

**Business Meeting Minutes
September 5, 2018**

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. Co-Chair Amanda Bailey, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Secretary Melissa Brown, K-6 Special Education Coordinator Lynne Laramie, and seven other community members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from June 13, 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 Student Services

SEPAC leadership met with K-6 Special Education Coordinator Lynne Laramie and High School Educational Team Leader Susan Bohmiller. The SEPAC shared that the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) now offers webinars and workshops on Basic Rights and other topics in several different languages. We may consider offering Basic Rights in Spanish if we can partner with other local SEPACs. For now, the SEPAC can refer families to FCSN webinars. The SEPAC can translate materials as needed.

The pending district equity audit, which will compare student outcomes across multiple categories (including disability status), was also discussed. A presentation will be made to the School Committee later this year.

The SEPAC requested information about Extended School Year (ESY) programming, including how many students qualified and the number of students who attended. There have been parent reports about limited and late communication about the program. Student Services agreed, noting it can be challenging to qualify students and subsequently staff the program earlier in the year if data does not show criteria for ESY eligibility has been met. The SEPAC reminds parents/guardians that evidence of regression is only one qualifier for ESY (along with recoupment issues and risk of regression) and encourages parents to document experiences that they feel merit consideration for ESY. The SEPAC is also interested in learning about families' experiences at the secondary level as programs were cut from 4 to 3 days a week last year. Another area of consideration is providing students attending ESY access to peers through Community Education.

The Administration Building, which houses the Acton preschool program, will now be locked during school hours. Visitors must ring the bell to be buzzed in to the building.

There is a new initiative at Douglas, the Nurturing Educational Support Team (NEST), for students in grades 3-6 with learning disabilities, including dyslexia, and social-emotional challenges. A highlight of the program is a therapy dog. Preliminary feedback indicates the program is going well, with general education teachers reporting students are better prepared overall due to embedding multiple subject areas in one block.

B. Feedback Sought for Stakeholder Meeting with New Superintendent

The new superintendent would like to attend the December meeting in order to meet families. The SEPAC chairs will also meet with the superintendent as part of his entry plan stakeholder feedback sessions to talk about priorities related to students with disabilities, including partnerships between general educators and special educators, social-emotional issues, the building project, and more. Parents should feel free to contact the SEPAC with additional items for consideration.

C. New Special Education Personnel & Roles

The district communication map has been updated for 2018-2019. There are a number of new staff members at Merriam, including a new principal, assistant principal, K-3 resource room special educator, and IEP Team Chair Margo Austein. The district has added new IEP Team Chairs Allison Leahy at McCarthy-Towne and Barbara Maglione at Blanchard and Conant.

D. Early Childhood Program Expansion

The Acton early childhood program site has added a classroom to service a small cohort of students with intensive needs. This classroom will be led by the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) with support staff. The old substantially separate Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) classroom led by the BCBA will now be headed by a special educator while retaining ABA methodology. The SEPAC strongly encourages preschool families with children receiving ABA services to ensure continued BCBA consultation and clinic time within their IEPs.

E. Progress Reporting Via PowerSchool—Clarification RE: Partially Rejected IEPs

There was confusion last spring regarding how parents would receive IEP progress reports. Student Services indicated those with accepted IEPs as of December would have progress reports available via PowerSchool, while those with IEPs in transition or partially rejected would have reports mailed to them. Parents shared that while they received reports for accepted IEPs via PowerSchool, those reports are no longer available. Others with partially rejected IEPs have reported not receiving progress reports at all. Parents are encouraged to request copies of progress reports via Student Services. Parents are also encouraged to ensure no information was lost in the manual entry of IEPs to the PowerSchool Special Education software. Student Services would like to come to a meeting to demonstrate PowerSchool functionality once these issues are resolved.

F. Updates on Selected 2018-2019 Goals & Priorities

1. Outreach via Back to School Nights, Social Media

Parents are encouraged to sign up to staff Back to School Nights to facilitate outreach. The SEPAC has also been reaching out to families through Facebook groups, the Acton-Boxborough Family Network, and the Acton Chinese-Language Yahoo group, among others. A family event will be held with the Friends of the AB SEPAC later in the year. There are also plans to host a focus group for parents/guardians of students with Specific Learning Disabilities.

2. Drafting Mini Survey for Fall Release

The SEPAC intends to issue a short survey to parents/guardians in late fall, focusing on Specific Learning Disabilities, communication, and ESY.

3. Website Revisions Underway

The website requires significant updating, particularly following the organization name change. Anyone who identifies a broken or outdated link on the website is encouraged to email abrsdsepac@gmail.com. Suggestions for new resources are also welcome.

4. Status of Bullying & the IEP, Basic Rights Workshops

- Invitation to Collaborate with Area SEPACs

We are hosting the annual Basic Rights workshop in conjunction with the Maynard, Sudbury, Concord, and Concord/Carlisle SEPACs and our respective school districts. Concord's MassPAC Plus membership means we can secure a second workshop on communication or IEP development for reduced cost. Mass Advocates for Children will present on schoolwide and IEP strategies to address bullying, date TBD.

IV. New Business

There was an inquiry about the possibility of looking at MCAS outcomes by disability. The district has this data available internally.

The district continues to use the discrepancy model to find students eligible for special education. There was a clarifying discussion about the implementation of general-education Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS) interventions for students with identified special education needs and those without.

Social-emotional issues were also discussed in light of the suicide of a high school student at the beginning of the summer. Interested parties are invited to review the School Committee minutes from the summer workshop for steps the district has taken in response.

Absenteeism was noted as historically a problem in the district for regular and special education students and especially for girls at the junior high level.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

VI. Next Meeting

Wednesday, October 3, 2018, at 7:30 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High Library

All AB SEPAC 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.absepac.org) for information regarding upcoming events.

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Brown, Secretary