

# Michigan's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

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This Diverse Group of Stakeholders Supports Opportunities for All Students

September 2017



Michigan Department of Education  
Special Education Advisory Committee

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# Michigan's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

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This Diverse Group of Stakeholders Supports Opportunities for All Students

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), a federally-mandated body, meets monthly during the school year to learn about, discuss, and offer advice to the state education agency and the State Board of Education (SBE) on issues affecting students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs). The **mission** of the SEAC is to support opportunities for all students in Michigan, especially those with IEPs, by gathering, sharing, and disseminating information to the public; advising the State Board of Education; and working with the Office of Special Education.

## Summary Look at the SEAC Role

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1. The SEAC is required by the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA).
2. The SEAC serves as an advisory committee to the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and the State Board of Education.
3. The SEAC is a stakeholder group, which comes together to give advice.
4. The diversity of the SEAC membership enhances the quality of advice given.
5. The advice of the SEAC is based on fact and good judgment.
6. The SEAC provides policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in Michigan.
7. The SEAC does not set policy.
8. The SEAC participation helps members (contacts, information, etc.).

## Advisory Versus Advocacy -- A Single Voice

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Sharing unique experiences can be vital to the work of the SEAC. The array of backgrounds among the members is part of why the collective opinion of the SEAC members is so highly valued. Newcomers begin to recognize that while they may come to the SEAC as advocates, their role as members of the SEAC is different. Collectively, they listen to and learn from one another, and then advise the MDE and the SBE.

The SEAC is designed to help foster an environment where members share viewpoints in order to advise policy as a single voice. After any new issue has been introduced, members work in small groups in structured discussions, ensuring that all members get a chance to speak.

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Arriving at a point where 33 individuals speak in a single voice usually requires some compromise. In this large and varied group, reaching consensus does not necessarily mean everyone shares the same view on a particular issue. Rather, the SEAC comes to agreement on its collective advice, and that advice may point out where differences exist. The SEAC works to resolve these differences when possible.

As an advisory panel, rather than an advocacy committee, the primary work of the SEAC is complete once the advice is sent on to the SBE and the MDE. Although the SEAC works to advise as a collective entity, individuals also find personal and professional benefits as SEAC members. They learn about special education issues in the state, and how opportunities and expectations for students with disabilities vary across the state. As SEAC members, they can apply what they learn to their personal situations as well as carry important information to the organizations and agencies they represent.

## **SEAC's Role – per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

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The advisory panel shall—

- (i) advise the State educational agency of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;
- (ii) comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities;
- (iii) advise the State educational agency in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 1418 of this title;
- (iv) advise the State educational agency in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports under this subchapter; and
- (v) advise the State educational agency in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities. (CFR 300.169)
- (vi) Review and comment on completed due process hearing findings. (34 CFR 300.513(D)(1)).

The 33 member committee consists of representatives from 25 organizations plus 8 members-at-large. There are also several non-voting ex-officio members who represent state agencies which have responsibilities related to students with individualized education programs (IEPs).

Members hail from all over Michigan. They are teachers, parents, school superintendents, social workers, school board members, and many in other careers. Some have a longtime history with special education. Others are beginners in the system. They are a diverse group, yet they're united in one purpose—to support opportunities for all students in Michigan, especially those with disabilities.

The SEAC comprises what one former member called “Michigan’s special education stakeholders in a microcosm.” The diversity of stakeholders makes the SEAC highly valued by the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for its input on policy, performance goals, and the unmet needs of students with disabilities.

## **SEAC Composition**

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What are the federal regulations for membership of State Special Education Advisory Panels? § 300.168 Membership (a) General. The advisory panel must consist of members appointed by the Governor, or any other official authorized under State law to make such appointments, be representative of the State population and be composed of individuals involved in, or concerned with the education of children with disabilities, including— (1) Parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26); (2) Individuals with disabilities; (3) Teachers; (4) Representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel; (5) State and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities under subtitle B of title VII of the 2 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.); (6) Administrators of programs for children with disabilities; (7) (Representatives of other State agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities; (8) Representatives of private schools and public charter schools; (9) Not less than one representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities; (10) A representative from the State child welfare agency responsible for foster care; and (11) Representatives from the State juvenile and adult corrections agencies.

In Michigan, the SEAC members are appointed by the SBE and serve three-year terms. State law caps membership at 33. Twenty-five organizations are represented, and eight at-large members are appointed by the SBE.

As required by the national Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which governs special education for all states, at least 51 percent of the members must

be either individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities, ages birth through 26 who currently receive special education services. (§300.168b)

Nine ex-officio members attend meetings and provide input, although they do not vote. The ex-officio members always include the State Director of Special Education and may include the immediate past chair of the SEAC. The SEAC also includes additional ex-officio members representing various state agencies.

