

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

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## Business Meeting Minutes December 18, 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, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Secretary Melissa Brown, Interim Director of Special Education Debbie Dixson, School Committee Member Diane Baum, and seven other community members were present.

### II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from November 20, 2019, were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes with one correction. The motion passed unanimously.

### III. Organizational/Business Issues

#### A. Updates from Monthly Meeting with Interim Special Education Director

##### 1. Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) Tiered Focus Monitoring On-Site Visit May 2020

DESE will be conducting a site visit in May to 1) perform ongoing monitoring of the district's special education programs and 2) review corrective actions taken based on prior findings. This will include an interview with SEPAC officers to ensure the district is compliant with state law mandating a SEPAC. The Interim Director of Special Education will share the findings of the evaluation of the district's Learning Centers, which was part of DESE review process in spring 2019.

The district is currently developing a tiered system of support targeting literacy. The newly-formed Literacy Visioning Committee will issue guidelines by fall 2020. Tier 1 will encompass research-based general education practices available to all students; Tier 2 will encompass targeted assistance informed by on-going formative assessments (this may include small-group instruction within the general education setting as well as support from a reading specialist); and Tier 3 will encompass intensive supports, which may include special education services or explicit teaching methodologies. The SEPAC continues to underscore the need for communication with parents when a child is screened and/or being provided with Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports.

Educators across the district may attend a series of professional development seminars on dyslexia. The first will provide foundational knowledge on dyslexia. The second focuses on selecting appropriate assessments when dyslexia is suspected. The third covers research-based interventions for remediation.

Professional development in co-teaching modalities will also be offered to educators through collaboration with Dr. Lisa Dieker from ACCEPT.

B. FY21 Special Education Budget Items & Discussion

Please see the FY21 budget binder on the School Committee page at [abschools.org](http://abschools.org) for detailed information about the proposed budget. There are nine slated special education staffing additions. There are two proposed adjustment counselors, one within the REAL program at the high school and one at McCarthy-Towne, to support students' social-emotional needs. Pathways at Blanchard now serves seventeen students in grades K through grade 6 and requires an additional educator. BRIDGES at the high school also requires additional staff due to projected enrollment. One districtwide occupational/physical therapist and one districtwide speech language pathologist are being proposed to address caseloads. The SEPAC supports the proposed additions and hopes future budgets will include the reinstatement of a transition coordinator at the high school.

C. School Building Project Update

The school building project funding passed at both town meetings and both town ballots.

D. State Revision to Evaluation Consent Form

DESE now requires districts to include a check box on evaluation consent forms offering to send parents or guardians evaluation reports at least two days prior to an initial evaluation or re-evaluation meeting. Acton-Boxborough is having difficulty reconciling this requirement with PowerSchool, but as a matter of practice sends all evaluation reports at least two days prior to meetings. The SEPAC reminds parents that evaluation reports should also include specific recommendations to be discussed at the meeting.

E. Feedback on Accessing & Using PowerSchool to View Individualized Education Program Progress Reports

Parents continue to report difficulty in accessing documents through PowerSchool. Progress reports were issued for students at Blanchard, RJ Grey, and ABRHS. Per the Interim Director of Special Education, a number of parents have emailed requesting support in accessing these documents.

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

1. Basic Rights "Understanding the IEP" Workshop February 11, 2020, 7-9 p.m. at Sudbury Senior Center; Decoding Dyslexia Presentation TBD
2. Dyslexia Feedback Listening Session for Parents/Guardians TBA

Parents and guardians are strongly encouraged to attend the upcoming Basic Rights workshop in Sudbury.

**IV. New Business**

The district continues to monitor issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Areas of potential concern as flagged by the state include the high number of Asian students placed in substantially-separate settings and a disproportionate number of African American students

identified as having a communication disorder. Additionally, students who are identified as English Language Learners are over-identified as also having special education needs.

The first annual winter family social on December 16 was a wonderful success, with approximately 40 people in attendance.

Interested parties are encouraged to contact Melissa Rier at Acton Rec to support efforts toward building inclusively-designed and fully-accessible playgrounds. Funds are being raised for Jones Field and Gardner Field.

The SEPAC celebrates the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) signs installed on the playgrounds at the Admin early childhood program site, Conant, and Blanchard. PECS enable students who do not communicate verbally to express their needs and preferences to peers and staff by pointing or signaling to one or more pictures.

The Blanchard principal reached out to the SEPAC to inquire about how to better support families of students with special education needs.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

**VI. NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday, January 8, 2020, at 7:30 p.m. 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