



**Acton-Boxborough Special Education
Parent Advisory Council
(AB SpEd PAC)**

Business Meeting

Wednesday, May 16, 2018, at 7:30 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High Library

Agenda

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of Minutes

Review and approval of April 25, 2018, meeting minutes

III. Organization/Business Issues

- A. Updates from Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director
- B. Brainstorming PAC Goals and Priorities for 2018-2019 School Year
- C. Discussion and Vote on Amending Bylaws – Organization Name Change, Updated Language
- D. Description of PAC Officer Positions for Election June 13
- E. Working with Local Recreation Workshop Information

IV. New Business – Other topics on people's minds

V. Open Issues

- A. MCAS – 3rd & 4th grade ELA performance vulnerable for students with disabilities
- B. Concerns about the process for combining outside specialists' recommendations with district evaluations/recommendations and appropriately incorporating those recommendations into the IEP
- C. Mandatory special education training/professional development for regular and special education staff – hiring dual-certified staff
- D. Enhanced Extended School Year, before-, and after-school programming
- E. Increased use of technology in IEP development, revision, & communication
- F. Out of District findings from 2015 parent/guardian survey counter overall positive trend
- G. Need for consistent K-12 executive functioning curriculum

VI. Adjournment

All AB SpEd PAC meetings are open to the public. We encourage parents of children with special needs and others interested in special education to attend. Please check our website (www.abspedpac.org) for information regarding upcoming events.

VII. Annual Meeting & Officer Elections

Wednesday, June 13, 2018, 7:30 p.m. RJ Grey Junior High Library

Please note this meeting will be followed by a brief Friends of AB SpEd PAC meeting



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting April 25, 2018

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. PAC Board Chair Amanda Bailey, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Secretary Melissa Brown, Special Education Director Pam Smith, Standing Committee Chair Blossom Davies, School Committee member Paul Murphy, and five other community members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from March 21, 2018, were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director

Susan Bohmiller, ABRHS Education Team Leader (ETL), discussed the co-teaching pilot program at the high school. Co-teaching is an inclusion model where a special educator and general education teacher co-lead a class. This model was successfully implemented this year in one section of each of the four core classes for 9th grade students and will be offered within two sections of each core class across all grades next year. Professional development opportunities have been offered to teachers to facilitate on-going success of the co-teaching model, including tours of programs in other districts. The Henderson School in Dorchester is a fully inclusive K-12 school that offers tours to the public as well. The PAC endorses the co-teaching model and hopes to see greater emphasis on inclusion at the lower grade levels as well, including kindergarten. The incoming superintendent, Peter Light, oversaw a full co-teaching model while principal at Franklin High School.

Another point of discussion was access to advanced level courses for students with IEPs. In general, teachers are flexible in accommodating the needs of these students, though in some cases (e.g., AP courses) course content can't be modified. Susan noted that requests for overrides can be an issue, particularly if outside the team's recommendation.

Two additional updates regarding the high school include Larry Dorey's appointment as acting principal for another year as well as the construction of a new Minuteman Tech campus. The district continues to educate students and families about the secondary educational opportunities available at Minuteman Tech.

Staffing changes include the resignation of Merriam/McT/Douglas Educational Team Leader Molly Norton. A search for a permanent ETL will begin this summer.

The Maynard SEPAC is hosting its special education admin in a presentation on the state of special education in their district after her first two years there. The PAC asked if there was interest from the Special Education Director in doing the same here. A presentation date will be forthcoming.

B. PowerSchool Special Education and Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Development—Families' Perspectives, Potential Mini Survey

The switch from E-SPED to PowerSchool has required all IEPs to be entered manually into the new system. Parents have noted some information has subsequently been missing or generalized in IEPs, so it is important to review documents carefully. As with all technology conversions, there has been a learning curve. Student Services is confident that many of these issues will be resolved once all IEPs are in the system. Workshops to facilitate parents accessing and electronically signing the IEPs are pending. The PAC is considering a mini-survey to capture families' experiences with this transition.

C. IEP Progress Reporting

There has been variability in the issuing of IEP progress reports, which IDEA states should be issued concurrently with general education report cards. The PAC is working with Student Services to ensure alignment in reporting, as well as to establish guidelines for those elementary schools which do not issue report cards (Merriam and McCarthy Towne). On-going issues with transparency and access to student assessments was also noted.

