

Special Education Parent Advisory Council

SEPAC By-Laws

Revised 6-9-15

Article I. Name of Organization

The name of this organization shall be the Dedham Special Education Parent Advisory Council, also known as SEPAC. SEPAC will be non-commercial, non-sectarian and non-partisan. The name of this organization or the name of any members in their official capacities shall not be used in any connection with a commercial concern or any partisan interest or for any purpose other than the regular work of the organization.

Article II. Mission of SEPAC

The SEPAC receives its regulatory authority from the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR) 603 CMR 28:07 (4) and MGL c71B, 1C, and 3 under the Parent Involvement Sections. See attached Exhibit A.

PURPOSE

State law mandates the SEPAC and its duties include, but are not limited to:

- Advising the School District on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities
- Resource and information dissemination to parents and professionals in the district
- Meeting regularly with school officials
- Participating in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district's special education programs

MISSION

The SEPAC strives to be a positive, solution-oriented group that serves as a resource and advisor to parents of children of all ages with special needs. We support appropriate education for all children with special needs in our community and work toward ensuring that students' needs are being met. For Dedham to be an effective and strong SEPAC, we need members' energy, support, and active involvement. Our goals are:

- To encourage and promote the understanding, respect, and support for all children with special needs in our community and schools.
- To ensure that students needs under IDEA, Massachusetts Special Education Regulations (Chapter 766), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Americans with Disabilities Act as amended in 1990, No Child Left Behind (NCLB)(Elementary & Secondary Education Act of 2001), and other applicable laws are being met.

- The SEPAC prohibits discrimination against members on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability in the administration of its policies or programs.

Article III. Terms of Membership

There are two types of Membership, *General* and *Voting*. Meetings are defined as a SEPAC-sponsored meeting in which the business of the SEPAC is conducted. This may include activities or committees at which attendance and/or minutes are taken.

General membership shall be open to any resident of Dedham or person affiliated with the Dedham Public Schools. All meetings are open to the general public.

Voting membership is required in order to vote in officer elections and other business that comes before any SEPAC meeting. Voting membership shall be given to any general member who is either:

- A parent or guardian of a child with special needs residing in Dedham with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Accommodation Plan.
- A student not less than fourteen (14) years of age who is on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Accommodation Plan from the Town of Dedham.

Article IV. Staff Administrator

Staff administrator shall be the current administrator of special education for the Town of Dedham. He/she shall act as an advisor to the organization. The staff administrator is a non-voting member. The staff administrator shall perform the following functions:

- Provide the membership with documented information regarding changes in regulations, new policies, program changes and mandate reports.
- Provide technical assistance on all aspects of public laws, both state and federal, that impact special education.

Article V. Voting and Election

Elections

1. Nominations will occur every two years in April, starting in 2016.
2. Elections will occur every two years in May, starting in 2016.
3. If there is a resignation from a board member, once the resignation has been accepted, a new election will take place for a new board member to serve out the remainder of term.

Procedures for elections

1. Voting is only open to Voting members as referred to in Article III
2. Members have to be present to vote.

3. For each election a neutral voting proctor will be chosen, and voting members will write their votes on paper. Proctor will collect and tally votes.

Nominations for Positions

Publicity for nominations must take place through a communication method that at least 2/3 of the voting membership has access to. The communication method, if electronic, must be advertised at the beginning of each school year to the general membership offering the opportunity to each potential participant to elect to participate in the form of communication that will disseminate the nomination.

Voting

Additionally, a nomination can take place on an ongoing basis for any open position. All nominations must be made at a SEPAC meeting that is open to the general membership. Voting will take place at a subsequent meeting that occurs at least 15 days after the nomination. This will give voting members an opportunity to be aware of the nomination and to cast an informed vote.

Publicity of all Nominations and Elections shall be done in no less than two (2) of these ways to reach as many people as possible. All Nominations for and Elections must be posted for at least 15 days prior to the actual election.

1. Sent to Local Press
2. Connect-Ed voicemail message
3. Posted on the SEPAC Web page and through the listserv. (electronic)
4. Distribution through school directly to families (paper or electronic)

Article VI. Officers of SEPAC

Executive Board

Officers of the SEPAC shall be the President, two Vice Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Board shall consist of a minimum of 5 parents of children in the district. Each member upon election, shall annually sign the Code of Business Conduct to be held on file with Secretary.

Duties of the Executive Board

President and Vice Presidents

- President is expected to attend all meetings of the organization and meetings of the Executive Board. Vice President shall preside at executive board meetings in absence of President.
- Execute and supervise responsibilities related to contracts and agreements on the organization's behalf, and sign any such contracts and agreements on behalf of the Executive Board.

- Oversee the functioning of the SEPAC, ad-hoc committees, special projects, and events.
- Secure annual membership to MASSPAC as a resource for the benefit of all families of children with special needs in Dedham.
- Oversee the duties of the Secretary and Treasurer, including the monitoring of SEPAC central account with the District.
- Coordinate the approval and dissemination of monthly flyer for meeting to the superintendent.
- Coordinate and communicate with Special Education Administration and School Committee to encourage collaboration and information sharing.
- Meet with the School Committee to report on the goals of the SEPAC for the upcoming year, to report on the progress toward the goals during the year, and to inform the School Committee about parent concerns and views regarding the education of children.
- Contact speakers for upcoming meetings, confirm speakers, and provide speaker agreements to the secretary for materials follow up.

