

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

Business Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, May 18, 2022, 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 February 16, 2022, and April 6, 2022, meeting minutes

III. Organization/Business Issues

- A. Updates from Monthly Meeting with Director of Special Education
 - 1. Discontinuation of Registered Behavior Tech Training
 - 2. SEPAC Survey Translation
- B. Director of Special Education Entry Findings Presentation
- C. Updates on SEPAC Priorities for the Year
- D. Brainstorming Priorities for 2022-2023
 - 1. School Requests RE: Books, Playground Spaces, Presentations
 - 2. Possible Autism Listening Session
 - 3. Survey Findings to Guide
- E. Upcoming Events
 - 1. Basic Rights: Evaluations & Eligibility 5/24
 - 2. Date & Location for June SEPAC Annual Meeting & Officer Elections

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. Annual Meeting & Officer Elections

TBD



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

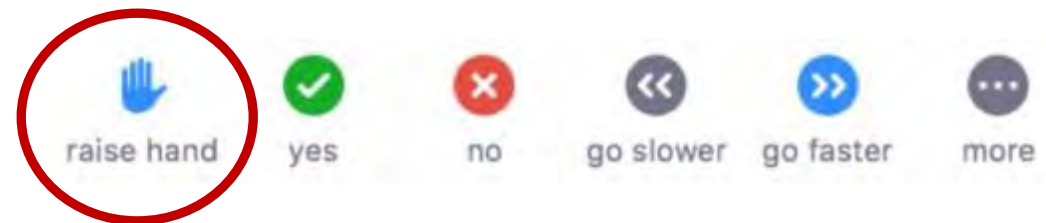
Business Meeting

May 18, 2022

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 February 16, 2022, and ~~April 6, 2022,~~ meeting minutes
- 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

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 - 1. School Requests
 - 2. Possible Autism Listening Session
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- E. Upcoming Events
 - 1. Basic Rights: Evaluations & Eligibility 5/24
 - 2. SEPAC Annual Meeting & Officer Elections 6/15, Location TBD

A. Updates from Monthly Meeting with Director of Special Education

- Discontinuation of Registered Behavior Tech Training
 - BCBAs lack time to provide required oversight hours while continuing to directly serve students
- SEPAC Survey Translation
 - 31 families require translation: Spanish (16), Portuguese (10), Korean (2), French (2), Chinese (1)
 - The SEPAC has identified translators; district resources may be leveraged in the future with sufficient notice
- Hiring and Extended School Year summer program planning

NOTE: THIS MEETING IS BEING RECORDED

B. Director of Special Education Entry Findings Presentation

Acton-Boxborough SEPAC
abrsdsepac@gmail.com

C. Updates on SEPAC Priorities for the Year

1. Relationship Building with New Administrators, Families, & Other SEPACs
2. Address & Remove Barriers to SEPAC Participation & SEPAC Leadership
3. Gather Stakeholder Feedback & Make Recommendations Regarding Inclusion for Students Placed in Substantially-Separate Program(s)
4. Continued Advocacy RE: SEPAC Dyslexia Recommendations
5. Monitor Families' Experiences with Extended School Year, Return to School & Pandemic Recovery
6. Workshops on Basic Rights, Post-Secondary Options, Other Topics TBD

Relationship Building

New Administrators

- Met monthly with new Director of Special Education
- Participated on search for new DEI Director
- Staff recognition form to share positive stories
- Ongoing relationship building and advocacy with ABRSC

Families

- Listening sessions with Director of Special Ed
- ABFN Kindergarten socials
- Continuum of supports workshop
- Joint PTO participation
- Connection with DEI Family Advisory leadership
- Fall playground meetup
- Social media outreach
- “Acton in Focus” interview

SEPACs

- Area leadership meeting summer 2021
- Jointly hosting basic rights workshops on evaluations & eligibility, understanding the IEP, transition planning
- Participation in regional and statewide leadership groups
- MassPAC Plus and SPaN SEPAC membership

