

# Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council (AB SEPAC)

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## Business Meeting Minutes January 9, 2019

### I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. AB SEPAC Co-Chairs Amanda Bailey and Carrie Weaver, Secretary Melissa Brown, Director of Special Education Pam Smith, and six other community members were present.

### II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from December 19, 2018, were reviewed. A revision was suggested to add the wraparound services contract to the list of proposed FY20 budget items. The motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as revised. The motion passed unanimously.

### III. Organizational/Business Issues

#### A. Monthly Meeting with Student Services

Early childhood education and accountability around kindergarten readiness for students with and without disabilities was discussed.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is developing family engagement standards from birth through grade 12. The SEPAC encourages participation in the stakeholder feedback sessions held around the state.

The SEPAC asked about determination criteria for the Developmental Delay category when establishing special education eligibility. Concern has been expressed Developmental Delay may not be the most appropriate category when testing reveals profiles consistent with dyslexia, autism, or other disabilities. Services follow the child's needs, but some categories may trigger additional considerations. An example is students with autism afforded additional provisions under Chapter 57. Student Services internally tracks student population by disability category.

The proposed budget for special education for FY20 is less than last year, though this does not reflect a reduction in services. There are natural fluctuations that happen year to year in terms of the number of students with IEPs or the number of students served within the district, for example. The number of students with IEPs is lower than it was last year.

#### B. Discuss SEPAC Position Re: All-Day Kindergarten Funding

The district is having conversations about potentially moving to district-funded universal All-Day Kindergarten (ADK). The membership discussed the SEPAC's position in order to make a recommendation to the School Committee. All students are currently guaranteed half-day K. ADK tuition is \$4500 and enrollment is processed through a lottery system. For children with IEPs, kindergarten placement is determined by the IEP team as one of the following: half-day, full-day, 'half day/half day' (general education in the morning and a resource program in the afternoon), or Out of District. Some members expressed support for universal ADK on the grounds that it would redefine and facilitate access to the Least Restrictive Environment, remove tuition as a potential disincentive in placement

considerations, and could provide greater flexibility for co-teaching. One member expressed interest in reviewing the literature on best practices. Others expressed concern about funding. A motion was made to vote to recommend universal and therefore district-funded All-Day Kindergarten to the School Committee. The motion passed with five members voting in favor of and three abstaining.

#### C. Extended School Year (ESY) Information

The dates for ESY will be announced by February. The SEPAC continues to educate families about eligibility determination factors for ESY, including documented regression over breaks in service, risk of regression, and issues with recoupment.

#### D. Updates on Selected 2018-2019 Goals and Priorities

Decoding Dyslexia and the Decoding Dyslexia-MA Facebook group are great resources for families. School Committee liaison to the SEPAC Tessa McKinley has asked the SEPAC to develop a document about what to do if you suspect dyslexia, pairing early signs of dyslexia, interventions, etc., with information about navigating the special education eligibility process. The SEPAC will research what is currently available and start to compile resources.

The parent/guardian survey will be ready for release at the end of January.

Parenting Support Hour is scheduled from 2:30-4:30 p.m. at the Acton Memorial Library on the following dates: 2/3, 3/3, 4/7, 5/5, 6/2.

A community member donated a digital copy of "Intelligent Lives" to the SEPAC. An admission-free screening of the 70-minute film is being planned for the spring.

#### **IV. New Business**

The SEPAC encourages parents/guardians to consider running for open School Committee seats this spring, with two three-year terms opening from Acton and one three-year term from Boxborough.

Acton Recreation is seeking Community Preservation funds to assist with the Jones playground rebuild. The new playground will be up to ADA standards. Families are encouraged to express support by attending the meeting (Thursday 1/17 at 7:30 p.m. at the Acton Memorial Library) or by emailing the Community Preservation Committee at [cpc@acton-ma.gov](mailto:cpc@acton-ma.gov).

A member expressed concern about the lot size of the proposed sites for the new elementary school building given it will also house the Early Childhood Program.

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

#### **VI. NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday, February 6, 2019, 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](http://www.absepac.org)) for information regarding upcoming events.*

*Respectfully submitted by Melissa Brown, Secretary*