

# Chelmsford Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Presentation for the  
School Committee  
Spring 2018

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# Acknowledgements

Chelmsford SEPAC would like to acknowledge the efforts and insights provided by the many people who helps to re-establish this organization. The combined efforts of parents, guardians, school committee members, administration, and persons from the Chelmsford community made the accomplishments for the 2017-18 school year possible.

Legalese surrounding special education is very difficult to navigate, even for highly educated and experienced adults. There are many rules, regulations, statistics that have to be followed, and data that is discussed. It's confusing, it's overwhelming, it is an emotional rollercoaster to feel like you are going into a meeting to fight for what your child needs. We want to make sure support is available for families when they need it and that they feel like a respected and necessary team member.

The main reason we are all here is for the children, whether they are your own or someone else's. The opinions, concerns, and recommendations discussed here are presented for the purpose of bettering specialized education in Chelmsford Public Schools. This is consolidated from discussions with parents, guardians, and interested persons in the community. This report is not the sole creation of the authors, but a representation of the issues that have been brought up at SEPAC meetings during the 2017-18 school year.

We'd like to thank Dennis King for being the school committee liaison. He has attended several of the meetings and does his best to answer questions in a timely and thoughtful manner. We'd also like to acknowledge Donna Newcomb's efforts in helping to establish this organization. We are excited for the opportunity to liaise with her for the next year. Additional appreciation goes to Dr. Jay Lang, superintendent, and Amy Reese, Director of Student Services, for their knowledge, collaboration, and understanding.

# Table of Contents

[Chelmsford SEPAC](#)

[2017-18 Review](#)

[Meeting Summary](#)

[Public Relations](#)

[Budget](#)

[Benefits of active SEPAC](#)

[Children's Rights](#)

[Concerns](#)

[Recommendations](#)

[2018-19 SEPAC Goals](#)

[Summary](#)

[Sources](#)

[Chelmsford Special Education Parent Advisory Council By Laws](#)

# Chelmsford SEPAC

Massachusetts state law, 603 CMR 28:07(4) requires that that all public school districts maintain a SEPAC. Each district is charged with assisting the SEPAC in maintaining operation and activities. After several years of inactivity, parents in Chelmsford came together to reform a Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC).

SEPACs are public bodies that must comply with Open Meeting Laws (OML). Board members are elected according to individual body bylaws. Board members should be sworn in by the Town Clerk and sign a certification of knowledge of the OML. SEPACs are responsible for announcing their formation to the School Committee and instructing the School Committee of their advisory role under the law. SEPAC monies must be deposited with the municipal treasurer and held as a separate account for the SEPAC. SEPACs may engage in fundraising activities, but are not required to do so.

SEPAC responsibilities include:(1) advising the School Committee on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities (2) Meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the school committee special education programs (3) establish by-laws regarding officers and operational procedures.

Advisory duties to support those responsibilities include: (1) Collaborate with the school district to provide the required Basic Rights of Special Education training for parents and professionals annually, 603 CMR 28:03 (1)(a)(iv) (2) organize and host other trainings that are of interest to families and staff involved with special education. (3) Provide an annual written report to the administration and school committee regarding special education within the district. In the course of its duties the SEPAC shall receive assistance from the school committee without charge, upon reasonable notice, and subject to the availability of staff and resources.

## Mission Statement

Current bylaws state that our mission is to:

- Inform parents of their rights
- Share information about programs and services in the district
- Direct parents to advocacy and support
- Inform parents of relevant legislation
- And provide input to school committee

## Bylaws

Upon resuming meetings in September 2017, it was determined that the existing bylaws dated 2007 were to be followed. Currently the bylaws state the mission, define membership, voting protocol, board positions and responsibilities, and bylaw amendment protocol. This enabled a board to be elected by the parents and set a baseline for SEPAC's role and responsibilities. A Bylaw Subcommittee is currently working on a revision of this document.

