

# Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

2021-2022 Priorities  
Fall Presentation to the ABRSC

# 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.”*

# 2021-2022 Officers

## Co-Chairs

Abraham Gutierrez, Amanda Bailey, & Kara Lafferty

## Secretary

Erica Abbruzzese

## Standing Committee Chair for Outreach (Out of District)

Carrie Weaver



# The SEPAC's Role

Acton-Boxborough SEPAC  
abrsdsepac@gmail.com



Content inspired by Family Voices, "Assessing Family Engagement in Systems-Level Initiatives"

# Select 2021-2022 Priorities

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



# 1) Relationship Building

- Met with new Director of Special Education during the summer; resuming monthly leadership meetings
- Attended Acton-Boxborough Family Network kindergarten social
- Friends of 501(c)(3) is resuming family events
- Connected with local SEPAC leaders over the summer to share resources and plan for the year



# Upcoming Listening Sessions

- The Director of Special Education and AB SEPAC leaders will host informal listening sessions for parents/guardians via Zoom from 7-8 p.m. on these dates
- Participants are welcome to attend any session

**10/18 Elementary #1**

**10/25 Elementary #2**

**10/26 Early Childhood**

**11/1 RJ Grey JHS**

**11/4 ABRHS**

**11/8 Out of District**



## 2) Addressing & Removing Barriers to SEPAC Participation & Leadership

- Broadcast or hold online meetings and make recordings available
- Expand outreach to better engage racially- and culturally-diverse families of children with disabilities
  - “Acton in Focus” interview to introduce the SEPAC and share special education resources via a different medium
- Include additional demographic questions in surveys
- Forge connection with district DEI Family Advisory Group





# Addressing & Removing Barriers

- Provide mentorship (if desired) for leadership positions
- Continue to promote events with no cost or those with available scholarships
- Continue to share information regarding 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 emphasizing intersectionality regarding the disability experience



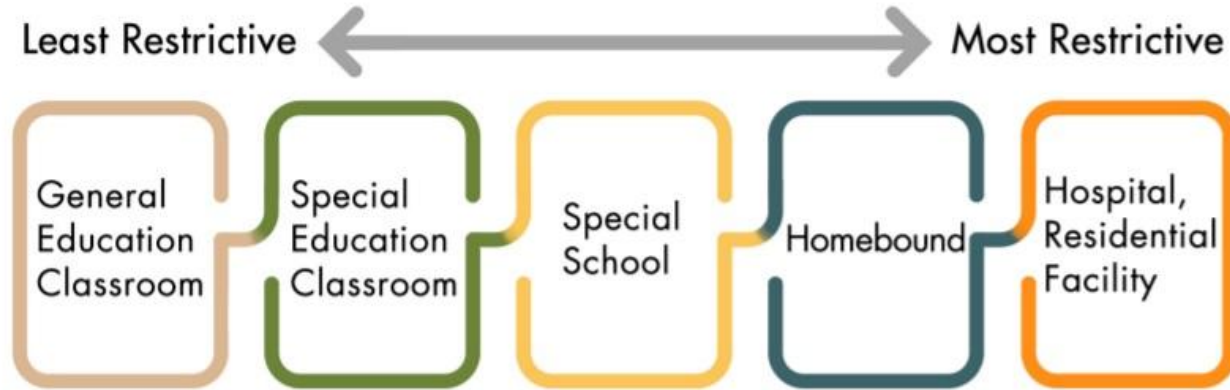
### 3) Inclusion for Students Placed in Substantially Separate Program(s)

#### **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

- Students with disabilities are to be educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate
- Students are removed from gen ed only if education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be satisfactorily achieved
- Co-teaching is one way the district is addressing this, particularly for students who would otherwise go to Learning Centers



# Inclusion Cont'd



- Families of students in specialized programs have reported varying experiences with placement decisions and inclusion support
- This may start with the kindergarten placement process or moving from school to school

## 4) Dyslexia Advocacy

- The AB SEPAC issued dyslexia recommendations to the district in June 2020
- The district has done considerable work around early identification and changing general education instructional practice
- Families have raised questions about support for students in mid-to-late elementary
- The SEPAC hopes to gather more information through the listening sessions and survey findings



## 5) Monitoring Families' Experiences

- The pandemic isn't over ... and our students will be dealing with its effects long after it ends
- Guidance has been issued from the state regarding COVID Compensatory Services
- Feedback forms, surveys, and listening sessions will help determine recommendations and identify workshops and resources to assist families
- Conversations are taking place at SEPAC meetings about issues as they arise



# Return to School Feedback Form

- Opened return to school feedback form in August
- 130 responses representing students with IEPs and 504s
- Allowed the SEPAC to identify gaps in outreach to certain schools ahead of formal surveys, listening sessions
- Key takeaways were people didn't know who to contact with questions about the coming school year (50.8% of respondents), strong desire to connect with other families



# Survey Objectives

**Goal 1:** Solicit information from our entire parent/guardian community to facilitate participation and ensure all children with disabilities are represented through our efforts

**Goal 2:** Monitor families' experiences with special education programming to provide feedback and guidance to the district

**Goal 3:** Follow up on issues previously identified through surveys, feedback forms, and anecdotal reporting



# Meeting Dates & Resources

Acton-Boxborough SEPAC  
abrsdsepac@gmail.com

October 20

November 17

December 15

January 12

February 16

March 16

April 6

May 18

June 8 Annual Meeting & Elections

## **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)



# Thanks & Contact Information

Our thanks to  
Director of Special Education Jennifer Truslow,  
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for their ongoing collaboration and support

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