

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

Business Meeting Minutes

February 15, 2023

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. SEPAC Co-Chairs Amanda Bailey and Kara Lafferty, Secretary Lynette Cassel, Director of Special Education Jennifer Truslow, School Committee liaison to the SEPAC Adam Klein, and nine community members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and passed to approve the December 14, 2022, meeting minutes as written.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Updates from Monthly Meeting With Director of Special Education

1. Staffing

There are openings (BCBA, SLP, special educators, and paraprofessionals) due to resignations, maternity leave, and people pursuing other options. Roles are being covered by long-term subs and other staff.

2. Internal Special Education Program Review Findings

Consultants Dorsey Yearley and Chris Brumbach were hired to look at the admin structure and use of paraprofessionals throughout the district due to high turnover and increase in use of paras. They spoke with a variety of staff, conducted a survey, met with SEPAC leaders, and reviewed data. They recently presented their findings to district admins and special ed leadership. Recommendations included creating a strategic plan and clarifying priorities and vision. There is a need to define the role of the special education coordinator. Additionally, further clarifying specialized programs is required with possibly having a dedicated coordinator for the specific programs. They also asked how the district can have more opportunities for special educators and general educators to collaborate and support students. They suggested clarifying language in IEPs about when and why a special education assistant is needed and how these decisions are made. A parent asked if there was any advice about changes to the levels of training for the ABA support staff who had obtained Registered Behavior Technician status. The Director said the RBTs weren't mentioned specifically. There will be a multi-year process to think about the district's priorities.

3. 2022-2023 State Tiered Focus Monitoring Report Findings

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education representative was in the district in September. The final report said the ABRSD is in compliance in all areas. There was one finding about Out of District monitoring that asked the district to create a

form to show how the monitoring was taking place vs. having the information throughout a student's record. Overall, the state was very complimentary. They recommended looking into improving communication with families (progress reports, etc.). There was positive feedback about the good relationship between the district and the SEPAC. It is noted that the state was looking for very specific details, not the broader feedback that they may have gotten from individual families. They will review every three years with different indicators.

B. Pathways Program Status & Expansion to Junior High

In 2016-17 an internal program called Pathways was created to support students with Autism within the district. Now the program is expanding as that cohort heads to the junior high. At this time there are cross school observations and exchange of information (Blanchard/RJ Grey) to determine needs. This includes space, schedules, and inclusion opportunities. There will be a time for parents to meet the professional staff and see the classroom space as well as a visiting day for the students. A parent asked how those who are heavily supported but not in the Pathways program will have their needs met. Their transitions are planned for as well. Another parent asked how people know if their child is in a specific program. Typically this is mentioned in the N1 form. Those present agreed programs should be more clearly listed and described in the IEP.

C. District Mathematics Update at 1/26/23 School Committee Meeting

1. Subgroup MCAS & iReady Performance

Data was shared showing how many students were 2-3 years behind in math, broken down by subgroups. The SEPAC confirmed caregivers had not been informed of this in every instance.

2. General Ed Progress Monitoring

There is no clear procedure for general ed progress monitoring at the elementary level, nor how the information is shared with caregivers. A student may be behind without a caregiver knowing. This has implications for Child Find. Parents/guardians are to receive iReady results upon request.

3. Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Implementation

Students with special education needs are general ed students first and receive MTSS support. Caregivers of all students need to be informed when this occurs and what type of intervention students are receiving.

D. IEP/504 Accommodations & District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)

The ABRSD has a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan outlining best practices for all students. An ICAP (Individualized Curriculum Accommodation Plan) is sometimes offered instead of a 504 plan. For students with documented disabilities, it is important to have specific accommodations documented in 504s and IEPs even if they are best practice, especially for portability. The Acton-Boxborough DCAP directly states accommodations must be listed in 504s and IEPs even if they appear in the DCAP. The Director shared she is in charge of supervising school counselors as well as 504s.

E. Transition Assessments for Students 14+

Transition planning for life after high school should be part of the process for all students with IEPs 14+ regardless of disability type. Transition assessments can take many forms, including formal and informal measures. They will be individualized based on

student needs. There are reports of delayed transition assessments for students in Out of District placements. The SEPAC will seek additional clarity regarding existing practices.

F. Other AB SEPAC Priorities for 2022-2023

1. Outreach & Community Building

- a. The SEPAC will do a presentation for the Early Childhood Program PTO later this month on what the organization does and other resources for families.
- b. ADHD Essentials with Brendan Mahan is scheduled for 3/8/23 at 6:30 p.m.
- c. The SEPAC's autism listening session will take place this spring at the Sargent Memorial Library in Boxborough.

IV. New Business

Five seats are turning over in the upcoming election (3 in Acton and 2 in Boxborough). Caregivers of students with disabilities are encouraged to run. The last date to obtain papers is March 3 for Acton and March 24 in Boxborough. Per its bylaws, the SEPAC does not campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

VI. Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 15, 2023, at 7 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High Library

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

Respectfully submitted by Lynette Cassel, Secretary