

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

Business Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, June 10, 2020, at 7 p.m. Virtual Meeting Over Zoom

To attend: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81657860338>

To call in: +1 646 876 9923

Meeting ID: 816 5786 0338

This meeting will be followed by a Friends of AB SEPAC 501(c)(3) meeting

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of Minutes

Review and approval of February 12, 2020, meeting minutes

III. Organization/Business Issues

- A. Updates from Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
- B. Updates from Meetings with Interim Special Education Director
- C. Vote on Revised SEPAC Dyslexia Recommendations
- D. Updates on Organizational Goals from 2019-2020
- E. Seek Nominations & Elect Officers for 2020-2021 School Year
- F. Draft & Vote on Goals & Priorities for the 2020-2021 School Year
 - 1. Address & Remove Barriers to SEPAC Participation and SEPAC Leadership for BIPOC Parents/Guardians of Children with Disabilities
 - 2. Participate in Search Process for New Special Education Director
 - 3. Monitor State Guidance & Families' Experiences Regarding Reopening Schools
 - 4. Conduct Parent/Guardian Survey
 - 5. Community Education on Basic Rights & Other Topics TBD

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

V. Open Issues

- A. MCAS performance vulnerable for students with disabilities
- B. Mandatory special education training/professional development for regular and special education staff – hiring dual-certified staff
- C. Increasing opportunities for meaningful inclusion across domains
- D. Enhanced Extended School Year, before-, and after-school programming
- E. Increased use of technology in IEP development, revision, & communication
- F. Following up on communication issues noted as barriers to overall satisfaction and subgroup trends for Out of District, Early Childhood, and Specific Learning Disabilities identified via 2015 and 2017 parent/guardian surveys
- G. Need for consistent K-12 executive functioning curriculum

VI. Adjournment

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

VII. Next Meeting

2020-2021 Meeting Schedule TBD

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

Business Meeting Draft Minutes February 12, 2020

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. AB SEPAC Co-Chairs Amanda Bailey and Carrie Weaver, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Secretary Melissa Brown, School Committee liaisons to the SEPAC Tessa McKinley and Diane Baum, and ten other community members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from January 8, 2020, were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously, with one abstention.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Updates from Interim Special Education Director

The Interim Special Education Director was unable to attend the meeting.

B. Update on Permanent Special Education Director Search

The search committee for the Special Education Director position has been appointed. Members include three parent/guardian representatives (thirty-five applied and individuals were selected via lottery), SEPAC Co-Chair Amanda Bailey, an elementary principal, the preschool BCBA, elementary and junior high educational team leaders, a psychologist, one special educator, and community member Nancy Duggan. The Deputy Superintendent will lead the committee.

The deadline has been extended to net more applicants. Interviews will begin in March. The SEPAC has requested a public forum to meet finalists and provide feedback to the district, as has occurred previously.

C. February 1, 2020, SEPAC Dyslexia Listening Session & Form Feedback

1. Draft Recommendations

Twelve parents/guardians attended the listening session and another nine responses were recorded via the feedback form. District representation for the listening session included the Superintendent, the Interim Special Education Director, and some special education staff. Both parents/guardians and district personnel report that the experience was positive.

The SEPAC shared a working document of best practices for identifying and working with students with dyslexia. Meeting attendees reviewed the document and offered additional suggestions and revisions. Notably, some practices are already occurring across the district and others are occurring at the school or individual level. Parents/guardians report that in some instances specific measures and tests to evaluate for dyslexia must be requested by families. This working document will be available on the SEPAC website and shared with the district and School Committee once finalized. The SEPAC and the district are each following updates from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) regarding dyslexia screening and remediation.

D. Elementary Learning Center Populations from January 25, 2020, School Committee Budget Saturday Presentation

Parents/guardians are encouraged to review the slide deck from Budget Saturday (available on the district website) with particular focus on the distribution of elementary students within Learning Centers per grade. In many schools, the number of students utilizing Learning Centers increases each year, with a significant jump around 3rd grade. It is concerning that some schools appear to be using a “wait to fail model” and are thereby likely not fulfilling Child Find obligations. The SEPAC is still waiting for the findings from the district program evaluation of Learning Centers as part of process monitoring from DESE.

