for solutions.