

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
ST. JAMES PARISH SCHOOLS

Notice: A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) was scheduled for Thursday, March 16, 2023 at 6:00PM at the School Board Meeting Room.

SEAC MEETING MINUTES

1. The meeting was called to order by Senecca Boudreaux at 6:00 PM on March 16, 2023. Ms. Tammy Templet led the prayer. Senecca Boudreaux led the Pledge of Allegiance. Kasi Graver called roll; council members in attendance were Senecca Boudreaux, Tammy Templet, Roxanne Washington, April Cole, Donna Arceneaux, Madeline Young, Renee' Frye. Members who were absent included Dr. Melissa Roussel Ph.D. and Representative Ken Brass. Members of the council went around and introduced themselves. Ms. Senecca Boudreaux mentioned there were two additional council members not in attendance.
2. A review of public comment procedures was given by Senecca Boudreaux. She also mentioned that there would be one final Special Education advisory meeting in April.
3. A review of the SEAC process was given by Senecca Boudreaux. Senecca Boudreaux explained the goal of the council, she mentioned that there were 9 members, members serve on the council for one year, and SEAC meets 3-4 times per year.
4. Senecca Boudreaux announced there was no old business that needed to be discussed, so the meeting progressed to new business.
5. Senecca Boudreaux opened the floor for new business by introducing Carson Phills, Unified Champion Schools Manager. Carson Phills presented the purpose and goal of the Special Olympics. One goal of the Special Olympics is to expand to focus on community, and district levels and to provide a higher frequency of activities outside the one olympic

event. He explained that the Special Olympics was a sports organization but was a service organization first. The Special Olympics currently offers 14 unified sports and will be adding 2 additional sports soon. Athletes can compete on district, state, national, and international levels. He discussed inclusive youth leadership as an important component of Special Olympics. Inclusive youth leadership includes opportunities provided to the students off the sports field. Whole school engagement was also discussed as an important part of Special Olympics; he gave examples of dress down days in support of various disabilities. He stated that all programs and initiatives are free. He left booklets for anyone wanting more information to take. He presented a video featuring Ponchatoula High School, which was recognized with an ESPN Honor Roll Award. The video lasted 5 minutes. The video showed how the school practices inclusive practices through the buddy program, gardening, and unified sports. He ended his presentation by offering his help to enhance initiatives that have already been started in the district, and asked for questions.

Questions that were presented to Carson Phills were:

- Is the Special Olympics only for students enrolled in school? (by Donna Arceneaux)
Yes (Carson Phills)
- Is the Special Olympics primarily focused on the students with Intellectual Disabilities? (by Tammy Templet)
Yes (Carson Phills)
- What is the focus on the program offered for younger children starting at age 2? (by Tammy Templet)
The young athletes program focuses on jumping, running, and other activities. (Carson Phills)

Senecca Boudreux mentioned some inclusive planning taking place in our district at Paulina Elementary. One of the speech therapists and PE teachers are seeking opportunities through grant funding to add inclusive equipment to their playground so all students can have equal access. A council member then welcomed the Special Olympics to St. James Parish.

6. Senecca Boudreaux announced that the 1st annual Special Olympics will be held May 5, 2023 at St. James High School. The goal of this event is to

provide special education students, who have the most significant disabilities, an opportunity to participate safely and successfully in athletic activities. Permission slips were sent home for the Special Olympics. The event will be open to the public, and she encouraged family members to attend. She explained the Olympics will consist of 4 events: 50 meter run, 200 meter run, softball throw, and long jump. The events will be led by the APE teachers. St. James High School's softball team will be assisting with the event. Letters about the event are going to be sent to community organizations and businesses. St James High School's media team will be covering the event. Everyone in the Special Olympics will be a winner; all students will get a medal. The council members selected the Special Olympics T-shirt design following the meeting. There were no questions concerning the Special Olympics.

7. There were no parent agenda items. Senecca Boudreaux announced the email address that parent agenda items could be sent.
8. Senecca Boudreaux announced the following council agenda items for discussion:
 - A) How can the needs of students with specific learning disabilities be better met in the General Education Classroom?

The council spent a lot of time discussing this particular topic. The consensus of the group was that parents need help making informed decisions during IEP meetings. Parent training was suggested by several of the council members. Senecca Boudreaux led the council members in a discussion of the importance of using accommodations and modifications to help keep students participating in the general education curriculum, rather than pulling them out. Tammy Templet mentioned the importance of parents advocating for their children, and how as a principal she always welcomes questions posed by parents. Madeline Young mentioned how her special education teachers support her in the general education curriculum. Senecca Boudreaux gave a question for council members to reflect on, have we as an IEP team exhausted everything to help children be successful within the general education setting before alternatives are considered? She also discussed that the parent is a member of the IEP

team. Seneca Boudreaux discussed the importance of addressing both the students' strengths and weaknesses. She explained that we do not want a student to lose an identified strength because we spend all of our time focusing on an area of weakness. She discussed that Louisiana has high expectations for students with disabilities. We believe that all students can learn, and IEP goals should be both ambitious and attainable.

B) What are the challenges our students with disabilities face when it comes to the state's accountability system?

Tammy Templet discussed the new literacy screener for K-3rd graders that is required by the state. She mentioned that this is challenging for some non-verbal students. Seneca Boudreaux explained that the state now mandates that students with certain disabilities be given the chance to take the assessments with accommodations outlined in their IEPs. The score of zero cannot just be given to a child because they are non-verbal, instead their speaking devices should be utilized to the best of their ability. Seneca Boudreaux explained that the state requires all students to be assessed. She explained the difference between the LEAP test and LEAP CONNECT test. She explained the importance of having high expectations for all students.

C) What kinds of resources and/or training would be necessary for the parents of students with disabilities to support the students at home?

Council members agreed that parent workshops, and resources offered by Bayou Land's Families Helping Families could help students at home.

9. Seneca Boudreaux asked for public comments. Kasi Graver confirmed that there were no public comments' requests for any of the agenda items.

10. Closing remarks were made by each of the attending council members.

11. The meeting was adjourned on March 16, 2023 at 7:10 pm.

At the conclusion of the meeting, council members selected the Special Olympics T-Shirt design. There were seven members of the public present in the audience.