

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

Business Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, December 15, 2021, at 7:30 p.m. Virtual Meeting Over Zoom

To attend: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84512204162>

To call in: +1 646 876 9923

Meeting ID: 845 1220 4162

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of Minutes

Review and approval of November 17, 2021, meeting minutes

III. Organization/Business Issues

- A. Updates from Monthly Meeting with Director of Special Education
- B. Follow Up from Parent/Guardian Conversations
- C. Current District Administrative Searches & Previous SEPAC Participation
- D. CASE Collaborative Capital Plan & Proposed Recreation Spaces at Colebrook
- E. Updates on SEPAC Priorities for 2021-2022
 - 1. Relationship Building – DEI, ELPAC, Families, District, Other SEPACs
 - 2. Workshops
 - “Supporting Students” 12/8/21 Recording & Slides Available
 - Basic Rights in Special Education and Anti-Bullying Presentations TBA

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

VII. Next Meeting

Wednesday, January 12, 2021, at 7:30 p.m. Virtual Meeting Over Zoom



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

Business Meeting

December 15, 2021

I. Call to Order

Virtual Meeting Participation

- SEPAC meetings are public
- 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 November 17, 2021, meeting minutes (draft available in meeting packet at 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 Monthly Meeting with Director of Special Education
- B. Follow Up from Parent/Guardian Conversations
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 - 1. Relationship Building
 - 2. Workshops

A. Updates from Monthly Meeting with Director of Special Education

- Staffing
- Referrals for initial evaluations are up, particularly K-2
- Update regarding significant disproportionality finding regarding Black students overidentified with communication disabilities
- Specialized program definitions and alignment

Student Social Emotional Well-Being

THE STRESS RESPONSE IN KIDS

FIGHT

Yelling, Screaming,
Using Mean Words

Hitting, Kicking, Biting,
Throwing, Punching

Blaming, Deflecting
Responsibility, Defensive

Demanding,
Controlling

"Oppositional",
"Defiant", "Noncompliant"

Moving Towards What
Feels Threatening

Irritable, Angry,
Furious, Offended
Aggressive

FLIGHT

Wanting to Escape,
Running Away

Unfocused, Hard
to Pay Attention

Fidgeting, Restlessness,
Hyperactive

Preoccupied, Busy with
Everything But the Thing

Procrastinating, Avoidant,
Ignores the Situation

Moving Away From What
Feels Threatening

Anxious, Panicked
Scared, Worried,
Overwhelmed

FREEZE

Shutting Down,
Mind Goes Blank

Urge to Hide,
Isolates Self

Verbally Unresponsive,
Says, "I don't know" a lot

Difficulty with
Completing Tasks

Zoned Out,
Daydreaming

Unable to Move,
Feeling Stuck

Depressed, Numb,
Bored/Apathetic,
Helpless

- Noted by the Superintendent as a major issue and budget driver
- Happening at all levels
- Questions about proactive versus reactive approaches and trauma-informed practices
- Staff training and flexibility—while acknowledging ongoing stress

B. Follow Up from Parent/Guardian Conversations

- AB SEPAC Co-Chairs and the Director of Special Education hosted six hour-long conversations between 10/18 and 11/8 with Early Childhood, elementary, junior high, high school, and Out of District parents/guardians
- Survey(s) will allow to dig deeper and begin to develop action steps and recommendations

Early Childhood & Elementary Themes



- Transitioning from EI to the ECP and the ECP to kindergarten
- How to advocate and what to ask for
- Community building
- Social emotional support
- Team meetings—understanding process, being informed participants, etc.
- Home/school logs, overall communication
- Programming in the new building
- Awareness and understanding of differences to foster inclusion and prevent bullying

Junior High Themes

- Executive functioning preparation at the elementary level
- Homework
- Bullying, including from staff who may not understand disabilities
- Positive program- and staff-specific feedback
- More support transitioning from elementary to junior high and junior high to high school



High School Themes

- Meaningful inclusion for students assigned certain programs
- Community for kids “in between” gen ed and specialized programs; helping them find their niche
- Social emotional well being
- 504 Plans not understood or followed by all teachers; misinformation
- Transition assessments and planning for life post-high school
- “One for some”



Out of District Themes

- Transportation issues
- Support staff shortages and turnover
- Desire for community-based activities
- Transition to post-secondary
- Social emotional and trauma-informed approaches
- Caregiver stress and isolation; peer mentors for parents/guardians
- Sibling supports, including at in-district schools



**Families report being isolated
well before the pandemic**

Resources

Anti-Bullying

Mass Advocates for Children

massadvocates.org/resources-bullying

MA DESE Technical Assistance Advisory Bullying Prevention & Intervention

doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/11_2ta.html

Sibling Supports

Monthly group for sibs 6-18 of kids with mental & behavioral health needs

Contact (857) 523-1145 or emily.rubin@umassmed.edu

MA Sibling Support Network

masiblingsupport.org

Sibling Support Project

siblingsupport.org

C. Current District Administrative Searches & Previous SEPAC Participation

- Active searches for Conant and Gates Principals
- RJ Grey Principal search pending; Douglas Principal search TBD
- SEPAC has requested names of those on screening/search committees to ensure representation
- SEPAC leadership previously involved in searches for Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services (now DEI), Special Education Director, Early Childhood Coordinator, and Principals (Merriam most recently)
- Participation has involved invitations from the district in some instances and SEPAC advocacy in others

D. CASE Collaborative Capital Plan & Proposed Recreation Spaces at Colebrook

- Presentation in the 12/16/21 ABRSC meeting packet
- Requesting CASE member districts approve establishment of a Capital Reserve Account and 2022 Capital Plan
- Immediate plans for additional classroom space (moving transportation office), playground, and multipurpose room



E. Updates on SEPAC Priorities for 2021-2022

1. Relationship Building

**OUTREACH +
AWARENESS
&
CULTIVATING
RELATIONSHIPS**

Efforts to Date

- Connections with DEI family advisory members
- Joint PTO/PTF/PTSO meetings
 - Shared emphasis on reaching linguistically-diverse families, ELPAC
- Listening sessions
- Workshop on supporting all students in general education
- Friends of AB SEPAC fall family social event
- “Acton in Focus” interview
- SEPAC info on district site and business meetings on calendar
- Staff recognition form
- Coordinating with other SEPACs on advocacy, Basic Rights workshop

Next Steps

- Solidify events on calendar
- Outreach to coordinators, building leaders
- Request SEPAC information be shared at kindergarten orientation
- Connect with School Committee liaisons
- Additional family social events
- Survey
- Follow up with ABFN regarding requested consultation
- Explore other community networking opportunities
- Other?

2. Workshops

- Supporting Students presentation 12/8/21 had 24 registrants
 - Slides and recording* available
 - Covers gen ed supports through special ed referral; defines MTSS, DCAP, etc.
- Basic Rights in Special Education planned for February with other SEPACs
- Mass Advocates for Children workshop on bullying this spring

NOTE: THIS MEETING IS BEING RECORDED

IV. New Business

Other topics on
people's minds

Acton-Boxborough SEPAC
abrsdsepac@gmail.com



More Information

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

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- G. Need for consistent K-12 executive functioning curriculum

VI. Adjournment

- We will **vote to adjourn the meeting**
- 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

Next Meeting January 12, 2021, 7:30 p.m.
Meeting Recordings Available @ absepac.org

Thanks & Contact Information

Our thanks to Director of Special Education Jen Truslow
and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee for their
ongoing collaboration

absepac.org

 @absepac

abrsdsepac@gmail.com