

Andover SEPAC Bylaws APPROVED AT 8/9/22 SEPAC MEETING

Bylaws for Andover Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

ARTICLE I –NAME:

The name of this organization shall be the Andover Special Education Parent Advisory Council; also known as Andover SEPAC.

ARTICLE II - MISSION:

A SEPAC is a Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Every public school district in Massachusetts is required to establish a SEPAC. Massachusetts state law assigns both an advisory and participatory function to SEPACs. A SEPAC is a public body which serves as an advisor to the School Committee on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities. In addition, the SEPAC has a duty to meet regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the district’s special education programs. The SEPAC is a self-governing body (creates its own bylaws and operational procedures) and is open to all parents of children with disabilities and other interested parties.

The Andover Special Education Parent Advisory Council’s (SEPAC) mission is to foster a partnership with parents and the community to ensure that all students that require specialized instruction become life-long learners, critical thinkers and socially responsible citizens who contribute to a diverse community. The members of this volunteer group will work in conjunction with the dedicated staff of teachers and administrators to ensure that all students are able to access the high-quality, comprehensive education and educational services that Andover Public Schools have to offer. Additionally, the SEPAC’s goal is to help parents/caregivers connect with one another in a supportive, transparent, inclusive manner that encourages an atmosphere of effective open communication amongst students, parents, educators, school administration and the community at large. Furthermore, the Andover SEPAC will provide education and information to parents, caregivers and the broader community on Special Education Issues and Services as a means to ensure that all students needs are met under the Massachusetts Special Education regulations 603 CMR 28.07 (04)* and other applicable laws are being met.

ARTICLE III - PURPOSE:

The SEPAC receives its statutory authority from the Chapter 71B Section 3 of the Massachusetts General Laws, which requires a school district to establish a Parent Advisory Council (PAC), and assigns both an advisory and participatory function to the PAC. The authority is also codified in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR) 603 CMR 28.07 (4).

Andover SEPAC’s purpose is to fulfill the directives stated in MGL Chapter 71B Section 3. “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 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 Committee's Special Education programs. The SEPAC shall establish by laws regarding officers and operational procedures. In the course of its duties under this section, the SEPAC shall receive assistance from the School Committee without charge, upon reasonable notice, and subject to availability of staff and resources."

ARTICLE IV - DUTIES:

The Andover SEPAC shall:

- Provide a forum for regular meetings to discuss a wide range of issues in special education;
- Maintain an environment of respect, where varied viewpoints, disabilities, and backgrounds are welcome;
- Promote inclusion of students with disabilities in all district and community activities;
- Be mindful of the often sensitive and emotional nature of child disabilities and special education, and maintain the privacy of individual members circumstances and families;
- Meet regularly with the Executive Director of Special Services, Superintendent, School Committee and appropriate Special Education Directors and Department Coordinators to participate in planning, development and evaluation of the School District's Special education programs;
- Advise Andover's School District, Student Services leadership, School Committee, parents, and the community at large about education and safety issues affecting students with disabilities;
- Work in cooperation with the School District to facilitate one workshop annually within the School District on the basic rights of students and their parents and guardians under the Special Education laws of the Commonwealth and the Federal Government, and make written materials explaining such rights available upon request;
- Conduct a yearly "Needs Assessment Survey". The results of this survey will be used to plan SEPAC goals for the upcoming school year;
- Participate in the review of the District's State Performance Plan, prior to submission to the Massachusetts Department of Education.

ARTICLE V- MEMBERSHIP:

Section One: General membership:

General Non-voting membership shall be inclusive and open to all parents / guardians of children with special needs who reside in, or have their special education placement through the Town of Andover and to all community members, and interested parties including all employees of Andover Public Schools with an interest in special education.

Section Two: Voting membership:

Voting membership shall be limited to any general member who is a parent or guardian of a child with disabilities residing in or attending public school in Andover and who has attended at least one SEPAC meeting in the prior 12 months. Any general member may bring a topic to the Executive Council for inclusion on a meeting agenda for discussion. If discussion necessitates a vote, a motion shall be made and seconded. Voting shall be by paper ballot or hand voting as deemed appropriate by a Chairperson. The decision will stand by simple majority (50% plus one) of voting members present, including remote participation if needed.