Progress reporting for the preschool is also under review and a committee is being formed to discuss the current reporting (a 4-5-page benchmark checklist/report, issued biannually) and compare that with what other preschool programs offer. The PAC notes that the checklist as written obfuscates skill acquisition and that preschool staff have additional non-teaching time to complete paperwork. The Special Education Director noted that the preschool staff frequently pursue professional development opportunities on Fridays.

The PAC reminds families to review Current Performance Levels in IEPs to ensure there is baseline data reported. Baseline data is necessary to track and measure progress over time. Parents have generally reported that OT and PT goals and benchmarks meet SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant/Realistic, and Time-Bound) while goals and benchmarks in other areas are not always measurable. Specific information about goal performance (% success in number of trials, opportunities, etc.) is much more useful than anecdotal information. Some families have reported pushback when asking for more current performance level data or more data-driven goals, with variability across buildings. Ideally, Student Services could support ETLs in aligning districtwide practices, thereby facilitating greater transparency and accountability.

D. District Updating Discipline of Students with Disabilities Policy (File: JKF)

As part of regionalization, the School Committee policy subcommittee has been updating policies and procedures. The PAC has been weighing in as appropriate. The discipline policy for students with disabilities has been revised to include the preschool, such that

the superintendent must be notified if a preschool student is suspended. The PAC notes a parent being asked to pick up a child early due to behavior constitutes a suspension.

E. Discuss Changing AB SpEd PAC Organization Name

The PAC reports that parents have inquired about the possibility of a name change of the organization, as “SpEd” is considered pejorative. As stated in the by-laws, the organization name is “Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council (AB SpEd PAC).” Most districts around the state use SEPAC versus SpEd PAC when abbreviating their organization names. The Executive Director of the Friends of AB SpEd PAC noted concerns with the time and financials necessary to complete a name change with federal and state government agencies given that group’s status as a 501(c)(3). Other issues include web links that will require updating, as well as PAC handouts, pamphlets, and the Parent Handbook. A community member volunteered to help with the process. The Chair noted that language in the organizational by-laws needs updating, so it would be reasonable to make both changes at once. The new organizational name would be “Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council.” A vote is scheduled for next meeting.

F. Community Access and Inclusion Opportunities

Acton Recreation is still seeking commissioners. While some playgrounds meet the legal definition of accessible, they do not have inclusive equipment. Surfaces that are fully accessible for individuals with mobility impairments can cost twice as much as surfaces such as woodchips. The Jones Field Playground renovation project in South Acton is on-going and support is greatly needed on design, outreach, and fundraising.

The Acton Commission on Disabilities (CoD) welcomes new members and has a standing meeting the third Tuesday of every month from 9:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

IV. **New Business**

A community member asked if the front door of the Admin Building housing the Acton preschool site could be locked during school hours. The Special Education Director noted that the district is aware that this is an issue and is taking steps to remedy it. The PAC Chair noted there is remote capability elsewhere in the district. Community members concurred this needs to be resolved, with many suggesting writing the School Committee.

A community member asked how to ensure students with pull-outs at Douglas have sufficient time and accommodations to complete their project-based exhibition work. The parent expressed frustration that neither general nor special education staff were taking ownership and that the staff were not on the same page. The PAC suggested those being bounced between special education and general education elevate the issues using the district communication map, starting with the principal, then Student Services.

Implementation of the Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is on hold until the district completes the first phase of the equity audit. The equity audit will investigate

outcomes across groups, including gender, elementary school, race/ethnicity, English language proficiency, and students with disabilities.

There is a parent-led movement, the Massachusetts Inclusive Schools Initiative, emphasizing inclusion for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The group intends to advocate for an inclusion endorsement and better practices statewide.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

VI. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, May 16, 2018, at 7:30 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High Library

All AB SpEd PAC meetings are open to the public. We encourage parents of children with special needs and others interested in special education to attend. Please check our website (www.abspedpac.org) for information regarding upcoming events.

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Brown, Secretary

PROPOSED EDITS 5/16/18 BUSINESS MEETING



By-Laws: Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

As amended June 11, 2014

Article 1: Name

The name of this organization shall be:

The Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council (~~AB SpEd~~ PAC).

