

ASCENSION PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Special Education Advisory Council

MEMBER HANDBOOK

2026–2027



LeBlanc Special Services Center
611 N. Burnside Avenue | Gonzales, Louisiana 70737
Official SEAC information: ascensionschools.org/schools/other-programs/leblancspecialservices/seac

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How to Use This Handbook

This handbook establishes operating expectations for the Ascension Special Education Advisory Council (Ascension SEAC). It should be read with current Louisiana law, Ascension Parish School Board policy, and the annual membership and meeting information posted on the district's SEAC webpage. If a conflict exists, controlling law and formally adopted district policy govern.

The handbook is administrative guidance and is not legal advice. The district may revise it when law, policy, or council procedures change.

1. Welcome and Purpose

Purpose

Ascension SEAC provides parents, district staff, students when selected, service organizations, and community stakeholders a structured opportunity to advise and provide feedback regarding special education policies, procedures, and resources. The council also conducts outreach to increase community knowledge, support, and collaboration concerning special education.

Vision

Students with disabilities are respected, supported, and provided equitable opportunities to meet meaningful educational expectations and prepare for successful futures.

Operating Commitments

- Keep students with disabilities and their families at the center of districtwide discussion.
- Promote communication, collaboration, trust, and shared learning among families, educators, service providers, administrators, and community partners.
- Represent districtwide needs rather than a single student, school, disability group, organization, or personal agenda.
- Use information, lived experience, data, and respectful dialogue to develop practical advice and recommendations.
- Connect families and the broader community with reliable special education information and resources.

Ascension Operating Model

Ascension's council is composed of members representing the Donaldsonville, Dutchtown, East Ascension, Prairieville, and St. Amant feeder systems. The council meets approximately six times during the year and is co-chaired by the district's Special Education Director and a parent leader nominated and elected by the current council. Annual rosters, dates, times, agendas, minutes, and reports are maintained on the official SEAC webpage.

2. Legal Foundation and Advisory Role

Legal Authority

Louisiana law requires each local public school superintendent to create a special education advisory council. The council's statutory purposes are to provide advice and feedback about special education policies, procedures, and resources and to engage in community outreach.

Authority: La. R.S. 17:1944.1; Acts 2019, No. 274, as amended through Acts 2025, No. 479 (effective December 1, 2025).

Advisory Status

SEAC is an advisory public body. It does not direct district employees, determine student eligibility or placement, develop or amend an individual student's IEP, decide complaints, expend funds, or establish School Board policy. Final administrative and policy decisions remain with officials who possess that authority under law and Board policy.

The council may nevertheless conduct its own public business by approving minutes, adopting reasonable operating rules, forming committees when authorized, and voting on advice or

recommendations to be transmitted to the Superintendent and/or School Board. Such action remains advisory unless accepted or acted upon by the proper district authority.

Open Meetings

Because the council performs public advisory work, its meetings and formal actions shall be conducted in accordance with Louisiana Open Meetings Law. Meetings are open to the public unless a lawful executive session is authorized. Proxy voting and secret ballots are prohibited; votes are taken by live voice and recorded in the minutes.

Authority: La. R.S. 42:11–28, including R.S. 42:14, 42:19, and 42:20.

3. Council Responsibilities

SEAC members work with the Special Education Director to:

- Advise and provide feedback on districtwide special education policies, procedures, priorities, programs, services, supports, and resources.
- Review information and identify patterns, strengths, barriers, and opportunities affecting students with disabilities and their families.
- Provide a family and community perspective on proposed initiatives and implementation issues.
- Support collaboration among families, schools, district leaders, service organizations, and community partners.
- Share accurate, general information and promote awareness of available supports and parent resources.
- Develop recommendations through informed discussion and, when appropriate, formal motions and recorded votes.
- Engage in outreach that increases knowledge, support, and collaboration concerning special education.
- Review the annual district report required by La. R.S. 17:1944.1(D) and ask clarifying, system-level questions.
- Complete other advisory work assigned or requested within the council’s lawful purpose.

