

SEPAC Meeting Minutes

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

Board

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

District

Amy Reese, Director of Special Education -
Amy Matson, Asst. Director of Student Services
Donna Newcomb, School Committee Liaison - Present

Members

Attendees Present: 10 (approx)

Handouts: added to SEPAC Binder

Start: 7:04p Meeting Called by Ali Barnes

Agenda Item

1. Review and Approve Minutes from Oct. 24, 2019 and Nov. 6, 2019 (note will post, suggestion contact)

Motion to Approve: Yes

Motion Seconded: Yes

Motion to Approve: Yes

Motion Seconded: Yes

Approved.

2. Special Guest: Amy Reese, Director of Student Services & Amy Matson, Asst. Director of Student Services

Slides: Copy available by CSEPAC and Student Services

Topic: Independent and Outside Evaluations - Intro Amy Reese and Amy Matson handed out slideshow (Broad Overview) printouts to members present. Amy Reese started presentation

Notes: See Agenda. Independent Evaluations: 603 CMR 28.04 (5):

16 month calendar window from time District does eval to Independent Eval. That's where Team Chair, Should be asking that. If a parent says "no" Parent Rights are referenced: here's the process...

If you answer "yes", but can later down the road still request an IEE (Independent Educational Evaluation).

Q. Is there a timeline? A. that's in slideshow

Summed up discussion: A parent cannot request an IEE through district if school district has not completed its own eval first. Done typical testing, and academic, parent comes back for Indep. Neuro Psych, what are next steps...When you request, no set process who to send request to: send to Team Chair or Student Services Office, it goes to Amy Reese and a response comes from Amy R. Talked about sliding fee based on income. (When/If) families don't want to share that info (financial). Options for families discussed. IEE based on public rate setting. Private can be costly, sometimes insurance may

cover partial, sometimes not... if they don't except public rates option, but there may be some leeway. "Need to adjust rates/hourly rates feedback from MA staff and parents.

Ali: Was she asking Timeline for IEE. Amy R. no, different process, get a response within 10 days. Question: clarification: 3 year eval is a process that is subject to the law. This is if you disagree with results from evaluations. Independent (Don't typically do Neuro Psych unless it has to do with specific disability). Area's you disagree with testing...area's you don't feel district's testing was accurate. IEP has to reconvene after 10 school days. Has to at least be offered in the 10 days...Team is charged with "considering" the findings of IEE.

Time and process different from Re-Eval. Has to be someone who accepts the rate, willing to negotiate with district. Amy R will reach out to schedule, parents schedule the appt. Send in as soon as you get it, District will date stamp.

Amy M. Go on DESE, state uses Outside Evals - any eval conducted by anyone outside school district. IEE is a process. Where an Outside Eval, parent can get at his/her own expense, when ever they want. Two separate paths, "Private Eval"/ 'Outside Eval". You can share private eval w/district, you don't have to, or you can share parts. District asks in writing, doesn't mean you have to meet if not necessary.

General diagnosis may be receiving throughout side evals

Outside that they see, take place in office, clinic...rarely evals that include observations in the schools, that's not typically included, when sharing outside report w/Team, reconvene, considering the findings/ diagnosis (ex. ASD, ADHD, Anxiety). Having that dialogue about outside evals w/day to day perspective in school setting discussed.

Question. Still going through process one year later? Additional Eval, was done, but at time didn't need skills, Amy M. Answer: depends on timeline. It starts back w/Team input. Lots of ways to access kids, depend on timeframe. "Never bad to reach out to Team first". Amy R. possibly why regulations state 16 months. Unless drastic shifts impacted skill set.

What is a Neuro Psych?

What is Independent Evaluation?

What is Team Chair?

(Questions asked from Parent/Member discussion)

Principal of School and Team Chair that oversees that school.

Yellow Sheet Contacts: List Team Chairs (Copy in SEPAC Sec. Binder)

Parent Question/Concern: Not all members of Team was there at eval/re-eval.

Response: Admins will look at specific case(s). If someone on Team is not available, therapist not avail, would you like to reschedule is typically offered. More member Discussion: Concern about going through eligibility check list w/out entire Team present. Decision for eligibility is made. Parent has a right to request Re-Convene. Amy R. Response: Reach out to Team Chair. District's professional (ie psychologist) to be at meeting to discuss Outside Eval from Private Eval, District provides their expert in that specific area.

Ali: reiterating: Someone who is listed on the agenda, but not at meeting: Parent should ask about this?

Amy R. Practice "should be, are you okay w/person not being at meeting" from Team Chair, but cannot guarantee. Regarding the Sign In Sheet: Amy M. If I can only meet on this day, district has parent initial or sign w/permission to continue. Question: Recourse if that doesn't happen? Kristen: parents aren't going to know that should be brought up, what does a parent do? Response: Amy M. Everyone listed on attendance sheet should be at the table. What if Team Chair is not present, they don't have to be present. Liaison will hold meetings. Ali clarifying question: What is the Expectation in district due to regulation(s).

Parent Comment: "I would have chosen to reconvene had I known that was okay to do so".

Amy M. Things are case by case.

Parent Question: Can you ask for a specific teacher? Response: You can request that ahead of time. Try to pick someone who is a core teacher relating to student's disability. Amy R. Hard press not to accommodate that.