## Leadership and Members

An interim board that was appointed by the Director of Student Services in April 2017. The interim board, Donna Newcomb and Jen Bartlemann, lead meetings beginning September 2017 that determined the previously approved bylaws would be followed in order to establish a parent elected board. Meetings were held to share information to define SEPAC's role in the district, collect parent input for concerns and needed workshops, share information on community resources, and a workshop entitled "Panel discussion on Anxiety, Social-Emotional Challenges, Social Skills, and Behavior as Communication" was offered in November. The interim board created parent liaison positions for each school in the district. The interim board designated an nomination committee to collect nominees for board positions, which were collected from November-January. It was determined by a supported motion that board positions assumed in January 2018 would be held for 16 months. A SEPAC email was set up by the appointed interim board at this time.

January 23, 2018 our first parent selected board member, Alison Barnes, was elected and assumed all duties of the board as the solely elected chair. March 12, 2018 open board positions were addressed in accordance with the bylaws that state an election should be held immediately in the event of open positions. Unanimous parent vote by those in attendance yielded: Kristen Eriksen as co-chair, Bethany Rappoli as treasurer, and Laurie McCarron as secretary. The co-chair position is to be held for the remaining time of the 16 month term for elected positions. The treasurer and secretary position will be held through May 22, 2018 as defined in the bylaws. Treasurer and secretary will be open for election at that time.

School liaisons were created in fall 2017. School liaisons responsibilities include: attending SEPAC meetings, attending PTO/BSA meetings, sharing information between parent groups, and being a point person for parent/guardian questions for their respective schools. These are volunteer, self appointed positions with no defined length of service. Over the course of the year, three of our liaisons have resigned from their positions. Currently our liaisons are: Heather Sexton (CHIPS), Kendra Barbanti (Byam), Cara Dellaterra (Byam), Laurie McCarron (Center), Kate Henderson (Center), Jamie Dillon (Harrington), Bethany Rappoli (Parker), Amy Domow (Parker), Bethany Morrill (CHS).

Membership is open to all interested persons in the community. Compared to surrounding communities, Chelmsford has an extremely active and involved membership. We average 17 persons in attendance, with more than 30 people present at some meetings. The attending members are mostly parents and guardians in the district, but teachers, nurses, and community members have also attended. It is exciting and rewarding to have so many families involved. In the short amount of time that SEPAC has been active, families have already formed supportive relationships, gained knowledge, and found a voice to advocate for the needs of the children in our district.

## 2017-18 Review

Following several years of inactivity, our first year yielded many accomplishments including: monthly meetings, providing workshops in Chelmsford, attending area workshops together, meeting the requirements for SEPAC as listed in the coordinated program review, networking with other organizations in Chelmsford to provide support to families. One of our biggest highlight is that we have brought parents together. Being a special ed parent is lonely. The process is hard, the language is foreign, the outcomes are personal. Being able to get support from people who “get it” makes a world of difference.

In accordance with OML, agendas are posted by the Town Clerk. Meeting minutes are approved by the public body and are kept by the secretary. Additionally, a reference binder including agendas, meeting minutes, and resources is available at the Chelmsford Public Library. Any persons with an interest in viewing this record can inquire at the children’s desk.

# Meeting Summary

Meetings are held monthly, excluding December. We average 17 participants, with some meetings having more than 30 attendees. This year's tasks have focused on a developing parent elected a board, establishing operational procedures, and providing resources to parents. Meetings generally follow a routine of taking care of SEPAC business, sharing resources and information, then opening the floor to new topics. New topics often include parents concerns and questions about the IEP and 504 process, protocol for various situations, academics and therapeutic supports, and the health and safety of children.

## September

- Approximately 30 attendees
- Determined that standing by-laws would be used until an elected parent board could review and revise
- Established that there would be SEPAC school liaisons and a nomination committee
- Shared resources: special education process, contact information for community organizations

## October

- Superintendent overview
- School Committee Liaison introduction
- Nomination committee and process for electing parent board established

## November

- Coordinated Sib-Shop with Simply Social Kids for January
- Discussions to answer parent questions related to CPS Budget and special education programming

## January

- Elected parent board: chair position filled
- Established SEPAC Facebook rules to protect the identity of students
- Discussion of SEPAC Structure, including: advising the school committee, providing support to parents, and community outreach projects

## March 12

- Elected parents to fill the remaining board positions: co-chair, treasurer, secretary
- Officially announced SEPAC website
- Established subcommittee for: Bylaw Revision, School Committee Presentation
- Shared Resources: Guest speaker from Decoding Dyslexia of Chelmsford