E. Elementary School Improvement Plans & Co-Teaching

Parents are encouraged to run for School Councils (separate from the PTOs and tasked with writing school improvement plans) within their children’s schools. The McCarthy-Towne principal recently presented on the McT school improvement plan to the School Committee, including plans to transition to a co-teaching model to maximize inclusion for students with disabilities in 6th grade. While the SEPAC supports increased access to the general education classroom for students with disabilities, placement decisions are to be made by individual IEP teams. General educators must be appropriately trained to practice co-teaching. The SEPAC has been invited by the principal to observe these co-teaching practices.

F. Mental Health & Crisis Resources

1. Mental Health & the IEP Workshop TBD; Webinar Available

Concerned parents/guardians have contacted the SEPAC regarding ensuring appropriate staff response to a child experiencing an emotional and/or behavioral crisis. Parents/guardians are encouraged to have conversations with their IEP teams and develop a behavior plan as appropriate. As a reminder, mental health resources and supports are available on the district website. Crisis support for mental health is available 24 hours a day through Advocates (800-640-5432).

IV. New Business

Parents/guardians asked about filing with the state if there is a violation with the implementation of an IEP or the evaluation process timeline. An upcoming newsletter will review how to file a complaint (see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>). You must sign your name to any complaint submitted to the DESE Problem Resolution System Office.

The Past PAC Chair expressed concern about overall district-wide Student Growth Percentiles on MCAS and compiled a working document highlighting particular grades, subjects, and schools with lower than desired growth percentiles. School Committee liaison Diane Baum said that the Student Opportunity Act would ideally provide opportunities to gather data and implement interventions supporting sub-groups of students, including students with disabilities.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

VI. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, March 18, 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

REVISED Acton-Boxborough SEPAC Dyslexia Recommendations to the ABRSD 6/10/2020

Screening

Implement universal pre-K through grade two screening for dyslexia, *including for children already with IEPs*. Students in grades three or higher should be screened upon suspicion.

Move-ins should be screened if not already identified as having a Specific Learning Disability in reading.

Whether there is a family history of dyslexia should be asked as part of all screening.

Notify all parents when screening occurs and inform them of results.

If a child is found at risk, the child should be placed in reading support using a structured literacy approach with scientifically-proven, evidence-based programs targeting the weakness.

Reading Support

Inform parents when a child is receiving any support from a reading specialist, regardless of tier.

The curriculum in reading support needs to be aligned with scientifically-proven, evidence-based programs.

Conduct progress monitoring every three months or more frequently if required for students in reading support and/or those with IEPs for language-based disabilities and share findings with parents.

Provide parents timely and consistent access to a child's records (DRAs/F&Ps, speech and language screens, spelling inventories, etc.) to track progress.

Identification

Abandon the wait to fail model—Child Find requires the district to proactively seek out and identify children with disabilities.

If a child is in reading support for an extended period, it is important to figure out **why**; reading support is supposed to be a short-term intervention. Screening should be required after a set amount of time based on the intervention being used.

If a child is struggling and there are parent concerns and/or evidence of reading failure, do not delay the process by recommending more Child Study Team, RTI/MTSS, or “screenings” instead of testing.

Those conducting screenings and evaluations need to be trained to identify dyslexia, including deficits in sequencing, phonemic awareness, rapid naming, or a combination of these.

Utilize a standardized battery including the GORT, TOWRE, TWS, and CTOPP-2 as part of evaluations for children suspected of having a language-based learning disability.

Fully consider outside evaluations when determining eligibility. If the school is unable to do the appropriate testing, outside evaluation findings should be accepted.

General Education Reading Instruction

Universally align the reading curriculum methodology to structured literacy.

Foundations, Just Words, or similar scientifically-proven, evidence-based curriculum should be done systematically and sequentially in Tier 1 and Tier 2. They should not be used randomly, haphazardly, or as a Tier 3 intervention.