ARTICLE VI – QUORUM and VOTING:

For any Andover SEPAC business requiring a vote, there must be present at a meeting, a quorum consisting of at least 5 voting members, including 2 Executive Council members, and may also include remote participation.

ARTICLE VII – THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:

Section One: Members of the Executive Council:

The SEPAC Executive council shall comprise of the following elected positions; Co-chair (1-2); Vice Chair (1); Secretaries (1-2); Treasurer (1); Outreach/Public Relations (1-3);

Each Executive Council member is required to:

- Be a voting member of SEPAC;
- Become familiar with Andover SEPAC's Bylaws;
- Become familiar with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) document: Guidance for Special Education Parent Advisory Councils <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/pac/guidelines.pdf>;
- Become familiar with the document A Parent's Guide to Special Education, written by the Federation for Children with Special Needs in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Education. <http://www.fcsn.org/parentguide/pgintro.html>;
- Attend SEPAC's annual meeting.

Section Two: The Duties of the Executive Council

Co-chairs -

- Set agenda for each general meeting;
- Preside at all SEPAC meetings;
- Present SEPAC's annual goals at the first meeting of the school year;
- Monitor the function of committees and subcommittees;
- Meet with district leadership, including but not limited to Superintendent, Executive Director of Special Services, and School Committee as needed;
- Prepare periodic reports for the Special Education Administration regarding SEPAC activities and needs;
- Coordinate annual "needs assessment survey" and present results to district leadership;
- Attend, represent and speak on behalf of the SEPAC at School Committee meetings as needed;
- Perform annual review of bylaws and bring any suggested changes to the full membership for consideration and vote;
- Coordinate and approve all SEPAC activities and efforts, including public communications;
- Develop and manage the SEPAC budget along with other members of the SEPAC Executive Council.

Vice Chair -

- Preside at SEPAC meetings in the absence of, or at the request of, the co-chairs;
- Assist the co-chairs as appropriate;
- Develop and manage the SEPAC budget along with other members of the SEPAC Executive Council.
- Maintain SEPAC records;
- Recruit liaisons at each school to promote awareness of SEPAC at all school events; open houses, PTO meetings, school bulletin boards.

Secretaries -

- Maintain a contact list of all general and voting members;
- Publicize meetings, SEPAC workshops and activities;
- Post all meeting agendas in conjunction with district administration and/or the Town Clerk;
- Coordinate with the Co-Chairs on all communication between SEPAC and its membership.
- Within 7 days notice, make every attempt to provide interpreters for foreign languages and ESL for anyone who requests such.

Treasurer-

- Keep a full and accurate account of receipts and expenditures in accordance with the budget adopted by the organization;
- Arrange disbursements as authorized by the Executive Council of SEPAC (disbursements for non- budget items shall be approved by the Executive Council);
- Present a financial statement quarterly at SEPAC meetings, and at other times when requested by the Co-chairs;
- Facilitate disbursements from School Committee, Executive Director of Special Services, or other designee when needed.

Outreach / Public Relations -

- Work with Co-Chairs to create and send press releases making use of all media (newspapers, email, social media, school monthly calendars, weekly school events calendars, Andover Town calendar) for purposes of providing visibility about SEPAC on such matters as special meetings, projects, surveys, membership, recruitment, parent support groups and other SEPAC initiatives as directed by the Executive Council;
- Coordinate flyer and letter/brochure creation and distribution; in backpacks, at IEP and 504 meetings, at PTO meetings, school bulletin boards and open houses;
- Promote communication between members of local, state and national councils and organizations;
- Monitor and update website and social media pages.

