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Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)

Statement of Purpose

According to Minnesota Statute 125A.24, school districts must have a special education advisory council that is incorporated into the district's special education system plan. The purpose of the parent advisory council that is established through this statute is to:

- Increase the involvement of parents of children with disabilities in district policy-making and decision-making.
- Advise the district on policy and decisions affecting and/or related to special education.
- Recommend priorities to be addressed by the district in their annual and long-term strategic plan.
- Support the needs of students with disabilities regarding the special education budget at school committee meetings.

The following may be addressed by the SEAC:

- Support of activities on behalf of students with disabilities.
- Development of cooperative relationships between general and special education.
- Training and support for parents, families and students with disabilities.
- Develop strategies so district and parent groups can work together to advocate for current and future legislation including, but not limited to, the implementation and/or reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Serve as a forum for the expression of concerns and recommendations pertaining to the education of students with disabilities in the district.
- Support and encourage involvement of families of learners with disabilities in their school and educational programs.
- Promote an attitude of respect towards all learners and an appreciation of their unique differences.

The purpose of Independent School District 197's Special Education Advisory Council is to represent the interests of district learners with disabilities from birth through age 21, by:

- Advising the Special Education Department on current issues, program needs, parental concerns and involvement, and department priorities;
- Serving as an advocate for high quality special education programs;
- Promoting communication between family, school and community;
- Actively seeking input from students and parents;
- Hosting many informational workshops for parents, students, and community members on current special education topics and services.

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.

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- 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.

Membership

The Special Education Advisory Council shall consist 13 council members: Assistant Director of Special Education, the Assistant Director of Early Learning, Special Education Coordinator, five parent representatives and five special education teachers. The Director of Special Programs will serve as an ex-officio member and ensure that the legal requirements of the SEAC meeting are being met.

The council will vote in one chair and a co-chair (one parent and one teacher), who will be responsible for organizing and facilitating SEAC meetings. The last voted position is the Secretary, who will be responsible for taking meeting notes. The Assistant Director of Special Education will serve as the Treasurer.

Terms of Office

Council members (including chair, co-chair, and secretary) shall be appointed to a term of two years and may serve a total of three terms. The Director of Special Education has the right to extend the term as long as the parent still has a child who is receiving special education services within the district.

Attendance

In order to promote cohesiveness and enable all members of the council to be part of an informed decision-making process, members are encouraged to attend each of the council meetings. The council chair to determine if they are still interested in council membership will contact a council member who misses three meetings.

If a member is unable to attend a council meeting, it is expected that they contact the Special Programs Department at 651-403-7011 before 4:30 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

In case of inclement weather, a council meeting may be cancelled. Every effort will be made to contact council members via a phone call to alert them to the cancellation. Please also check your emails for cancellations.

Meetings

The Special Education Advisory Council will meet three times a year within the District and one time a year within the Dakota County SEAC. Meetings will be limited, as much as possible, to two hours in length.

Discussion and Information Sharing

In order to facilitate discussion among all council members, all members will be asked to limit their comments so as not to prohibit others from speaking. Agendas will be timed so that meetings can be efficient and end on time. If a particular agenda item requires more discussion or more information is needed to make an informed decision, an agenda item may be carried over to the next meeting.

If a council member wishes to bring an item to the council for discussion, they are encouraged to provide the membership with all necessary information to aid in the discussion. If more information is needed, as stated above, the member may be asked to bring it to the next meeting and discussion will be tabled until that time.

If a member wishes the council to discuss an issue that requires outside expertise, they are encouraged to contact the chair prior to the meeting so that the item can be placed on the next agenda and need be, an appropriate speaker can be contacted.