Members of the SEAC Executive Committee and other veteran members serve as mentors to first year members. The mentors guide the new members through the varying SEAC processes and orient them to the collaborative culture of this unique advisory committee.

## **Organizations with SEAC Representation**

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- American Federation of Teachers Michigan (AFTM)
- The Arc Michigan
- Autism Society of Michigan (ASM)
- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
- Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan
- Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan (LDAM)
- Michigan Alliance for Families
- Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)
- Michigan Association for Children’s Mental Health (MACMH)
- Michigan Association of Computer Users and Learning (MACUL)
- Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA)
- Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools (MANS)
- Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA)
- Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA)
- Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB)
- Michigan Association of School Psychologists (MASP)
- Michigan Association of School Social Workers (MASSW)
- Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)
- Michigan Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Michigan ASCD)
- Michigan Education Association (MEA)
- Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association (MEMSPA)
- Michigan Reading Association (MRA)
- Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Association (MSHA)

- Michigan Transition Services Association (MTSA)
- Student Advocacy Center

## **State Agencies with SEAC Ex-Officio Representation—per IDEA Requirements**

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- Educator Preparation Institutions
- Michigan Department of Corrections
- Michigan Department of Education – McKinney Vento Act
- Michigan Department of Education – Office of Special Education
- Michigan Department of Health & Human Services – Education & Youth Services, Child Welfare
- Michigan Department of Health & Human Services – Juvenile Justice
- Michigan Department of Health & Human Services – MI Rehabilitation Services

## **SEAC's Recent Work**

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(Function #1) Advise re: Unmet Needs

The SEAC is charged with identifying Unmet Needs within special education and bringing them to the attention of the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). Unmet Needs issues that the SEAC has studied over the year are challenging behavior and assistive technology. When the SEAC selects issues such as those outlined above as priority Unmet Needs, then members first analyze the scope of the problem by reviewing related data. They then identify areas of consensus and generate a data guided document for consideration by the MDE and SBE. These are reflected in SEAC's Annual Report.

(Function #2) Comment Publicly on Proposed Rules

The SEAC did not comment publicly on rules or regulations proposed by the state in the education of children with disabilities as there were no rules in the promulgation process during the 2016–2017 school year.

In a related matter, however, following presentations regarding ESSA planning, several SEAC members did provide feedback to MDE representatives and to the ESSA stakeholder survey.

(Function #3) Advise re: State Performance Plan Targets

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Under the IDEA, Michigan is responsible for a six-year State Performance Plan (SPP) for special education. The SPP is comprised of 17 performance indicators that measure the state's progress. Six of these indicators are compliance indicators, with targets set by the US Department of Education (USED), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Twelve of the indicators are results indicators, with targets set by the state.

The SPP and Annual Performance Report (APR) summarize Michigan's outline for progress toward state and federally established targets. During the 2013-2014 school year, the OSEP made several sweeping changes.

- The SPP and the APR were combined into a single document.
- Several indicators were removed, as the data were submitted elsewhere.
- A new indicator, the State Systemic Improvement Plan, was created.
- New targets were to be submitted for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2013 through FFY 2018.

The majority of data that will be submitted on February 1, 2018 will come from the 2016-2017 school year.

The targets for the results indicators are determined by the MDE Office of Special Education (OSE) with input from the SEAC and other stakeholder groups. In order to provide helpful input into the target setting process, SEAC members need to have a basic understanding of indicators for which targets are to be set.

Typically, one month's meeting is slated to have a learning session. The state indicator team presents what the indicator measures, related historical information, the rationale for the recommended targets, and the proposed targets. SEAC members have the opportunity for questions and discussion. The following month's meeting includes an "action item" when the SEAC makes a decision regarding its position on the proposed target and provides its formal advice to the MDE OSE.

During the 2017-2018 school year, the MDE OSE will review and provide feedback on graduation flexibility re: the cohort of students considered.

(Function #4) Advise re: monitoring corrective action plans

There were no federal monitoring activities required during the 2016–2017 school year.

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(Function #5) Advise re: Development of Policies Related to Coordination of Services for Students with IEPs

The State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) takes into consideration the SEAC's thinking about the proposed coordination of efforts across offices as well as the early literacy priority area and its related targets.

In the current work of

- implementing the goals and strategies of Michigan's Top 10 in 10 Plan, and
- the alignment of the ESSA plan, and the requirements of the State Technology Plan,

the SSIP is being used as the framework to address the major components of these plans while also addresses the MDE priorities around

- creating equity as well as
- focusing on early literacy.

(Function #6) Review Due Process Hearing Findings

The SEAC met its obligation to receive findings and decisions of all completed due process hearings related to special education by receiving summary information pertaining to all completed due process hearings.