ARTICLE VIII – ELECTIONS:

- Officers of the SEPAC Executive Council are elected annually by voting membership and hold office until the next annual election;
- Elections shall be conducted at SEPAC’s annual meeting, which is held in June.
- TERM OF OFFICE: The members of the Executive Council shall serve for two (2) years, unless removed for cause or they voluntarily resign. The Chair and Vice Chair can each serve for two (2) consecutive terms. All other officers may serve no more than five (5) consecutive terms in a particular office.
- Nominations may be taken from the floor at or one month prior to the annual meeting. All voting members are eligible to make nominations.
- If any office has more than one nominee, elections shall occur by ballot, or roll-call if held virtually.
- If any office becomes vacant, an election for that office shall be held at a special meeting or a general meeting, provided notice is posted, with term to expire at next annual elections. *This does not count toward limits under TERM OF OFFICE.*
- Elections shall be decided by a simple majority vote of the voting membership, subject to the presence of a quorum;
- Andover SEPAC will inform the Executive Director of Special Services, School Committee liaison, and MassPAC the outcomes of annual elections and the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of the new Council members. Notification shall minimally happen via e-mail;
- Any Council member may resign by delivering a written notice of resignation by mail, in person, or by email to the members of the SEPAC Executive Council. Resignation shall be effective immediately upon such delivery unless the resignation is slated to be effective at another time;
- Resigning Council members or committee members are required to transition all duties/information pertaining to their role in SEPAC to remaining Council members prior to resignation.
- REMOVAL FROM THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL: A Council member shall be removed if he/she:
 - Misses four (4) Council meetings in one year without justifiable reason or without prior notice of absence. (“justifiable reason” will be determined by the Chair and agreed upon by a majority of the Council present for that meeting).
 - Becomes a detriment to the organization as determined by the Chair and the majority of the Council members present.

ARTICLE IX – MEETINGS:

- The number of meetings and the dates of those meetings shall be determined annually by the SEPAC Executive Council. Andover SEPAC will make every attempt to provide advanced notice of all meetings and elections will be published/posted with a minimum of 48 hours advance notice.
- The SEPAC Executive Council will be prepared to present to the School Committee and/or district special education leadership at least two (2) times per year, and as needed; to report to the School Committee in the beginning of the school year on goals of the SEPAC for the upcoming year, and at the end of the school year on the progress on the goals of the SEPAC. The SEPAC Executive Council will report to the School Committee as needed regarding recommendations from its annual Needs Assessment Survey;
- Minutes of all SEPAC meetings shall be recorded and posted in accordance with the MA Public Records Law on the Andover SEPAC website;
- The SEPAC shall hold an Annual Meeting of the voting members each year for the purpose of electing officers;
- Within 7 days notice the SEPAC Executive Council Secretary will make every attempt to provide interpreters for foreign languages and ESL for anyone who requests such.

ARTICLE X - SUBCOMMITTEES:

The SEPAC Executive Council will vote by quorum to approve subcommittee chairs. All findings of the subcommittees must be presented to the SEPAC Executive Council and approval must be voted by membership at a SEPAC general or special meeting.

The SEPAC Executive Council may vote to approve District School Liaisons to attend, and communicate, as approved by the Executive Council, on SEPAC matters at various recognized PTOs and PACs across the District and Out of District Placements and / or Specialized Programs.

The SEPAC Executive Council may vote to approve a Student Representative to receive from the Andover student population, issues, concerns, and feedback relative to Special Education and report back to the Executive Council. The Student Representative shall be of Transition age (ages 14-22, per Chapter 285 Section 2 of c.71B). Identification of a Student Representative shall be coordinated with the Executive Director of Special Services as needed. Appointments shall be for the duration of one year with renewal or reappointment by vote of the SEPAC Executive Council.

ARTICLE XI - NON-PERMISSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

The Andover SEPAC does not participate in political campaigning on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Personal attacks and / or negative commentary will not be accepted.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the organization will not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

ARTICLE XII- PROCEDURES:

Robert's Rules of Order are the default procedures for this organization.

ARTICLE XIII – AMENDMENTS:

These bylaws may be amended by a vote of the majority of the voting membership present at any SEPAC meeting, provided that written notice of the proposed amendments is given at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.