



Jim McCuaig Education Centre  
 2135 Sills Street Thunder Bay ON P7E 5T2  
 Telephone (807) 625-5126 Fax (807) 623-7848

September 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)** has representatives from various local support associations/agencies, parents/guardians and community members who advocate for students with special needs. If you would like assistance or information, please call one of the contact people listed below. We can connect you with people familiar with the processes.

<b>LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS</b>	<b>NOMINATIONS - Representative</b>	<b>PHONE</b>
Anishnawbe Mushkiki	Jennifer Bean	623-0383 (w) 475-4549 (h)
Anishnawbe Mushkiki	Ashley Etienne	623-0383 (w) 355-9636 (h)
Autism Ontario – Thunder Bay Chapter	Cory Koski	285-5073 (h)
Autism Ontario – Thunder Bay Chapter	Debby Dick	935-2073 (h)
Children’s Centre Thunder Bay	Angela Hill	343-5008 (w) 633-1629 (c)
Community Representative	Danielle Miller	355-3202 (c)
Dilico Anishinabek Family Care	Wilma Kleynendorst	623-8511 (w) 623-8511 (h)
Dilico Anishinabek Family Care	Leslie Harding	939-3161 (w) 251-4024 (h)
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Information Network	Miranda Myers	473-7523 (h)
Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario	Liz Tod	472-6055 (c)
Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario	Carey Murphy	344-2229 (w) 628-2779 (c)
OPTIONS Northwest	Suzanne Posthumus	708-0999 (c)
VIEWS For the Visually Impaired – Thunder Bay Region	Kelly Matyasovszky	475-3837 (w) 475-6929 (h)
Voice for Hearing Impaired Children	Mike Otway	630-6340 (w) 476-0922 (h)
Lakehead District School Board	Trustee George Saarinen	628-4923 (c)
Lakehead District School Board	Trustee Sue Doughty-Smith	356-4326 (c)

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Lakehead District School Board

## **ALL ADVOCATES ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL PARENTS**

***Advocates can help parents/guardians/students to help themselves by***

- **Supporting parents/guardians/students**
- **Analyzing and helping to resolve problems**
- **Informing parents/guardians/students of their rights**
- **Confidence building**
- **Following up on concerns**
- **Referring to appropriate agencies**
- **Accompanying parents/guardians/students to meetings**

Lakehead District School Board  
625-5100

Superintendent of Education  
Michelle Probizanski

Executive Secretary  
Robin Orr  
625-5126

### **YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!**

Lakehead District School Board invites all parents/guardians and interested members of the public to attend Special Education Advisory Committee meetings. The Committee meets in the Board Room, Jim McCuaig Education Centre, 2135 Sills Street, Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. on the following dates:

October 16, 2019

November 20, 2019

December 11, 2019

January 15, 2020

February 19, 2020

March 11, 2020

April 15, 2020

May 20, 2020

June 17, 2020

Please note the SEAC Website:

<https://www.lakeheadschoools.ca/special-education-advisory-committee-seac/>

The website provides information on:

The Role of SEAC  
Committee Members  
Advocacy Information  
Meeting Schedule

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Lakehead District School Board

# Special Education Advocacy - The Role of SEAC

Lakehead Public Schools

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Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) advocates are representatives from various local support associations/agencies, parents/guardians, or community members who have voluntarily agreed to support families as they navigate the Special Education system.

Families may choose to use an advocate any time they feel that they need extra support in understanding or contributing to their child's special education program. Use of an advocate early in the process may prevent difficulties later on.

## Confidentiality

Families can feel confident that SEAC advocates will treat them with respect and dignity. All personal information will be treated as confidential.

