

SEPAC Meeting Minutes October 3, 2019

Location: Chelmsford High School
Learning Commons, located on Floor 3

Board

Ali Barnes, Co-Chair - Present
Kristen Eriksen, Co-Chair - Not Present
Laurie McCarron, Secretary - Present
Vyas Sanzgiri, Treasurer - Present

District

Amy Reese, Director of Special Education - Not Present
Donna Newcomb, School Committee Liaison - Not Present

Members

Attendees Present: 7+ late arrivals

Handouts: added to SEPAC Binder

Start: 7:02 p.m.

Agenda Item

1. Welcome and Establish Meeting Protocol:

Ali welcomed members. Ali stated that the handouts for this meeting are in the Special Ed Office, currently unavailable. Ali has a projector to give the overview.
Overview of SEPAC includes: SEPAC Kick Off for the new year: What SEPAC is and what SEPAC does. SEPAC participates in the planning, development and evaluation of the district's special education programs. SEPAC support parents by offering Workshops and helping to find resources. SEPAC works with the district to provide a yearly Basic Rights. This year's Basic Rights Workshop is Wed., Oct. 16th at 6:45 the CHS Learning Center. Basic Rights has recently changed at the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Ali states: "We chose Evaluation and Eligibility." Ali highly recommends that parents attend this Workshop. Ali summarized the SEPAC Mission and Purpose from our By-Laws and Board introductions. Ali Barnes, Kristen Eriksen, (Co-Chair) Vyas Sanzgiri (Treasurer) and Laurie McCarron (Secretary). Liaison explanation: "to attend PTO and SEPAC meetings to help share information." At SEPAC meetings, Kristen and Ali usually get "here" at 6:00p, to open the doors, to offer a casual parent chat time. Meetings begin at 7:00p. **Public Input is offered at every meeting**, including: concerns, questions, discussion and feedback. Public Input Sheets also available at every meeting to help w/ difficulty sharing at an Open Meeting. Ali "One way to make sure your voice is being heard and SEPAC is getting information to advise School Committee, check off why you're here, there is an optional spot to contact you, or the district to contact you. This helps keep track, helps 'us' with Presentation at School Committee." Voting based on "Roberts Rules". Ali asked if any Questions, there were none. Babysitting is available for most SEPAC events, for free. RSVP is needed. Email sent to Joan Murphy, email is listed on SEPAC webpage, Joan runs the "Early Childhood" program at CHS. Students get credited service hours for volunteering.

2. Review and Approve Minutes from April 24, 2019 and May 23, 2019:

Copy of minutes provided on each table for members to review. Motion was made to accept Minutes, Motion was seconded.

3. Special Guest: Jen Melanson, Chelmsford Community Services Coordinator:

Jen introduced herself, she is employed by the town and started the position in July. It's a new position. Jen has been getting to know the district's schools, police department and community, she has a background in Health Care, ER and ICU and Social Services. She is a LSWA, married, mom of three. She shared with the members about having a special needs diagnosis and being the parent of a child with a medically complex, rare diagnosis and that she understands the need for parent/family resources in the community. Jen went on to talk about the job: A position that the Town Manager posted, (police have a part time clinician, grant funded for 2nd clinician, behaviour health mental health), but no one who oversees all those services, Jen's position helps to identify the gaps. She is currently getting to know the lay of the land. Jen stated that she is working hard to learn the area and services offered in the area. She is glad to have an active SEPAC in the community to help with connections, she urges members to reach out. Jen's office is housed at Town Offices. Drop in hours are: Tues. 4-6 and Thurs 9-11. Or call/email to make an appt. Jen mentioned that she is trained through CTI Lowell, fuel assistance, help find: Medical Equip, Loan programs, Resources available (lower costs for gas bill for special needs family(s). Town entities partnering with Housing Authority, Pilot Program, H friendly from AARP - livable community for all ages. Jen looks forward to getting intergenerational activities going and connections for kids to connect. Survey will be going out next week to residents of Chelmsford. "Kids learn from adults, Adults can learn from kids too". She will be at the CPL one Saturday a month, (Oct. date not given) from 11- 1.

4. Public Input: Public comment on general matters related to special education:

Open floor Question: Amy Domow: How are special ed services scheduled in a greater community, does it happen...What happens when a child is identified for a specialized service like ex. "Orton-Gillingham", How does that work? Identified after the start of the school year, what is the policy that they (student) get what they need?

Q. Peter Molloy: What is school district policy on Home Work as it relates to frequency, volume and duration?

Laurie McCarron asked SEPAC "How do we get answers to these questions?"

Ali's answer: "Amy Reese is director of student services, Amy Matson is Asst. Director of special ed and out of district liaison, we (Ali and Kristen) usually meet before SEPAC meetings and share info we get from parents - consolidate that - if there are issues that are repeatedly brought up, why we have input sheets - if common concern we want to bring up with Admin. and School Committee."

Questions/Discussion continue.