Article 2: Purpose

The purpose of this Organization shall be to:

1. Improve communication among parents/guardians, staff, administrators (both within and outside of the district), and the School Committee on special education issues.
2. Serve as a resource and support network for parents/guardians of children with special needs regarding procedures, educational, and non-educational issues.
3. Advise the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee/district on issues related to the education and safety of ~~special education~~ students with disabilities and participate regularly in the planning, development and evaluation of the ~~districts'~~ district's special education programs.
4. Serve as advocates for equal educational opportunities for all ~~special-needs~~ children with disabilities.

Article 3: Membership

1. General membership shall be open to the public.
2. Voting memberships shall be any general member who is a parent or a guardian of a child with special needs, with or without an Individualized Education Plan Program (IEP) or 504 Plan who resides in or whose child attends school in Acton or Boxborough. Voting membership is required to vote in annual officer elections and all other business that comes before any ~~AB SpEd~~ PAC meeting.

Article 4: Executive Board

Section 1: Membership

1. Officers of the ~~AB SpEd~~ PAC shall be the Chairperson and Secretary. The Secretary position may be shared by two individuals and the Chairperson position may be shared by three individuals. (All fundraising and financial activities are now conducted by the "Friends of AB SPED PAC, Ltd." organization. See Article 8 below for further information.)
2. The Executive Board shall consist of voting and non-voting members. The voting members will include all officers of the ~~AB SpEd~~ PAC, one chairperson of one standing committee, and one Past PAC Chairperson. Non-voting members may include representatives from each of the following: Special Education Administration and Regional School Committee.

Section 2: Duties

Duties of officers of the Executive Board shall be as follows:

1. Chairperson(s)

- a. Set the agenda and preside at all meetings of the organization and meetings of the Executive Board.
- b. Act as primary liaison to the Superintendent, School Committee and Director of **Pupil Services Special Education**.
- c. Execute and supervise responsibilities related to contracts and agreements in the organization's behalf, and sign any such contracts and agreements on behalf of the Executive Board.
- d. Oversee the functioning of the **AB SpEd** PAC committees, special projects, and events.
- e. Oversee management of the **AB SpEd** PAC website: ensure that content is kept current, meeting minutes are posted in a timely manner and website hosting services are renewed annually.

2. Secretary(s)

- a. Record, disseminate and file the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board and general PAC meetings.
- b. Maintain the organization's records, including a current membership list.

3. Standing Committee Chairpersons

As needed for such topics as Program Development, Parent Support, Resource/Information, Legislative Issues and/or Liaison Coordinator.

- a. Recruit members and hold committee meetings, as necessary.
- b. Provide annual objectives to the Executive Board at the beginning of the year.
- c. Report committee activities to the Executive Board and the full membership.

6. Past PAC Chairperson

- a. Advise PAC Chairperson(s) on ongoing issues of organizational concern.
- b. Provide continuity and support to the PAC Chairperson(s).

Article 5: Elections

Section 1:

All **AB SpEd** PAC officers are elected by the voting membership at the Annual meeting held in the Spring. If an officer position becomes vacant mid-term, a special election may be held at any time throughout the year to fill that position. All officers' terms will expire on June 30th of the subsequent school year.

Section 2:

In the event that the Executive Board members have a concern about the actions or behavior of another Board member, the **AB SpEd** PAC Chair(s) will give the individual in question written notice of their concerns and an opportunity to make the appropriate changes prior to initiating action to remove the individual from office. A member of the Executive Board may be removed by a majority vote of the Executive Board for behaving in a manner unbecoming a representative of the organization or for taking actions counter to the goals/purposes of the organization. The Executive Board members may appoint an Interim Board member to fill the resulting vacancy until the next election is held at which time a permanent replacement will be elected by the voting membership of the PAC.

Article 6: Meetings

Section 1:

A schedule of meetings shall be determined and published by the Executive Board.

Section 2:

At any PAC meeting, five voting members must be present to constitute a quorum for business requiring a vote.

Section 3:

In accordance with the School ~~Committees'~~ Committee's policy **and procedure**, Files BDFB **and BDFB-R**, the Director of ~~Pupil Services~~ Special Education and the ~~SpEd~~ PAC Chairperson(s) will meet quarterly to discuss planning, development and evaluation of the ~~districts'~~ district's special education programs. Other staff, ~~SpEd~~ PAC Board members and the School Committee liaisons(s) may also be included at these meetings.