D. Brainstorming Priorities for 2022-2023

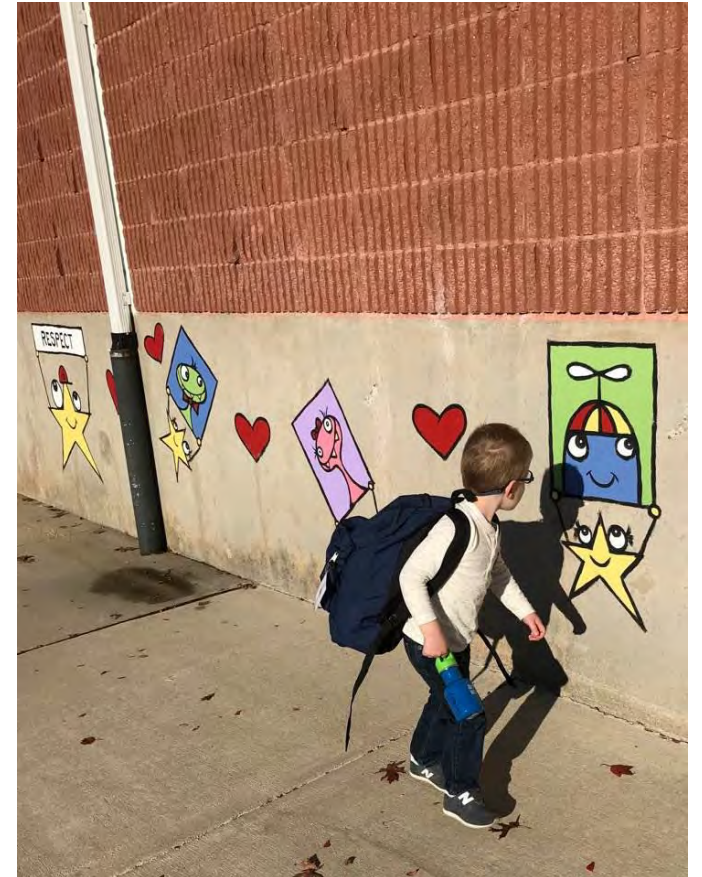
Context:

- Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) implementation ongoing
- District professional development to address behavior, social emotional learning, and trauma
- Ongoing special education program restructuring
- Relationship building with [more] new administrators
- DESE Tiered Focus Monitoring process



1. School Requests

- Conant has requested the SEPAC speak at a PTO meeting
- McCarthy-Towne has requested input regarding children's literature and potential speakers on inclusion
- Blanchard has requested input regarding children's literature and playground accessibility
- Relationship building opportunities with new administrators, school-based DEI teams, and PTOs



2. Potential Autism Listening Session

- Anecdotal reports from families of students with autism struggling with inclusion, properly-trained support; specialized programs currently under review by special education administration
- Would help allow for SEPAC to fulfill statutory advisory and participatory roles
- Survey findings will help establish the “size of the problem”
- Could mirror dyslexia listening session process—solution focused, goal to craft a list of recommendations for the district
- Dyslexia feedback also included online Google form for those who could not or did not feel comfortable participating in person

3. Survey Findings

- 39% of students with IEPs (362 of 933) were reflected in 2017 survey findings; the SEPAC used informal feedback forms during the pandemic to respond more quickly to concerns
- First time translating the survey into other languages
- Following up on old trends, anecdotal reporting, and new questions arising from pandemic
- Findings to be documented in written report and shared with the School Committee in the fall when presenting priorities for 2022-2023

E. Upcoming Events



Basic Rights: Evaluation & Eligibility

Tuesday, May 24th,
from 7-9 p.m. over Zoom

*Hosted by the Sudbury,
Lincoln-Sudbury, Acton-Boxborough,
Concord/Concord-Carlisle, Maynard,
and Lincoln SEPACs with support
from our school districts*

Annual Meeting & Officer Elections in June

- The SEPAC can have up to three Chairs and two Secretaries
- Other positions on the executive board include Past PAC Chair and Standing Committee Chair
- Descriptions in bylaws at absepac.org
- In person meeting proposed June 15th to celebrate successes, connect parents/caregivers



Friends of 501(c)(3) Needs Officers



- The Friends of AB SEPAC 501(c)(3) exists to support the AB SEPAC's work, particularly community building and education
- *SEPAC funds would otherwise be controlled by the school district*
- The 501(c)(3) must have a President, an Executive Director, a Secretary, and a Treasurer to exist
- Officer terms are two years

NOTE: THIS MEETING IS BEING RECORDED

IV. New Business

Other topics on
people's minds

Acton-Boxborough SEPAC
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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

V. Open Issues

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- C. Increasing opportunities for meaningful inclusion across domains
- D. Enhanced Extended School Year, before-, and after-school programming
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- 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

- 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

Annual Meeting & Officer Elections June 15th
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

**Business Meeting Draft Minutes
February 16, 2022**

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. AB SEPAC Co-Chairs Abe Gutierrez, Amanda Bailey, and Kara Lafferty; Secretary Erica Abbruzzese; Director of Special Education Jennifer Truslow; and nine community members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from December 15, 2021, and January 12, 2022, were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes as written was voted and passed unanimously.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Updates from Monthly Meetings with Special Education Director

1. Extended School Year Information

The district continues to plan for summer ESY. Programming, particularly for specialized programs, is under review. Summer 2021 services for Compass and Connections were three days per week; this is being increased to four days per week for summer 2022. Shawna Young will be the ESY summer coordinator. The confirmed start date is July 5th. The district will follow state guidance regarding COVID protocols. The SEPAC stressed that ESY should be determined on an individual basis and not limited to a set number of hours, days, or weeks.

