

# **SSD Parent Advisory Council (PAC) Handbook**

**September 2010**

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# **Mission and Vision of the SSD PAC**

## **Our Mission**

The mission of the Special School District Parent Advisory Council (SSD PAC) is to fulfill the legislative directives outlined in Senate Bill 687, codified as Sections 162.212, 162.855, 162.856, 162.857, 162.858, 162.859, 162.860, 162.865, 162.867, 162.870 and 162.910 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri. These legislative directives include the following powers and duties addressed specifically to the Special School District Parent Advisory Council:

To consult with the Governing Council and Board of Education on issues involving pupils or parents of pupils of the District, including procedures for parental rights in resolution conferences and other proceedings regarding disputes between a parent and the local school district, the special school district or both, over the education of a pupil; and

To appoint three members to the public review committee who are able to work toward consensus for the ultimate benefit of children who receive special education services.

## **SSD PAC Vision Statement**

SSD PAC is committed to working toward real inclusion as well as increasing educational opportunities for children of all abilities.

## **How SSD PAC Works:**

SSD PAC representatives consult with:

- Superintendent of SSD and/or staff
- SSD Governing Council (which is made up of one Board of Education member from each of the SSD 22 partner school districts)
- SSD Board of Education (appointed by the Governing Council)
- Public Review Committee (appointed for one year, every four years, to review Special School District)

In addition to its mission and vision, a purpose of the SSD PAC is to collaborate, educate and advise the above groups concerning the rights and concerns of families of children with disabilities.

Up-to-five parent representatives (one voting member and up-to-four alternates) are self-nominated, selected or elected from each of the 22 partner school districts and each of the five SSD schools to form the SSD PAC. Terms for members are for two years.

The PAC generally meets at 7 p.m. on the 3rd Wednesday of each month in the Board of Education room at SSD's Central Administrative Office at 12110 Clayton Road in Town & County.

**Sample SSD PAC Agenda**  
**Month, Day, Year**  
**Time – Location, Address**

- I. **Call to Order** – The PAC President (or Vice President in their absence) begins the meeting.
- II. **Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum** – The corresponding Secretary will verbally call attendance by district and individual PAC member. Quorum is established when a simple majority of the districts with active members are represented by at least one member. Currently we have 17 districts with active members which means 9 districts must be present in order to establish quorum.
- III. **Approval of Agenda – MOTION REQUIRED** Approval of the meeting agenda. If anyone would like something added/changed, a motion would be needed to do so. Then a second motion would be required to approve the agenda with the revision.
- IV. **Approval of Minutes - MOTION REQUIRED** Approval of the previous month's minutes. If anyone would like something added/changed, a motion would be needed to do so. Then a second motion would be required to approve the agenda with the revision.
- V. **Public Comments** – This time is reserved for anyone (PAC member or visitor) who would like to make a comment, voice a concern, etc. Each speaker will be timed and limited to three (3) minutes.
- VI. **Standard Orders of Business**
  - a. **Unfinished Business** - Any items that were tabled at the prior meeting.
  - b. **New Business** - Any new items to be discussed by the organization.
  - c. **Committee Reports** – Any committees that have been established by the PAC (i.e. Executive Committee), or any SSD committee
    - Executive Committee
    - Special Committees – PAC representatives report on any SSD committees that they have attended since the last PAC meeting.
    - Liaisons (Board of Ed Meeting Reports, Joan/Lynn/John, etc.)
- VII. **Announcements** – This section will be dedicated to any announcements regarding upcoming events, activities, classes, etc.
- VIII. **Scheduled Speakers** – Any scheduled speakers would present at this time. We will attempt to limit the number and duration of speakers throughout the year.
- IX. **Special Orders** - This is where special orders such as elections would take place.
- X. **Good of the Order** - This is a time set aside for members to offer comments or observations (without formal motions) about the society and its work.
- XI. **Adjournment – MOTION REQUIRED**

## **Parent Advisory Council at the District Level (D-PAC)**

Parent representatives are elected/selected from each school in their district to form a district-level parent council. D-PAC parents may consult with their district superintendent and/or liaison, the SSD director for their district, their elected SSD PAC representative and their SSD Governing Council member.