## Purpose

- Support families as they navigate the education system
- Share expertise and information
- Guide families in making informed decisions
- Build and maintain relationships between families and schools
- Be a part of the team that supports the child with special needs

## Special Education Advisory Committee



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Integrity Acceptance Responsibility  
Empathy Respect

## Advocates

### Learn

- About the child (strengths, needs, likes, dislikes)
- About the child's school experience
- About the family situation and needs

### Share

- Information
- Contact numbers of people or agencies who can help
- Tips to navigate the system

### Support

- Be a listening ear
- Attend meetings as a support to families
- Help to access services or equipment
- Help parents/guardians to interpret or understand documents (IEP, Assessments, IPRC)
- Support parental input into IEP's
- Help parents/guardians to create a portfolio for the student (see Transitions Handbook)
- Help parents/guardians feel comfortable in the school setting
- Help to resolve issues
- Create a list of questions the parent/guardian wants to ask

Continued on reverse



## Special Education Advocacy

# The Role of the SEAC Advocate

### More Information

[www.lakeheadschoools.ca](http://www.lakeheadschoools.ca)

(807) 625-5126

## Supporting Parents/Guardians

If a member is contacted by a family or the school, advocates should follow the process outlined below.

**Listen** to the concerns of the family.

### Investigate

The advocate will explore the situation and determine the dynamics by answering the following questions:

#### Who has the family spoken with and what was the outcome?

- ask if the parent/guardian has spoken to the teacher
- ask if the parent/guardian has spoken to the facilitator
- ask if the parent/guardian has spoken to the Vice Principal/Principal

**If they respond that they have spoken with the above staff, ask what the outcome(s) of the discussions has been.**

#### What does the family want to accomplish?

- program change, acquire equipment, extra support, etc.

**Analyse** the situation in relation to the protocol and the comfort level of the parents/guardians. Seek out information or knowledge to educate the parents/guardians.

### Respond

Help the parent/guardian to follow the chain of communication. The ideal goal is to resolve concerns at the school level. If this is not possible, advise the parent/guardian to contact the Special Education Officer at (807) 625-5170.

### Outcomes

The advocate will strive to help to resolve concerns with the intention of achieving:

- The best possible educational experience for the student;
- Balance and student success;
- A positive, supportive relationship between the family and the school.







# Special Education Advocacy

## Families

### Current SEAC Member Associations/Agencies

Anishnawbe Mushkiki  
Autism Ontario

Children's Centre Thunder Bay  
Child and Community Resources  
Dilico - Anishinabek Family Care

Fetal Alcohol Support  
Information Network

OPTIONS Northwest

VIEWS - For The Visually Impaired  
Thunder Bay Region

VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children

### Two Community Representatives

### More Information

[www.lakeheadschoools.ca](http://www.lakeheadschoools.ca)

(807) 625-5126

## Models of Advocacy

**Models of advocacy vary in the way that the advocacy is provided, and whether the advocate is a paid worker or a volunteer.**

### Collective Advocacy

SEAC is a collective advocacy group that advises the Board of Education on matters relating to Special Education. This is where a group of service users campaign on their own behalf, or on behalf of others, to resolve an issue that affects them collectively. Collective advocacy is a useful way of representing service users' opinions to a statutory body (for example) in order to resolve a local issue and bring about change.

Individual SEAC members have volunteered their services to act as Advocates to parents/guardians of students with special needs.

### Self-advocacy

Students are encouraged, where possible, to feel comfortable with and understand their individual learning needs in order to communicate those needs to school staff and ensure that their needs are met. Parents can encourage students to learn about their disability, to understand their own personal learning needs, and to practice speaking up for himself or herself at school. Parents can help students to learn to be assertive while maintaining a respectful attitude.

### Parent Advocacy

When students are not ready or are unable to communicate their own needs, for a variety of reasons, parents act on behalf of their children to ensure that their learning needs are being addressed by the school. Parents are encouraged to be active in their child's education, communicating with the school about the day to day challenges and successes that their child encounters. When all parties involved in a student's education have knowledge and understanding of a child's strengths and needs, the best possible educational experience can be achieved. Parents are a valuable source of education for teachers as parents have "expert information" about their child.

### Professional Advocacy

Involves a paid worker with specific knowledge of systems and services who supports a number of clients. SEAC does not provide professional advocacy services.

