

Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Spring 2022 Update to the ABRSC

Co-Chairs Abe Gutierrez, Amanda Bailey & Kara Lafferty



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

Acton-Boxborough SEPAC
abrsdsepac@gmail.com



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

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
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

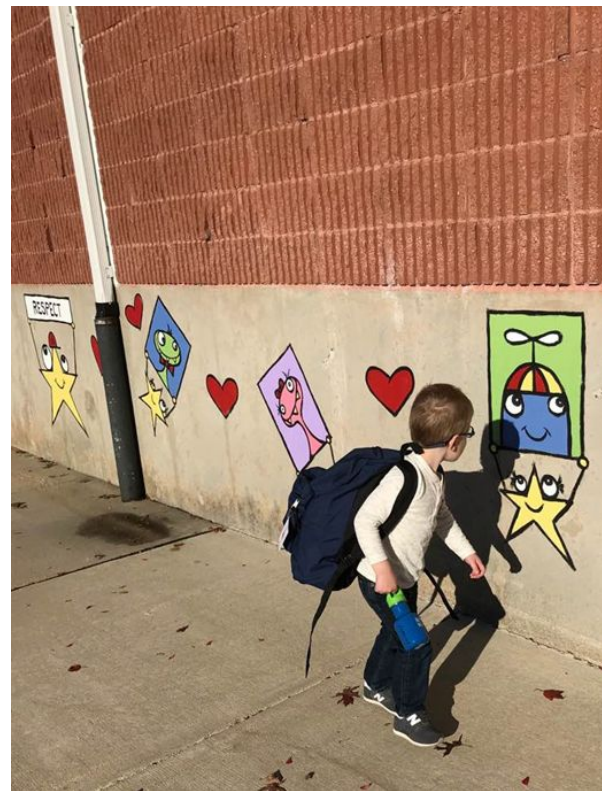
- Listening sessions with Director of Special Ed
- ABFN Kindergarten social
- Continuum of supports workshop
- Joint PTO participation
- Connection with DEI Family Advisory leadership
- Fall playground meetup
- Social media outreach
- "Acton in Focus" interview

SEPACs

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

Connections

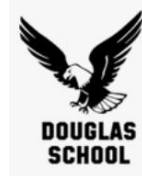
- Conant has requested the SEPAC speak at a PTO meeting
- McCarthy-Towne has requested input regarding children's literature and potential speakers on inclusion
- Blanchard has requested input regarding children's literature and playground accessibility
- Relationship building opportunities with new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



Listening Sessions

- The Director of Special Education and AB SEPAC leaders hosted informal listening sessions in the fall for Early Childhood Program, elementary, junior high, high school, and Out of District parents/guardians
- Findings to be addressed by parent/guardian education through workshops, ongoing discussion at SEPAC meetings, and survey feedback

Early Childhood & Elementary Themes



- Transitioning from Early Intervention 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.
- Overall communication
- Programming in the new building
- Awareness and understanding of differences to foster inclusion and prevent bullying

Junior High & High School Themes

- Executive functioning preparation at the elementary level
- Homework
- Bullying
- Support transitioning from elementary to junior high and from RJ Grey to ABRHS
- Positive program- and staff-specific feedback
- Meaningful inclusion for students assigned certain programs
- Social emotional well being
- 504 Plans not understood or followed by all teachers
- Transition assessments and post-secondary planning
- “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; sibling supports



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

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

Trainings & Workshops



- Supporting All Students
 - Covers gen ed supports through special ed referral; defines MTSS, DCAP, etc.
- Anti-Bullying from Mass Advocates for Children
- Basic Rights: Evaluation & Eligibility and Understanding the IEP co-hosted with Concord-Concord/Carlisle, Maynard, Lincoln, Lincoln-Sudbury, & Sudbury SEPACs

Addressing & Removing Barriers to SEPAC Participation & Leadership

- Held meetings online and made recordings available
- “Acton in Focus” interview to introduce the SEPAC and share special education resources via a different medium
- Translating survey into languages other than English; added racial/ethnic demographic question
- Forged connection with district DEI Family Advisory Group



Other Accomplishments

- Monitored the FY23 budget process and successfully advocated for disability-related items
- Participated in statewide initiatives (IEP Improvement Project feedback session, e.g.)
- Tracked district progress toward addressing significant disproportionately finding of Black students over-identified with communication disabilities
- Followed up on questions regarding absenteeism, elementary progress reporting, transportation issues, confusion over IEPs/504s/DCAP

Upcoming Events

Acton-Boxborough SEPAC
abrsdsepac@gmail.com

Annual Meeting & Officer Elections
June 15, 2022

RJ Grey Junior High Library
6:30 p.m. Parent/Guardian Social
7:00 p.m. Annual Meeting

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

Thanks & Contact Information

Our thanks to
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and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee
for their ongoing collaboration and support

absepac.org
 @absepac
abrsdsepac@gmail.com