

# District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)Toolkit



#### Thank you for using the District-Level Parent Advisory Council toolkit.

This tool supports the development of District-Level Parent Advisory Councils (DPAC) throughout St. Louis County. This toolkit will provide the items to develop a strong and impactful group of families dedicated to supporting and empowering students of all learning abilities to excel to their greatest potential.

#### The toolkit includes the following items:

- 1. **Building and Maintaining A DPAC** provides individuals with the information needed to understand the purpose and function of the DPAC.
- 2. **DPAC Introductory Meeting Agenda** provides an initial meeting agenda for staff and families considering the development of a DPAC.
- 3. **Slides for Initial DPAC Meeting** customizable slides for facilitating your first DPAC meeting. The slides offer:
  - a. Meeting tools (agenda, norms, parking lot, etc);
  - b. Guiding the discussion about the purpose of the group;
  - c. Identifying leadership roles and responsibilities;
  - d. Recognizing the benefits of the DPAC;
  - e. Aiding the discussion regarding structuring your team; and
  - f. Accessing available district supports
- 4. **Appendix of Sample Items** including the following items to help get you started:
  - a. Sample flyers
  - b. Sample invitations
  - c. Sample agenda
  - d. Sample descriptions
  - e. Technical supports available

These tools are only a guide. DPACs are each unique. Your DPAC should consider the needs of the families and students in your district. DPAC leaders should also solicit the support of district leaders to help sustain your efforts.

Special School District's Family and Community Engagement department (FACE) supports families interested in partnering with others to optimize the learning and life opportunities of students receiving special education services within your district. You are not alone. Please feel free to contact us with questions at face@ssdmo.org.

# Section 1: Building and Maintaining DPAC



# SECTION 1: BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A DISTRICT-LEVEL PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (DPAC)

#### What is a Parent Advisory Council (PAC)?

- Parent Advisory Councils are called by many different names: Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC); Local Parent Advisory Council (LPAC); or some combination of the district's name and Parent Advisory Council.
- A local PAC provides direct input to school district leaders about policies, programs, practices, and services that have an impact on students with disabilities and their families.
- Its purpose is to advise, advocate, offer guidance, and support systemic family engagement.
- An effective PAC increases the proactive engagement of families by encouraging their input in shaping local special education policy.
- In St. Louis County local school districts, special education services are implemented by Special School District (SSD); collaboration and communication between the district PAC and the SSD PAC are essential for the function of both PACs.
- PACs do not have formal authority to neither issue directives nor set policy. These advisory groups provide input and guidance to educators regarding family perspectives that are essential for decision making and partnerships.

#### What is the role of the district-level PAC?

- To foster collaborative partnerships with the local school district by providing direct input on the policies, programs, and practices that affect services and supports for students with disabilities;
- To provide family perspective regarding the unique needs and programming of their students;
- To increase the engagement of families of children with special needs; and
- To advise on issues that affect the education, health, and safety of students with special needs.

#### Who should attend a district-level PAC meeting?

- Family members (parent, grandparent, guardian, foster parent, or and adult in the parenting role including siblings) of student(s) living with disabilities;
- Anyone with student(s) eligible for or receiving services under an IEP or 504 plan; and
- SSD and district-level leadership.

#### What happens at a district-level PAC meeting?

- Family members discuss success stories and issues from their point of view with the focus on building a better school community;
- Members voice concerns related to students in the school district gathered from families within their district:
- DPAC members share updates from the SSD PAC meeting; district representatives are in attendance as collaborative leaders with the goal of providing updates related to special and general education services in the school district;
- Members encourage DPAC participation to other district families and promote family engagement/input at their local schools; and
- Decisions are made regarding future meetings (speakers, other district leaders, and individual staff members may be invited, based upon requests from the PAC).

#### How will your group work?

This is up to the group, but something you should think about and discuss is that some groups are intended for parents to talk informally and share their experiences. In such cases, it may not be necessary to have someone formally lead meetings. Other groups may seek to create activities or otherwise achieve formal objectives. For these groups, it may be best to have a facilitator to lead meetings and leadership roles to take on various group responsibilities.