Abandon predictable texts that foster memorization over decoding.

Teachers need professional development around dyslexia and structured literacy curriculum versus balanced literacy.

Remove anchor charts from classrooms and Learning Centers that promote three-cuing methods ("Does it make sense? Does that sound right? Does that look right?") and those that promote guessing (e.g., Eagle Eye, Tryin' Lion).

Intervention / Service Provision

Have special educators certified in Orton-Gillingham and Wilson across grade levels. Certification should be mandatory when recruiting new hires for reading support or special education.

Label the intervention in the IEP methodology with explicit progress monitoring and measures named. Use "dyslexia," "Orton-Gillingham," and "Wilson Reading."

Goals and benchmarks must include the Essential Components of Reading Instruction (ECORI) and be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timebound (SMART).

Baseline performance data must be provided for all goals and benchmarks.

Do not limit or cease intervention arbitrarily or because a child is caught up to grade level. The pace of instruction or increased reading load in the next grade may outstrip a child's abilities.

Utilize block schedules to avoid pulling students out from core content (science, social studies, math, etc.).

Group children together who have the same service needs.

Teach spelling using a specialized program in addition to accommodating with spell checkers.

Consider the social and emotional impact of the reading disability and provide related supports or counseling as needed.

Post Remediation

Dyslexics who no longer require IEPs should be found eligible under Section 504 in order to access standardized testing accommodations.

All staff, including school counselors, need to be informed of the limits of the general education District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP). Students with identified disabilities requiring accommodations, related services, and/or specialized instruction need to have those documented in a 504 plan or IEP.

All teachers through grade 12 should be able to support dyslexic students and understand their needs and accommodations.



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

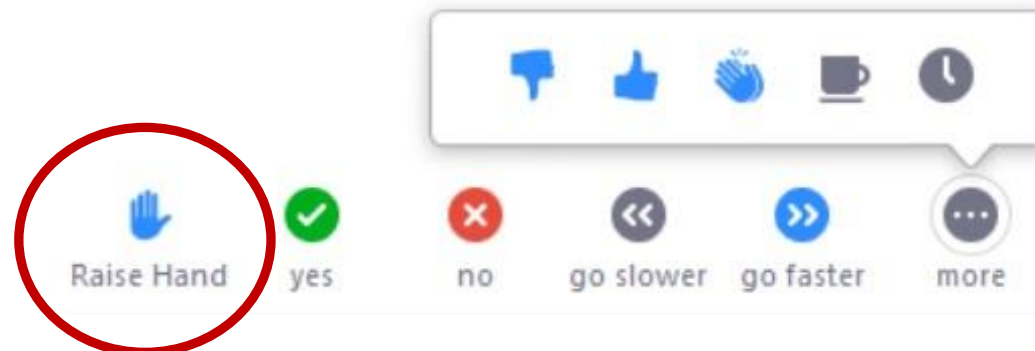
Annual Meeting & Officer Elections

June 10, 2020

I. Call to Order

Virtual Meeting Participation

- SEPAC meetings are public and subject to Open Meeting Law
- Participation may not take place via the chat box
- Votes will be conducted by roll call
- To be recognized by the Chairs, please use the raise hand function in the Participants window



Our Mission

**To ensure understanding, respect, support,
and the appropriate education of all children in our community.**

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council's
duties under state law include:

“advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities and meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the school district’s special education programs.”