## March 27

- Shared Resources: Guest speaker from AANE, handouts from Vision of Community
- Q&A with Amy Reese

April 24

- Shared Resources: Guest speakers from Chelmsford Special Education Parent Support Group
- Began discussions for outreach programs, fundraising
- Announced positions that would open in May and planned election procedures

## Public Relations

A variety of methods were used to spread awareness of SEPAC's recent activity and to integrate SEPAC support into the community. Initially, there was a Facebook group created to coordinate efforts to re-establish sepac. That small group has grown to membership of over 300 people. The Facebook group is used to share information from meetings, events, and community resources.

A new website has been published: [chelmsfordsepac.weebly.com](http://chelmsfordsepac.weebly.com). We are working on building a resource list for parents and SEPACs. Other information that can be found on the website: upcoming events, meeting schedule, meeting agendas, meeting minutes. We have been teaming with other SEPAC's regionally and non-profit groups with related interests. This is to share resources, learn how to work effectively and efficiently as a team, and potentially to collaborate to provide workshops with local districts. Some of the organizations we have been working with: MassPAC, PAC-2-PAC, Regional SEPAC Leadership, Decoding Dyslexia of Massachusetts, Decoding Dyslexia of Chelmsford.

Within the community, Friends of Robert's Field reached out to us for a public input session for the new playground. SEPAC was able to give feedback on the design that was created to meet the needs of children with a wide range of abilities. The Chelmsford Public Library has a parent resource section in the children's library with books that are applicable to SEPAC parents labeled with a "SEPAC" sticker. There is a SEPAC resource binder available at the children's librarian desk that contains copies of meeting agenda & minutes and resources handed out at meetings. We co-hosted a collaborative art project called "Lending A Hand" with the Chelmsford Special Education Parent Support Group. That artwork is displayed in the parent resource section of the children's library.



# Budget

The SEPAC budget for the 2017-2018 school year was \$500. The funds are managed by the District. Funds allocated to provide for the District's MassPAC membership. Among other benefits, membership provides for the annual Basic Rights Training that Districts are required to provide.

As a new SEPAC, we are in the process of exploring options for obtaining additional funds. This may include establishing a Friends of the Chelmsford SEPAC organization. SEPACs may but are not required to attempt to raise funds to support their operations.

## Benefits of active SEPAC

Having an active parent advisory council representing our children with special needs is an essential component to the Team process.

The Benefits of an active SEPAC are many - including access to current Workshop and Trainings including A.P.P.L.E (Advancing Parent Professional Leadership Education) offered to districts and parents in Massachusetts from the Federation for Children with Special Needs and MassPAC. This type of training helps achieve collaboration while creatively strengthening a SEPAC to implement a two year plan of action.

Other workshops and trainings include - Intro to the Transition Planning Process, Turning Three Essentials, an IEP for My Child, MCAS: access & Achievement for Students with Disabilities and the Parent Consultant Training Institute (PCTI). These types of workshops and trainings are usually promoted through an active SEPAC with cooperation from their district. The bottom line is that parents have a place to go. Not every parent or caregiver that has a child with special needs or suspected disabilities is aware of this after leaving the hospital - or after an adoption process. Many times with "invisible" disabilities, the need for help and support is great but the know how of where to turn or what to do regarding resources and support can be limited. A SEPAC is an effective bridge to help the district and the parents navigate through this process.

# Children's Rights

The authors of this report felt it was necessary to highlight the reason for our efforts: our children. While there are rights listed in legal documents, they don't fully take into account the needs and abilities of the whole child. It is easy to look at black and white text stating a child qualifies to be helped based on a test score. It is more difficult to consider their hopes for being successful, desires to fit in with their peers, and the heartbreaking realization they can have when it becomes apparent that they are not the same as their peers.

Along with the 4 major laws that relate to children with special needs and education regarding accommodations, instruction and services, there is also the ESSA - Every Student Succeeds Act. Massachusetts is committed to focusing on additional supports for students who struggle by strengthening standards, curriculum, instruction and assessments including supports for social-emotional learning and use of technology. This includes highlighting and sharing the incredible work being done in schools and districts. Each of the author's has a certain reason for being so passionately involved in our purpose to help the SEPAC fulfill its purpose.

