



The Brookline SEPAC Bylaws

Amended November 10, 2017
Amended: June 8, 2017
Revised: October 2015
Revised: August 2013
Revised: November 2006
Initial: June 10, 1997

DEFINITION

District Parent: The term “District Parent” encompasses the parent(s), guardian(s), and Special Education Surrogate Parent, currently residing in the Town of Brookline Massachusetts who is, or has been, legally responsible for a student with a disability with the LEA being the Public Schools of Brookline.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The full name of this self-governed organization shall be the “Brookline Special Education Parent Advisory Council,” and its abbreviated name shall be “Brookline SEPAC.”

ARTICLE II: MISSION

The purpose of the Brookline SEPAC is to work for the understanding of, respect for, and support of all children with special needs in the Brookline Public Schools community. To that end, and pursuant to 603 CMR 28.07(4), the Brookline SEPAC shall:

- Advise school officials and the school committee on matters pertaining to the education, health, and safety of students with special needs. Advocate on behalf of students with special needs and their families to school officials, the school committee and the school community.
- Meet regularly with Special Education Administrators and other school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school districts special education programs.
- Facilitate communication between families with special needs students and the Brookline Public Schools.
- Provide support and information for and facilitate the sharing of information among parents/guardians/special education surrogate parents.
- Provide informational forums to parents/guardians/special education surrogate parents, students, educators, and other professionals involved with children with special needs.

- In cooperation with the Public Schools of Brookline, provide annual training on the rights of students and District Parents under state and federal special education law.
- Participate in the development and review of the six year Coordinated Program Review prior to submission to the Department of Education, as well as any three-year mid-cycle follow-up. Fulfill all other obligations of parent advisory councils as set forth in Chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws, Section 3; Chapter 71, Section 1 C; and Title 603 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations, sections 28.03(1)(a)(4) and 28.07(4), with respect to the Public Schools of Brookline, Massachusetts. The Massachusetts regulation states:

“Each school district shall create a district wide 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 by-laws 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: MEMBERSHIP

General Membership is open to any resident of Brookline including District Parents, educators, and other parties interested in the special education of Brookline students. In accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) Guidance for Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (March 2010), “School district administrators who are not parents of children with special needs in the school district should not be PAC members” hence, are not part of the General Membership.

Voting Membership consists of District Parents. The DESE guidance specifies that “School district personnel, including teachers and other service providers and school committee members, ... if they are parents of children with special needs in that school district, they may be parent members of the PAC” i.e. Voting Members.

New members may be accepted at any time. Responsibilities of the Voting Membership include electing the Brookline SEPAC Board (Article VI) and voting on changes to the By-Laws (Article VII).

ARTICLE IV: Brookline SEPAC BOARD

The Brookline SEPAC Board shall include one to two Co-Chairs, one to two Secretaries, and liaisons from each school as enumerated below. This group of individuals shall be commonly known as the SEPAC Board. The term for Chairs and Secretaries is two years, one year for Liaisons. In the event that both Co-Chair positions become open simultaneously, one of the newly elected Co-Chair positions must be limited to one year to ensure that Co-Chair vacancies alternate to the extent possible. In the event that there are not enough individuals who wish to be on the SEPAC Board, the Board shall function with no less than three members. When necessary, a board member may hold multiple positions. The Board should meet at least twice a year for the purpose of enacting and monitoring the annual goals. If any office becomes vacant, an election will be held as soon as practicable, with the term expiring at the time of the next election. Any Board Member who enters into a financial arrangement (such as employment) with the school district during their tenure as a Board Member must inform the other Board Members as soon as practical.

The Voting Board Members are as follows: Co-Chairs and Secretary(s) will have one vote each in matters to be decided by the SEPAC Board. Liaisons will vote based on the schools they represent with each school, out-of-district, and BEEP each having one vote and Brookline High School having two votes.

Co-Chairs:

- One to two Voting Members will hold this position.
- One of the chair(s) will preside over each Brookline SEPAC meeting.
- Set the agenda for Brookline SEPAC meetings and coordinate agenda for SEPAC Board meetings; coordinate events and coordinate the speakers where appropriate.
- Are responsible for the general running of Brookline SEPAC.
- Are the primary liaisons between the Brookline SEPAC and the Deputy Superintendent for Student Services.
- Ensure Brookline SEPAC is properly advising the Brookline School Committee.

Secretary(s):

- One to two Voting Members will hold this position.
- Record the minutes of monthly meetings.
- Keep a list of attendees.
- Coordinate to make the meeting minutes publicly available.
- Oversees and coordinates compliance with the MA Open Meeting Laws.

School Liaisons

- One to two Voting Members per school will hold this position, chosen by Co-Chairs annually.
- One to three Voting Members representing BEEP students, chosen by Co-Chairs annually.
- One Voting Member representing Out of District students, chosen by Co-Chairs annually.
- Facilitate communication between the parents and the SEPAC Board members.
- Attend a minimum of two general Brookline SEPAC meetings per calendar year.
- Every effort will be made to assign liaisons who have a child enrolled and on an IEP or 504 plan in the school to which they liaise.

