I. Purpose of SEAC

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I. **Purpose of SEAC**

1. Advise the Superintendent, School Board and Special Education Department of unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities;

2. Assist the Superintendent, School Board and Special Education Department in the formation and development of long-range plans for providing needed educational services for children with disabilities;

3. Participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities;

4. Submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of children with disabilities to the Superintendent for transmission to the School Board.

5. Assist the Superintendent and the School Board in interpreting to the community, plans for meeting the needs of children with disabilities for educational services.

II. **Committee Membership 2004-2005**

**Members**

Chenelle Harris, Chair, Parent
Sarah Russell, Vice Chair, Parent
June Yurkiw, Recording Secretary, Parent
Mary Beth Helsel, Corresponding Secretary, Parent

Betty Anby, Parent
Paul Babcock, Community Representative
Carl Brakman, Parent
Sheila Canada, Parent
Marlene Foster, Community Representative
Barbara Joynes, Parent
George Flood, Community Representative
Sharon Menzies, Parent
Wayne McMasters, Parent
Richard Mills, Community Representative
Maqbool Sheikh, Community Representative
Freddie Simmons, Community Representative
Jean Stevenson, Community Representative
New Members

Carl Brakman - Parent
Betty Anby - Parent
George Flood – Community Representative

Member Resignations

Jo Ellen Fotiou – Parent
Joan Lewis – Community Representative
Angela von Hayek – Parent
Jean Steveson – Community Representative

Consulting Members

Pat Woodbury, School Board Representative
Mr. Robert Pietrasanta, Director Special Education
Dr. Charlene Greiner, Supervisor Learning Disabilities, Secondary
Marlene Montandon, Supervisor Learning Disabilities, Elementary
Marian Harper, Supervisor, Programs for Mental Disabilities and Autism
Wanda Council, Supervisor, Speech Language and Services and Sensory Impairments
Ruthann Newton, Parent Resource Center

III. Summary of SEAC Meetings

September 28, 2004

Public Comment Period
Concern over the length of time it is taking to complete Child Studies at Jenkins Elementary was raised. Glen Whitlock was identified as a resource to assist in understanding and resolution of the issue.

SEAC letter to the school board in regards to proposed changes to IDEA had not been received by the School Board members.

Teacher Staffing-Regina Harris, Human Resources Supervisor, NNPS, presented information on teacher staffing. Items included recruitment efforts, incentives, license requirements and statistics on current teacher status.
SEAC Membership-Carl Brakman, Betty Anby will be presented to the school board for membership in October. George Flood was approved to replace Joan Lewis.

**October 26, 2004**

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)-program presented by Donna Walls and Bernie Reinhard

SEAC Annual report will be presented at the November School Board Meeting.

SEAC letter to school board on IDEA was sent to the school board. (open item from September meeting)

SEAC Membership-Carl Brakman, Betty Anby were approved by the School Board for membership.

SEAC Member Comment Period- (1) SEAC website not updated (2) On-line site for SEAC concerns in addition to phone line (3) IEP goals and objective section-concern over inability to denote which goals are/are not working (4) Parent awareness of full day placement for students (5) Lack of notification of SEAC meeting

**November 23, 2004**

Pre-Referral Intervention & Child Study-program presented by Denyse Doerries, T/TAC William and Mary. (as a result of public concern at September meeting)

SEAC Annual Report was presented to the School Board at the November 16 2004 meeting

IDEA was reviewed by the School Board on November 3, 2004.

Meeting topic for January meeting will be IDEA.

**January 25, 2005**

IDEA Reauthorization-Melissa Smith, VA Department of Education, presented a program focusing on the three areas of significant changes to the IDEA. (1) IEPs (2) Discipline and (3) Due Process.

SEAC Meeting Notifications-monthly notices will be sent home and an email sent to the lead Special Education Teacher at each school.

February meeting topic will be response to SEAC’s annual report.

SEAC Comment Period-concern over incorrect/outdated reports being used at a student’s triennial.
February 22, 2005

Action Report on SEAC Recommendations-Mr. Pietrasanta reviewed SEAC recommendation from Annual Report and outlined actions that have been and/or will be taken by the Special Education Department.

SEAC Website-committee information has been updated on the website.

IDEA Changes-deadline for comments to the recent IDEA changes are due on the 28th of February.

Menchville High School (MHS) Special Education Teacher Request-June Yurkiw received a comment from some teachers at MHS concerned over students who are leaving high school without the occupational and social skills they will need to succeed in the workplace or in postsecondary education. Root cause of the issue is believed to be limited space and resources. Suggested was a larger “Suburban Learning Cottage”.

School Board Concern-Carl Brakman expressed concern over the School Board’s endorsement of legislation that affects special education without seeking input from the SEAC. Mr. Brakman also expressed concern over his belief that there is a lack of awareness of Extended School Year (ESY).

March 22, 2005

Public Comment Period

SEAC meeting notices-request that notification be sent home earlier. Parent received noticed on the day of the meeting. Sending of meeting notifications continue to be inconsistent, varying from school to school. Some indicated that notices were received a week in advance, others had not received one at all. Suggestion that meeting notices are also sent out at the beginning of each school year.

