

# Washington State Special Education Advisory Council

Improving the Education for All Students with Disabilities

**MEMO TO:** Randy Dorn, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

**FROM:** Ann Waybright, Chairperson  
Washington State Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)

**DATE:** July 1, 2016

**RE:** Special Education Advisory Council Annual Report

I am submitting the 2015-16 annual report of the Special Education Advisory Council activities and recommendations for your consideration. This report fulfills the requirements set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 392-172A-07060.

As a part of this report, the council reviewed the recommendations from the prior year, and noted progress towards those recommendations as well as identifying emerging trends and issues in the current school year. The recommendations reflect the review of information and summarize the work of the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) for the 2015-16 school year.

SEAC wishes to express our appreciation for the collaborative and effective relationship we have with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). This relationship provides SEAC with the information and opportunity to maintain a strong and open line of communication regarding the issues that are critical to the needs of students with disabilities that receive special education services in Washington State. Additionally, SEAC recognizes the tireless work of the OSPI Special Education Section. We also appreciate the time you spend with us sharing your perspectives and priorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this report with you. If you have any questions, or if I can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me at [awaybright@bethelsd.org](mailto:awaybright@bethelsd.org).

# 2015-16 Washington State Special Education Advisory Council ANNUAL REPORT

The Washington State Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) operates in compliance with State and Federal Requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B, and Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.155. The purpose of SEAC is to identify emerging issues, and facilitate the provision of special education and related services to meet the unique needs of the state’s 135,000 eligible students. The annual report provides information on membership, activities, and recommendations of the council for the 2015-16 school year, and is respectfully submitted to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Randy Dorn.

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

SEAC met three times during the 2015-16 school year. These meetings were in various locations throughout the state to ensure an opportunity for participation by community members. The meetings for the 2015-16 school year were as follows:

Date	Location	Topics
October 7 and 8, 2015	Anacortes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEAC orientation for new members, and establishment of group norms.</li> <li>• Results of federally required Annual Performance Report for 2014.</li> <li>• Washington’s State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) project update.</li> <li>• Proposed state regulations regarding the use of Restraint and Isolation.</li> <li>• OSPI Special Education update</li> <li>• Parent Liaison Report/Program update</li> <li>• 2015 SBAC (statewide test scores) update</li> </ul>

February 4 & 5, 2016	Olympia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of OSPI's Legislative Priorities for the 2016 Legislative Session.</li> <li>• Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorization update.</li> <li>• Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) update.</li> <li>• Consistency Index Initiative update.</li> <li>• Review of the legislative bills of interest to SEAC members.</li> <li>• Charter Schools in Washington update</li> <li>• Legislative visits by SEAC members.</li> </ul>
May 5 and 6, 2016	Spokane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-site visits to two charter school programs at PRIDE Prep and the Spokane International Academy</li> <li>• Legislative end of session update</li> <li>• OSPI Special Education update</li> <li>• ESSA accountability planning update</li> <li>• SEAC By-law Review and Change</li> <li>• SEAC compiled draft 2015-16 Annual Report</li> </ul>

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**

SEAC membership includes a majority of (at least 51 percent) parents or person with disabilities. Qualified persons are encouraged to apply.

A listing of current membership and affiliation follows:

**2015-16 SEAC MEMBERSHIP ROSTER**

<b>Member Name</b>	<b>Washington State Representation</b>
*Andres Aguirre	DSHS/Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Megan Bale	Assessment Specialist Seattle
*Sarah Butcher	Parent/Bellevue Special Needs PTA
*Shari Cotes	Parent
Lou Oma Durand	Secondary Transition Services
*Carrie Fannin	Private School
Cheryl Fernandez– <i>Executive Committee</i>	Special Education Teacher
*Sherry Krainick	Washington State PTA
*Darci Ladwig	Parent/Spokane County Special Needs PTA
Jennifer Lee	Parent/Spokane County Special Needs PTA Parent to Parent Coordinator Spokane, Whitman and Lincoln counties at the ARC of Spokane
*Kimberly Leger	Parent/Special Education Administrator
Rebecca Lockhart– <i>Executive Committee</i>	Parent/Special Education Administrator
*Victoria McKinney	Parent/Training and Information Center
Ann Waybright – <i>Executive SEAC Chair</i>	Related Services

\*Denotes individual who meets requirements of IDEA as a parent or person with disabilities. The council consists of members appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction who are representative of the state population, and are involved in or concerned with the education of children with disabilities. Staff members from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Special Education Section are available to provide technical assistance to SEAC in order to enhance the Council’s ability to execute its responsibilities.