Matters Outside the Council’s Role

- Resolving an individual student’s IEP, evaluation, placement, discipline, service-delivery, or due-process dispute.
- Receiving or investigating confidential complaints about a specific student or employee.
- Directing staff, supervising programs, negotiating contracts, or committing district resources.
- Speaking for the district or council without authorization.
- Using council membership to promote a commercial, partisan, personal, or organizational agenda.

When an individual concern is raised, the chair redirects the person to the appropriate district contact or available dispute-resolution process without discussing personally identifiable information in the public meeting.

4. Membership and Leadership

Composition

The Superintendent determines the number and composition of the council, subject to Louisiana law. Membership shall satisfy all of the following:

- At least 50% are parents or legal guardians of students with an exceptionality other than gifted and talented who are enrolled in, or receive special education services from, the district. These parent/guardian members may not be district employees.
- A high school student with an eligible exceptionality and one nonemployee representative of an entity serving students with disabilities or their families may be counted toward the 50% category when selected in accordance with law.
- At least 10% are other special education stakeholders not represented in the parent/guardian or school-personnel categories.
- At least one member is a teacher, principal, or paraprofessional who serves students with disabilities in an Ascension school.
- The district seeks representation across elementary, middle, and high school levels and, when practicable, across feeder systems, disability perspectives, and communities.

Application and Appointment

The district solicits applications from eligible parents and guardians, teachers, principals, paraprofessionals, students when appropriate, service organizations, and other stakeholders through its website, social media, and other public channels. The Superintendent or designee appoints members after reviewing statutory categories, qualifications, representation, and council needs. Membership is voluntary and unpaid.

Terms and Vacancies

Ascension may use staggered terms to support continuity; the annual application or appointment notice controls the length of a member's term. A member may reapply and may be reappointed at the Superintendent's discretion. Vacancies are filled by appointment for the remaining term or as otherwise stated in the appointment notice.

Chair

As required by Louisiana law, the Superintendent designates the SEAC Chairperson. The Chairperson calls and presides over council meetings and establishes meeting agendas.

5. Member Standards and Service

Member Expectations

SEAC members serve as representatives of Ascension Public Schools and the communities they represent. Members are expected to conduct themselves professionally and respectfully during meetings, outreach activities, public communications, and other council-related interactions.

Conduct must reflect the district's core values of **Teamwork, Leadership, Learning, and Service**, as well as its commitment to respect, tolerance, integrity, and collaboration.

Members are expected to:

- Attend meetings, arrive prepared, review distributed materials, and participate actively.
- Notify the Chairperson promptly when unable to attend.
- Treat council members, district personnel, families, students, and members of the public with dignity and respect.
- Listen carefully, ask clarifying questions, consider different perspectives, and express disagreement respectfully.
- Refrain from personal attacks, threatening or intimidating conduct, harassment, discrimination, or disruptive behavior.
- Focus comments and recommendations on districtwide improvement and the council's posted agenda.
- Protect confidential and personally identifiable information.
- Disclose any actual or apparent conflict of interest and follow the Chairperson's direction regarding participation.
- Communicate accurately and distinguish personal opinions from formally approved council recommendations.
- Avoid statements or conduct that could reasonably misrepresent the council's position or undermine public trust in the district.
- Support community outreach and maintain constructive relationships with the communities represented.
- Use district or council affiliation appropriately and obtain authorization before speaking on behalf of SEAC or Ascension Public Schools.

Attendance, Resignation, and Removal

Regular attendance and professional conduct support an informed, cohesive, and effective advisory council. Members who are unable to attend a meeting should notify the Chairperson as soon as practicable.

A member who is unable or unwilling to continue serving should submit written notice to the Chairperson, preferably at least 30 days before the next regularly scheduled meeting when practicable.