Note: All student agenda books have a page indicating all SEAC meetings for the year; meeting dates and times were posted on the website; each meeting was posted on Channel 47 and each month the School Board Office marquee carried information about the meetings.

Foundations for Change-Louise Johnson announced their expansion into summer and after school programming for children with autism and developmental disabilities in Hampton.
Summers in Newport News

Newport News Parks and Recreation Therapeutic Program-Alice Parks discussed 8 week summer camp program, Camp Discovery and Camp Cheers.

Wanda Council, NNPS, presented general information on NNPS Summer School and ESY.

Annual Plan- Mr. Pietrasanta presented the annual plan and funding application to the State.

Legislative Endorsement HB 2602-Dr. Pat Woodbury will address HB 2602 with the School Board and provide feedback to the SEAC.

Nominating Committee-Maqbol Sheikh and Betty Anby will serve along with Chair, Sarah Russell.

Topic for April Meeting will be Bridging.

SEAC by-laws will be reviewed at the April meeting. 

SEAC Comment Period-Request for posting of Special Education Policies and Procedures on SEAC website.

April 26, 2005

Bridging-Dr. Charlene Greiner, Marlene Montandon and Joan O’Brien presented the program on Bridging. Bridging-transition of students from one educational environment to the next. (elementary to middle school, middle school to high school)

Nominations for SEAC officers for 2005-2006 school year:
Chenelle Harris, Chair, Parent
Sarah Russell, Vice Chair, Parent
June Yurkiw, Recording Secretary, Parent
Mary Beth Helsel, Corresponding Secretary, Parent

SEAC on line site for public comments is up.

Discussion held regarding improved communications with the School Board.
May 24, 2005

Mr. Pietrasanta and Chenelle Harris presented awards to 6 Special Education Teachers who received the designation of Teacher of the Year for their schools.

SEAC by-laws revisions were approved.

Installation of officers for the 2005-2006 school year. Slate of officers are:
Chenelle Harris, Chair, Parent
Sarah Russell, Vice Chair, Parent
June Yurkiw, Recording Secretary, Parent
Mary Beth Helsel, Corresponding Secretary, Parent

Membership Committee-Sarah Russell will serve as chair of the committee with Betty Anby and Sheila Canada.

Legislative Committee-Carl Brakman and Mary Beth Helsel will serve to increase member awareness of laws and legislative action at the State and Federal levels.

NNPS Special Education Policies and Procedures-Mr. Pietrasanta requested SEAC member participation for sessions during the summer to review/update departmental policies and procedures.

Committee discussed focus areas for SEAC for the 2005-2006 school year. Items presented were:

1. Disability Awareness Assemblies
2. Parental Involvement
3. Teacher Certifications
4. Sub-committees to review policies of the Special Education Department
5. SEAC member training
6. Practical living skills for students
7. Processing of Public Comments to the SEAC

IV. SEAC Recommendations

1. NNPS School Board utilize the SEAC for input/feedback on Special Education issues and actions planned by the School Board that affect the Special Needs Population.

2. NNPS School Board and Special Education Department outline goals/actions for inclusiveness in schools to ensure consistency throughout the school system and monitor progress.
3. NNPS School Board review compensation and incentive packages for newly hired special education teachers and current incumbents to assess competitiveness in the market/local area, to insure compensation package reflects additional duties associated with the position and to insure retention.

Special Education Department conduct focus groups or surveys with Special Education teachers to assess morale and concerns with a goal to impact retention.

4. NNPS Special Education Department form committees to review alternative curriculum/learning programs, such as ABA, EDMARC, Universal Design, Audio-Hope and Hosts Learning to determine feasibility in providing to students and provide feedback to NNPS School Board and SEAC.

V. Personal Observations

For the 2004-2005 school year, I have had the awesome privilege to serve as Chair of a committee of concerned and faithful parents and community representatives. While we all have come to the SEAC via different roads, we have a common goal. A goal to serve as a voice for our Children being served by the Newport News Public School System (NNPS) and to assist the teachers and administrators who touch our Children everyday and have the ability to have great impact on their future.

While I believe that the NNPS, whether due to laws/regulations or just a desire to assist our children attempt to serve our children with passion and a desire to assist them in becoming all that they can be, just like any other organization, it is not perfect and has opportunities for improvement. I personally have 2 areas that I think the NNPS should focus on in regards to Special Education.

(1) Improved relationship with the SEAC. As clearly stated in our purpose, we are here to assist the School Board. While we are often requested for input from the Special Education Department, we welcome the opportunity to assist the School Board with review or items/issues regarding Special Education.

(2) Inclusiveness and Consistency across all schools. My nine year old son has had the opportunity to attend 4 schools in the NNPS and the level of inclusiveness has been different at all schools.

As I work in the Human Resources profession, I deal with diversity challenges everyday. I am confident in saying that a lot of the issues stem from non-experiences with persons with disabilities and an assumption that the
differences are too great to understand. I think if we created an environment in which Children in the NNPS, with and without Special needs, learn to live with each other, thus increasing understanding of the differences and learning about the similarities, what an impact we can make on the future of all students and the world as a whole.