An open book is shown from a top-down perspective, with its pages fanned out. A pair of glasses with thin, dark frames is placed across the center of the open book, with the lenses resting on the pages. The background is a warm, golden-brown color with soft, radial light rays emanating from the center of the book, creating a sense of depth and focus. The overall mood is professional and academic.

Spring 2020 Presentation  
to the ABRSC

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

# 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.”*

# The SEPAC's Role

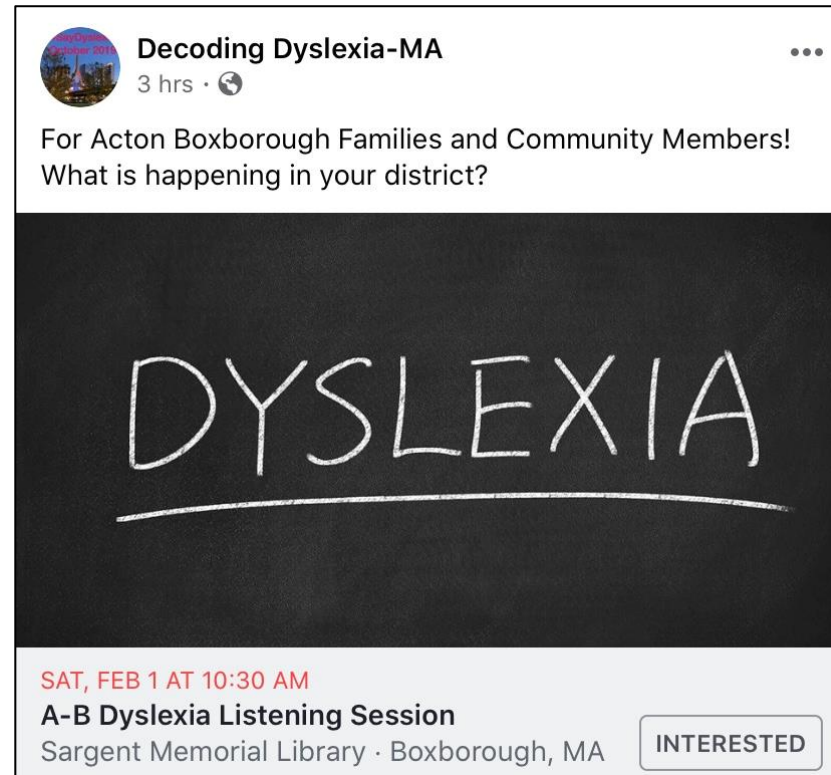




# Celebrating the Good



Acton & Boxborough voters approved the school building project



District leadership and staff attended a public listening session to hear families' concerns



Communication boards installed at Blanchard, Conant, & the Acton ECP site

**Acton-Boxborough SEPAC**  
[abrsdsepac@gmail.com](mailto:abrsdsepac@gmail.com)

# Update on Priorities for 2019-2020

- *Continue to improve SEPAC outreach and engagement ... , 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/guardians of children with Specific Learning Disabilities to develop recommendations for identification and intervention* **MET**
- *Monitor PowerSchool access and Extended School Year programming* **ONGOING**

# Engagement & Relationship Building

- Attended meet and greet with new Interim Director and IEP Team Leaders
- Met with elementary building leadership and new IEP Team Leader
- Participated in the joint PTO/PTF/PTSO council
- Attended community listening sessions about race; reached out to staff about SEED training for SEPAC officers and membership
- Invited to present to elementary communities on basic rights
- Participated in the Special Education Director search process
- Solicited feedback from families and recognized 12 staff members for their efforts during the school closure

Scaled Score	Percentile Rank	NEPSY-II Classification	Wechsler Classification
19	99.9	Above expected level	Very superior
18	99.6		
17	98.6		
16	97.7		
15	95		Superior
14	91		
13	84		
12	75	At expected level	High average
11	63		
10	50		
9	37		
8	25		
7	16		Borderline
6	9		
5	5	Borderline	Low average
4	2.3		
3	1.4	Below expected level	Borderline
2	0.4		
1	0.1		
		Well below expected level	Extremely low

*Note.* Scaled scores have a mean = 10 and standard deviation = 3. Percentile ranks corresponding to the scaled scores are based on the Wechsler classification.