II. Approval of Minutes

- Review and approval of February 12, 2020, meeting minutes
- Draft minutes are in the 6/10/20 meeting packet on the AB SEPAC site, absepac.org
- We will **vote to approve the minutes as written or amended if necessary**
- Voting will be by roll call
- If you are not a voting member (parent/guardian of a child with a disability residing or attending school in Acton or Boxborough), please ABSTAIN

III. Organization/Business Issues

- A. Updates from Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE)
- B. Updates from Meetings with Interim Special Education Director
- C. Vote on Revised SEPAC Dyslexia Recommendations
- D. Updates on Organizational Goals from 2019-2020
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A. Updates from DESE

Turning 3

- If your child turns 3 between March 15-August 31, your child can continue to receive Early Intervention (EI) services through October 15, 2020, or until the district can evaluate to determine eligibility
- EI programs can provide your child's services even if your child was already discharged on their 3rd birthday

Turning 22

- 688 referrals continuing; transition to adult services determined on an individual basis

DESE Updates Cont'd

Extended School Year (ESY)

5/22/20

Therefore, if in-person ESY is permitted consistent with state re-opening plans and local health guidelines, DESE recognizes it will only be available on a very limited basis, if at all.

6/8/20

Schools and districts should employ their best efforts to provide as many in-person services to high-priority students this summer as is feasible while following proper health and safety precautions. All other students who are eligible for summer services will continue to receive those services remotely.

DESE's Required Steps for In-Person ESY

- 1. Identify high-priority students most at need for in-person summer services and communicate with families.*
- 2. Identify, hire, and onboard appropriate staff.*
- 3. Identify and purchase necessary protective equipment.*
- 4. Develop situation-specific protocols as indicated Modify any existing health and safety plans and/or school protocols as needed due to COVID-19.*
- 5. Develop a training plan that includes identification of the staff needing to be trained, procurement of resources and trainers, and a system to confirm all necessary training is completed prior to in-person instruction.*

What About the Fall?



Feedback Opportunities & More Information

- ABRSD surveys sent by the Superintendent's office
- AB SEPAC feedback form to be posted at absepac.org
- Email the state Return to School Working Group at RTSWG@mass.gov

DESE Info to Special Education Directors

doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html

Mass Advocates for Children (MAC)

massadvocates.org/covid19

Special Needs Advocacy Network (SPaN)

spanmass.org/covid-19.html

Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN)

fcsn.org

B. Updates from Meetings with Interim Special Education Director

- Special ed updates are ongoing from the leadership team to families
- Extended School Year *planned to be remote* with possibly some in-person evaluations in August
- District working with families to determine when evaluations will resume or commence in fall
- Clarification provided regarding how to respond to IEPs via Docusign
- Process for distribution of N1 forms/Prior Written Notice clarified
- IEP narrative progress reports will be issued June 17; questions about PowerSchool access over summer
- Staffing updates

C. Dyslexia Recommendations

- Revised Acton-Boxborough SEPAC dyslexia recommendations to the ABRSD are available in the 6/10/20 meeting packet at absepac.org
- These were developed from our listening session and feedback form and were reviewed at the February 12 business meeting
- Recommendations build on efforts the district is already undertaking to address new MA law (see next slide)
- *These recommendations have been shared and are being lauded by Decoding Dyslexia chapters around the country*

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Work with the new MA Dyslexia Legislation