**District-level PAC members** may consult and collaborate on solutions to issues that effect the quality of education received by students with disabilities • discuss the effective use of the resources of both the partner district and SSD to achieve that end • affirm the voice and the rights of students with disabilities and their families within the context of their home district

### **Purpose of a Parent Advisory Council at the District Level**

- To assist parents in networking and communicating with other parents of children who receive special education services in their school district
- To help parents become as informed as possible about their child's special education services and the school districts that serve them
- To improve communication and promote general collaboration between the partner district and Special School District
- To create a positive understanding and awareness for students with disabilities in all of our schools
- To establish a network for advocacy for local, state and national disability issues

### **Roles of a District-level PAC Representative**

- Help improve communication between parents, partner districts and Special School District
- Attend regular committee meetings with the administrators of your district or be available to receive information (consider having an alternate PAC representative in the building for instances when you cannot attend a meeting or need someone to share responsibility)
- Distribute the minutes and other information from these meetings to principals, teachers and other parents in your building
- Work with your building principal to have a PAC position on the PTO/PTA board of your school
- Serve as a contact for other parents by assist them in accessing information and introducing them to individuals who can answer their

questions (you do not need to have all the answers, but may be a contact to refer parents to administrators, teachers, agencies or others parents who may have the answers)

- Promote a positive awareness for students with disabilities:
  - To make sure students with disabilities are a part of all school activities, publications, assemblies and field trips
  - To make sure they are eligible to receive awards, recognition and diplomas
  - To make sure they are listed appropriately in school directories/"buzz books"
  - To make sure parents feel welcome and a part of the school
- Form a support group or informal network within your school to assist other parents in accessing information about the district and services for their children (staff from the Parent Education & Diversity Awareness program can assist you in setting up these groups)
- Start a disability resource area in your school (such as the library or counselor's office) and have books, handout and brochures for parents and staff
- Find ways to recognize staff and students who have done an outstanding job
- Encourage principals and teachers to attend some of the PAC meetings

### **Suggested Topics for PAC Meetings at the District Level**

- Special education services (available at elementary, middle/junior high, senior high levels)
- Disability awareness programs
- IEP process
- Adaptations and modifications/504 Plans
- How to talk to your child about his or her disability
- Plan a PAC "Get to Know You Meeting" where parents share their stories and learn to recognize each other as support for other parents
- Transportation issues
- District diploma issues
- Referral/diagnostic process
- Recognition of teachers/students who do an outstanding job
- Discipline/suspension of students with disabilities
- Visit to Family & Community Resource Center at SSD Central Office
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
- Presentations from local agencies (e.g., The Recreation Council, St. Louis Regional Center, LDA)
- Sibling support

- General and special education collaboration
- Least-restrictive environment
- Differentiated instruction
- Health concerns: Training and awareness of nurses
- Building friendships/self-esteem/circle of friends
- Summer opportunities/The Recreation Council
- Transition planning/Transition Program at SSD
- Estate planning/Missouri family trust/guardianship
- Effects of medication on learning
- Staff awareness events (show videos such as FAT City Workshop, have speakers)

### **Ideas for Networking Within the Partner District Schools**

- Put notices in your principal's newsletters informing other parents of your role as a PAC representative and other information parents might need
- Submit information for district publications
- Give your principal a letter that he or she could give to new parents that would introduce you as a contact for them
- Talk to your principal about getting on a PTO/PTA board to help create school-wide awareness of students with disabilities
- Network within the school to gain contacts through the counselor, nurse, resource room teachers
- Do a needs assessment in your school (parents, staff, students when appropriate)
- Work with staff to create a brochure of SSD services, programs and contacts within your district or building
- Have packets of information about the PAC and resources for parents at open houses, for IEP conferences, for the counselor to give new parents, for the school nurse (packet could include a letter from you, brochure on district services, SSD Parent Education & Diversity Awareness Program, census information etc.)
- Plan grade-level, school or district-wide disability awareness days;
- Plan district-wide events
- Work with principals to pilot awareness programs for teachers;
- Recognize general and special education teachers who do an outstanding job in working with students with disabilities
- Join district committees and talk about your PAC role



## **Suggested Ground Rules for PAC Meetings**

- Problems and issues discussed in PAC meetings should reflect the need for clarification of district policies and procedures, concentrating, when possible, on the problem or issue itself, rather than who is having it
- Issues to discuss may also reflect the tone/climate in the buildings, or the relationship between your district and SSD
- Individual problems should be referred to your teachers and area coordinators
- Try to avoid sharing personal information, but if someone does, please respect the confidentiality of others
- Everyone should have a chance to comment without interruption or judgment by others committee members
- Try to limit the comments you make to a few minutes at a time