Summarized: Does it change by level - elementary, ms, hs". Parent feedback Concern: Learning Center used not for Reading, not being used for what it should be used for. Relay on SEPAC and as voice, impact of change that SEPAC pushes...HW being one of them. Parent Question - Renee Limauro 1: (Has the district been looking into a Comp. Reading Evaluation for specific learning disabilities to ensure they're using sensitive enough assessments to look at all 5 aspects of Reading...(Decoding, Vocab, Comprehension, Fluency, Phonemic Awareness). Parent Question 2: If students are involved in specialized reading instruction, how are they (district) progress monitoring and sharing info w/families?

Ali: specifics on one particular topic, helps for SEPAC to put on specific Workshops. If something coming up a lot, related to policies, ect...SEPAC members could create a subcommittee and have specific feedback for the district. Discussion ends.

Chair asks for 2 Minute Recess to step away from meeting:

Re-Convene:

Laurie: Reading Comprehension discussion needed.

Ali: Taking notes to bring to Admin including: Types of testing being used, formative assessments are being used to override diagnostic assessments/eval and form assessment grade level for scores, concerns: being used to prevent students from qualifying for services (eligibility) related to that - outside assessments are not being accepted as reliable evidence to support eligibility. Another parent echoes same concerns. Further discussion: how are "we" making sure that there are outliers, good practice. Assessment part and specialized instruction in all areas literacy across the district. Someone in their building - offered at every building at all levels. Certified teachers. Parent Concerns/Questions: how are services scheduled? Kristen Grange: Shouldn't child with services have same opportunities of all students (like specialists) instead of missing them? Renee, Laurie: Parent involvement in SST process.

Peter: a child who attends community ed services, if they require administrated medicine after school day, nurse has left for the day...nobody on staff that can administer that medication. Discussion: "Community Ed"? Parent told "that's something you and the nurse have to work out". Email sent from parent to Superintendent and waiting reply.

Note: Public input records are used to collect information on topics of interest and concerns. Ali will send info to Director of Special Education. Summary of Chair's noted topics include:

- *How are services scheduled during the school day?*
- *How are children able to both access required services and specials (art/music/etc) during school day?*
- *What is the homework policy? re: frequency, volume, duration, by grade level?*
- *Much input on Reading Instruction, RTI/MTSS supports, direction instruction for SLD/Dyslexia, teacher qualifications, evaluations and assessments, accessibility to teachers who are OF/RAVO/Wilson certified.*
- *What is the policy on parent involvement in SST?*
- *What is Community Ed Program responsibility/protocol for providing medication during after school care program?*

5. Good News:

Meet and Greet:

Ali: "Admin from Student Services met with parents at a Meet and Greet, low turnout but discussion was good, lot of new people in district - yellow paper has all of their info (note: a copy will be requested to have in SEPAC secretary binder). All very positive, incredible base of knowledge and experience in Admin. 3 new Team Chairs, one is a new position. Amy Domow set that up. Other piece of news Laurie McCarron is on the State Special Education Advisory Council (Panel) which entails: advising and policies at State Level."

Laurie: Good News to report includes, SEPAC Brochures. 1,000 copies made and another 1,000 copies to be printed. SEPACs were offered a Table at every Open House in the district. Some Open Houses included SEPAC in their slide-show presentation. SEPAC continues to appreciate the support from the district in a collaborative effort to share resources and support to families and further support Family Engagement. A.P.P.L.E Training was fun! Parents and Admins worked on a 2-3 year Team Plan of Action (TAP) to bring back to the district and implement (Good News being one of the areas, to help celebrate positive accomplishments/updates and maintain, build/increase momentum). Last school year's Community Awards! Over 60 people nominated and recognized by the SEPAC with collaboration from parents and the district to send out nomination forms and print award certificates (in color)! Many SEPAC parent members volunteered to help organize and distribute the Awards at the Nominated person's work/school. Amy Domow, Cara Dellaterra, Kristen Eriksen, Laurie McCarron, Heather Sexton, Linda Tanini (please let us know if we missed a name here) all helped with the efforts. Thank you so much!

6. Review of Liaison Duties and Recruit Volunteers:

Ali: This part in the meeting SEPAC lets Liaisons take floor for updates, if parents are looking specific info regarding their student's school. Liaisons attend SEPAC meetings and PTO meetings, Ali gives liaisons a summary of what SEPAC talked about, what needs to be presented and to whom. A Liaison is not a Board position. If you are interested in doing this position, email the SEPAC - Clarifying SEPAC email is ChelmsfordSEPAC@gmail.com available on website, business email. Info agenda, workshops, etc. SEPAC members do not use that info to discuss personal info, it is subject to Open Record. For more in depth questions on where to go for Parent Support CSEPAC.liaisons@gmail.com if parents have specific question. No SEPAC business is conducted there. Any questions?

7. Special Education Report:

Not present to share

8. School Committee Report:

Donna Newcomb is the SEPAC liaison to the Chelmsford SEPAC, the alternate is John Moses. Ali states that "Donna is very involved in everything that we do, we greatly appreciate her."