- Leadership roles
  - Will you have executive roles (president, vice president, secretary)? If you
    decided not to have executive roles, who will be your committed group of
    leaders?
- Meeting frequency
  - Monthly meetings
  - Bi-monthly meetings
  - Quarterly meetings
- Meeting dates and times
- Meeting locations
  - Virtual
  - o In-person
  - Hybrid meetings

#### How do I publicize the district-level PAC?

Recruiting new members will require getting the word out. See the list of free options to support you:

- Social media
- School newsletters
- Director newsletters
- Bulletin boards
- Flyers through school backpacks
- School district websites

#### What should I keep in mind?

- It will take time for your DPAC to grow—don't get discouraged if it's not standing room only at the first several meetings. Even with a lot of commitment, it can take time for a group to take root. Be patient and give it time.
- Gathering a core group of families who can commit to coming to each meeting will help provide stability early on.
- Inviting guest speakers to present on specific topics (like special education or local services, for example) can help build interest in a group that is just getting started.
- Groups tend to fluctuate between high and low attendance, so don't worry if you get a big turnout at one meeting and a small one the next.
- Don't just count on organic growth—invite and bring people to meetings, and encourage this practice throughout the group.
- Pay attention to those who are participating and those voices or individuals that are not participating and intentionally invite and/or inquire about the barriers that may prevent them from attending.

#### **Tools to Use**

- Hemingwayapp.com
  - App to help individuals write for busy/overwhelmed individuals
- Canva
  - Create graphics for invites, flyers, and invitations

# Section 2: DPAC Introductory Meeting Agenda



# SECTION 2: GUIDING AGENDA TO DISCUSS THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR DPAC

- 1. A Brief Introductory to SSDPAC and D-PAC
- 2. How do we get started?
  - a. Whose support should we seek before beginning?
  - b. Who should we include in the planning?
  - c. Recruitment and Outreach Plans?
  - d. How do we decide meeting dates and times?
  - e. How do we decide topics of discussion?
- 3. Resource Tools
  - a. Flyers
    - i. PAC Flyer Sample Hancock
    - ii. Sample PAC Flyer Ferg-Flor
  - b. Sample Invitations
    - i. Sample Invite
  - c. Sample Agendas
    - i. PAC Agenda Sample
  - d. Meeting Content
  - e. Introductory PowerPoint
  - f. Introduction to Roles and Positions
    - i. PAC Position Introduction
- 4. Technical Assistance
  - a. Supports provided by FACE
  - b. Hemingwayapp.com
    - i. App to help individuals write for busy/overwhelmed individuals
  - c. Canva
    - i. Create graphics for invites, flyers, and invitations
  - d. Microsoft Translate App
    - i. Translate documents to make them accessible for all families.
- 5. Questions

# Section 3: SLIDES FOR THE INITIAL DPAC MEETING



{Please insert your district logo here}

Parent Advisory Council Introductory Meeting



- → Tools to support PAC meetings
- Purpose of PAC
- Leadership Structure of PAC
- Planning Time
- → Next Steps

Today's Meeting Outcomes

### **Meeting Tools**







GROUP NORMS/MEETING NORMS



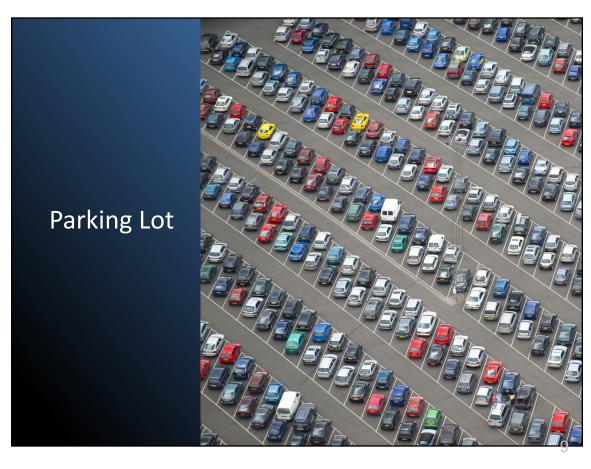
PARKING LOT



PLUS/DELTA









# Plus+ Delta-RX

- What went well
- **Areas of Improvement**
- Things to do differently

### SSD Parent Advisory Council

#### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Special School District (SSD) Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is to effectively collaborate with and advise its stakeholders (including parents/guardians, the SSD Board of Education, Governing Council, SSD administration and staff, and partnering school district administrators and staff) in order to improve the educational, self-efficacy, and social outcomes of each student served by SSD.

#### Parent Advisory Council (PAC) are called many different names.

- Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)
   Local Parent Advisory Council (LPAC)
   District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)
   {Insert your district name} Parent Advisory Council

### What is a **PAC**?

#### **PAC Purpose**

- advise, advocate, and offer guidance
- increase the proactive, productive involvement of families by inviting their input in ways that can be used to shape local special education policy
- share information between the SSD PAC and the partner district PAC

What Authority Does a PAC Have? These groups are ADVISORY.