Parent Question: Can an addition person come to a meeting? What if two professionals are involved?

Amy R. Sometimes that can arrange ahead of time.

Amy M. suggestion: For those that have more questions: Two more of these (presentations) are planned for this spring. Float those questions by Amy R, Amy M and/or SEPAC Board.

Ali: Easiest way to collect questions, comments is contacting SEPAC email, leave out personal info, email it to Chelmsford SEPAC or put on Public Input Sheet (available at each business meeting) and submit to SEPAC. Amy R. for specific/individual questions, email Amy R or Amy M.

3. Public Input: Public comment on general matters related to special education: Kristen explained the Public input sheets to fill out, members can share identifying info or not, SEPAC can track concerns to have focus groups or committees to share w/district.

Feedback from Members: Communication. "That's what needs to be addressed." Among the district and from District to Parents: Amy D, MaryEllen F, Kristen, Laurie, Ali and Members discussion:

Have a right to request a meeting to discuss proposed testing before it is done.

Parent Comments: "My observation(s) were not included in the eligibility process"; "Standardized testing scores seemed to be the only thing that mattered to determine eligibility".

Suggested to SEPAC members after discussion: Plan to bring Amy M. and Amy R. back to discuss "Eligibility", "Waiting to Fail", "Effective Progress", "Year to Year Transitions Concerns"

Parent Comment: "Getting the runaround when parent concerns are brought up."

Ali: A concern during the presentation, Amy R stating unable to guarantee Team Chairs and Liaisons letting parents know about an option to reconvene"...thoughts on that "ditto sheet". Parent having a right to reconvene is applicable. Whomever is running meeting, with a flow-sheet.

Comment: Alan Bloom is coming, for special education to work on that.

Notes: Donna

Important to Document, Document, Document. Important to take parent minutes/highlights of a meeting. If a "no reply" loop in Amy R. If Amy R doesn't reply, loop in Superintendent, if no reply, loop in School Committee member. Put everything in writing. Follow up communication after meetings is important.

Being courteous and respectful in communications helps to build bridges.

Read paper carefully, everyone on that meeting should be on that paper. Question: Do you have to sign something stating: "I agree to hold this meeting..." brief member discussion.

FCSN has a call center and it's free. Link to FCSN is on CSEPAC website.

Ali Public Input: Ali runs a group in town called "Chelmsford Signs". Classes are starting next week, anyone interested (for elementary school kids) contact chelmsfordsignsasl@weebly

Public Input Concern: Parent Communication being refused in e-mails.

4. Liaison Report

CHIPS: Going great. PTO sponsor Mr. Reager (sp?) plays drums. PTO making sure things are available for all abilities. Open House: MaryEllen gave tours. Families from Community were very interested in all the parts of CHIPS, sensory room, motor room, etc... Getting community aware of special education (highlighted).

Byam: Winter Store along w/Harrington offered a quieter shopper from 9-10, no takers. Next year open up event to community. Zen Den came. New volunteers. Zen Den will be at 4th grade celebration. President asks for SEPAC updates at meetings (highlighted).

Center:

South Row:

Harrington:

Parker/McCarthy:

CHS:

5. Workshop Coordinator Report: Amy D. Workshop coming up in Feb. (update will be on website). Possibly in March, having town resources for people. Amy D. reaching out Jen Melanson.

6. Old Business

a. Subcommittee for School Committee Presentation - Vote: Unanimous

Motion to Present to SC - motioned

Motion seconded: unanimous

Notes: Ali shared slide show theme "You are not alone." Ali went through slide by slide for SEPAC member input. Ali shared SEPAC 2019-2020 Goals and Accomplishments with SEPAC members. Also shared was past SEPAC meeting updates, workshops, concerns, recommendations. One of the concerns being 78% of our Special Ed students and 54% of Title 1 students at the elementary level are not meeting expectations on MCAS. One of the recommendations included CPS staff should direct parents to CSEPAC for support and resources. Ali shared CSEPAC 2020-21 Goals that SEPAC plans to work on in the future including bringing in SEPAC Board Members. Budget Review from 19-20 was incorporated in slideshow. Zero money in SEPAC line item. Future proposed budget includes MassPAC membership (includes Basic Rights and VOC ticket for SEPAC member).

Feedback: Proclamation to be shared at SC during presentation. Marketing: a sign for Open House(s) for SEPAC

Font Larger or darker.

Add in "Good News" Slide: add in about Presentation Awards.

b. APPLE Follow-Up - Define Board Member Roles - Discussion

NOTES: Schedule for March to discuss further

7. New Business

a. Vision of Community Conference: free ticket available - Discussion

i. Saturday, February 29, 2020 8:30a - 4:00 p, SeaPort World Trade Center

ii. More information: <https://fcsn.org/voc/>

b. Volunteer Opportunities

i. Zen Den: Tues. Jan. 28th at the Harrington Elementary Heritage festival (let Ali know if available to help volunteer).

ii. Community Awards Coordinator - Discussion

1 or 2 Volunteers needed to go further.

iii. CSEPAC Board 2020-21 - Discussion: Need Volunteers

NOTES:

8. New Items Expected for Feb. 27th Meeting

a. Community Awards Coordinator

b. SEPAC Bill of Rights: inviting Westford SEPAC

c. Presentation from the Literacy Subcommittee:

Close Meeting: 9:12p