The Superintendent or designee may remove a member for:

- Repeated unexcused absences;
- Loss of eligibility for the membership category represented;
- A material violation of confidentiality, applicable law, Board policy, or council procedures;
- Failure to disclose an actual or apparent conflict of interest;
- Harassment, discrimination, personal attacks, threatening, disruptive, or unsafe conduct;
- Misrepresentation of the council or district;
- Repeated conduct inconsistent with the district's core values or the responsibilities of council membership; or

- Repeated disregard of established council standards after notice and an opportunity to correct the conduct.

Before removal, the district should provide the member with notice of the concern and a reasonable opportunity to respond, except when immediate action is necessary to protect safety, confidentiality, legal compliance, or the orderly operation of the council.

Meeting Ground Rules

- The Chairperson recognizes speakers and maintains an orderly, respectful discussion.
- One person speaks at a time, and members must wait to be recognized before speaking.
- Members must listen respectfully and may not interrupt, ridicule, intimidate, or engage in personal attacks.
- Comments must address the pending agenda item and focus on issues rather than individuals.
- Differences of opinion must be expressed professionally and in a manner consistent with the district's values.
- The Chairperson may redirect or stop comments that are repetitive, irrelevant, confidential, personally identifying, disruptive, threatening, discriminatory, or otherwise inconsistent with council procedures.
- Reasonable time limits may be applied consistently to support participation and the timely completion of council business.
- Questions or concerns involving individual students, families, or employees will be redirected to the appropriate district process and will not be discussed during the public meeting.

6. Meetings and Public Participation

Schedule and Location

Ascension SEAC ordinarily meets six times each year, exceeding the statutory minimum of three meetings. Meetings are held within Ascension Parish. The district may alternate daytime and evening meetings to broaden participation. The official webpage controls for current dates, times, cancellations, and rescheduling.

Public Notice

- At the beginning of each calendar year, publish the dates, times, and places of regular meetings established for the year.
- Post written notice of each regular, special, or rescheduled meeting no later than 24 hours before the meeting, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays.
- Include the agenda, date, time, and place; post at the principal office or meeting building and on the district website as required by law.
- List each agenda item separately and describe it with reasonable specificity. The agenda may not be changed within the statutory 24-hour period.
- Provide notice to members of the public and news media who have requested it in the required manner.

Authority: La. R.S. 42:19. Extraordinary-emergency exceptions are applied only as allowed by law.

Public Access and Comment

Meetings are open to observation. The council shall provide an opportunity for public comment before taking action on an agenda item that will be put to a vote. The council may adopt reasonable, viewpoint-neutral rules addressing speaker registration, time limits, order, decorum, and duplication. Public comment is not a question-and-answer session and does not permit disclosure of confidential student or personnel information.

The district will provide accessible meeting participation consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act and La. R.S. 42:14(E). A person requesting an accommodation should contact the district sufficiently in advance when practicable. When the council has remote-participation capability, or when viable alternative participation is required, the district will follow adopted procedures and applicable law.

7. Agenda, Parliamentary Procedure, and Voting

Agenda Development

The chair establishes the agenda with input from the parent co-chair, members, district staff, and stakeholders. Members should submit proposed topics by the chair's announced deadline and explain how the topic advances the council's districtwide purpose. Agenda placement remains subject to relevance, legal review, available information, time, and district priorities.

Standard Order of Business

1. Call to order; roll call and determination of quorum.
2. Approval of agenda and prior minutes, when listed for action.
3. District updates, presentations, and unfinished business.
4. New business, with public comment before any vote.
5. Member and community information, outreach items, and future topics.
6. Summary of actions and assignments; announcements; adjournment.

Parliamentary Procedure

The council uses the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised as a procedural guide when consistent with law, Board policy, and this handbook. The chair may use simplified procedure for a small advisory body while protecting fairness, clarity, and participation. Controlling law prevails over parliamentary rules.