PACs **do not** have formal authority to issue directives or set policy.

Rather, they make **recommendations** and **provide guidance** that can be used by decision makers and local leaders.



# Participation in a PAC offers the opportunity to:

- Network and communicate with other parents of children who receive special education services
- Increase your awareness of special education services
- Create a positive awareness of students with disabilities
- Improve communication between your local school district and SSD
- Provide direct input to school leadership

### How Does A PAC Benefit Families and Students?

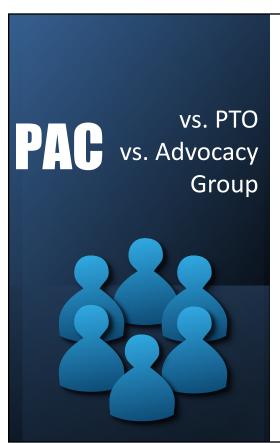
The great benefit of participating in a local PAC is that the individual needs of a child become part of 'the big picture' and can reach a broader community of children.



PAC vs. PTO

How is a PAC different from a PTO, an advocacy group, or parent support group?

Families come together for many reasons—support, friendship, event planning, advocacy, information, and active response.



While each of these purposes is important, a **PAC** is **NOT**:

An **advocacy group**, which focuses on upholding rights for children and advocating for change from outside the system;

Focused on a **single issue** or immediate concern; or

Special Education **PTO or PTA**, which might plan classroom activities, fundraisers, or other events.

#### Benefits of a Successful PAC

**Outreach** – Outreach can engage families of students with disabilities so that they are involved in helping to shape local special education programs and policies.

**Positive relationships** – Effective PACs engage families and school leaders to establish shared goals and priorities that benefit students with disabilities. They connect with teachers, Child Study Teams, and community resources as sources of support for helping improve programs and services.

**Collaborative problem solving** – PACs thrive on team spirit and team action. While members bring varied perspectives, everyone shares a common mission: to improve outcomes for all students receiving special education services and support. System change based on input.





Communicate the needs of families whose children receive special education and related services and can advise school leaders on unmet needs identified through family input.

A trusted source of information – PACs can strengthen the bridge between the school district and families.

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# No Reason for Anyone to Feel Left Out...

- listen to other families to understand and appreciate what is important to them
- make other families feel valued in whatever contribution they can make
- find ways to connect with other families and communicate collectively what is important to us



#### President:

#### Responsibilities May Include:

- Prepare agendas of all meetings and preside at all meetings of the council
- Ensure that procedures and rules are established and carried out
- Be permitted to vote
- Be responsible for assisting in recommending and arranging for presentations for the education of council members and other parents during the regular meeting or at other times
- Appoint a committee or establish procedures to conduct the nomination and election of members
- Appoint committees as needed to conduct the business of the council.

#### **Vice President:**

#### Responsibilities May Include:

- Preside over meetings in the absence of the president.
- In the event that the president is unable to complete their term of office, the vice-president will serve as the president until an election of a new president can be held and the office of the president is filled.
- Vice-president will perform other duties as may be delegated by the president or executive committee.

#### **Recording Secretary**

#### Responsibilities May Include:

- Record the minutes of all meetings, including votes.
- Record attendance at meetings for the purpose of determining a quorum
- Be the custodian of the council's records, including assisting in arranging access for public inspection and copying
- Support participation of members at all meetings of the council
- Maintain a file of documents for members
- Perform such duties as may be delegated by the president or executive committee.

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- Support participation of members at all meetings of the council
- Maintain a file of documents for members
- Perform such duties as may be delegated by the president or executive committee.

#### **Corresponding Secretary**

#### Responsibilities May Include:

- Be responsible for all correspondence within the PAC.
- Ensure all members receive information regarding the PAC in their preferred mode of communication.
- Send reminders of upcoming meetings.
- Perform such duties as may be delegated by the president or executive committee.