ARTICLE V: REMOVAL OF A BOARD MEMBER

If at any time the Board Members wish to remove a member of the SEPAC Board, this can be done by calling a vote of no-confidence among the Voting Board Members. If two-thirds or more of the Voting Board Members vote “no-confidence,” then the board member shall be removed from office and an election held as soon as practical for a replacement. Removed board members may not run for board seats for a period of one calendar year.

ARTICLE VI: ELECTIONS

- Elections are held every year to fill the rotating SEPAC Board positions.
- Any candidate for a SEPAC Board position or a liaison position will, prior to the election, publicly disclose to the membership any financial arrangement (such as employment or other agreement of work) currently held by said candidate, or immediate family member, with the Public Schools of Brookline.
- The date and location of the election will be advertised (via website and email) four weeks prior to the election.
- Any District Parent who wishes to volunteer for a position needs to notify the Brookline SEPAC Co-Chairs prior to the election.
- Elections may be held by a show of hands of the Voting Members if the number of volunteers does not exceed the number of positions. Otherwise, a ballot shall be used to count the votes of the Voting Members.
- Liaisons will be chosen by the Co-Chairs and Secretaries soon after the elections.

In case there is a shortfall in the Co-Chair position (due to a resignation or lack of candidates during the election process); the Board may appoint an interim Co-Chair until the next election. The Board must agree to the appointment by a simple majority.

In the case there is a shortfall in the other Board positions, the Co-Chairs may appoint an interim, until the next election.

Article VII: AMENDMENTS

Amendment(s) to the By-Laws must be submitted to the Brookline SEPAC membership in writing two weeks prior to voting on the amendment(s). A reasonable attempt will be made to communicate to the Brookline SEPAC General Members of the proposed change(s). A simple majority of the responding Voting Members is needed to carry any change.

Article VIII: MEETINGS

1. Brookline SEPAC Meetings are subject to open meetings laws in accordance to MGL c.39, ss23A-23C.
2. The established quorum for any meeting shall be a simple majority of the Board Members.
3. Meetings are to be held no less than three (3) times per school year.
4. Notice of meetings shall be posted as early as possible, (at least 48 hours in advance in Town Hall). Notice may also be posted by email, Brookline SEPAC web site, Students Weekly Packets, Postings at various Schools, and the local press. Reasonable attempts shall be made to notify the General Membership of meetings, times, and proposed agendas prior to the meeting.
5. Meetings shall be held in a public place and all General Members are welcome. Attendees shall sign an attendance list at each meeting. Members may be invited to speak during General Membership participation times (as noted on the agenda) or at the discretion of the Co-Chairs.
6. Meetings shall be conducted by a Co-Chair, who shall set the agenda, determine the length of discussions (referring to Roberts Rules of Order as needed), recognize participation, and conduct votes of the Voting Board Members as needed. In the absence of a Co-Chair meetings shall be conducted by the Secretary.
7. Any agenda item that requires a vote should be noted as such on the agenda. The vote shall be by Voting Board Members only and shall be conducted by one of the Co-Chairs. The Board Members shall make a good faith attempt, whenever possible, to elicit input from the General Membership before taking a vote on a particular item.
8. Minutes of all Brookline SEPAC meetings shall be recorded and retained as a matter of public record on the official Brookline SEPAC web site.

Article IX: COMMITTEES

The Co-Chair(s), with input from the Board, may create standing and special committees to promote the purpose and interest of Brookline SEPAC. Committee involvement shall be on a voluntary basis. Presentations and/or written reports shall be submitted as needed, upon the request of the Board, or upon termination of a project. A Co-Chair(s) of Brookline SEPAC shall be an ex-officio member(s) of all standing and special committees. Special committees shall terminate when their final reports are submitted.

Article X: ADDITIONAL POSITIONS

For the proper functioning of the Brookline SEPAC, volunteers may fulfill other duties that are not part of the Board. These individuals are chosen by majority consent of the board. The positions may be created or removed at any time; they may include but are not limited to:

- Workshop Coordinator – aids in scheduling speakers, rooms, etc.
- Social Meeting Coordinator – aids in arranging social events
- Technologist – aids in update and maintenance of the website and social media

Article XI: ADDITIONAL POLICIES

The Brookline SEPAC neither fundraises nor solicits donations. Monetary donations are not accepted. We will, at times, have events that are co-sponsored with another organization (e.g., a Brookline PTO) and items such as space or refreshments may be supplied or paid for by the co-sponsor. Costs for interacting with our membership such as web hosting, brochure printing, etc. may be covered by a member of the PAC but are not tax deductible. Other than the co-chairs, no member of the PAC may speak on behalf of the PAC nor represent as doing so.