Quorum and Voting

A quorum is a simple majority of the council's total membership unless controlling law or an adopted rule requires more. No official action is taken without a quorum. After discussion and required public comment, the chair restates the motion and conducts a live-voice vote. Each member's vote is recorded in the minutes. Proxy votes, secret ballots, and serial communications used to evade an open meeting are prohibited.

Items Not on the Agenda

The council ordinarily discusses and acts only on posted items. A matter not on the agenda may be taken up only through the unanimous procedure authorized by La. R.S. 42:19, including reasonable specificity, public comment before the vote to add the matter, and required minute entries. This authority may not be used to defeat the purpose of Open Meetings Law.

8. Minutes, Records, and Confidentiality

Minutes

District staff records written minutes of each meeting. Minutes shall include, at minimum, the date, time, and place; members present and absent; substance of matters considered; motions; public comment where required; and the vote of each member. Minutes are approved through the council's public process and posted or made available as required by law and district procedure.

Authority: La. R.S. 42:20 and Louisiana Public Records Law, La. R.S. 44:1 et seq.

Records

Agendas, minutes, annual reports, approved recommendations, and other council records are retained and disclosed according to public-records law and district retention procedures. Members should route records requests to the district's designated public-records contact and should not delete or independently release council records that may be subject to retention or legal review.

Confidentiality and Student Privacy

SEAC's work is districtwide and should not require access to personally identifiable student information. Members shall not identify or discuss an individual student, family, or employee in a public meeting. Student education records may be shared only when authorized by FERPA, IDEA confidentiality rules, Louisiana law, and district procedure. District staff will aggregate or redact information when appropriate.

Confidentiality rules do not convert otherwise public council business or records into secret information. Questions about whether a record may be shared must be referred to the chair or district legal/public-records personnel.

Electronic Communications

Members shall not use group email, text messages, social media, or serial one-to-one communications to deliberate council business outside a properly noticed meeting. Administrative communications—such as distributing an agenda, confirming attendance, or sharing a public resource—should not invite reply-all deliberation.

9. Annual Reporting and District Information

SEAC Annual Report—Due in May

Each May, SEAC submits a written report regarding its activities to the Superintendent and the Louisiana Special Education Advisory Panel. The Superintendent ensures that the report is posted on the district website and submitted to the Louisiana Department of Education for publication. The report should summarize:

- Membership and meeting dates;
- Topics, presentations, and information reviewed;
- Outreach activities;
- Formal recommendations or advice and the status of district responses, when available;
- Progress toward annual council priorities

Annual District Report to SEAC

The Superintendent provides SEAC with an annual report containing, as applicable:

- Special education financial data, including federal, state, and local funding;
- Subgroup academic data for students receiving special education and related services;
- Compliance violations relating to special education requirements; and
- The number of designated seclusion rooms as defined by La. R.S. 17:416.21.

The report should be presented in an accessible, privacy-protective format that supports informed questions and districtwide recommendations. SEAC does not receive personally identifiable student information for this purpose.

Authority: La. R.S. 17:1944.1(C)–(D), including Acts 2025, No. 479.

Annual Operating Information

The district’s official SEAC webpage is the authoritative source for the current roster, meeting calendar, agendas, minutes, annual reports, and archived council materials. Because those items change annually, they are incorporated into this handbook by reference rather than duplicated as permanent handbook text.

10. Communication, Outreach, and Individual Concerns

Community Input

Parents, students, educators, service providers, and community members are encouraged to share districtwide topics with SEAC members or the chair. Submissions should describe the general issue, the students or systems affected, available information, and the type of advice or improvement requested. The chair determines whether the topic is appropriate for a future agenda, referral, or written resource.

Outreach

- Share accurate information about district special education resources and family supports.
- Develop parent-friendly resources, learning sessions, surveys, or feedback opportunities approved through district procedures.
- Seek perspectives from feeder systems and communities that may be underrepresented.
- Coordinate with service organizations and district departments without endorsing private providers or products.
- Report outreach activities and themes without identifying individual students or families.