"I am a supporter and promoter of gifted students pursuing a quality education that includes music. Unfortunately, music is one of the first courses to be reconsidered as a part of the regular curriculum when it involves a student who appears to be struggling with disabilities. During the April 24th School Committee Meeting, it was proudly mentioned that Chelmsford has been designated "A Best Community for Music Education" in the U.S. by the NAMM Foundation - for the 6th consecutive year. As Ms. Whittlesey stated, "this award recognizes that Chelmsford is leading the way with learning opportunities as outlined in the ESSA - which recognizes music and arts as important elements of a well rounded education for all".

A well rounded, enriched curriculum is imperative to our students, especially our middle schoolers who navigate their way to find a socially structured group that they fit well in to. \*An area that highlights and shares the incredible work being done in the school and the district.

One of the first questions parents ask (silently) when their child is struggling - "What did I do wrong?" and "How can I help my child succeed - in school - and in life?" - "Why can't everyone else understand my child the way I do?" When I first suspected LD with my child, I had so many questions but few answers. I didn't know much about special education services, or who to turn to for help regarding my child's needs and rights. I didn't understand the process of an SST meeting, what a 504 was and had never heard the term SEPAC. I am one of those parents that needed a SEPAC. "At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child's success is the positive involvement of parents." (Jane D Hull)"

- Laurie McCarron

"It pretty much goes without saying that we're all here because of the children. At this time, we want to share a little about our own children. My husband and I were blessed with the opportunity to adopt premature fragile twins. We knew that it would be difficult. In reality, we had no idea that it would be as hard as it has been. They are now 10, almost 11, and are both placed in an out of District school through the Chelmsford Public Schools. To get into their story is too emotional and frankly it's personal. It's not my story to tell. What is my story, is that I have had to negotiate the school system, outside therapies, evaluations, IEPs and 504s, medical appointments, I could go on but you get it. I felt very alone on this journey.

The twins had challenges in academics, social emotional regulation, and behavior difficulties. I often said that I felt like I was drowning, barely holding my nose and mouth about the water in order to breathe. There were many people and agencies holding sticks and ropes out to me, but I didn't know which ones to grab. SEPAC in Chelmsford was inactive at that time. I did not drown, and after many years, I've been able to get to a pretty stable place with my family. I feel like I've learned a lot that could help others in the future. I feel like SEPAC would be, if put into my analogy, a Lifeboat so that instead of jumping right into the water, families have support, guidance and direction to help get through uncharted waters."

- Kristen Eriksen

"I have a smart, kind and helpful child who is incredibly hard-working and has been described as a role-model student by her teachers. She is also dyslexic. Dyslexia is the most common learning disability affecting approximately 15% of the population, and it has been heavily researched. We know how to remediate it. Early intervention is critical due to the brain being more neuroplastic before the age of 9, so most states have already passed and we have legislation pending in Massachusetts to provide for early screening and intervention. At 9 years old, our daughter told us that her private Orton Gillingham reading tutor was her "best hope".

Our family is involved with advocating for dyslexia legislation at both the national and state level, and I have been involved with the SEPAC this year because our child says she doesn't want other kids to have to feel "stupid" like she did, and this helps her to feel better about her own experience. I hope that you will join other School Committees in supporting the dyslexia legislation pending in Massachusetts, and as it is implemented, please remember that early screening really benefits future students and our current students still need support."

- Bethany Rappoli

"My experience as a special education parent has been mixed. I have one child who we've had to advocate for their entire life due to invisible disabilities. I have one child become suddenly and permanently physically disabled just before beginning kindergarten. That means I've had the experience of, first, slowly learning the lingo and processes and, second, being thrown suddenly into a whole new language and culture of medical care and education. During both of those experiences, trying to figure what to say, who to say it to, when to push for more information or services, and when to hold back while the professionals do their job has been a difficult line to balance on. It is like constantly being on a tightrope, where one side is you failing your child because you didn't push hard enough and the other side is counterproductive because you are being too pushy, stepping on toes, and being "that parent." When parents have knowledge about their rights, how the system works, and what services are available, they are able to have a more balanced discussion. That makes evaluations and meetings more productive for everyone and results in the best possible programming for our students."