#### Parliamentarian

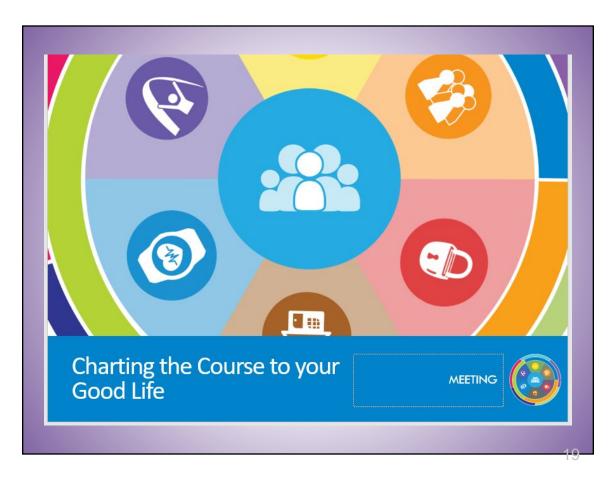
#### Responsibilities May Include:

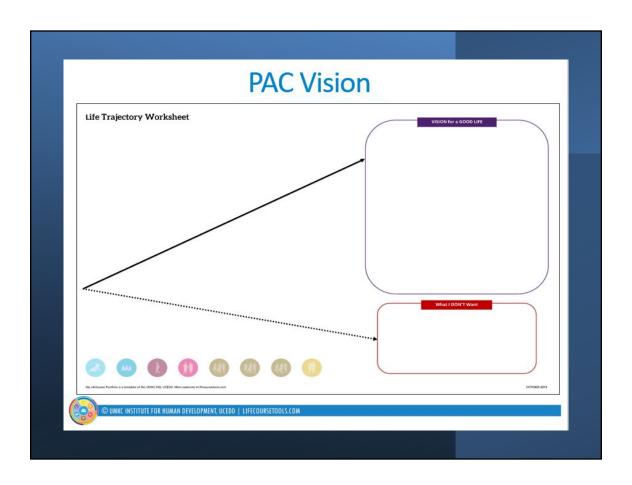
#### Responsibilities may include:

- Monitor the proceedings of the council to ensure that all bylaws and laws of the State of Missouri are observed.
- Consult with the presiding officer on all questions of parliamentary procedure.
- Perform duties as may be delegated by the president or executive committee.



As you
Build...Think
and Plan For
Succession







### How will you serve?

**Self - Nominations** 

Voting

**Next Meeting Date** 

Plan of Communication

**Topics to Consider** 



Support Available



email: face@ssdmo.org



**SSD YOUTUBE PLAYLIST - FACE WORKSHOPS** 



**Department Directory - Speaker Options** 

# Section 4: APPENDIX OF SAMPLE ITEMS



# Special School District Parent Advisory Council (SSD PAC)



# Everyone is Welcome to Attend!

Meetings are held on Wednesdays

August, 14th 2019

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019

October 9th, 2019

November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019

December 11th 2019

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

SSD Central Office, Board Room 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63131

The SSD Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is comprised of families advising and collaborating to improve the education, confidence and social outcomes of each student served by SSD. For more information contact the PAC at pac@ssdmo.ora

Or visit: https://www.ssdmo.org/leadership/pac.html

# iAcompáñenos

# Consejo asesor de padres de Ferguson Florissant

# ¿Qué es un consejo asesor (PAC en inglés)?

Un grupo de padres que tienen estudiantes que son atendidos por SSD con la misión de construir una red de apoyo, aumentar el conocimiento del proceso de educación especial, y fomentar la comunicación positiva y la colaboración con otras familias, el personal y la comunidad escolar.

15 de marzo a las 6:30 PM

Reunión informacional por Zoom

Dé clic aquí para participar en la reunión

ID de la reunión: 936 6797 4610

Código de acceso: 644665

Información de la reunión





# Join us!

# Ferguson Florissant Parent Advisory Council

### What is PAC

A group of parents who have students that are served by SSD with mission to build a network of support, increase knowlege of special education process, and foster positive communication and collaboration with other families, staff, and school community.

Meeting Information



# March 15 at 6:30 PM

Informational Zoom Meeting

Click here to Join the Meeting

Meeting ID: 936 6797 4610

Passcode: **644665** 

FERGUSON-FLORISSANT SCHOOL DISTRICT

One District United

23

#### **PAC Invitation**

September\_\_\_\_, 2022

Dear Parent

I invite you to attend the first Hancock/Special School District Parent Advisory Council meeting.

A Parent Advisory Council is a group of parents whose mission is to build a network of support for parents, increase knowledge of the Special Education process, and foster positive communication and collaboration with other families, staff, and the school community.

#### PAC's role:

- To provide direct input on the policies, programs, and practices that affect services and supports for students with disabilities.
- To increase the involvement of families of children with special needs.
- To advise on issues that affect the education, health, and safety of students with special needs.