9. Old Business:

a. Recess Subcommittee Presentation - Vote:

Ali Barnes and Peter Molloy presented a slide show presentation. The purpose of this Subcommittee (losing recess as a punishment) Overview: Recess Policy in CPS is fairly vague. On p. 21 of the Student/Parent Handbook under "Forms of Consequences" states "A student might be required to serve detention at recess time..."

DESE advisory 2016-1 states...Legislation 5 states have passed protecting recess or protecting 20-30 min of physical activity. Bills at State house. Chelmsford has DCAP available for all students. Pamphlet.

Note: Open Floor Discussion for Subcommittee to amend any part of slide show.

Comments: Title it Recess/Break, because MS and HS kids benefit. 15 minutes in Middle School.

Is this happening at Elementary Level...across grade level. Lunch room monitors taking away Recess.

Peter: Who would be on duty to cover it? From teachers level, adding space in day, does that extend the teachers day and Admin level, have to hit some many hours on learning (9/90). How does implementing that space impact time on learning - from a Legal standpoint.

Laps around HS no more, security issue. Any down time? Homeroom? Plus block. Pride Block, 2x a week sign up w/teachers, study extra help, At HS level, kids to suggest what they want to do, structured but not, they get to choose who they work with Teacher. Breaks up their day. Q. Does anyone have a child where recess is their least favorite part of their day? Students where unstructured is bothersome. Discussion. Possible to have a choice not have recess? Too stressful, needs down time away from everything. That option never honored in elementary school, how many incidents could have been prevented.

Recess isn't happy for everybody. Recess is not a space for everyone. Ali: any additional feedback, email SEPAC to add to Forced to be out at Recess, they need down time to regroup. Including all info, figuring out a way for upper classes.

Ali recapped parent feedback and discussion highlights. HS Plus and Pride block. Add concern: anxiety at recess, too unstructured. Subcommittee will make those edits, officially. A Motion to accept changes and to present SC made, Motioned seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

b. APPLE Follow-UP: Better defining Board member roles. Co-Chairs role, Kristen is taking on more Family Support. Ali is taking on Admin Role of Chair. Re-defining Treasurer position. Vyas taking on more PR and IT tasks, SEPAC doesn't have control of "our own" money, it is a line item. Not a lot for Treasurer to do, amend to reflect role accurately. Ali looking for suggestions over course next few weeks, bring up at next SEPAC meeting to change/update the By-laws. Related, discussed possibility of having Members at Large. Look at language for By-laws if a parent volunteer. By-laws "general membership" Voting membership that is restricted. "General membership is open to any membership - Ali read out that part of the by-laws. Feedback and discussion - Survey didn't apply...Table Topic, next meeting, Suggested changes board member role - start a discussion definition of membership.

i. Define Board Member Roles - Discussion (above)

ii. CSEPAC Procedures Manual Subcommittee - Discussion : Procedures manual: would like that all written language be in one place. A subcommittee to be put together any feedback or specifics defined purpose or duties. Bring up for a vote next meeting.

10. New Business:

Meeting & Events: Highlights - The meeting and workshop schedule will be updated on the CSEPAC website.

a. 2019 - 20 Meetings & Workshops Schedule - Discussion Posted on SEPAC website (dates). Amy D. Workshops. Basic Rights Workshop. Nov. "Integrated Learning Across Levels: Nov 6, 2019 6:30 at CPL. Dec. 11 Doing in Billerica co-sponsoring with Billerica SEPAC, effective - at Parker School in Billerica. One of the parent survey results about Mental Health, bringing in Nadine Briggs could come in and talk looking for co-sponsor ship. Ask PTO's to help sponsor? Council of Schools (Laurie to look into). Meeting is Oct. 16th CoCs. at 7:00 at McCarthy Library. May have a volunteer to attend. Amy D. Effective Communication

FCSN **Correction requesting Feb 5 or 12th (Workshop).

March looking to put together a Panel Support:

April: ADHD and anxiety

May: Behavior. (hard copy) AS they are finalized they will be added . Psychologist for Parker - put on anxiety Workshop. Feedback.

i. CHIPS Open House - Discussion - Heather volunteering to table SEPAC at OH Volunteering to help CHIPS (Patel)

ii. Zen Den & Trunk-or-Treat - Discussion - Volunteers always welcomed and needed!

iii. Winter Tree Scavenger Hunt - Discussion

Heather Sexton volunteered her tree "Thank you to Heather!"

Volunteer Opportunities. Zen Den explanation. Sensory Friendly Playspace for children and adults who need a place to relax during busy community wide events. (note: for more Zen Den details, see CSEPAC Website)

c. School Committee Presentation Subcommittee - Discussion:

Looking for input. Ali states SEPAC usually aim for end of Feb. early March, part of budget season, Line Item recommendations: if any interest in being on that subcommittee email SEPAC.

11. New Items Expected for October 24 Meeting:

Here (Chelmsford High School, Learning Commons/Library) at 7:00p.

a. Establish Subcommittees

b. Special Guest: TBA working on pinning that down.

Close: 9:02