## **Characteristics of Groups That Work**

- Members trust each other
- Goals are clear and are determined by the members
- Members feel as if they belong
- Members identify with each other's experiences
- Conflict is recognized and discussed with the intent to resolve
- Members accept responsibility for group functions
- Communication between members is clear and direct
- Members use each other as a resource and as support
- Members feel empowered
- Individual differences are respected

*(adapted from Maine Parent Federation)*

# Parent Advisory Council (PAC) Needs Assessment

Do you need more information in these disability areas?	Yes	No
Autism Spectrum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asperger Syndrome	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speech/Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attention Deficit Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental Retardation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Behavior Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bipolar Disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Auditory Processing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe) _____		

Do you need information in these cross-disability areas?	Yes	No
Assistive technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transition to adult life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sibling support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing my child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friendship/social skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homework strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to advocate for my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stress management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe) _____		

## **What is the best way to get information to you (please check 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> choice):**

	1 <sup>st</sup> best way	2 <sup>nd</sup> best way
Invite me to a meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meet me in my community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Come to my home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Send information home with my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mail it to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email it to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fax it to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Call me at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Call me at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Page me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Send me a videotape/dvd	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Please fill out:**

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_ Pager \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to call me: in the morning ☐ in the afternoon ☐ in the evening ☐

Email address \_\_\_\_\_ Fax number \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's school \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher's name \_\_\_\_\_

## **HISTORY OF THE PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL AT SSD**

**Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council** — In the late 1980s, two Parkway parents asked the SSD superintendent to start a Parent Advisory Council. There was no formal membership, but the plan was to have representatives from each of the then 23 partner districts and SSD schools to gather once a month to discuss issues. Two councils were formed: one for parents whose children were served in the SSD schools (SSD Parent Advisory Council), and the other for parents of students in the 23 partner districts (LEA Parent Advisory Council). The councils met for several years and were productive on many issues, but never were able to get equitable representation from all of districts.

**Parent Planning Committee** — In 1993, SSD's parent program initiated the Parent Planning Committee (PPC) with representatives from the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council. Derrick Dufresne, a facilitator who does consultative work throughout the country, was brought in to assist the committee with the planning phase. The committee adopted as its mission statement: To develop a formal plan that ensures parents will have a strong and equal voice in special and local district issues, and will be involved in planning and decision making at all levels of the educational process of children with disabilities. The PPC continued to meet and plan for about two years, but interest in the committee was difficult to sustain.

**Parent Liaison Committee** — In the fall of 1995, the SSD Board of Education asked the superintendent to start parent groups at the partner district level. The parent program was asked to coordinate this effort, which resulted in the Parent Liaison Committees (PLC). A plan was implemented where parents were to meet monthly or quarterly in their districts with SSD and partner district administrators. A representative from each district was to serve on a district-wide PLC that would meet monthly with the superintendent. The intent of the PLC was to have SSD

administrators develop and lead meetings until parents were comfortable enough to take over and continue on their own with district support. By second semester of the 1995-'96 school year, PLC had parents who had volunteered to be a parent liaison in more than 200 schools in 19 partner districts. In January through May of 1996, 60 PLC meetings were held. Parent Liaison Committees ran successfully for several years with SSD administrative support. Unfortunately, only a few of the districts had parent groups strong enough to sustain themselves without SSD in the lead role.

### **Parent Advisory Council**

In 1996, Missouri Senate Bill 687 changed the governance of SSD and along with the legislation mandated the formal creation of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) An SSD Governing Council made up of board members from each partner district also was created by the legislation and it was given the responsibility of establishing a process for PAC members to be “independently selected by parents of pupils of the special school district” and to consult with them.

In April 1997, the Governing Council approved its process for selection and the first PAC members were elected in May. They represented a parent group that was for the first time independent of SSD. The PAC has been meeting monthly since the fall of the 1997-'98 school year. Beginning with the 1998-'99 school year, the election procedure was turned over to the SSD PAC members.

Three possible levels of participation:

SSD PAC — representatives are elected/selected from each of the 22 partner districts and each of the five SSD schools to represent their district/school at the inter-district level

District Level (D-PAC) — parent representatives from each building in the district come together to represent their school at the D-PAC district level

Building Level (B-PAC) — all parents whose children receive special education services participate at the B-PAC level