#### Who should attend a PAC meeting?

- Anyone in the district with a student or students with disabilities.
- Anyone with a student or students eligible for or receiving services under an IEP or 504 plan.

#### What happens at a PAC meeting?

- Concerns related to a group of students are shared and discussed.
- District representatives provide updates related to special services in the school district.
- Parents discuss issues among themselves and plan the agenda for the next meeting.
- Speakers, other district leaders, and individual staff members may be invited, based upon requests from the PAC.

Please join us on		
DATE:		
Time:		
Location:		





The Affton PAC was formed by families who expect that children with disabilities and/or unique learning needs are educated effectively, afforded the dignity of belonging, and valued throughout all Affton School District. We hope that as we continue to grow, our membership will be representative of the full diversity of our student body and their families. Angela Hanks is the current leader of this group. "Like" the Affton/SSD Family Group Facebook page or contact us for more information. Our 2022/2023 meeting dates are listed below, meetings will be via google meet! The google meet invite will be sent to all families via email and posted in our facebook group. Please join us, we look forward to meeting you!

September 15, 2022 (Welcome and introductions)

October 20, 2022 (How to prepare for My Child's IEP)

November 17, 2022 (Affton High School and Beyond)

January 19, 2023 (Summer Planning for 2023/ ESY)

February 16, 2023 (Mental Health For Students and Families)

April 20, 2023 (TBD)

For further questions please contact [add your email here]@gmail.com.





### **Meeting Agenda**

DATE: 09/6/2022 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 pm

Join Zoom Meeting:

**Meeting ID:** 

Passcode:

Time Required	Agenda Item	Topic Leader	Type*	Desired Outcome
6:30 pm – 6:45 pm	Call to Order		I	Welcome guests, take attendance, and housekeeping items.
6:45 pm – 7:05 pm	SSD Special Education Director Report		D, I	Report
7:30pm to 7:40pm	PAC Structure		D, I	Recruitment of ELT
7:40pm – 7:55 pm	Family Comment		D,I	Gathering information
7:55pm – 8:00 pm	Topics for Next Meeting and Upcoming Events		I	Share Information about Upcoming Meetings
8:00 pm	Meeting Closure and Adjournment		GB	Wrap up w/Plus/Delta Google Form

*Key to Member's Involvement	Meeting Norms		
Continuous Improvement (CI)	<ul> <li>Engage in honest, focused, and respectful discussions.</li> </ul>		
Discussion/Dialogue (D)	<ul> <li>Use the "Raise Hand" if You Would Like to be called on</li> </ul>		
Information Sharing (I)	<ul> <li>Place yourself on mute, unless you are asking a question, being asked a question, or presenting.</li> </ul>		
Action/Decision Point (A)	<ul> <li>Please use the chat feature for "Parking Lot" Comments.</li> </ul>		
General Business, No discussion necessary (GB)	<ul> <li>Limit side and non-topic conversations in the chat feature.</li> </ul>		
	<ul> <li>Adhere to the agenda and honor the time allotted for each item.</li> </ul>		

### Sample Descriptions from SSD and DPACs

(Suggestion: Visit some of the noted DPAC school district PAC webpages for up to date information)

#### **SSD Parent Advisory Council**

The SSD Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is composed of families advising and collaborating to improve the education, confidence and social outcomes of each student served by SSD.

The PAC consists of five parents or guardians – one member and four alternates – from each of the 22 St. Louis County school districts and from each of the five SSD special education schools. The parents or guardians of students receiving special education services in that district or school elect SSD PAC members.

The mission of the Special School District (SSD) Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is to effectively collaborate with and advise its stakeholders (including parents/guardians, the SSD Board of Education, Governing Council, SSD administration and staff, and partnering school district administrators and staff) in order to improve the educational, self-efficacy, and social outcomes of each student served by SSD.

The Ladue Special Education Parent Council (SEPC) is focused in three core areas, all of which support Ladue School District students who receive services through the Special School District of St. Louis County:

- 1) **Advocate Within Our Schools** SEPC engages the Ladue School District, the Special School District of St. Louis County, and building-level administrators within Ladue Schools to provide parent input on matters concerning special education and the students that receive services.
- 2) **Educate Parents** SEPC educates parents about special education and how special education services are delivered to students within Ladue Schools.
- 3) **Provide a Network of Parents** SEPC provides the parents of children who receive special education services the opportunity to connect with each other and build a community of support among families.