- Alison Barnes

We respectfully ask that our concerns and recommendations are considered not only for the legality of meeting the specialized needs of some students, but for the overall well being of all children in Chelmsford.

# Concerns

Chelmsford SEPAC submit the following concerns to the Chelmsford School Committee. These items have been presented to SEPAC by parents, guardians, and interested parties in the community:

(1) Communication surrounding special education services can lack consistency, clarity, timeliness. This includes information and resources for the following areas:

- (a) Information about IEP/504/Team meetings,
- (b) What to do and who to go to when there is an issue related to an evaluation, IEP, 504, or out of district placement
- (c) Information about specialized transportation for students, whether they are in district or have out of district placements
- (d) who/what/where/when for ESY
- (e) Information about children's performance and behavior, including punishment by removing recess, communication with teachers & parents, Parents finding things out second hand - either from their child or another parent
- (f) There have been times when emails regarding SEPAC issues have not been responded to in an informative and timely manner. Parents report that their emails and calls are sometimes not returned or the information given does not fully answer their questions.

(2) Parents feel disconnected.

- (a) We are disconnected from Each other: Inclusion isn't fully understood by parents and children. Stigmatism against students that are pulled out for services This needs to be more fluid within the context of the day/routine. Many parents do not understand how behaviors related to a diagnosis are addressed with in an inclusion classroom.
- (b) We are disconnected from the education process: Special education has little to no presence at open house. Parents sometimes do not meet specialists or therapists until late in the school year, or sometimes never. While parents could make an effort to reach out and schedule individual meetings, that puts burden on the parents and is not an efficient use of the district's time. Parents are not prepared for what happens next when a child moves up to a new school or begins a new program. Parents know that their child needs access to social/emotional learning opportunities, but may not know what to ask for.
- (c) We are disconnected from the community: Out-of-district children are a part of community, but are not necessarily included in community events. We need to

actively support our children's social and emotional needs as members of the community and with their like age peers.

(3) There is a reactive approach to addressing student needs. Parents have expressed concern that the district is waiting for children to fail before providing needed support. According to the Child Find Mandate, districts must actively search and identify children who has suspected special needs.

(4) Coordinated Program Review included many items that were rated as "partially implemented" or "not implemented" for special education and civil rights standards. While there is noticeable effort to correct some portions of the CPR, like SE32 which is related to establishing a SEPAC & SE34 which is related to programming for social emotional learning, there are some items listed in the November 2017 corrective action plan that line up with concerns that have been brought up at SEPAC meetings:

- (a) A number of issues related to team composition and attendance at meetings, like agreeing in advance in writing that an individual will or will not attend a meeting.
- (b) Documents are not consistently provided immediately following the development of the IEP.
- (c) Inconsistencies in notices given to parents regarding proposal or refusal of part of an IEP or 504; a description of each evaluation procedure, test, record or report; a description of any other options that the school district considered and the reasons why those options were rejected
- (d) General education staff does not receive training on state special education requirements and related local special education policies and procedures
- (e) The District's non-discrimination policy does not include protection for students identified with a disability
- (f) Student handbook does not include code of conduct procedures for students on a 504 Plan

# Recommendations

Chelmsford SEPAC submits the following recommendations to Chelmsford School Committee:

- (1) Maintain active SEPAC.
  - (a) SEPAC information should be openly distributed to parents throughout the special education process and throughout the school year. A SEPAC flier should be distributed at IEP & 504 meetings, when an SST is formed for a child, at kindergarten orientation, and at moving up events.
  - (b) Collaborate SEPAC to provide parent workshops, including Basic Rights.
  - (c) Clearly communicate details of special needs transportation by providing information to parents on the standardized protocols for specialized transportation and extended school year programming. If there is no standardized protocol, then one should be developed. This could be in the form as a flow chart of who to contact and when.
  - (d) Information needs to be provided about where, when, and who is doing extended school year programming prior to the end of the regular school year.
  - (e) Emails should be responded to in a timely manner to either acknowledge receipt of emails or to respond informatively. This should be modeled from the top down, starting with the director of student services.
- (2) Collaborate with SEPAC to provide supports and resources to build relationships between parents, familiarize parents with education processes, and increase opportunities for families with out of district placements to feel connected to our community. Help parents feel connected by:
  - (a) Parents can connect to each other through workshops. One idea is to collaborate to develop a parent workshop that describes how inclusion works for all students. We recommend two events, one for PK-4th and one for 5-12th, because inclusion looks a bit different for younger and older children.
  - (b) Parent can connect to the education process. We have ideas for several events to co-host with the district.
    - (i) Centralize special education teachers, therapists, and specialists to a single location during open house. While many of the therapists and specialists are in the building during open house, they are spread out and difficult to find. We recommend having specialists and therapists located in a communal area so that parents are able to introduce themselves in a timely manner. This practice should be done throughout the district for continuity.
    - (ii) Host a "Meet the Director of Student Services" event in the fall. Follow the same model done in November 2016 where Amy & school liaisons met with parents and shared information about programs offered.
    - (iii) Develop a "Move Up Fair" for students transitioning to a new school. Host a presentation specifically to address the changes in programming when

- moving from one school/program to another, One idea is that this would include breakout sessions where parents could meet teachers and therapists from the school they will be moving up to.
- (iv) Request collaboration from the district to host a social emotional regional event, like the “Promoting Effective Social Emotional Learning in Your Community” hosted in Lexington on May 30, 2018.
  - (c) Help parents connect with their community. Invite OOD families to community events. In order to help children who attend school in different districts feel connected to their community, we recommend that they be included in invitations to special events that happen at our schools. Those children still live in Chelmsford, and if at any point moving back into this district for education becomes a choice, they need to have a connection to peers and community.
- (3) Take a proactive approach to addressing student needs and seeking out students who need alternative curriculum or approaches to behavior, social, and emotional needs.
- (a) Screening for dyslexia should happen in Kindergarten/1st grade. This should be through the creation of a joint task force for improving literacy and remediating language based learning disabilities. The task force should include representatives from administration, general and special education teachers, a SC rep, and at least one parent. CPS can proactively plan for the passage of the pending dyslexia legislation in MA calling for early screening and intervention. The earlier the intervention, the better the outcome for the student.
  - (b) Define levels of intervention, like the Response to Intervention (RTI) model, that occur before an evaluation is recommended or agreed upon when requested. The process to figure out if your child needs services is not clear. Parents need to know the timeline for trying approaches for individual needs within the general ed classroom. Parents need to know the process for seeking out and identifying children with special needs.
  - (c) Evaluate the behavior policies related to removing recess as a punishment. Punishment is a short term solution to a long term problem. Identify the cause of unwanted behaviors during lunch & recess and address those needs, rather than punishing children.
- (4) Continue efforts to achieve the goals listed on the CPR. We recommend that the items listed as concerns from CPR be made a priority. We realize a lot of the efforts that go towards meeting the goals listed on the CPR are behind the scenes. It would benefit the relationship between parents and the district to make those efforts be made visible. That could be done by communicating those action during SEPAC board meetings with administration or arranging for time on a SEPAC agenda to give an update to the entire group. We would like to be able to acknowledge the efforts being done to meet those goals and be an active participant in developing special education programs.