Secretary

- Keep the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board and of general SEPAC meetings.
- Maintain the organization's records which include monthly sign in sheet from meetings, board meeting notes, and notes from monthly meetings, in addition to all other communication.
- Keep and disseminate minutes at next meeting and post minutes on the website/listserv for review of those who could not attend the meeting.
- Coordinate speaker needs including copies of presentation, equipment needs, and special requests.
- Maintain the resource files with current information, copies, and dissemination at table during meetings.
- Maintain the SEPAC listserv disseminating information according to policy set forth by Executive Board.

Treasurer

- Preside over all financial matters which includes oversight of Friends of PAC and District accounts that may arise.
- Request two signers at all times on Friends of PAC account held at Dedham Savings Bank.
- Report on financial matters at all meetings as requested, with a written report issued to the board in September and May of each year.
- Upon dissolution of the SEPAC, the remaining assets at District account are to be used exclusively for educational purposes.
- Upon dissolution of the SEPAC, the remaining assets at Dedham Savings Bank account are to be given to the District Accounting Office to be used exclusively for educational purposes.

Article VII. Meetings

- SEPAC meetings are subject to open meetings laws in accordance to MGL c.39, ss23A-23C.
- Meetings shall be held in a public place and all General Members are welcome. Attendees shall sign an attendance list at each meeting. Members may be invited to speak during General Membership participation times or at the discretion of the Chairperson(s).
- Business meetings (as defined to be held to conduct business of the SEPAC or district) shall be held at least once per year from September through June.
- General meetings shall be held at least six (6) times per year from September through June.

Publicity of all general meeting dates, business meetings dates and elections shall be done in no less than two (2) of these ways to reach as many people as possible.

1. Sent to Local Press
2. Connect-Ed voicemail message
3. Posted on the SEPAC Web page and through the listserv. (electronic)
4. Distribution through school directly to families (paper or electronic)

Article VIII. Subcommittees

- Subcommittees shall be established as deemed necessary by the existing Executive Board.

Article IX. Amendments

- These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the membership present at a business or general SEPAC meeting.

CODE OF BUSINESS CONDUCT
Adopted as of 6/9/15

Conflict of Interest Policy for Dedham Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

A. A conflict of interest is defined as an actual or perceived interest by Dedham Special Education Parent Advisory Council board member or Dedham Special Education Parent Advisory Council general member in an action that results in, or has the appearance of resulting in, personal, organizational, or professional gain. Board members and general members are obligated to always act in the best interest of the organization. This obligation requires that any board member or general member, in the performance of organization duties, seek only the furtherance of the organization mission. At all times, board members and general members are prohibited from using their job title or the organization's name or property, for private profit or benefit.

B. The Board members and general members of the organization should neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors/vendors. This is not intended to preclude bona-fide organization fund raising-activities. No board member or general member of the organization shall participate in the selection, award, or administration of a purchase or contract with a vendor where, to his knowledge, any of the following has a financial interest in that purchase or contract:

1. The board member or general member;
2. Any member of their immediate family;
3. Their partner;
4. An organization in which any of the above is a board member or general member;
5. A person or organization with whom any of the above individuals is negotiating or has an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

C. **Disclosure**--Any possible conflict of interest shall be disclosed by the person or persons concerned.

D. **Board Action**--When a conflict of interest is relevant to a matter requiring action by the Board, the interested person(s) shall call it to the attention of the Board and said person(s) shall not vote on the matter. In addition, the person(s) shall not participate in the final decision or related deliberation regarding the matter under consideration. When there is a doubt as to whether a conflict exists, the matter shall be resolved by vote of the Executive Board, excluding the person(s) concerning whose situation the doubt has arisen.

E. **Record of Conflict**--The official minutes of the Executive Board shall reflect that the conflict of interest was disclosed and the interested person(s) did not participate in the final discussion or vote and did not vote on the matter.

Dedham Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Name of Member Position Held

Signature of Member Date

Exhibit A.
603 CMR 28.07(4) and MGL c71B

603 CMR 28.07 (4) Parent Involvement

(4) Parent advisory participation. Each school district shall create a district wide parent advisory council offering membership to all parents of eligible students and other interested parties. The parent advisory council duties shall include but not be limited to: advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities; meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district's special education programs. The parent advisory council shall establish by-laws regarding officers and operational procedures, and, in the course of its duties, the parent advisory council shall receive assistance from the district without charge, upon reasonable notice, and subject to the availability of staff and resources. The district shall conduct, in cooperation with the parent advisory council, at least one workshop annually within the school district on the rights of students and their parents and guardians under state and federal special education laws. The Massachusetts General Laws, requires a school district to establish a PAC, and assigns both an advisory and a participatory function to the PAC. The following is the excerpt from Section 3 of Chapter 71B that pertains to PACs:

"... The school committee of any city, town, or school district shall establish a parent advisory council on special education. Membership shall be offered to all parents of children with disabilities and other interested parties. The parent advisory council duties shall include but not be limited to: advising the school committee on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities; meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school committee's special education programs. The parent advisory council shall establish by-laws regarding officers and operational procedures. In the course of its duties under this section, the parent advisory council shall receive assistance from the school committee without charge, upon reasonable notice, and subject to the availability of staff and resources. ..."