The district is seeking to fill several positions, including a BCBA for Conant and Gates and a school psychologist for Conant. They are also advertising for a school counselor for Conant in the hope of filling the support role more quickly. An interim BCBA is in place. The district continues to struggle with transportation issues. Staffing shortages are not unique to A-B. Nurse monitors and van monitors are always difficult to staff. The district continues to use Indeed, SchoolSpring, and other means to recruit.

The district is working with DESE on an action plan due at the end of April to respond to the significant disproportionality finding regarding Black students overidentified with communication disabilities.

The Director shared the district is in the middle of the required Tiered Focus Monitoring self assessment. This includes records reviews to ensure IEPs have all components, gathering information from teachers regarding specialized equipment (Assistive Technology, e.g.), and verifying compliance with instructional grouping requirements. Data will be submitted to the state by the end of the school year. Civil rights, English learner, and special education data is submitted at the same time. Families can access previous Tiered Focus Monitoring and older Coordinated Program Review reports on the DESE site. The SEPAC will be part of next year's site visit and a survey will be distributed from DESE to families.

The Director continues to work on clearly defining specialized programs, entry and exit criteria, program profiles, staffing, and transitions between schools (if necessary). The district will use grant funds over the summer to examine all programs, including the language based program at Douglas. A parent asked how programs matriculate students. The Early Childhood Program feeds some students into programs based on needs and service levels in the IEPs.

B. FY23 Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Proposed Budget

1. Summary of Advocacy to Date

The SEPAC has been advocating hard with the School Committee against any special education-related cuts to the budget. The proposed reduction of a special educator is not in alignment with the district's expressed values of:

- a. prioritizing student needs per the ABRSD Strategic Plan and Goals, including increased co-teaching;
- b. addressing disproportionate outcomes for students in the High Needs subgroups;
- c. and ensuring effective post-COVID recovery services and supports to address the social emotional and academic needs of those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and school closures.

Building caseloads are a stated rationale for the special educator cut. The SEPAC urges the district to shift resources rather than cut them. The percentage of Students with Disabilities (IEPs) relative to the overall student population *has* been in decline, from 17% in 2014-15 to 14.7% in 2021-22. This percentage should remain steady even with an overall decline in the general student population. Importantly, implementation of districtwide general education Multi-Tiered System of Supports should not result in a further decline in the percentage of students with IEPs. A-B is behind the state average.

C. Staffing by Program/Building (See Acton-Boxborough FY23 Budget Binder)

The SEPAC leadership reiterated that tier 1 and tier 2 urgent and strategic needs are prioritized. Proposed budget needs were discussed by the Director of Special Education. A parent asked which school would be impacted by a staff reduction. Based on caseload, the reduction is slated to occur at Gates. The SEPAC leadership encourages all parents to take an active role engaging with the School Committee, the towns' finance committees, and other boards about how special education priorities matter for all families. Staffing by program can be found in the budget binder on the School Committee site.

A parent asked when co-teaching would be fully implemented. Co-teaching is still a goal although it was interrupted by the pandemic. The process of training and rolling out implementation is ongoing. The district continues to offer opportunities for teams to become familiar with strategies and how to use them in the classroom. This can take a couple years to become truly proficient. The Director shared they may bring back the consultant used for training prior to the pandemic.

D. IEP Progress Reporting Consistency

Some elementary schools have three general education report cards and others issue none. This results in an equity issue where some parents receive three IEP progress

reports and others receive only two. This was the compromise determined by previous special education directors. There has been a significant lag in issuing IEP progress reports in the buildings without gen ed report cards this year. A timeline had been established in the past. The SEPAC advocates for consistency across schools and to make IEP progress reporting more clear and useful. A parent expressed general difficulty navigating the PowerSchool portal and frustration at only being able to view progress one goal at a time through the platform.

E. Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) Club Request RE: Student/Family Autism Experience Interviews

The SEPAC received a request from a high school club to interview families of students with autism and the students themselves. No interest was expressed. The SEPAC may want to develop a policy regarding these kinds of requests for research data or external survey participation, perhaps in line with the district policy/procedures.

IV. New Business

The Conant PTO has requested the SEPAC speak at a meeting. There is a basic rights workshop TBA. The Federation for Children with Special Needs has support available to families in a variety of languages. The Federation annual conference is upcoming; the SEPAC has three tickets through MassPAC Plus membership if parents, students, or staff are interested in attending.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

VI. Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 16, 2022, at 7:30 p.m. Virtual Meeting Over Zoom

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

Respectfully submitted by Erica Abbruzzese, Secretary