

Number of Students - 4832 · Active IEPs - 1261 · Elementary - 1011 · Secondary - 250

Exceptional IEPs - 741 · Non-Exceptional IEPs - 520 · Sault Ste. Marie - 559 / 356 · East & North Schools - 182 / 164

Success and Well-Being of our Students

1. Whereas physical support equipment can support a student's needs to stand up during lessons and satisfy a sensory or rocking need to help to sustain attention; and whereas self-regulation items help to maintain emotional regulation and acceptable behaviours; **SEAC recommends that necessary equipment be purchased and or available in the Learning Library for students with special needs who are in intermediate and senior grades. Suggestions include alternative seating options and materials pertaining to the child's well-being. SEAC further recommends that the HSCDSB website reflect an up-to-date inventory providing educators and therapists with an understanding of the equipment, items, and toys available to best inform purposeful educational and therapeutic interventions.**

2. Whereas the goal is for students to be in school a full day and not remain on a modified day for an extended period without a plan; and whereas the purpose of this plan is to help the child's day increase in such a way as to promote success and re-integration; **SEAC recommends that in addition to being tracked with a designated attendance code, students who are sent home regularly, due to their inability to cope or in any capacity sustain a full day of school, meet at regular intervals (i.e. case conference) with the parent/guardian, school team, Special Education Department, and community partners to develop a formal plan and set attainable goals.**

3. Whereas every child with a vision impairment faces unique challenges in how they interpret the world; and whereas much of a child's learning occurs at school, children with vision impairments greatly benefit from the support of a specialized vision itinerant teacher who is able to educate and provide resources to classroom teachers and Educational Assistants; **SEAC recommends that a vision itinerant teacher be assigned within the HSCDSB to support students with vision impairments by offering programming suggestions, resources, and support to teachers and Educational Assistants.**

4. Whereas the Ministry of Education has announced a ban on cell phone usage in the classroom, and whereas the promotion of inclusion is integral to a sense of belonging and equity; **SEAC recommends that assistive technology be widely incorporated into each classroom, for all students, starting in the primary/junior grades promoting a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach further benefiting students.** Whereas HSCDSB currently employs only one Assistive Technology Resource Teacher; **SEAC further recommends that educators receive training on assistive technology usage and implementation to best support and promote its delivery.**

5. Whereas the use of mechanical restraints may be deemed necessary in conjunction with the HSCDSB and the caregivers of a student; **SEAC recommends that policies and procedures be developed surrounding, but not limited to, the proper use of mechanical restraints with compliance criteria, training for staff, and strategy development to support the student with the goal of decreasing and ultimately ceasing the use of such restraints.**

Equitable Stewardship of our Resources

1. Whereas the Ministry of Education's Responsive Education Program (REP) Allocations for the 2024-2025 school year was released in April; **SEAC recommends that the Superintendents of Special Education and Finance issue a status report to SEAC in September with regards to the allocations given to the HSCDSB for the projects and programs it intends to pursue.**

2. Whereas the biannual report of SEAC recommendations provides important and informative progress; **SEAC recommends the Superintendent of Special Education continue to review this report with SEAC members.**

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Nurturing of our Catholic Faith

1. Whereas school board policies define guiding principles and set expectations for procedures, roles and responsibilities within a community of schools; **SEAC recommends that the HSCDSB collaborate with the Ontario Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) to develop a Religious Education and Faith Formation Curriculum Policy with particular consideration given to the accommodations that will enable students with special education needs to grow in their faith.**
2. Whereas Catholic faith upholds that God has made us each in his wisdom and likeness, and whereas a well-informed Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) approach serves all students; **SEAC recommends that HSCDSB advocate to the Ministry of Education to develop a faith and social science based curriculum that educates students on neurodivergent brain development and cognition. SEAC further recommends that this curriculum begin in primary grades and continue throughout high school.**

Engagement with Employees and Partners

1. Whereas there is a significant waitlist for community mental health supports for children; and whereas it is imperative to normalize and destigmatize counselling and mental health support; **SEAC recommends that families be made explicitly aware of mental health supports provided in schools. Some suggestions for the distribution of this information include emails, a photo wall, parent teacher night, welcome to kindergarten, and online communication tools. All communication posted in the school should be continuously updated and close to the main entrance to ensure dissemination. SEAC further recommends that each school develop and provide a printed newsletter to each family, in September of each year, outlining all supports available.**
2. Whereas visual noise can be anxiety provoking, increase disruptive behaviour, and reduce the ability to self-regulate; and in recognizing that the learning environment is the third teacher; **SEAC recommends all staff engage in training regarding purposeful classroom organization, design, and décor with consideration for learners. SEAC further recommends that a demonstration classroom be curated to provide specific examples and evidence of how to meaningfully create this learning environment.**
3. Whereas “district school boards and school authorities must provide relevant in-service training sessions for all members during regular SEAC meetings or in an alternative forum on an ongoing basis”; **SEAC recommends that appropriate training be completed for members as a means of onboarding. SEAC further recommends that the board establish an alternative forum for members to have access to ongoing, relevant training.**
4. Whereas SEAC is committed to increasing its accessibility and promoting its mandate to the families, students and staff it serves; **we recommend that representatives of this Committee be invited to Learning Resource Teacher networks, professional development opportunities; and relevant Board activities.**
5. Whereas the HSCDSB completed a Ministry of Education mandated student census in 2023; **SEAC recommends that the Board, in consultation with Administration, SEAC, the Parent Involvement Committee(PIC), and Special Education Program Leads, undertake a Special Education Census, by March of 2025, for the purpose of gathering perceptions and prioritizing needs related to school and classroom environments, delivery of supports, and barriers to achievement and well-being that are encountered by students with special needs.**