

Hanover Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)
Annual Status Report
May 25, 2022

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 and membership is offered to all parents and guardians of children with disabilities and other interested parties. The Special Education Parent Advisory Council's duties under state law include, "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 district's special education programs."

(Chapter 71B, Section 3, also known as Chapter 766. *available at* <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71B/Section3>)

The Hanover SEPAC is an independent community organization which collaborates with district professionals and functions in an advisory role relative to special education issues. We strive to provide information and support to the special education community.

Hanover SEPAC 2021-2022 Board

Co chairs-	Diane King Kate Sullivan (September- March)
Treasurer-	Adriana Mason
Public Relations-	Caitlin Melone
At-large Members-	Alicia Clearly, Diane DuTullio, Jill Livermore, Lori Murphy, Allison Taylor

Introduction

With the start of the 2021-2022 school year, the return to masks mandates for schools and the continuation of Covid testing protocols, it was clear the Covid-19 pandemic was still very much a part of our daily lives. As SEPAC leaders, we recognized that there was a broad range of diverse needs for families as we all continued to manage the effects of the ongoing pandemic. To that end, we set our focus on community education and support. We aimed to increase engagement and learning opportunities in order to bring families together to build a strong and supportive SEPAC community. The wellbeing of all children, community education and the importance of collaboration guided our work this year.

What follows is a list of official events, a summary of our notable work over the 2021-2022 school year and a look ahead.

SEPAC Calendar of Events

September 17, 2021 (via Zoom)-	Board Meeting
October 5, 2021 (in person)-	District Event: Meet the Administrators
October 25, 2021 (in person)-	Meet the SEPAC with special guest, Danielle Green, Esq.
November 19, 2021 (via zoom)-	Board Meeting
December 7, 2021 (in person)-	Special Education Parent Focus Group with Ms. Dorsey Yearly
January 21, 2022 (via zoom)-	Board Meeting
February 15, 2022- (via zoom)-	Basic Rights: Evaluation & Eligibility with Cape Cod Advocate, Christine Rielly
March 1, 2022 (via zoom)-	Safety in the IEP with special guest, Carrie Noseworthy, founder of "A Safer Me"
March 18, 2022 (via zoom)-	Board Meeting
April 11, 2022 (in person)-	District Event: "Moving Up" Understanding Building Transitions
May 12, 2022 (in person)-	Board Meeting and Special Education Program Review discussion
June 13, 2022 (TBD)-	Board Meeting

Initiatives and Special Projects

Participation in the Special Education Program Review:

Hanover SEPAC was excited about the District's decision to engage with Ms. Dorsey Yearly to conduct a Special Education Program Review. Identified as a key stakeholder, SEPAC had the opportunity to participate in several ways. In late fall 2021, the SEPAC officers were interviewed by Ms. Yearly. Shortly after, the greater SEPAC community was invited to participate in an evening event led by Ms. Yearly. In both instances, those in attendance were given the opportunity to answer questions and share their perspectives.

Since the release of the report, the Director of Student Services, Mr. Oates, the School Committee SEPAC liaison, Mrs. Hall, and SEPAC officers have engaged in conversations to determine effective ways for the SEPAC community to remain an integral part of this work. At our most recent board meeting on Thursday, May 12, 2022, much of our focus was the Special Education Program Review. Mr. Oates and Mrs. Hall were in attendance and engaged in meaningful conversations with SEPAC to gain our perspective on the recommendations. SEPAC looks forward to continued collaboration as Hanover moves forward with next steps.

Roundtable Events:

Throughout the school year, the SEPAC leadership received several questions centered on transitions: building transitions and IEP transition planning. From these questions and conversations with Mr. Oates, the idea of roundtable discussion events was born. We believe that we can harness the expertise of the professionals within our district to help educate and guide families, while at the same time help facilitate open and productive lines of communication.

Our first roundtable event, "Moving Up" was held on April 11, 2022. District professionals and the SEPAC community engaged in conversations about the process for changing buildings and "moving up" within our district. SEPAC intends to build on this "roundtable" concept to foster meaningful conversations and education opportunities. We will co-host an IEP transition planning roundtable in the fall and we hope to co-host more roundtable events in the future.

Office Hours:

SEPAC began holding Office Hours in March of 2022. During the school year, on Thursdays from 9-10am, a SEPAC officer, usually the chair, hosts virtual office hours. This is a time when parents are able to log on, share their thoughts and ask questions about special education. We intend to continue this next school year as the parent

connections and the ability to support one another are invaluable. The zoom link for our office hours can be found on our facebook page and on the district website.

SEPAC Informational Flyer:

Additionally this spring, we created an informational flyer for families. The District has agreed to distribute these flyers to families at IEP meetings. A copy of the flyer can be found here: [☰ SEPAC flyer](#)

Networking with local SEPACs:

Due to the relationships developed with the Chairs of local SEPACs, we were able to offer more education opportunities to our community. In turn, we invited other local SEPACs to share in our speaking events. The Hanover community was invited to the following events via social media and/or district emails:

1. "Charting the Life Course" on November 3, 2021 courtesy of Norwell SEPAC
2. David Flood, Inspirational Speaker on November 23, 2021 courtesy of Abington SEPAC
3. Basic Rights: Understanding the IEP, January 12, 2022 courtesy of Norwell SEPAC
4. Zach Smith, for Autism Awareness on April 13, 2022 courtesy of Norwell SEPAC
5. Putting Kid Back Together: Rethinking our Kids' Social World After Covid on March 30, 2022 courtesy of Norwell SEPAC

Annual Staff Recognition Awards (June):

Every year, SEPAC gives families the opportunity to recognize staff members who have had a positive impact on their child throughout the school year. We ask families to write a brief letter explaining their reason for the special recognition. SEPAC then prints the recognition letters and presents them to staff toward the end of the school year. This has been a well received event in the past and we look forward to acknowledging teachers and other staff members at the end of this school year.

A Look Ahead

Along with continuing the work mentioned above, the Hanover SEPAC has plans to revisit our by-laws and rewrite our operational procedures. In November of 2021, the Attorney General's office determined that SEPACs are not subject to Open Meeting Laws effectively making our by-laws immediately outdated and in need of review. We plan to start this work over the summer. As we work to redefine our roles and procedures, we have asked the School Committee SEPAC liaison for help in clarifying

and defining procedures for the Hanover SEPAC to effectively fulfill our advisory role to the School Committee.

The Hanover SEPAC is grateful for the supportive nature of our district professionals. We look forward to continued collaboration with the entire Hanover community to work in the best interest of all children.