

Special Education Advisory Council

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education



Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) has the longest running Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) in Colorado (since 2008). Modeled on the Colorado SEAC, most members are parents, but the advisory group also includes students, educators, district administrators, and community members. For the past five

years, Boulder's SEAC has become a strong advisory council offering recommendations to both special education and general education practices. The Council's mission is to actively represent children/youth with disabilities and impact decisions made on their behalf to enhance the quality of the educational services they receive.

BVSD SEAC is overseen by the district SEAC Coordinator and by the Special Education Executive Director. During the 2021-22 school year, the team included 17 members, with three sub-committees on inclusive practices, career readiness, and parent education. BVSD SEAC strives for a representational committee so that the group represents various geographic areas, student ages, student disabilities, and family structures and cultures. SEAC has an application process for membership and the main goal is to have members who understand that all students with Individual Education Program's (IEP) are represented. BVSD SEAC meets virtually five times a year and uses breakout groups and Google docs to capture our notes and recommendations. All recommendations must be aligned to the strategic themes and initiatives. At the final meeting, the team presents recommendations to all special education directors, as well as individuals from the superintendent's office. All materials are translated into Spanish and posted on the website.

Last year, one of the sub-committees addressed the gap from BVSD's decision to remove School Resource Officers. The executive director worked with the new director of the School Safety Advocates to review each SEAC recommendation and determine how it could be implemented. The new director updated SEAC at the first meeting of the year (September 2021) and asked for someone from that group to be on the hiring committee for school-based advocates. Council members have seen a decrease in 'discipline' with students with IEPs and fewer conflicts.

BVSD's SEAC Coordinate shares: "It took us a few years to be this effective in our advisory work. Being online has been a significant asset as it has removed many barriers to participation and reduced the length of meetings. Having shared Google docs has also allowed us to communicate effectively as well as provided a way for leaders to ask guiding questions. We are seeing our work implemented in a variety of departments and programs." One challenge is that the SEAC can only advise and make recommendations. The SEAC cannot decide or ensure implementation, so this work requires district leaders to value SEAC recommendations. Therefore, it is important to have an Executive Director that can ensure the recommendations have a person or department to receive them.

Standard 4—Speaking Up For Every Child
Essential Element 1—Create an Inclusive Culture