## SEAC GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We believe students receiving special education services are general education students first.
- We believe in the Principles of Universal Design.
- We believe in a growth mindset where each student can show growth and achieve when we provide meaningful access and opportunity in school and school/community events.
- We believe in the use of multiple, valid, and reliable measures to capture academic, social and emotional skill development and growth addressing the whole child.
- We believe every student has the right to earn a high school diploma through access and opportunity provided with appropriate accommodations and modifications.

## LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

SEAC once again recognized the need to inform legislators of concerns regarding services for students eligible for special education and related services. The February 2016 meeting, held in Olympia, afforded members the opportunity to meet with their legislators. The key recommendation to legislators by SEAC focused on state budget and constitutional issues regarding fully funding basic education in Washington.

- Special education students are general education students first. Failure to fully-fund basic education will have a negative impact on special education students and programs because the basic education allocation is the foundation upon which the special education excess cost entitlement formula rests. Continued discussions must resolve fully funding basic education consistent with the Washington State Supreme Court decision in *McCleary* to avoid continuing unintended consequences for students eligible for special education services.
- In addition, the Washington State Congressional delegation should lead the fight for fully funding IDEA at the federal level.
- Supported Superintendent Dorn's priorities (SEAC's February 4, 2016 minutes).

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the 2015-16 school year, SEAC meetings focused on the review and status of previous recommendations, and provided additional input to OSPI regarding emerging special education issues and trends. The following accomplishments for the year include:

- SEAC strongly supported full funding of basic education in Washington State and the results of the State Supreme Court decision in the *McCleary* case.
- SEAC members made visits to their local legislators and staff to discuss Superintendent Dorn's legislative priorities for the 2016 legislative session, and how his priorities align to the needs of students eligible for special education services.
- SEAC's knowledge base increased through the various speakers and information sessions that were available to the group.
- SEAC provided recommendations to WEA and OSPI on Common Core and Special Education training modules; Smarter Balanced Assessments and the WA-AIM alternate assessment system.
- SEAC provided recommendations to OSPI regarding the annual performance report (APR) and State Performance Plan (SPP) requirements of the federal Department of Education, specifically Indicator 17.

- SEAC members participated on numerous national and local task forces/committees related to special education issues.
- SEAC received routine updates on the status of the reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and five SEAC members sit on designated ESSA workgroups.
- SEAC visited PRIDE Prep and the Spokane International Academy, two charter public schools.
- SEAC members received an update on parental trends and issues by Scott Raub, OSPI Family and Community Liaison.
- SEAC gave input to OSPI regarding the State's five-year plan to improve educational outcomes for students eligible for special education services.
- SEAC reviewed and provided input on OSPI's Consistency Index Initiative.
- SEAC supported and encouraged a continuing dialogue between assessment, special education & general education staff at OSPI.
- SEAC provided comments on the proposed restraint and isolation regulations that became final in January of 2016.
- SEAC updated the by-laws, and developed a SEAC commitment letter for use with future SEAC members.

## **PROGRAM OF WORK 2015-16**

At the last meeting of 2015-16, SEAC members reviewed work accomplished during the year, and identified priorities for 2016-17 school year. This review resulted in the development of a list of identified areas for consideration. The areas of consideration in 2016-17 include:

- Continue to advocate, monitor, and support funding increases for basic education consistent with the Supreme Court's most recent timetable.
- Review state-identified compliance issues regarding measurable annual IEP goals, sufficient evaluations, and service delivery issues, as well as discipline and procedural protections.
- Continue to refine and implement the Consistency Index Initiative within the state.
- Review post school outcomes for students eligible for special education: High School and Beyond Plan & Transition Plan, and continue to inform legislators about transition issues specific to the special education population
- Positively influence the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on behalf of students with disabilities.
- Review the certification requirements for general and special education teachers.
- Maintain SEAC's involvement in the development of the social/emotional learning standards.
- Explore the professional development systems for regular and special education staff including certificated and classified staff.
- Review research-based inclusion practices and outcomes.
- Examine the impact of linking graduation (certificates of academic and/or individual achievement) with performance on standardized tests.

