Concord Public Schools & Concord-Carlisle Regional School District

Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Because every student deserves an extraordinary education

Visit our website at www.concordsepac.org
The Concord Public Schools and Concord-Carlisle Regional School District Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) respectfully submits this report to the Concord and Concord-Carlisle Joint School Committee.
Mission Statement

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

SE PAC Board

Carol Yelle, President
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Joanne Jensen, Secretary
Casey Atkins, Membership Chair
Shaina Brito, Events Chair
Helen McKinlay, Publicity Chair
Becky Robichaud, Technology Chair
Tali Ditman-Brunye, Communications Chair

SE PAC Liaisons

Casey Atkins, Concord Integrated Preschool
Aiyana Currie, Alcott School
Betsy Olsson-Mackowski, Thoreau School
Aimee Christian, Willard School
Open, Concord Middle School
Carol Yelle, Concord-Carlisle High School
Mary Tambor, Out of District
It's been a productive academic year for SEPAC and its volunteer Board. Through inclusive programming, collaboration with the District, and outreach to the Community, SEPAC strives to extend its mission. We're delighted to share an overview of our activities broadly organized into two categories: community impact and collaboration. We gratefully acknowledge the goodwill, energy, and positive reciprocity of our concerned parent, caregiver, administrator, and educator communities. Together we've created something great.

**Community Engagement and Impact**

Under the leadership of Shaina Brito, Events Chair, SEPAC organized a number of well-attended workshops focused on resource navigation, knowledge and capacity building. The objective of these workshops is to build community among SEPAC members and also the greater community.

Workshops that were held are as follows:

- Q&A session and chat with Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent, and Jessica Murphy, Director of Special Education.

- The Federation of Children With Special Needs presented Basic Rights in Special Education: A Workshop for Parents and Professionals.

- The Science of Reading Difficulties. Presented by Nancy Duggan, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Decoding Dyslexia of Massachusetts (DDMA).

- Myrto Flessas from the Bureau of Special Education Appeals presented a workshop on Mediation and Facilitated Team Meetings.

- A panel presentation hosted by Heather Mahoney (Transition Specialist) in partnership with SEPAC was held on Special Education Transition: Guidance, Preparation and Development.
• My Child has Trouble with Friendships was presented by Caroline Maguire, New England Coaching Services.

• A social gathering event was held at a local coffee shop. Parents/caregivers met and provided support and community building within the SEPAC.

Promotion for events was led by Helen McKinlay who oversees multi-channel marketing efforts through social media presence, local newspaper advertising, and school based electronic distribution lists. Connection and exchange with other area SEPACs helps reach a broader audience.

Additionally our Communications Chair, Tali Ditman-Brunye, authored six newsletters this year. The Newsletter is distributed to parents/caregivers with students receiving special education services in the Districts and covers topics of interest to the community.

Our social media presence, led by Becky Robichaud, reinforces outreach with a well trafficked website, Gmail, Google Calendar, Facebook Page and Twitter. Information is shared about District happenings, area workshops and articles that are of interest to members of our community.

Our Membership Chair, Casey Atkins organizes the SEPAC Liaisons. Liaisons attend each School’s Open House to provide parents/caregivers information about SEPAC and act as a contact for each School. This is an important part of connecting parents/caregivers with their specific school.

At the beginning of this school year we had planned to conduct a survey similar to one done two years ago. However, we opted out of distributing the survey due to the WestEd Program Review that was initiated by the District. We are considering sending the survey out early next year.
**District Collaboration**

SEPAC met with Jessica Murphy, Director of Special Education, bi-monthly to discuss matters pertaining to special education in both Concord-Carlisle and Concord-Carlisle Regional. Our conversations are engaging and provide the SEPAC and the District with valuable communication. We also maintain contact with Jessica if the need arises.

SEPAC met with Dr. Laurie Hunter last summer to provide introductions and connect the new Superintendent with the SEPAC.

The SEPAC has representation at the PTG meetings and School Advisory Councils. Participation in these groups provide a close up look at current events in each School as well as information sharing between parent groups.

A sub committee was formed to review policies that are up for review. The committee is currently in discussion. We anticipate a recommendation to the Superintendent by the end of the academic year.

We would like to thank the District for supporting our membership to the Federation of Children with Special Needs. This membership provides a trained speaker from the Federation to deliver the Know your Rights workshop. Shaina Brito attended the Visions of Community Conference this year as part of our membership. It was a great opportunity for education, networking with other SEPACs and planning for future events.

**Joint School Committee Participation**

Melissa McMorrow was appointed as our School Committee Liaison. We would like to thank Melissa for her support over the year and wish her the best. We look forward to the School Committee identifying a new representative for the 2019-2020 school year.

The SEPAC Board followed budget negotiations very closely. After several meetings and discussions with members of the School
Committee we prepared and read a statement of support of the school budget to the Concord Finance Committee.

One of our highlights this year was the presentation of our SEPAC Appreciation Awards to members of the Concord and Concord-Carlisle School District for having made a positive impact to members of the special education community. This is the second year that Tali Ditman-Brunye and Joanne Jensen organized the awards. This is a tradition for many years to come. A full list of award recipients can be found on our website.

**Looking Ahead**

The Coordinated Review for both the Concord Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District is being conducted over the 2019-2020 School year. The SEPAC looks forward to having pro-active involvement in the review.

The WestEd Program Review was conducted in both Districts in preparation for the Coordinated Review. The Regional report was distributed early this year and the Concord report is set for distribution by September. It is important that SEPAC play an active role in discussions around the findings of those reports.

Out of District processes and procedures is an area of importance and is a focus for the SEPAC for next year. We have agreed to schedule an open forum in September with Jessica Murphy. The details of the event are being discussed. We feel this will provide an opportunity for improved communication.

With the addition of the new District-wide self-contained K-1 classroom the SEPAC would like to ensure that parents/caregiver are given periodic updates and that the District and classroom team are available for comments and observations to ensure that student’s needs are being met.

The SEPAC will continue to be available to parents/caregivers and the community to provide support and discuss issues pertaining to special
education in both the Concord School District and Concord-Carlisle Regional School District.

In closing it is important for us to remember that we are all here for the students, the parents/caregivers, the community and the District. As stated in the District Mission:

The mission of the Concord Public Schools and Concord-Carlisle Regional School District is to educate all students in becoming lifelong learners, creative thinkers, caring citizens, and responsible contributors in a global society.

District core values are:

- Academic excellence
- Respectful and Empathic Community
- Professional Collaboration
- Education Equity
- Continuous Improvement

The SEPAC respects this Mission and Core Values. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Joint School Committee, the District and the Community.

Thank you.