Guidance for Leading Inclusive Special Education Programs:

Engaging Key Stakeholders to Support Success for All Students

DEPARTMENT of
EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

Guidance for Leading Inclusive Special Education Programs

All students deserve equitable access to high quality instruction. Yet, school systems often face unique and complex challenges in improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Addressing these challenges is multifaceted and requires strong leaders who can effectively coordinate programming within and across departments and schools to increase equitable access to inclusive learning opportunities for students with disabilities.

To support the increased effectiveness of special education programming through effective and inclusive system-wide planning, the department will release seven guidance documents to school systems in 2022. The guidance will cover the highest impact areas of special education programming to most effectively improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Each guidance document will be accompanied by an hour long webinar to support implementation.

In partnership with and alongside school and school system leaders, special education leaders are encouraged to review the guidance documents and attend webinars. Please note: release dates and topics are subject to change.

| TOPICS FOR 2021-2022 GUIDANCE FOR LEADING INCLUSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS	
Month	**Topic**
January	**Leveraging Data to Align Budgets and Spending to Priorities**
February	Creating Compliant Systems for Student Success **Webinar: February 22 at 1 pm**
March	Educator and Staff Well-Being **Webinar: April 8**
April	Student Well-Being and Trauma Informed Supports **Webinar: May 3 at 1 pm**
May	Positive Behavior Intervention **Webinar: June 7 at 1 pm**
June	High Quality Teaching and Learning Aligned to Louisiana's Vision for Success **Webinar: July 7 at 1 pm**
July	Engaging Key Stakeholders to Support Success for All Students **Webinar: August 2 at 1 pm**

Engaging Key Stakeholders to Support Success for All Students

Purpose

Meaningful and ongoing stakeholder engagement is critical to the success of all students. When school systems intentionally engage diverse groups of stakeholders, valuable insights are gained that enhance efforts to meet state and local goals and ultimately improve student outcomes.

Stakeholders (including parents, taxpayers, and business owners) provide unique perspectives that reflect their vested interests in school and student success. These stakeholders can, and should, inform schools' missions, priorities, and activities. Further, having open and effective communication with stakeholders can help them align their own activities to a school system's mission and priorities while avoiding conflicts and misunderstandings. Transparency and collaboration among key stakeholders plays a critical role in sustaining a district's mission and improving student outcomes.
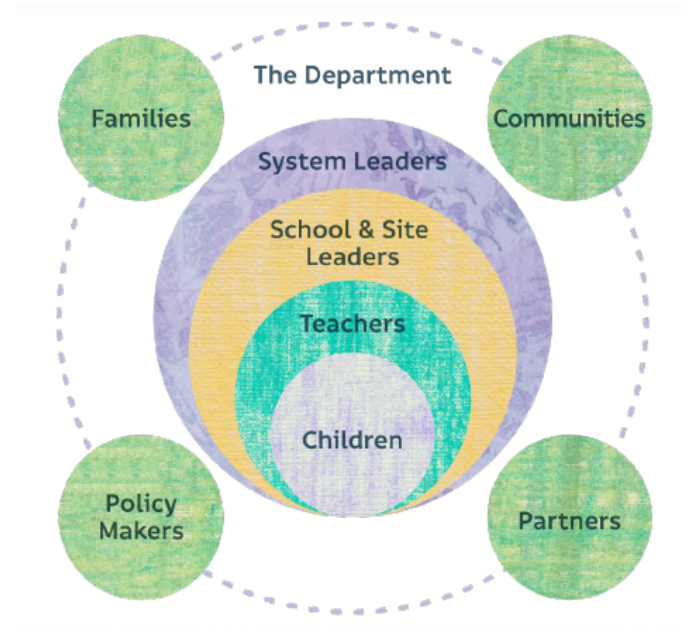
Stakeholders and Systems Change

Lasting systems change requires a set of answers to stakeholder questions related to scope, urgency, and outcomes. Systems change also comes with emotions that vary by stakeholder, while some see change as a threat and others view change as an opportunity. For this reason, it is important for stakeholders to be involved early and often in the process by first understanding the "why" behind the drive for change.

In 2019, Louisiana enacted legislation to support the creation and utilization of local special education advisory councils (SEAC) to integrate stakeholder feedback into local

Table 1: Key Educational Constituent Groups and their "Stake" in Students' Reading Success

Constituent Groups	What's at Stake?
Students	Personal success throughout school, future opportunity
Parents	Pride, success, and opportunity for the students they care about
School staff	Professional efficacy and job satisfaction
School & district staff	"Adequate yearly progress," meeting accountability expectations
School board	Fulfilling the district's mission, media coverage, accountability
Taxpayers	Getting a good return on their tax "investment" in schools
Business community	Ability to hire graduates with skills needed, community economics
Other community members	Community pride and "livability," real estate values

planning processes. This year, Act 576 further clarified SEAC requirements. While these guidelines provide structure for a baseline level of stakeholder engagement, including the elements listed below, LEAs are free to further extend their outreach and collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders.

What is the purpose?	To provide advice and feedback regarding special education policies, procedures, and resources; to engage in outreach activities to increase the level of knowledge, support, and collaboration with respect to special education.
When should SEACs be formed?	SEACs were established in school systems by January 1, 2020.
What are SEAC membership requirements?	Minimum 8 members; at least 50 percent should be non-school board parents/guardians of students with exceptionalities other than gifted and talented; at least 10 percent should be special education stakeholders; one member should be a high school student with a disability; and at least one member should be a teacher, principal, or paraprofessional who serves students with disabilities.
How often should SEACs meet?	Minimum 3 times per year
What are the reporting requirements for SEACs?	SEACs must submit a written report to the local public school superintendent or administrative head of the charter school and the statewide Special Education Advisory Panel in May of each year.

Families	Communities	Policy Makers	Partners
• partner in their child's educational journey. • are informed about their child's progress. • access resources for supporting their child's educational journey. • choose the setting that is best for their child.	• are informed about the quality and progress of their schools and early learning sites. • participate in the decision-making for their community (through organizations like school board and ready start network coalitions).	• are child-centered. • are informed about the progress of early care networks and sites, school systems and schools. • have a positive, collaborative working relationship with the Department.	• support the local vision and mission. • align to the Department's Vision for Success. • expand and enrich the capacity of priority and operational work.

Conclusion

Consistent and meaningful engagement with a variety of stakeholders is critical to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Providing high-quality instruction to students, while also caring for their physical, social, and emotional needs, requires a joint effort that cannot be accomplished by school staff alone. Local SEACs provide school systems with a structure for

gathering feedback from a cross-section of community members, many with specific ties to special education in one way or another. It's also important to consider which stakeholders might not be able to share their feedback through this format and ensure there are other ways for their input to be collected.

Self-Assessment
- Who are the current members of your local special education advisory council (SEAC)? What community outreach activities have they engaged in? What feedback have they provided?
- What initiatives are you trying to move forward in your school district?
- Who, besides SEAC members, are the stakeholders? How involved are they? Who is resisting? What barriers exist that prevent or limit stakeholder engagement?
- How can stakeholders be proactively and systematically involved from the beginning?
- How can difficult stakeholder relationships strengthen your effectiveness as a leader?

Resources
Leading By Convening Modules
https://www2.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/support/stakeholderlores.pdf
https://www.louisianabelieves.com/beengaged
https://ldh.la.gov
Partnerships for Success Guide