SEAC members reviewed format and content which was addressed in the 2015 Annual Report. A number of recommendations from 2015 continue to be relevant, and the following recommendations are included for Superintendent Dorn’s consideration:

**Recommendation 1:**

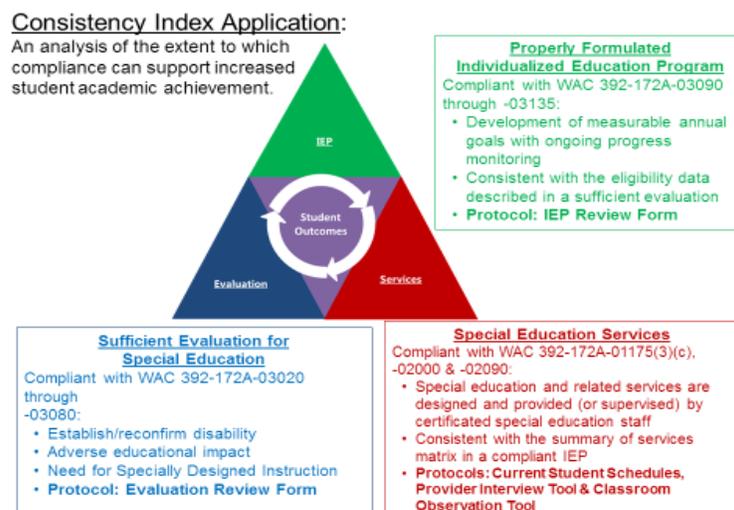
**SEAC continues to support legislative efforts to fund the prototypical school model that will fund the actual cost of educating all students.**

This recommendation is consistent with historic SEAC recommendations regarding funding for general and special education. SEAC recognizes that the cost of educating students with disabilities remains a concern for many school districts. Students with special education needs should not be scapegoats for inadequate and outdated funding of basic education. When basic education funding is adequate, the special education funding for excess costs for eligible students will be proportionately adequate as well because special education funding is a multiplier of the basic education allocation for all students. SEAC *strongly* recommends that the Legislature apportion the true costs of educating all students in Washington State without relying on local levy assistance.

**Recommendation 2:**

**SEAC recommends that special education service providers establish a stronger relationship between the student’s evaluation, IEP, and delivery of services.**

Students receiving special education services do so based upon an evaluation that confirms their need for specially designed instruction. For an IEP to be meaningful and authentic, it must reflect relevant and meaningful recommendations contained in a sufficient evaluation report. When there is a direct link between a sufficient evaluation and the IEP, the services delivered to the student in a classroom or related services environment can more adequately reflect and provide the expectations described in the IEP. SEAC recommends that professional development efforts by OSPI, Educational Service Districts, state-funded projects and local school districts focus attention on quantifying this relationship through the development and implementation of a Consistency Index (see below). SEAC further recommends that in some cases, targeted staff development will be necessary to ensure that the Consistency Index can be implemented with fidelity.



**Recommendation 3:**

**SEAC supports the development of a Best Practices Website.**

The development and maintenance of a “best practices” website in the area of special education was included in the Governor’s proposed budget for the 2015-17 biennium. Although the website was not included in any subsequent budget proposals from either the House or Senate in 2015, SEAC is supportive of the website, and encourages OSPI and the Legislature to secure adequate funding.

As of the 2015-16 school year, research is underway at the state, ESD and district level utilizing the Consistency index (see Recommendation 2) as a means of identifying best practices for inclusion in the “best practices” website. Website development to communicate these practices in an accessible way to practitioners, community and family members will commence upon completion of research and vetting of aligned resources.

SEAC believes this resource would be essential for school staff as well as parents/guardians involved with students receiving special education services. Research based practices that demonstrate strong alignment in the consistency index (evaluation, IEP and delivery of services) need to be highlighted and available for others to emulate. SEAC strongly encourages OSPI to continue to support the development of a “best practices” website.

**Recommendation 4:**

**SEAC continues to support OSPI in the integration of data for information and program improvement purposes.**

A longitudinal integrated student data system that is query capable would provide relevant information to improve services to students with disabilities, and improve the capabilities of special education personnel. An integrated data system would also provide a method of capturing trend data and help ensure that this information drives changes and improvements for all students. Implementing the integrated data system would ease transitions from early learning to the K–12 school years and beyond. A well-designed system will better inform policy and decision-making. SEAC believes that a query capable, integrated data system will serve to assist stakeholders in effectively, and efficiently examining the critical variables that influence high quality instructional services for students with special education needs.