January
2020

Learning	Implementing	Collaborating	Ongoing
<p>Dyslexia presentation, EDCO spring 2019</p> <p>4-day MIT symposium, Dr. Joanna Christodoulou & Dr. John Gabrieli, summer 2019</p> <p>2-day MGH symposium, Dr. Joanna Christodoulou & Dr. Tiffany Hogan, summer 2019</p> <p>ABRSD Special Education Professional Learning Series, <i>The Cognitive Challenges of Learning to Read</i> for colleagues, November 2019</p> <p><i>Comprehensive Reading Assessment and Interpretation</i>, January 2020</p> <p><i>Suspecting Dyslexia and Eligibility Determination</i>, February 2020</p> <p>District-wide Grade Level Meetings: <i>Overview of Dyslexia</i> - PK (November) *K (October); Grades. *1, 5 (January); Grades. 2, 6 (February); Grades. 3, 4 (March) *Dr. Christodoulou presented</p> <p>Districtwide workshop, <i>Emergent Literacy Learners and Early Markers of Dyslexia</i>, Dr. Christodoulou, spring 2020</p> <p>ABRSD Elementary Literacy Coordinator, <i>Evidence-based Practices, Tools and Resources</i>, December 2019</p> <p>Webinars/Podcasts: January 16, 2020 - Dr. Louisa Moats; March 18, 2020 National Association of School Psychologists Dyslexia and Specific Learning Disabilities: <i>Focus on Effective RTI</i></p>	<p>Added question re: familial history of learning difficulties to DIAL-4 kindergarten screening (implemented spring 2019)</p> <p>Added RAN (Rapid Automatized Naming Task - (colors/objects) - to kindergarten literacy screening (fall 2019)</p> <p>Added Kindergarten Protocol Document to compile information to inform kindergarten teachers as students transition into the school district.</p> <p>Implement Beta screening tool developed by Dr. Nadine Gaab this spring</p> <p>Added question Re: familial history of learning disabilities and dyslexia to developmental history/home assessment used in all initial special education evaluations</p> <p>Screen new students enrolling in district - in process</p>	<p>Nancy Duggan, Decoding Dyslexia Founder</p> <p>Dr. Nadine Gaab - early adoption of Dyslexia Screening App developed at Boston Children's Hospital for spring 2020</p> <p>Dr. Christodoulou will attend April 13, 2020, PK-6 Literacy (Reading) Vision Committee to consult with the entire committee</p> <p>Collaboration with Newton Public Schools for MTSS framework, March 2020jj</p>	<p>Pk-6 Literacy (Reading) Vision Committee with a variety of representation from the district with the goal to create an MTSS framework for Reading PK-6.</p> <p>Subcommittee work to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create PK-6 reading vision statement • define the roles/responsibilities of educators, • identify screening tools/assessment, • investigate evidence-based instructional practices/resources, • determine professional learning and training for educators, and • identify key family engagement opportunities and strategies. <p>District leadership attendance at DESE MTSS Conference, February 2020</p> <p>ABRSD Elementary Literacy Coordinator participation in DESE statewide early literacy leadership</p> <p>District-wide PK-6 Collaboration across departments</p>

Voting on Dyslexia Recommendations

- We will **vote on the revised AB SEPAC dyslexia recommendations to the ABRSD**
- Voting will be by roll call
- If you are not a voting member (parent/guardian of a child with a disability residing or attending school in Acton or Boxborough), please ABSTAIN

D. Updates on Organization Goals from 2019-2020

- Continue to improve outreach and engagement by attending back-to-school nights, reaching out to PTOs, and building relationships with the Interim Director of Special Education and new special education staff, including IEP team chairs **(MET)**
- Participate in the search process for a new Special Education Director **(MET)**
- Pursue districtwide use of percentiles with standard/scaled scores in evaluation reports **(MET)**
- Monitor early reading assessments and interventions and engage with parents of children with Specific Learning Disabilities to develop recommendations for identification and intervention **(MET)**
- Monitor PowerSchool access and ESY programming **(ONGOING)**
- Community education and outreach regarding Basic Rights; screen “Intelligent Lives” **(MET)**

... and Then There Was a Pandemic

- Chairs met with the Superintendent and the Interim Special Education Director on March 27; weekly meetings through June
- Published parent/guardian feedback form and shared findings with administration
- Presentation and Q&A from April 22 available at absepac.org
- Ongoing connection with MassPAC and statewide SEPAC leaders
- Tracking guidance from the US DOE, DESE, and disability advocacy groups
- Information sharing via Facebook, newsletters, and absepac.org
- Recognized 12 educators named by families as making a difference for students during remote learning

E. Seek Nominations & Elect Officers for 2020-2021 School Year

- The AB SEPAC can have up to three Chairs and two Secretaries
- The non-officer members of the Executive Board are the Past PAC Chair and one Standing Committee Chair (Outreach)
- We will take nominations for the slate, **vote on the slate, then vote to elect the slate**
- Voting will be by roll call
- If you are not a voting member (parent/guardian of a child with a disability residing or attending school in Acton or Boxborough), please ABSTAIN

Our Thanks to Bill Guthlein

The Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council sincerely thanks Bill Guthlein for over a decade of service to the families of Acton and Boxborough.