# Percentiles

*Pursue districtwide use of percentiles with standard/scaled scores in evaluation reports*

- Adopted districtwide across all disciplines
- Assists staff and families in interpreting findings



# Outreach & Education

- Partnered with Concord/Concord-Carlisle, Maynard, and Sudbury SEPACs and our school districts to host Basic Rights in Special Education workshop; series planned
- “Intelligent Lives” screening and talkback continued inclusion conversation
- Winter family social (40+ attendees)
- Shared resources and information via newsletter (1400+ subscribed) and Facebook page (400 followers)
- Continue to provide information regarding no or low-cost workshops and events



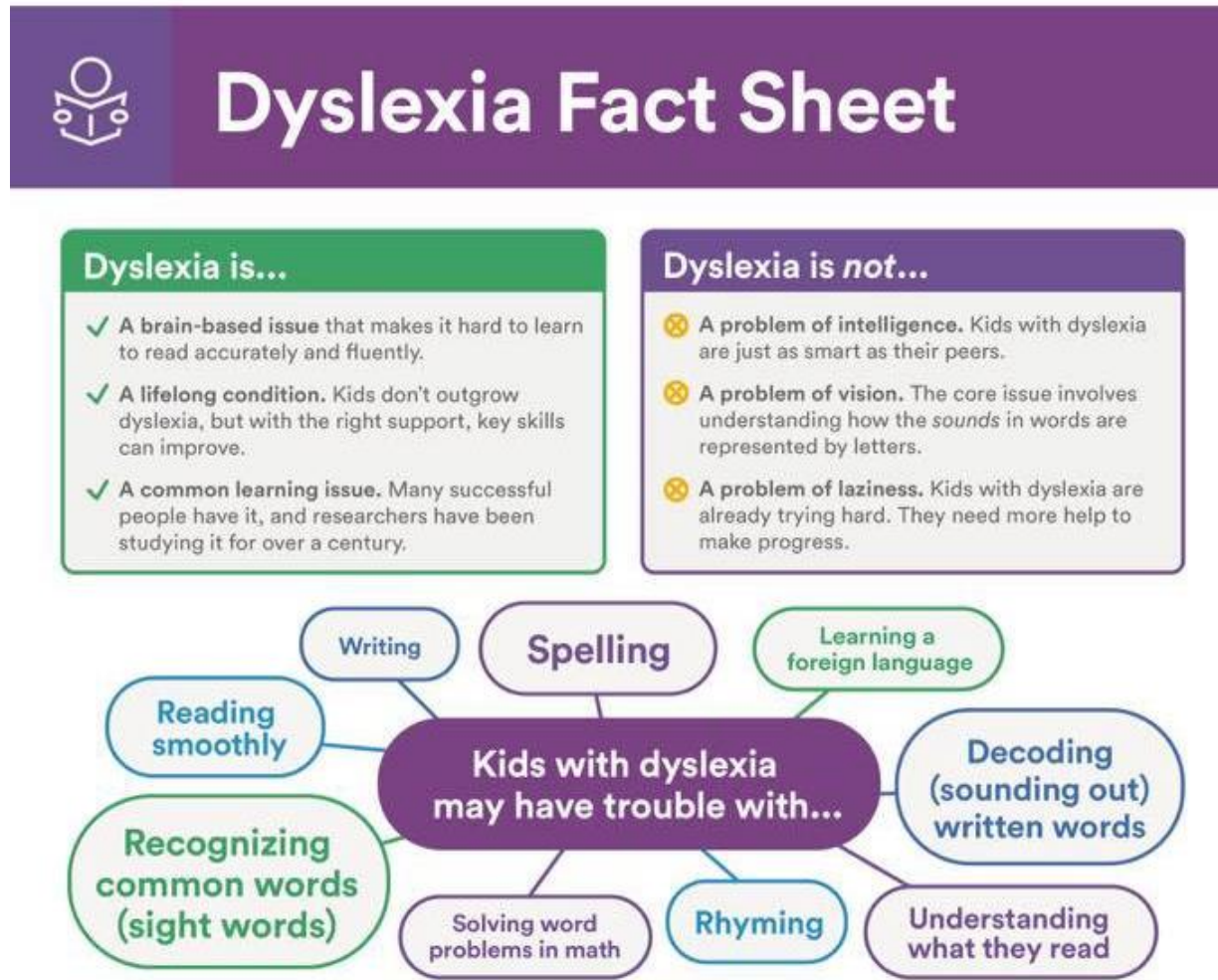
intelligent *lives*  
a film by dan habib