**Recommendation 5:**

**SEAC supports the development and implementation of an accountability plan consistent with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that maximizes flexibility in Washington, and is respectful of and considerate on behalf of students receiving special education services.**

SEAC members are actively participating in the ESSA reauthorization planning and development process. SEAC believes that the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides an important opportunity for Washington to reshape and redesign an equitable system of accountability for all students. SEAC believes that the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) should be the foundation of the accountability plan for all students, and that OSPI should take full advantage of the opportunity to create and apply multiple measures when determining the extent to which the state’s accountability plan considers schools and districts in need of improvement. SEAC strongly encourages OSPI to be thoughtful and intentional in the development of a meaningful accountability plan. SEAC recognizes that the decisions made in the design and implementation of a statewide accountability system will effect an entire generation of k-12 students.

**Recommendation 6:****SEAC recommends an ongoing examination of special education pre-service and in-service requirements.**

SEAC continues to support OSPI's efforts to examine current pre-service and in-service training requirements to determine how administrators, teacher candidates and para-educators are best prepared to enter and excel in the field of special education. Teacher candidates need to understand and use state learning standards and extensions of those standards to improve academic outcomes. Familiarity with a Continuous Improvement Cycle model for all students, adequate supervision of para-educators, and modification and accommodation strategies are all necessary components of a teacher preparation program. SEAC also sees value in the co-teaching and mentoring models as ways to allow teacher candidates to work closely with accomplished teachers who understand assessment, intervention, and instructional strategies that meet the needs of students eligible for special education and related services. At a minimum, every teacher candidate should have formal, supervised time working with students eligible for special education. SEAC recognizes the need for targeted and specified training for all educators working with special education students. SEAC also sees the need for on-going professional development in the areas of social/emotional skill development, classroom management and mental health issues. In addition to improved pre-service and in-service training opportunities for teachers and related services staff, SEAC believes that on-going efforts to improve the skills of special education administrators needs to continue. SEAC encourages OSPI to continue to work with the Professional Educators Standards Board to develop a special education administrator endorsement.

**PARTICIPATION ON TASK FORCES AND COMMITTEES**

SEAC members participated in a variety of state committees established by OSPI including:

- OSPI/WEA State Needs Project Special Education Cadre Trainers.
- State Rehabilitation Counsel.
- UW Bothell Enhancing Capacity for Special Education Leadership (ECSEL).
- OSPI's Admissions and Professional Conduct Advisory Committee (APCAC).
- University of Washington Special Education Advisory Board.
- OSPI's Institutional Education Committee.
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) steering committee
- National Parent Center Network.
- The Center for Parent Information and Recourses (CIPR), US Dept. of Education.
- Project AWARE – Youth Mental Health Project
- Ready WA
- State Independent Living Council
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Steering Committee and sub-committees
- State and national PTA
- Professional Educators Standards board sub-committees on certification
- State interagency coordinating council
- Results Washington

## **EMERGING ISSUES FOR NEXT YEAR**

Key issues will again be ESSA development and implementation, school funding, and assessment. Additionally, we will be focusing on the following:

- Professional development needs for pre-service and in-service educators including administrators, certified staff, and para-professionals on special education issues and evidence based practices (Core Competencies).
- Enhanced post school transition services (interests, values and aptitude).
- B-3rd Grade & WAKids data.
- Development of Best Practices website.
- Recruitment & retention of special education staff to build sustainability in the workforce.
- Research based models of inclusive practices.
- SBA test results—review of impact on special education students and need for accommodations and alternate delivery systems.
- Development and implementation of social/emotional standards.
- Trends and issues related to areas of identified non-compliance.
- Alignment of Special Education IEPs/evaluations/delivery of services.
- Charter school challenges for students eligible for special education.

## **ONGOING ISSUES**

- Parent involvement
- Instructional improvement.
- Staff development.

As always, SEAC serves at the request of the State Superintendent. We look forward to working together on priorities identified by you and your staff.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

SEAC appreciates the opportunity to provide recommendations and input for consideration. This report reflects the combined efforts of all those who have been involved within SEAC and staff from OSPI. We recognize that there is a need to draw a clear line from recommendations, to budget, and to potential legislation. We hope this report can help clarify that line.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to work with OSPI. We look forward to the coming year and our continued work with you!