Bill's passion for data-driven measures of student growth has influenced district policy, budgets, and student outcomes. His steady advocacy for accountability continues to guide our efforts.



F. Draft & Vote on Goals & Priorities for the 2020-2021 School Year

1. Address & Remove Barriers to SEPAC Participation and SEPAC Leadership for BIPOC Parents/Guardians of Children with Disabilities
2. Participate in Search Process for New Special Education Director
3. Monitor State Guidance & Families' Experiences Regarding Reopening Schools
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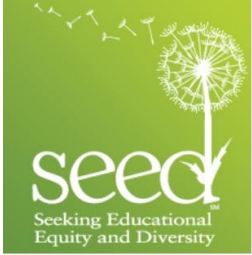
Addressing & Removing Barriers

- Provide childcare, transportation, etc., to attend our meetings
- Broadcast or hold online meetings and make recordings available
- Provide mentorship (if desired) as BIPOC parents of children with disabilities volunteer for leadership positions
- Expand outreach to better engage BIPOC families of children with disabilities
- Establish a listening session or online feedback form to gather information about how to best support BIPOC families of children with disabilities in Acton and Boxborough
- Continue to promote events with no cost or those with available scholarships

Addressing & Removing Barriers Cont'd

- Continue to share information regarding pro bono advocacy training and assistance such as through the Federation for Children with Special Needs and Mass Advocates for Children
- Host speakers on topics and provide resources relevant to the BIPOC/disability experience
- Have officers participate in [SEED](#) training and offer the same to SEPAC general membership to help ensure our meetings are safe spaces for all
- Solicit information from our entire parent community to facilitate participation and ensure all children with disabilities are represented through our efforts

Other ideas?



NOTE: THIS MEETING IS BEING RECORDED

SEED in Partnership with the ABRSD

The National SEED Project (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) creates conversational communities to drive personal, organizational and societal change toward greater equity and diversity

The goal of seminars is to:

- Develop the ability to listen more effectively to the experiences of others in order to build our cultural awareness and sensitivity
- Establish a shared vocabulary and foundation of knowledge pertaining to **systems** of oppression, power, and privilege
- Recognize how one's own experiences and "schooling" about diversity is a prelude to creating more equitable educational environments
- Consider the ways in which each of us has the agency to effect change in our individual roles as leaders in the district

Acton-Boxborough SEPAC
abrsdsepac@gmail.com

Voting on 2020-2021 Goals & Priorities

- Note these may evolve
- We will **vote on the AB SEPAC's organizational goals and priorities for the coming year as just discussed and determined by the membership**
- Voting will be by roll call
- If you are not a voting member (parent/guardian of a child with a disability residing or attending school in Acton or Boxborough), please ABSTAIN

NOTE: THIS MEETING IS BEING RECORDED

IV. New Business

Other topics on
people's minds

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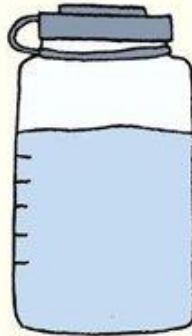
VI. Adjournment

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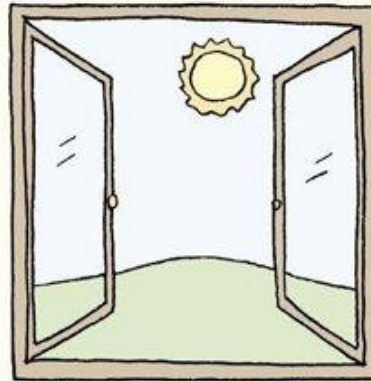
2020-2021 Meeting Schedule TBD

DON'T FORGET

DRINK WATER.



GET SUNLIGHT.



YOU'RE
BASICALLY A
HOUSE PLANT
WITH MORE
COMPLICATED
EMOTIONS.



Credit: Reza Farazmand

poorlydrawnlines.com

Thanks & Contact Information

Our thanks to Interim Special Education Director Debbie Dixon
and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee for their
ongoing collaboration

absepac.org

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