Section 4:

The ~~SpEd~~ PAC may upon invitation present formally to the School Committee two times a year to:

- Report to the School Committee on the goals of the Special Education Parent Advisory Council for the upcoming year; and
- Report to the committee on the progress on the goals of the Special Education ~~pParent~~ eCouncil during the year.

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council presentations to the School ~~Committees~~ Committee shall be made at the September or October meeting and the June or July meeting, subject to the Special Education Parent Advisory Council's consultation with the Chair of the ~~respective~~ School ~~Committees~~ Committee.

Article 7: Amendments

These By-Laws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the voting membership present at any Business Meeting, provided that written notice of the proposed amendments is given prior to the meeting.

Article 8: Grants, Donations and Fundraising

The ~~AB SpEd~~ PAC has decided not to pursue grants and donations or engage in fundraising. Instead it has decided to create a separate 501(c)(3) organization called "Friends of AB SpEd PAC, Ltd." for the sole purpose of raising funds to support and advance the mission of the ~~AB SpEd~~ PAC. By conducting fundraising through the "Friends of AB SpEd PAC" organization, monies may be raised and dispersed independently without needing to deposit funds with the town Treasurer and/or submit requests for disbursement through the School Committee or any other Town body.

Article 9: Non-Permissible Activities

The ~~AB SpEd~~ PAC does not participate in political campaigning on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office, nor does it attempt to influence legislation.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the organization will not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Article 10: Parliamentary Authority

In the event that the ~~AB SpEd~~ PAC's By-Laws are silent on an issue, the rules contained in the current edition of "Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised" shall govern the ~~AB SpEd~~ PAC.

DRAFT



ACCESS
RECREATION
BOSTON

Connect, Explore, Play!

AccessRec.org

Access Recreation Boston is dedicated to connecting people
with disabilities to recreation opportunities throughout
Greater Boston and beyond.



A project of the
Institute for Human Centered Design

For more information, contact:
info@AccessRecBoston.org

Recreation as a Related Service in IDEA 2004

1. Assessment of Recreation and Leisure Functioning

Assessment of recreation and leisure functioning is a procedure to determine the current functional strengths and needs of students with disabilities in terms of skills, abilities, and attitudes relative to recreation and leisure.

2. Leisure Education

Leisure education provides students with recreational and educational instruction to promote positive attitudes toward leisure, recognition of the benefits of recreation involvement, the development of skills necessary for recreation participation (such as social, decision making, and planning skills), knowledge of recreation resources, and attitudes and skills that facilitate independent, satisfying leisure experiences.

3. Therapeutic Recreation

Therapeutic recreation is the use of recreation activities to habilitate or rehabilitate functional abilities, which contribute to behavioral change. Therapeutic recreation is a process involving assessment, development of goals and objectives, and the implementation, documentation, and evaluation of intervention strategies.

4. Recreation in Schools and Community Agencies

Recreation in schools and community agencies involves the provision of recreation services that facilitate the full participation of children and youths with disabilities in school and community programs. Activities are used to promote health, growth, development, and independence through self-rewarding leisure pursuits.

The assessment process may focus on gathering data related to the individual's

- Physical, social, cognitive and/or emotional deficits that impede independent functioning and educational goal attainment;
- Physical, social, cognitive and/or emotional deficits that impede independent recreation behavior;
- Abilities, interests, and needs related to independent recreation involvement, as well as assistive devices and accommodations needed;
- Social functioning including social competence when interacting with peers and adults in school and community environments and ability to develop and maintain friendships;
- Ability to demonstrate decision-making skills related to independent recreation behavior in school and community settings;
- Ability to independently plan for free-time;
- Ability to demonstrate age-appropriate recreation and leisure skills across a variety of settings; and
- Ability to demonstrate knowledge of school and community recreation resources.

Provided by Chenine Peloquin, M.A., CTRS to MFOFC on May 9, 2018

Budget



Budgeting Tips

- ◆ Always include a line item in the budget for accommodations.
- ◆ Increase fees by a small amount for all participants.
- ◆ If fund-raising, it is important to maintain consistently a positive image and not perpetuate the stereotype of individuals with disabilities as beggars or as objects to pity.



