

SEPAC BYLAWS

Peabody Special Education Parent Advisory Council Bylaws

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Peabody Special Education Parent Advisory Council, hereinafter referred to as "SEPAC".

ARTICLE II: MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Peabody Special Education Parent Advisory Council is to provide education and information to parents and the broader community on special education issues and services, to establish more understanding of, respect for, and support of special education, and to work with the Peabody School District to insure that students' needs under Massachusetts Special Education Regulations 603 CMR 28.07(4)* and other applicable laws are being met.

* "(4) Parent advisory participation. Each school district shall create a districtwide 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 bylaws 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.

ARTICLE III: PURPOSE AND FUNCTION

Section 1: The purpose of the SEPAC shall be:

1. To fulfill all the responsibilities as defined within 603 CMR 28.00 and any other pertinent state mandates;
2. To promote better understanding and communication between parents with children in special education programs and the school system;
3. To be a resource for parents of children with disabilities, and provide the forum to share information;
4. To provide support for special education services and its mission of meeting the individualized needs of all students who are enrolled in special education programs through communication with and feedback to the special education director and school principals;
5. To promote communication, understanding, acceptance, and inclusion within the community;
6. To encourage a community commitment to quality education for all children and to support diversity within the educational setting.

Section 2: The function of the SEPAC shall be:

1. To participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of all special needs programs;
2. To provide an effective link between parents and school administration regarding issues around special education;
3. To provide information concerning special education issues to all parents of children enrolled in the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) Peabody Public School District;
4. To provide a forum for parents and other interested citizens to maintain a dialogue with the LEAs on concerns and issues relating to the education, health, and safety of all students enrolled in special education programs;
5. To provide and promote information and educational opportunities for the community on topics related to special education services;
6. To participate in the review of the LEAs State Performance Plan prior to its submission to the Massachusetts Department of Education;
7. To meet with the Director of Special Education on a regular basis.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

Section One: Parents of all children receiving Special Education services from the LEAs shall be considered members of the SEPAC and included in membership mailings, unless the parent(s) requests that their name be eliminated from the list.

Section Two: Types of membership

1. General membership: General membership shall be open to any interested person.
2. Voting membership: Voting membership shall be limited to any general member who
 - (a) is a parent or guardian of a special needs student residing in or attending school in Peabody Public Schools with or without an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Plan, and
 - (b) who has attended at least one other meeting of the SEPAC during the previous twelve months. Attendance at meetings may be in person or by remote connectivity.

ARTICLE V. CONFIDENTIALITY

Section One: For the purpose of confidentiality, the school district does not share the email addresses of families receiving special education services with the SEPAC. If a parent wishes to be included in the SEPAC mailing list, parents should email the SEPAC at PSEPAC@gmail.com with their request. All information will be kept private and used only for SEPAC purposes

Section Two: Any other interested parties who would like to be included in the SEPAC mailing list should email the SEPAC at PSEPAC@gmail.com with their request. All information will be kept private and used only for SEPAC purposes.

ARTICLE VI: MEETINGS

1. The SEPAC shall plan to hold at least four regular meetings each year. The schedule of meeting dates shall be determined at the last meeting of the previous school year.
2. Additional meetings may be held on an as-needed basis as determined by the membership.
3. All meetings shall be announced to all SEPAC members and notice given to the entire community. Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 39, Section 23B (the "open meeting law"). However, a maximum of two meetings per year, if determined by the membership, may be held for parents of children with special needs to prepare for an evaluation of the special services provided by the School System.
4. Minutes of all meetings shall be kept by the Secretary.

ARTICLE VII: QUORUM AND VOTING PROCEDURES

1. Elections are for filling an office position. Referenda are for removing personnel from an office position.
2. The SEPAC shall hold a general election for all offices. Officers may also resign or be removed from office. If an office becomes vacant for any reason, the President shall appoint an Interim Officer, and an election to fill the vacancy shall be held no later than the next meeting. The President shall list the election on the meeting agenda along with the names of the nominees.
3. Nominations for Officers shall be made in advance of the election meeting. Any member may make a nomination, and a member may nominate himself or herself.
4. Any member may request a referendum to remove an officer from office. The requests must be sent to the President or Secretary in writing. The request must include the cause or justification for removal, which shall be shared with the voters. The President will add the referendum to the agenda for the next meeting.
5. Votes shall be cast by a show of hands.
6. Any voting member of SEPAC is entitled to voting privileges. Each member's vote has equal weight.
7. Members who cannot attend a voting meeting may arrange to submit their vote to the Secretary in writing, in advance of the meeting.
8. A minimum of three voting members is required at a meeting to constitute a quorum for the purpose of voting.
9. When a quorum is present at any meeting, a majority of the votes cast by voting members present shall decide the matter at hand.