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# #saydyslexia



*Monitor early reading assessments and interventions and engage with parents/guardians of children with Specific Learning Disabilities to develop recommendations for identification and intervention*

# Dyslexia Recommendations

- The Acton-Boxborough SEPAC dyslexia recommendations to the ABRSD were approved at the June 10 annual meeting
- Shared with special education leadership and submitted for the ABRSC's consideration when formulating budgets
- Developed from the SEPAC listening session and feedback form; reviewed at the February 12 business meeting
- Recommendations build on efforts the district is already undertaking to address new MA law
- *These recommendations have been viewed 4000+ times online and are being shared and lauded by Decoding Dyslexia chapters around the country*

# ... 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](http://absepac.org)
- Ongoing connection with MassPAC and statewide SEPAC leaders
- Tracking guidance from the US DOE, MA DESE, and disability advocacy groups
- Information disseminated via Facebook, newsletters, and [absepac.org](http://absepac.org)
- 1:1 support as requested

# What About the Fall?





# Giving Feedback & Where to Find Information

- Families should complete surveys from the Superintendent's office
- AB SEPAC feedback form posted at [absepac.org](http://absepac.org)
- People may also email the state's Return to School Working Group at [RTSWG@mass.gov](mailto:RTSWG@mass.gov)

## **DESE Info to Special Education Directors**

[doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html](http://doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html)

## **Mass Advocates for Children (MAC)**

[massadvocates.org/covid19](http://massadvocates.org/covid19)

## **Special Needs Advocacy Network (SPaN)**

[spanmass.org/covid-19.html](http://spanmass.org/covid-19.html)

## **Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN)**

[fcsn.org](http://fcsn.org)

# 2020-2021 Officers & Meeting Schedule

## **Co-Chairs**

Amanda Bailey  
Abraham Gutierrez  
Carrie Weaver

## **Secretaries**

OPEN

## **Past PAC Chair**

OPEN

## **Standing Committee Chair (Outreach)**

OPEN

**2020-2021 Meeting Schedule TBD Based on ABRSC Meeting Dates**

# 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.

**Acton-Boxborough SEPAC**  
[abrsdsepac@gmail.com](mailto:abrsdsepac@gmail.com)



# Thanks & Contact Information

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

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 @absepac  
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## **Acton-Boxborough SEPAC Dyslexia Recommendations to the ABRSD 6/10/2020**

### **Background**

One of the Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council's goals during the 2019-2020 school year was to monitor early reading assessments and interventions and engage with parents/guardians of children with Specific Learning Disabilities to develop recommendations for identification and intervention. A public listening session attended by administrators, staff, parents/guardians, and community members was conducted in February 2020. Recommendations from that session and an online feedback form were drafted and submitted to the AB SEPAC membership for review. The recommendations below were subsequently voted on and approved by the membership at the June 2020 annual AB SEPAC meeting. Please note a number of these practices may be used in certain schools or individual instances. The AB SEPAC seeks their universal implementation in the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District.

### **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. The DIAL-4, RAN, and other research-based screening tools should be used.

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.