The cost of obeying the law and accommodating everyone in an activity may seem overwhelming—sometimes so much that recreation providers feel that they might be better off going into another profession. However, with a little creative thinking and hard work, one will find that adhering to the law while still offering quality programs at affordable prices is not only possible but advantageous in terms of increasing the numbers of participants in programs and creating positive publicity regarding the program.

Natural supports and other existing resources can often be utilized to make accommodations without any extra cost (see section Making It Accessible—Accommodation Strategies for more information). These types of

accommodations are especially helpful if a network of support exists for an individual and/or a recreation provider (see section Building a Network—Developing Local Teams). However, some accommodations can be costly.

The money needed can be raised in a number of ways. The most obvious is raising fees for programs by a few dollars. This extra money can then be used to pay for accommodations as they become necessary (e.g., sign language interpreters).

Fund-raising is also an effective way to raise money. Although yet another fund-raising drive might seem like one too many, the way a community tends to pull together to make integration work, and especially in recreation, may be surprising. Businesses and individuals are often willing to make an extra donation if they understand that the money will be used to assist individuals with disabilities to participate in community activities. New types of fund-raisers that have not been tried in your town also might be effective. For example, one organization arranges a town clean-up and participants are sponsored per piece of trash.

Probably the most effective way of managing a budget is to share resources with other organizations. Liaisons might be arranged with human service agencies, schools, businesses, recreation providers, and other organizations. For example, a piece of equipment might be purchased by three organizations and then shared among them. Or accessible facilities might be shared.

Finally, even when modifying an activity or organization does prove to be a financial burden, the payoffs more often than not outweigh the burden in terms of increased capacity to offer programs to individuals with disabilities who will become paying participants.



A local school, a Boys and Girls Club and the local Boy and Girl Scout councils share the cost of various pieces of adapted equipment, such as this bowling ramp, which are stored at and can be checked out from the local library.

Modifications

These introductory examples of and suggestions for making modifications should provide a good starting point for creating ways in which activities may become more accessible to individuals with disabilities. Each type of modification will be discussed in detail on the following pages.

Remember: Modifications can be a team effort! Utilize other participants, parents, teachers, friends, advocates, therapists, and recreation providers as resources!

Modifying Activities

Rules of the Game—Modifying the rules to enable participation

- Ⓢ Rule modifications should be an option for all participants

Examples:

- Ⓢ lengthening the three-second lane rule in basketball
- Ⓢ giving options of batting apparatus (e.g., whiffle bat, tennis racquet, baseball bat)

Regulations of Admittance—Making all individuals feel welcome

- Ⓢ State rules in the positive (e.g., instead of “no dogs,” a policy would read, “only seeing-eye and service dogs permitted”)
- Ⓢ Ask young people their age (for delineating groups) rather than their grade
- Ⓢ Ask about special accommodations on an application form
- Ⓢ Be proactive in your advertising (e.g., “we serve people of all abilities”).

Assistive Technology—Assistance through devices

- Ⓢ Everyday items (typically found in community shops, e.g., alarm clocks, Velcro, rope, scoot guard for rugs)
- Ⓢ Specialized items (usually must be ordered through recreation or occupational therapy magazines, e.g., a sit-ski)
- Ⓢ Owned by an individual, an activity/facility, or a consortium

Physical Environment—Working around or removing the obstacles

- Ⓢ The obvious (e.g., doorways, stairs)
- Ⓢ The not-so-obvious (e.g., acoustics, weather conditions)
- Ⓢ Consultation with community members

Natural Supports/Volunteers—People power

- Ⓢ Cooperative grouping
- Ⓢ Buddy system
- Ⓢ Volunteers used as group assistants and not as an individual's aide

Time/Place Modifications

- Ⓢ Accessible buildings/floors
- Ⓢ Meeting times to accommodate schedules of kids bused out of district

Defining success—Why are we doing this anyway?

- Ⓢ Flexibility on criteria for success
- Ⓢ Success is defined on an individual basis
- Ⓢ The ultimate goal—to have fun! (and perhaps the amount of fun an individual and a group has might be the best measure of success discovered yet)



Words to Focus On

cooperative

supportive

accommodations

working together

accessible

fun

encouragement

team building

regardless of ability

empower

qualified staff

inclusive

organized

interdependent

all abilities

modifications

integrated

no prerequisites

friendships

building community

flexible

adaptable

call anytime