At the end of each school year, the SEAC publishes an annual report reflecting it works in each of the six (6) Function areas over the past year. It serves as a summary of the key activities and accomplishments of the committee for the SBE and the MDE of the SEAC efforts to support the education of children with disabilities. The annual report is accessible to the public on the SEAC website.

SEAC Website

The [SEAC website](http://seac.cenmi.org) (seac.cenmi.org) contains information on the committee's role and functions, its current members, a meeting schedule, current year meeting notes, the most recent annual report, and links to federal and state legislation.

SEAC 2017-2018 Priorities

During the 2017-2018 school year, the SEAC will:

- Provide feedback on State Performance Plan Indicator 1: Graduation.

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- Review Michigan’s proposed revised significant disproportionality measures per new OSEP regulations.
- Consider Michigan Department of Education’s Becoming a Top 10 Education State in 10 Years when providing advice re: unmet needs of students with IEPs
- Provide feedback to the Office of Special Education regarding emerging work about the ISD role as IDEA grant sub-recipients
- Others to be identified

## **Public Welcomed at SEAC Meetings**

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Meetings of the Special Education Advisory Committee shall be open to the public [34 CFR 300.653(d)].

The public is welcome to attend and observe the SEAC meetings. Attendance at a meeting provides an opportunity to listen to presentations and discussions. All visitors are asked to complete Part One of the *SEAC Visitor Registration Form*, which is available on the [SEAC website](http://seac.cenmi.org) (seac.cenmi.org) and on-site at the registration table. See SEAC Procedures for details about how members of the public may also make a formal request to address the SEAC as a group. Please note that there is no response to the public comment during the Committee of the Whole meeting. The Executive Committee reviews issues identified during the public participation at their debrief when the committee discusses future agenda considerations.

### Meeting Details

The SEAC meets from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Most meetings occur at Lansing Community College West, 5708 Cornerstone Drive, Lansing, MI. 48917. Meeting agendas and related documents are available on the [SEAC website](http://seac.cenmi.org) (seac.cenmi.org) and on-site at the registration table.

A regular SEAC meeting includes establishment of a quorum (at least 17 members), approval of the agenda and past meeting’s summary, public participation, state department reports, reports from ex-officio members, committee reports, presentations, and dialogue.

## 2017-2018 Meeting Dates

Event	Date	Time	Location
New Member Orientation	Sunday 9/17/17	4:30– 8 p.m.	Henry Center, Lansing
Retreat	Monday 9/18/17	9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Henry Center, Lansing
Business Meeting	Thursday 10/6/17	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Lansing Community College West, Lansing
Business Meeting	Wednesday 11/1/17	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Lansing Community College West, Lansing
Business Meeting	Wednesday 12/6/2017	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Lansing Community College West, Lansing
Business Meeting	Wednesday 01/10/18	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Lansing Community College West, Lansing
Business Meeting	Wednesday 02/7/18	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Lansing Community College West, Lansing
Business Meeting	Wednesday 03/7/18	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Lansing Community College West, Lansing
Business Meeting	Wednesday 04/4/18	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Lansing Community College West, Lansing
Business Meeting	Wednesday 05/2/18	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Lansing Community College West, Lansing
Business Meeting	Wednesday 06/6/18	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Lansing Community College West, Lansing

# Appendix

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## Glossary of Terms

**Advisory Role:** The decision arrived at by the majority vote of the SEAC to provide advice to the MDE Office of Special Education or the State Board of Education.

**At-large members:** The eight members appointed to the SEAC by the SBE. These members do not represent the organizational interests of any of the 25 organizations represented in the SEAC.

**Federal Fiscal Year (FFY):** The United States Government operates on a financial calendar that begins October 1 and ends September 30. The 2017 FFY begins on October 1, 2017 and ends on September 30, 2018.

## Legal References to the SEAC

**Federal Statute**—*INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2004 (EXCERPT); Sec. 612 State Eligibility*

(21) STATE ADVISORY PANEL—

(A) IN GENERAL—The State has established and maintains an advisory panel for the purpose of providing policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the State.

**State Statute**—*STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (EXCERPT); Act 287 of 1964*

388.1009a Special education advisory committee; creation; appointment and terms of members; ex officio members; chairperson; expenses; duty.

Sec. 9a. The special education advisory committee is created in the department of education and shall consist of not less than 9 and not more than 33 members appointed by the state board of education for terms of 3 years. ...Each year the committee shall elect a chairperson and other officers as it considers necessary. ...The committee shall act as an adviser to the state board of education in the field of special education.

## Resource

Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education - State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report, State Systemic Improvement Plan, and Public Michigan's SEAC

Reporting information can be found on the [Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education website](https://michigan.gov/ose-eis) (michigan.gov/ose-eis).