#### 2019-2020 School Year with a different Chairperson

The Ladue Parent Advisory Council (LPAC) is a volunteer parent group whose mission is to build bridges as we navigate the Special Education process with the Ladue Schools / Special School District partnership. We strive to become more effective advocates for our children's special educational needs through parent education, positive communication and collaboration, and the sharing of information, resources and support within our communities.

Core beliefs guiding our mission are that:

- Parents are their children's first teachers
- Informed and proactive parents are their children's most effective advocates
- Parents are key members of their children's educational teams
- Positive communication and collaboration with educational teams produce the best results for children
- Active and involved parents can help to build inclusive communities for all children

#### What we do

We meet monthly to develop our abilities to:

- Share information and support with other parents navigating the special education process
- Learn about advocating effectively for our children
- Improve communication and promote collaboration between Ladue Schools and Special School District
- Promote a positive, inclusive understanding of students with disabilities
- Establish an advocacy network for local, state, and national disability issues

#### **Get Involved**

We welcome you to get involved and come to our monthly meetings.

If you'd like to play a more active role in the LPAC you might:

- Attend committee meetings with Administrators of Ladue Schools and Special School District
- Distribute meeting minutes and other important information to building principals, teachers, and parent groups
- Represent the LPAC on your building PTO
- Serve as a contact or mentor to other parents navigating the special education process
- Promote inclusion in school activities in which you or your children are involved
- Form a support network within your individual school to help other parents to access information
- Start a disability resource area in your school with materials for parents and staff
- Find ways to recognize students and staff who have done an outstanding job in special education and in the school community
- Encourage teachers and administrators to attend some LPAC meetings

#### **Kirkwood Special Education Parent Advisory Council**

The Kirkwood Special Education Parent Advisory Council (PAC) was developed to provide professional and supportive connections among parents and school staff who share an interest in promoting the education of children with disabilities. Each school has several parents who represent their school on the district-level PAC. These parents also work with their school to support families of students with special needs.

Kirkwood's district-level PAC meets several times each year to share information and seek input from parents on district planning for special education and related supports for students.

If you would like more information regarding PAC, please contact your SSD special education coordinator.

#### **Parkway Parent Advisory Council**

 The Parkway PACCD is a group of volunteer parents of children with disabilities. The PACCD is committed to ensuring all students with special needs in Parkway receive a high-quality education and services to meet their needs. Through ongoing communication between parents, Parkway administration, and Special Education administrators, the PACCD is a voice for the parents of all students with disabilities.

If your child receives special education services, has been diagnosed with a Section 504 disability, or is suspected of having a disability (i.e., being referred/evaluated), Parkway welcomes your involvement in a volunteer parent organization committed to securing quality education for students with special needs. Parents have opportunities to become involved with the PACCD at both the school and district levels.

Each school has one or more parent representatives who select and advise a district-level steering committee. The steering committee meets with Parkway and Special School District (SSD) administrators and acts in an advisory capacity regarding programs and services for students with disabilities. The organization also provides support and information to parents and sponsors general meetings for anyone interested in attending.

#### **Hazelwood Parent Advisory Committee**

Hazelwood School District parents have come together to form the Hazelwood Parent Advisory Committee.

#### Their mission is:

Work toward understanding, respecting and supporting all children with disabilities in our community and ensuring that they receive an appropriate education.

Provide a network of support for parents including access to relevant information.

Encourage an atmosphere of open communication, understanding and mutual respect among all students, parents, HSD staff and the Hazelwood community.

Collaborate with the parent-teacher groups, school councils and other school organizations toward the betterment of education in Hazelwood.

#### Their vision is:

Hazelwood School District and Special School District collaborating effectively to the degree that as partner districts we become seamless in our efforts for the educational benefit of all of our students.

#### **PAC Technical Support**

FACE provides assistance with:

#### Recruitment

- Family Leadership Institute (FLI) Graduates
- Workshop attendees
- Templates for email invitations and flyers
- Samples of newsletter invitations

#### **Organization**

- Meeting with families and staff to discuss initial organization
- Providing guidance on meeting organization
- Providing support in beginning PAC meetings
  - o PowerPoint outlining what a PAC is
  - o Providing guidance on PAC members leadership roles
  - o Planning goals for ongoing meeting

#### **Ongoing Support**

- Attending meetings as requested
  - o General meeting
- Potential Presentations topics available
  - o Summer Resource Information
  - o SSD 101
  - o Charting the LifeCourse
  - o IEP and Effective Communication

For assistance, contact FACE at <a href="mailto:face@ssdmo.org">face@ssdmo.org</a> or 314-989-8460.