Individual Concerns and Complaints

SEAC is not a complaint-resolution body. A person seeking help with an individual student matter should use the district’s established special education contacts and complaint-resolution procedures. Public comment at SEAC does not replace an IEP meeting request, prior written notice, mediation, a state administrative complaint, a due process complaint, or another right available under IDEA or Louisiana law, and it does not extend any filing deadline.

Contact and Current Information

Meeting location: ITTC Building, 14101 Roddy Rd, Gonzales, LA 70737

District main office: Ascension Parish School Board, 1100 Webster Street, Donaldsonville, LA 70346 | 225-391-7000. SEAC webpage: <https://www.ascensionschools.org/schools/other-programs/leblancspecialservices/seac>

Appendix A. Member Guidelines

The Ascension Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) provides advice and feedback regarding special education policies, procedures, and resources and supports community outreach. Members bring parent, student, educator, and community perspectives to identify strengths, raise concerns, and recommend improvements for students with disabilities and their families.

These guidelines support meaningful participation and reflect the district's core values of **Teamwork, Leadership, Learning, and Service**.

Participation and Shared Responsibilities

Members should:

- Attend meetings regularly, review distributed materials, participate in discussions, and notify the Chairperson when unable to attend.
- Treat students, families, fellow members, district personnel, and the public with dignity and respect.
- Listen to different perspectives, ask questions, and express disagreement respectfully.
- Identify barriers, raise concerns about policies and practices, and offer recommendations for districtwide improvement.
- Follow established meeting procedures and support opportunities for others to participate.
- Disclose conflicts of interest relevant to council business.
- Protect confidential information and avoid disclosing personally identifiable student information during public discussions.
- Conduct council business in accordance with applicable open-meetings, public-records, and privacy requirements.

Appendix B. Model Meeting Agenda

Item	Purpose / Required Procedure
1. Call to Order	Chair opens the public meeting.
2. Roll Call / Quorum	Record members present and absent; confirm quorum.
3. Approval Items	Read each item with reasonable specificity; permit public comment before the vote.
4. Presentations / Updates	Receive information and ask system-level questions.
5. Unfinished Business	State any motion clearly; discuss; permit public comment before voting.
6. New Business	Address only properly posted items; permit public comment before voting.
7. Outreach / Future Topics	Collect ideas without deliberating unposted substantive business.
8. Action Summary	Confirm assignments, owners, and target dates.
9. Adjournment	Motion and recorded vote if required by adopted procedure.

Public-comment reminder: A general comment period may be offered, but public comment must occur before action on every agenda item upon which a vote will be taken. The chair applies adopted reasonable rules consistently.

Minute Checklist

- Date, time, place, and type of meeting
- Members present and absent
- Substance of all matters considered
- Exact motions and the identity of mover, when recorded by procedure
- Opportunity for public comment before each vote
- Individual live-voice votes and result
- Assignments, announcements, and adjournment time

Appendix C. Legal and District References

Louisiana Local Special Education Advisory Councils: La. R.S. 17:1944.1 (current through Acts 2025, No. 479).

Louisiana Open Meetings Law: La. R.S. 42:11–28, particularly R.S. 42:14 (open meetings, voting, public comment, accessibility), R.S. 42:19 (notice and agenda), and R.S. 42:20 (minutes).

Louisiana Public Records Law: La. R.S. 44:1 et seq.

Student Privacy: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. §1232g and 34 C.F.R. Part 99; IDEA confidentiality provisions, 34 C.F.R. §§300.610–300.627.

Accessibility: Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§12131–12165; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. §794.

District SEAC Page: <https://www.ascensionschools.org/schools/other-programs/leblancspecialservices/seac>

Parliamentary Guide: Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, current edition, used only when consistent with controlling law and district rules.