## 2018-19 SEPAC Goals

- (1) SEPAC community outreach at Open House: SEPAC would like to have information available at Open House and plan a klck off event for the fall, which would likely be a coloring contest to highlight the benefits of inclusion.
- (2) True Colors Workshop: True Colors is a Team building workshop that is expected to happen in fall 2018. Once True Colors Workshop is organized, we would like to offer an invitation for administrators and school committee members to join us.
- (3) Attend A.P.P.L.E. Institute: APPLE Institute is a training conference for a SEPAC to more effectively support its members: families of children with special needs. The conference is typically held the first week in May and SEPAC members, administration, and school committee members are invited to attend together as a district.
- (4) Special Education Needs Assessment Survey: A needs assessment survey would allow us to gather information to better provide what families need and give targeted feedback to school committee.
- (5) ALEC Grant: Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition is an emergency services personnel training. It is specific to meeting the needs of children with autism during a crisis event. We are hoping to find a grant that would bring this training to Chelmsford.
- (6) Continue building a collaborative relationship with administration and school committee: We would like to continue building a collaborative relationship with the district. The SEPAC board will meet regularly with director of student services, set up meeting w/ superintendent, and continue to include school committee members at meetings.
- (7) Establish SEPAC guidelines for open dialogue between parents and collaborative dialogue with the District: It has been requested that we have time during meetings with administration present and times without. We want to be able to work with the district, but also respect the need for families privacy. Parents and guardians need to feel comfortable and be able to speak freely at SEPAC meetings, without fear of retribution of their inquiries. One way we will make that a possibility is to plan on having a board member arrive early to meetings, so that parents who need time to talk with each other have a space to do that.
- (8) Continue building a collaborative relationship with PTO and BSA groups: Providing for children with special needs benefits all students in the district. We would like to share information with all parents and guardians and help support students at school functions.

## Summary

We are so fortunate to have a large group of parents that are willing and able to step up and be a part of this process. Our voices and the actions we take will make it easier for us to give children what they need, when they need it. We look forward to working with the school committee and administration to make that happen.



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# Chelmsford Special Education Parent Advisory Council By Laws

Proposed 9/10/98

Amended 12/12/07

## **Article I- Organization Name**

The name of this organization shall be the Chelmsford Special Education Parent Advisory Council, also known as the SPED PAC.

## **Article II- Mission Statement**

The SPED PAC's mission is to:

- \*Inform parents about their rights regarding Special Education
- \*Disseminate information about programs and services in the school system
- \*Help direct parents to advocacy and support services
- \*Inform parents about special education legislation
- \*Provide input to the school committee on the district's special education programs

## **Article III- Membership**

General Membership- shall be open to any resident of Chelmsford or person affiliated with the Chelmsford School System.

Voting Membership- shall be limited to parents/guardians of children with disabilities who are receiving services through the Chelmsford School System.

## **Article IV- Officers**

The officers of this organization are the following but not limited to:

- \*Chairperson
- \*Secretary
- \*Treasurer

The term of office shall be one year from June to June. Officers may hold office for no more than two terms, but must be reelected at each annual meeting. Duties of the officers:

Chairperson- Set the agenda for all SPED PAC meetings, to open, close all meetings, recognize speakers from the floor and allow discussion of all matters properly before the organization.

Also the chairperson will represent SPED PAC at public functions, or delegate a representative if the chairperson is unable to attend. The chairperson shall also coordinate the activities of the organization. Duties of the chairperson may be shared among a Co-Chairperson.

Secretary- Shall be responsible for the maintenance of the attendance sheet and recording minutes of all SPED PAC meetings. The secretary shall maintain a permanent file of the organization's by-laws and the minutes of all meetings. The secretary shall maintain a record of all outside correspondence and post all meetings in accordance with open meeting laws.

Treasurer- Shall be responsible for maintaining the records for all monetary transactions of the organization and to provide a report of monthly activity and funds balances at every general meeting, and with a consolidated yearlong report submitted each June 30th.

#### **Article V- Election Procedures**

1. Officers shall be elected by a majority vote, of all in attendance, at the General Meeting in May.
2. Nominations for office shall be discussed and accepted at the general business meeting prior to the May election. Absentee candidates can only be nominated with their written permission.
3. If any office becomes vacant, an election for that office shall be held immediately, with person elected to complete the current term.

#### **Article VI- Subcommittees**

Subcommittees shall be created as needed. The subcommittee president shall be a volunteer or willing nominee accepted by a simple majority of the members present.

#### **Article VII- Meetings**

Business meetings shall be held at least quarterly, from September through June. All business meetings are subject to the open meeting laws. Notices of all general meeting dates shall be posted, submitted to the local press (when applicable), and communicated through the school system and PAC newsletters.

Annual elections will be held at the general meeting in May.

Minutes of all SPED PAC meetings shall be recorded and retained as a matter of public record.

#### **Article VIII- Bylaws**

Amendments These bylaws may be amended by a 2/3 vote, of those in attendance, at a business meeting.