To: Concord School Committee
   Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee

Date: May 31, 2017

Subject: 2017 SEPAC Annual Report

The Concord Public and Concord-Carlisle Special Education Parent Advisory Council (Concord SEPAC) respectfully submits the attached report of its activities from September 2016- May 2017 and its recommendations to the School Committee

Concord SEPAC Board:
Mary Tambor, Co-president
Becky Robichaud, Co-president
Joanne Jensen, Secretary
Casey Atkins, Membership Co-chair
Anne Kilroy, Membership Co-chair
Shaina Brito, Event Chair
Donna Roman, Publicity Chair
Heather Tunnecliffe, Technology Co-chair
Becky Robichaud, Technology Co-chair
Annual Report of the
Concord Public and Concord-Carlisle Regional SEPAC

The mission of the Concord Public and Concord-Carlisle Region SEPAC is to:

• Provide education and information to parents and the broader community on special education issues and services
• To establish better understanding of, respect for and support of special education
• To work with the Concord Public School District and Concord-Carlisle Regional School to ensure that students’ needs are met under Massachusetts Special Education regulations 603 CMR28.07(4)* and other applicable laws. Since 1986 Massachusetts Special Education Law has required school district is to establish a SEPAC and charges the SEOAC to advise the school committee and administration on “...matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities.”

Looking Back Over the Last 3 Years:

• We are extremely proud of our growth and accomplishments as a SEPAC over the past three years
• Our first year was comprised of establishing the building blocks of our organization. With many systems now in place, we have been able to focus on expansion of our outreach and offerings
• We have seen increased attendance at events and meetings
• In addition to forming connections with school administration, it has been a goal of ours to expand to the community as a whole. This year we have been a resource to other district SEPACs seeking guidance; we have met with and offered suggestions to our new Assistant Recreation Department Director, Anna Wood, who is adding an abundance of adaptive programming to their offerings; and, in conjunction with Jessica Murphy, we have advised the Concord Police in an exciting new endeavor

Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much:

• A great example of collaboration amongst the community, schools, and SEPAC is the creation of the First Responder Information Form
• The SEPAC assisted Concord Detective Scott Camilleri, who is also the Concord School Resource Officer, and Jessica Murphy, Director of Special Education, in designing a form whose goal is to increase safety for students with special needs.
• This voluntary program allows parents/guardians of children ages 3-22 the opportunity to give important information about their child’s needs so that First Responders are best prepared to assist in an emergency — whether inside the home or out in the community. All information is kept confidential.
Culture Shift:

- A natural result of our organization becoming more visible and embedded in not only our schools, but also the community, is a shift in how special education is perceived. Our hope has been to create a culture in our schools and community that considers students with special needs in all decision making processes, and understanding that supports and adaptations implemented benefit all students, not just those with disabilities.
- The events offered through SEPAC this year represented this belief in the varied topics that addressed the needs of all students. Two examples are: Understanding Executive Function: Strategies for Reducing Academic Stress & Creating Successful Students which included strategies for helping students manage homework, and improve planning and time management skills. Reading Development and the Brain, provided an overview about the typical and atypical reading brain, its development, and how it changes in response to intervention.
- The Accept the Challenge initiative, whose goal is to create a culture of acceptance and respect for the learning differences in all students, was brought into the elementary schools
- Each school has welcomed the addition of a liaison to the School Advisory Committee. This will give parents/guardians of students on an IEP a voice in the decision making process at each building.
- A designated School Committee representative has attended our board meetings helping us to share our efforts on a more regular basis.

Accept and Respect Each Other:

- This spring, with the support of the school administration, we brought Accept the Challenge into grades 2 and 3 of all 3 elementary schools
- The Accept the Challenge program is designed to promote understanding and empathy of individual differences and challenges, to be a starting point to engage students with simple activities and discussions that will strengthen their ability to take the perspective of others, and to develop skills around problem-solving for supporting all members of their school or classroom community.
- Accept the Challenge was developed by Maureen Blazejewski and Kerri Tabasky of the Mass Down Syndrome Congress.

2016: Our recommendations to the School Committee

- Superintendent Search: We are grateful for the opportunity to have had a SEPAC representative on the screening committee and giving this population of students a voice in a very critical hiring process.
- DESE Report: Last year we advised the school committee and administration to initiate opportunities for the elementary school principals and special education teams from each building to meet and share information in an effort to bring all three schools to Level 1. We are grateful for the efforts Jessica Murphy made in meeting with the staff at
these schools. Thoreau and Alcott are Level 1 schools and Willard has improved and is closing the gap for students with disabilities.

- CIPS Working Committee Final Report. Please see attached.

Looking Ahead:
- Terms for Mary Tambor and Becky Robichaud end this year. As we look forward to next year we will be seeking new leadership at our June elections. Over the past 3 years we have built a strong foundation, and we are confident that our work will continue to be carried out.

First Annual SEPAC Appreciation Awards:
- The people who are being recognized tonight embody the culture that the SEPAC is trying to cultivate:
  - Behind every successful and happy child is a community that has nurtured and cared for that child.
  - Every child matters.
  - All children deserve to reach for the stars, even those who may need more help getting there.
  - Our community’s strength relies on its diversity, which includes our special needs students.
  - Special education goals benefit everyone.

Parent Quotes:
- Parents have noted that these educators are "patient, kind, and hard-working," "truly understands the different learner and does his best to support specific styles," "goes above and beyond in every way." And, as one parent said as she embodied the sentiments of our community, "we will always be grateful for all of the help and support given to us”

2017 SEPAC Appreciation Award Recipients

Concord Integrated Preschool
Carla Abbott Nancy McGregor

Concord Elementary Schools
Laura Balogh Nancy Barrett Stephanie Burns
Jillian Deshaies Amy DiMatteo Jessica Edwards
Kate Fitzgerald Shannon Granger Maren Holmes
Meg Jensen Noelle Johnson Beth Kalikstein
Mary Beth Stevenson
2017 SEPAC Appreciation Awards continued

**Concord Middle School**
Peter Baldrachi  
Louanne Mackenzie  

Kim Cyr  
Jaime Malzman  
D. Reiko Funaki

**Concord-Carlisle High School**
Anthony Beckwith  
Rima Mulla  

Linda Finnerty  
Mary Ann Strang  
Christopher Gauthier

**Administrators**
Michael Mastrullo  

Jessica Murphy  
Diana Rigby