ARTICLE VIII: OFFICERS, ELECTIONS AND DUTIES

Section I: Officers

1. The officers of the Peabody SEPAC shall be the President, Vice President, Secretary, Membership Coordinator, Events Coordinator, Publicity/Communications Coordinator, Technology Coordinator, and Treasurer.
2. Nominations of candidates for officers for the ensuing year shall be requested from the membership by the Secretary in April or May of each year. Nominations may also occur at the beginning of the final meeting of the school year at which the candidate(s) are present.
3. In order to avoid conflict of interest, no officer shall be an employee of the Peabody School District.
4. Officers shall be elected at the Annual Meeting by a majority of votes cast by a quorum.
5. Each elected officer shall hold office for a term of one year (July 1 through June 30), and may be re-elected to such office in any subsequent year.
6. An officer may resign by giving notice in writing to the President or Vice President of the SEPAC. In the event of a resignation or removal from office, the voting membership shall hold an election for a successor to fill an unexpired term.
7. One person may hold more than one office.
8. Any officer or other member may attend meetings of the Special Education Parent Advisory Board (SEPAB), a sub-committee of the Peabody School Committee, relaying the concerns and/or needs of SEPAC members.
9. If no person is holding an officer position, the School District shall assume the duty of seeking nominees and conducting the nomination of at least one officer to serve.

Section Two: Duties of Officers

1. President / Vice President

- The President shall serve as the presiding officer of all regular and special meetings of SEPAC. In the absence of the President, the Vice President shall be the presiding officer of meetings. If the position of Vice President is vacant, or the Vice President is unable to serve, the President may appoint any other member to act as presiding officer of any meeting.

Other duties of the President and Vice President shall include:

- Drafting the agenda for each general meeting
- Recommending the creation of any committee or sub-committee
- Providing support to other officers
- Monitoring compliance with the Bylaws and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Regulations
- Acting as liaison with district and school officials and representatives, including the Special Education Administrator, the School Committee, the Superintendent, the Principals, and the Educators.

- Leading efforts to advise the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities.
- Coordinating regular meetings with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district's special education programs.
- Reporting to the Special Education Administrator regarding SEPAC activities and needs.
- Identifying and pursuing ways to collaborate on common goals.
- Funneling parent feedback to SEPAC and the Special Education Administrator.
- Acting as liaison between parents of students with disabilities or suspected disabilities and the Administrator of Special Education.
- Transitioning knowledge and expertise to the next President or Vice President upon end of term,
- Providing seven days notice to the Special Education Administrator in the event that a member requires access to interpreter services.

2. Secretary

- Drafting general meeting minutes and posting on the SEPAC website
- Counting and recording all vote results
- Responsibility for public comment forms at meetings

3. Membership Coordinator

- Maintaining the membership list and the email distribution list
- Maintaining an accurate attendance log of meeting attendees
- Leading efforts to encourage parents to get more involved in the SEPAC
- Coordinating efforts to recruit parents from each school, program, and out-of-district placements to become members
- Encouraging and/or enabling networking between members (support groups)
- Working with Events Coordinator to plan social events for parents
- Writing and distributing monthly newsletter
- Coordinating communication to non-English speaking parents of children on IEP's or 504's

4. Treasurer

- Coordinating efforts to apply for grants, donations, reimbursements, or any other funds for which SEPAC may be eligible
- Managing and account for funds collected, donated, and spent for SEPAC
- Verifying and disbursing expense reimbursements to officers
- Coordinating fundraising activities

5. Events Coordinator

- Leading event planning and publicity
- Posting the events to the SEPAC Calendar and Facebook page
- Recruiting assistance from membership and community

- Coordinating event logistics

6. Publicity/Communications Coordinator

- Publicizing events and meetings to the general public

7. Technology Coordinator

- Overseeing, maintaining, and/or improving online tools used by SEPAC

ARTICLE IX: CHANGES TO BYLAWS

Section One: ADOPTION, REPEAL OR AMENDMENT

1. These Bylaws may be adopted, repealed or amended at any SEPAC meeting, provided that the proposed action is submitted in writing to all SEPAC members at least 5 calendar days prior to the meeting scheduled for that purpose.
2. Proposed changes to these Bylaws may be adopted by a majority vote of voting members at such meetings scheduled for that purpose, at which a quorum is present.

Date of Adoption _____

Attest: _____, Secretary