

# **MERSD Special Education Parent Advisory Council Bylaws**

## **Article I: Name**

The name of this organization shall be the Manchester Essex Regional School District Special Education Parent Advisory Council, also known as MERSD SEPAC (hereinafter referred to as "SEPAC").

## **Article II: Purpose**

The SEPAC receives its statutory authority from the Chapter 71B, Section 3 of the Massachusetts General Laws. This authority is also codified in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR), 603 CMR 28.07(4).

The SEPAC's duties include, but are not limited to:

1. ADVISING the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities;
2. MEETING regularly with school officials; and
3. PARTICIPATING in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district's special education programs.

The mission of the SEPAC is to work for understanding of, respect for, and support of all children with special needs in the community. To that end, they will work to:

1. ADVISE the School Committee on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities;
2. MEET regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the School Committee's special education programs;
3. ASSIST in coordinating the presentation of 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.
4. SERVE as support network of parents of children with special needs, and provide the forum to share information.
5. FACILITATE communication between SEPAC members, local, State and National organizations, councils and groups.

6. PROMOTE communication and programs within the community to encourage understanding, acceptance and inclusion of special needs children.

7. PROVIDE educational/informational forums to parents, educators, students and professionals.

### **Article III: Membership**

#### Section One: General membership

General membership shall be open to any interested person.

#### Section Two: Voting membership

Voting membership shall be limited to any general member who is a parent or guardian of a special needs student residing in AND/OR has a student attending MERSD (the student may or may not have an IEP of 504 Plan)

### **Article IV: Executive Board**

Section One: The Executive Board of the SEPAC shall be comprised of 7 parent members who shall serve in the following roles:

- 2 Co-Chairs
- 1 Secretary
- 1 Elementary School Liaison
- 1 Middle School Liaison
- 1 High School Liaison
- 1 Communications & Data Coordinator

All Executive Board members shall be voting members of the SEPAC, elected per the provisions of Article VI. Officers may, from time to time, delegate any of their duties to another officer.

Section Two: The duties of the Executive Board shall include:

#### Co-Chairs

- Set the agenda for each general meeting.
- Preside at all meetings of the SEPAC.
- Recommend the organization and monitor the function of committees and subcommittees and appoint committee members
- Act as liaison between parents of students with disabilities or suspected disabilities and the Administrator of Special Education.

- Update MERSD Administration regarding SEPAC activities and needs
- Represent and speak on behalf of the SEPAC at meetings of the School Committee
- Lead the Annual SEPAC Presentation to the School Committee in June.

#### Secretary

- Manage the meeting schedule & reserve meeting spaces in both towns
- Coordinate the recording, filing and posting of minutes of the SEPAC
- Collect and review all correspondence of the SEPAC.
- Confirm annual membership renewal to MassPAC with MERSD in June

#### Liaisons

- Serve as the primary point of contact for each school(s) & serve as the SEPAC representative to parents within their assigned school(s)
- Communicate concerns and issues from parents & educators to the SEPAC Board from their assigned schools
- Provide a brief update on their assigned school(s) at every SEPAC Meeting

#### Communications & Data Coordinator

- Serve as the primary source of communication between the SEPAC and the MERSD School Committee and Administration and Parents.
- Write monthly SEPAC Memo, circulate for Board approval, and send to MERSD School Committee, summarizing ideas, issues and concerns discussed at each SEPAC Meeting.
- Monitor & review all special education data from DESE and other sources. Briefly update SEPAC Board on key data findings at every Board Meeting.
- Support Liaisons with any communications materials, emails, flyers etc to help promote SEPAC in their assigned schools.
- Prepare the data & analysis used in the Annual SEPAC Presentation to the School Committee in June.

### **Article V: Voting/Quorum**

A quorum of no less than 4 voting members must be present to constitute a meeting.

### **Article VI: Elections**

Officers of the SEPAC are elected by the voting membership and hold office for a 2-year term.

Parents may self-nominate by communicating their interest to serve on the SEPAC Board by emailing the SEPAC Co-Chairs no later than September 1st every year.

The Co-Chairs will confirm that self-nominees are MERSD parents or guardians and will create a final list of nominees and prepare the ballot.

Elections shall occur by ballot (annually) at the Annual September SEPAC Meeting in September.

Elections shall be decided by a simple majority vote of the voting membership (subject to the presence of a quorum).

Ballots shall be collected and counted by the Co-Chairs during the Annual September SEPAC Meeting and new officers shall be announced at that time and take office at that time.

If any office becomes vacant (a Board Member resigns before serving their 2-year term) an election for that office shall be held (by special meeting, at the next monthly meeting, provided notice is posted). The person elected at that time will serve out the remaining term of the person he/she is replacing.

Any officer may resign by delivering a written notice of resignation by mail, in person, or by email to the Administrator of Special Education. Resignation shall be effective immediately upon such delivery unless the resignation is slated to be effective at another time. An officer may be removed with or without cause by vote of the voting members.

The SEPAC will inform the school district of the outcome of the annual elections and the names, addresses and phone numbers of the new board by October 1st of each year.

## **Article VII: Meetings**

Meetings are defined as any SEPAC meeting, activities, or committee meeting at which a quorum is met. The SEPAC Board meets monthly from September-June, with the schedule set by the Board during the Annual September Meeting.

Advance notice of any and all meetings and elections will be published/posted with a minimum of 48 hours advance notice and comply with the MA Open Meeting Law regulations. Meeting notices are emailed to the MERSD Administration to communicate via email to parents and post of MERSD web sites.

Minutes of all SEPAC meetings shall be recorded and posted in accordance with the MA Public Records law.

The SEPAC shall hold an Annual September Meeting of the voting members each year for the purpose of electing officers and to vote on any matters as shall be specified in the notice of such meeting.

### **Article VIII: Conflict of Interest**

Any member of the Executive Board who has a financial, personal, or official interest in, or conflict (or appearance of a conflict) with any matter pending before the SEPAC, of such nature that it prevents or may prevent that member from acting on the matter in an impartial manner, will offer to the Board to voluntarily excuse him/herself and will vacate his seat and refrain from discussion and voting on said item.

## **Article IX: Amendments**

These by-laws may be amended by a simple majority of the voting members at a general meeting, but by-law changes may not be voted upon in the same meeting as they are proposed, unless a quorum (as described in Article V) votes unanimously to approve the change.

## **Article X: Procedures**

Roberts Rules of Order are the default procedures for this organization.

**Approved: MAY 17, 2017**