

Ascension Parish Special Education Advisory Annual Report 2022-23

APS SEAC Members for 2022-23:

1. Sagan Allen-Williams (parent)
2. Lisa Bacala (other stakeholder)
3. Lesly Borskey (parent)
4. Jade Brignac (parent)
5. Weston Moreau (parent)
6. Lynette Gros (parent)
7. Eileen Jorgensen (parent)
8. Elizabeth King (special education teacher)
9. Briaon Landry (parent)
10. Marvin Reed (parent)

Chair: Lynn Hathaway, Director of Special Education (non-voting unless tie)

General Meeting Information & Highlights: The Ascension Parish Special Education Advisory Council (APS SEAC) met on the following dates (in-person meetings with virtual option), quorum was reached at all scheduled meetings:

August 31, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

October 26, 2022 at NOON

December 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. - *meeting canceled due to district-wide school closure*

February 23, 2023 at NOON

April 26, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

June 28, 2023 at NOON

Positive & parent friendly features for 2022-23 SEAC meetings:

- SIX meetings scheduled, increase from previous year of three meetings annually
- Offered in-person meetings with virtual option
- Rotated meetings between NOON and 6 p.m. to give parents options for attending
- SEAC Council increased to ten members with eight sitting on as parents

Highlights & Agenda Items from SEAC Meetings

August 31, 2022 (VIRTUAL):

Introductions of all new SEAC members.

Decision to move from virtual meetings to in-person with virtual option.

District update on cameras in the special education classroom - funding approved, but not yet released. APS has already completed cost estimate of approximately \$100,000 for 43 classrooms.

Discussed new business/parent item: making transitions from school to school (primary to middle and middle to high) more effective and efficient for students with special needs, parents and staff.

October 26, 2022 (In-person with virtual option):

Review of parent handbook, feedback received from council members, media department is working on graphics and layout, will continue to take feedback on contents.

Review of transition discussion from last meeting: updated that lead teachers met to discuss and brainstorm ideas for improvement. Discussion of possible checklist for teacher and for parent.

Announcement of Fall Engagement Night: APS partnership with LASARD on November 2, 2022. Flyers sent home. LASARD will have another parent night in the spring and they are continuing their coaching with our special education classrooms for students with significant disabilities.

Update: Cameras in the Special Education Classroom - policy passed by APSB on October 25, 2022.

Parent Items - discussion around access to extra curricular activities & clubs; challenges with school pictures and the need for students to have extra care and time for a good picture.

December 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.: Meeting cancelled due to District-wide school closure

February 23, 2023 at NOON (In-person with virtual option):

Release of Special Education Parent Toolkit Binder and One-page IEP Info sheet. Three thousand copies printed. First editions will be released to all Primary School parents on parent conference day. Attendees given advance copy.

Cynthia Chesterfield from Families Helping Families spoke about resources and support for families with disabilities; explained how the program works and some of the community outreach activities and events. FHF Ultimate Goal: Teach parents about rights and responsibilities and most importantly to represent their child's best interest while working with educators.

Introduction of new Parent Facilitator Jamekco Lewis.

Cameras in the classroom updates - eleven classrooms have cameras installed. Sorrento Primary acted as a testing site to determine appropriate camera selection. Sixty cameras have been ordered and now waiting on the server installation. Parents will receive a letter once the cameras are operational. Forms are currently online.

LASARD Parent Engagement Activity: Wednesday, April 5, 2023 at Sugar Mill Primary. Parent items: Continuing transition discussion around needs for improved communication and orientation sessions. Inclusive activities - discussion on ways to increase activities at school level to involve all students (general and special education). Students need opportunities to build relationships with students outside their own class.

April 26, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. (In-person with virtual option):

Applications for SEAC 2023-24 will be released in beginning of May. Notifications will go out at the end of May to new members and others who applied. We need parents/guardians of students in special education, a Principal/teacher/paraprofessional, and also a community stakeholder who is not a parent or employee of APS.

Transitions update: We now have a transition survey for parents. We are still looking for feedback on this process.

Staffing updates: have added additional teaching and para positions; will be increasing behavior team support and capacity, paras will receive additional training.

LeBlanc will be holding Summer Bootcamp trainings for Admin, teachers, paraprofessionals and special needs bus drivers with focus on behavior, assistive technology, inclusive practices, and IEP compliance and quality.

Cameras updates: cameras have been installed in 23 primary classrooms, 4 more primary to go. All hard drives and software have been purchased and received. Forms are online and now waiting for final tests on server.

Parent item - Sports for inclusion students: discussion around special olympics. Megan Mast, APE Teacher spoke about sports/athletics opportunities that are increasing for students within Ascension Parish. Megan will return for June SEAC meeting with updates regarding progress and activities.

Parent item - Paraprofessional salaries. Discussion regarding need for increased pay for paraprofessionals so that we can be fully staffed with high quality paraprofessionals. Official Motion made and approved by SEAC Council for recommendation for increased pay for paraprofessionals approved. Currently, paraprofessionals work 180 days, 7.5 hours per day. Starting salary \$20,311 (reflects \$15.05 per hour; sick days and benefits are provided). SEAC members researched to find that average national pay for paraprofessionals is \$17.58 per hour; New Orleans paraprofessionals earn \$18.19 per hour.

******Official SEAC Motion approved:***

Recommendation for increased pay for paraprofessionals

Next meeting: Wednesday, June 28, 2023 @ NOON