

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

---

## Business Meeting Minutes November 20, 2019

### I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. AB SEPAC Co-Chair Amanda Bailey, Secretary Melissa Brown, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Interim Director of Special Education Debbie Dixon, and eleven other community members were present.

### II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from October 2, 2019, were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

### III. Organizational/Business Issues

#### A. Governor Proclaims November SEPAC Awareness Month

Governor Baker has proclaimed November SEPAC awareness month following parent advocacy.

#### B. Updates on District Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives

##### 1. DEI Family Advisory Group

##### 2. SEPAC Leadership Meeting with Superintendent about DEI Partnership and Feedback Opportunities

##### 3. Staff Professional Learning

The district received 70 applicants for the DEI Family Advisory Group; 40 individuals were selected. The SEPAC is not represented on the committee. SEPAC leadership subsequently requested a meeting with the Superintendent to gain information on inclusion initiatives, potential future collaboration, and feedback opportunities. The district is particularly focused on Universal Design for Learning, reading instruction (including remediating dyslexia), and clarifying the purpose of the resource programs.

The SEPAC looks forward to working with the district in educating the community about why inclusion matters (and subsequently addressing the misconception that kids with disabilities lower the standards in a general education classroom). Increasing representation of individuals with disabilities in learning materials as well among invited speakers are some ideas. The SEPAC welcomes additional input from families.

The district-wide professional development day on November 5th featured trainings related to DEI, including culturally-responsive teaching, disability-specific issues, and more. The SEPAC looks forward to partnering with Student Services on parent and community workshops. A listening session may help guide these efforts.

#### C. Communication Response Time from Special Education Staff and Administrators

Parents should receive a response to an email within one (school) day—even if the response is to confirm receipt with a plan to follow up later. Parents are reporting response times vary among

special educators and Educational Team Leaders, with some emails going unanswered. Additionally, IEPs have been taking a long time to be issued, particularly at the elementary level. The district is implementing a plan to address this. In the meantime, parents who are not receiving IEPs and/or responses to emails in a timely fashion should follow up with the Team Chair (generally the contact listed on the IEP) and CC the Interim Director of Special Education.

#### D. Special Education Timelines

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), parents should receive two copies of the IEP immediately after it is developed. MA law interprets “immediately” as within ten school days IF an acceptable meeting summary is provided. The summary must include “at a minimum ... (a) a completed IEP service delivery grid describing the types and amounts of special education and/or related services proposed by the district, and (b) a statement of the major goal areas associated with these services.” Parents are reminded they do not need to wait to receive the IEP to consent to services.

Parents are reminded they have 30 calendar days to reply to the IEP once they receive it. Given current backlogs, the SEPAC recommends parents email the Team Chair when the IEP arrives to document the start of the 30 days (this is the case for IEP amendments as well). Any IEP that is not responded to within 30 days can be reported to the state as rejected. This means any existing IEP will remain in stay put and no new services will begin. The district will typically send one or two reminders to parents prior to reporting the IEP as a rejection.

#### E. Current Early Childhood Dyslexia Screening Process

Districts have always been responsible for identifying children with disabilities via Child Find. New dyslexia legislation has resulted in the district pursuing research-based partnerships to help screen students. The main kindergarten screening process occurs in June and includes measures to assess early literacy (RAN) and math skills as well as additional screening questionnaires. Moving forward, students with IEPs enrolled in the Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program will be also be screened during this process. There is also screening during the school year.

#### F. Updates on SEPAC Goals & Priorities for the 2019-2020 School Year

1. Districtwide Use of Percentiles with Standard/Scaled Scores in Evaluation Reports  
Evaluation reports from the district will now include percentiles in addition to standard /scaled scores. This will provide important information to the team in developing the most appropriate accommodations and interventions for students with unique learning profiles. Note: percentages have not been normed for English Language Learners and thus cannot be reported for those students. The SEPAC thanks the district for implementing this change following the organization’s request.

2. Basic Rights “Understanding the IEP” Workshop February 11, 2020, 7-9 p.m. at Sudbury Senior Center; Decoding Dyslexia Presentation TBD

The second workshop in the Basic Rights series will be hosted by Sudbury in conjunction with the A-B and surrounding SEPACs. The third part of the series will occur in the spring and focus on post-secondary transition planning. Twenty-one people attended the first Basic Rights workshop. Seventy people RSVP’d and 35 attended the “Intelligent Lives” screening. Nancy Duggan from Decoding Dyslexia will present on a date TBA.

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

Critical votes on the elementary school building project will occur in December. There will be special town meetings in Acton and Boxborough on December 10 and on December 17 both towns will hold special town elections. All four measures must pass to ensure the project will proceed with state funding support. Parents are encouraged to talk with neighbors and write to *The Beacon* to underscore the urgent need for the new facility.

The search process for a permanent Director of Special Education will commence in January. SEPAC representation has been included in administrative searches in the past, including for the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, the Director of Special Education, Superintendent, and principals.

The SEPAC will continue to educate parents about Extended School Year (ESY) services as there have been reports of the ESY conversation not taking place and parents being provided misinformation about qualifying. Students may qualify for ESY when they have demonstrated regression, are at risk of regression, and/or have issues with recoupment. The district has committed to staffing ESY programs earlier and provide ESY recommendations by March. There will also be consistent program coordination moving forward. A parent requested district follow-up to assess the efficacy of ESY programming.

A parent asked about retaining a student for an additional year of preschool. The parent was advised to consult the state curriculum frameworks to explore kindergarten readiness and have a conversation with the IEP team about the appropriate placement for the next academic year.

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

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

Wednesday, December 18, 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*