

Lawrence Special Education Parent Advisory Council By-Laws

Article I: Name

This organization is a self-governed, volunteer organization known as the Lawrence Special Education Parent Advisory Council (hereafter referred to as SEPAC).

Article II: Mission

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

1. Advise the Receiver/Lawrence School Committee and designated representative(s) for the Lawrence Special Learning Services Department on matters that pertain to the education, health, and safety of students with special needs by providing direct parent input, review, and feedback.
2. Meet regularly with school administrators and committee members to advise and participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the district's special education programs.
3. Support and encourage an inclusive educational environment where students with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities and an environment where all students are engaged and encouraged to reach their full potential.
4. Promote a network of parents, guardians and educators through active outreach, and an e-mail membership list and provide a forum to share information and discuss matters of relative interest and concern with regard to education and opportunities for children with special needs in the Lawrence community. This network will also provide support for parents, guardians and educators, as well as relevant information pertaining to special education, training and resources.
5. Provide communication and programs within the Lawrence community which encourage the understanding, respect, acceptance and inclusion of students with special needs, thereby encouraging an atmosphere of open communication, understanding and mutual respect amongst all students, parents and educators within the Lawrence community.
6. Provide and promote informational workshops to parents, educators, students and other community and state professionals. Including, but not limited to, collaborations with parent/teacher groups, school staff and faculty, administrators, and other school and community organizations to promote the achievement of district goals and the SEPAC mission, and to provide opportunities for parents and school personnel to participate in joint training to foster mutual understanding.

7. Promote ongoing communication between Lawrence SEPAC members and local, state and national organizations, councils and groups. This will include staying current on public policy issues, state advisories and regulation which impact all education in Massachusetts, and crafting responses, as necessary.

Article III: Policies

The SEPAC will be non-commercial, non-sectarian, and non-partisan. The name of this organization or, the name of any members in their official capacities shall not be used in any connection with a commercial concern or any partisan interest, or for any purpose other than the regular work of the organization.

Article IV: Membership

1. Qualifications

General membership shall be open to any parent, guardian, educator or other qualified party interested in special education in the Lawrence Public Schools, who communicates to an Officer of the Lawrence SEPAC orally or in writing, their desire to become a member.

a. *General membership* is open to:

- any resident of the Lawrence Public School District; or
- any person affiliated with Lawrence Public Schools; or
- any person affiliated with a child whose education is the responsibility of the Lawrence Public Schools.

b. *Voting membership** is a required requisite for voting within the annual officer elections and any other business that comes before any Lawrence SEPAC meeting. Voting membership is open to any general member who:

- is a parent or guardian of a child with special needs who is attending Lawrence Public Schools; or
- is a parent or guardian of a child with special needs whose education is the responsibility of the Lawrence Public School District which includes out-of-district placements, or those being schooled in a home or institutional setting; or
- is a parent or guardian of a child with special needs residing in the Lawrence

2. Responsibilities

- a. All members will strive at all times to uphold the Lawrence SEPAC mission as stated in Article II of these Bylaws.
- b. All members will strive to attend all regular meetings of the Lawrence SEPAC
- c. All members who wish to receive notifications and other communications from the Lawrence SEPAC will deliver to the SEPAC Secretary all of the necessary information required to receive said notifications and communications, in the form in which such notifications and communications are to be delivered.

Article V: Executive Board Members

Officers:

- a. Executive Board Members of the Lawrence SEPAC will be known as officers, and shall be voting members whom are elected by the voting membership of the Lawrence SEPAC.
- b. Officers will preside in their role from the date of their election to the date of the next election of officers, which should be approximately every two years.
- c. Officers are required to be fully active and supportive members of the Lawrence SEPAC. Removal of an individual from an officer position will be voted on by the voting membership and will occur for the following reasons:
 - i. Excessive (more than 3) absences without prior written or oral communication, preventing a temporary replacement in the role for the missed event or meeting.
 - ii. Refusal or inability to support and uphold the mission and purpose of the Lawrence SEPAC
- d. If any officer position becomes vacant, a special election for that office position will be posted immediately. The individual receiving a simple majority vote shall immediately assume the responsibilities of the position.

1. The Chairperson shall:

- a. Preside at all meetings of the Lawrence SEPAC.
- b. Set the agenda for each General Meeting.
- c. Coordinate the work of the SEPAC Board members and committees.
- d. Monitor the function of all subcommittees.
- e. Coordinate all communication between the Lawrence SEPAC and SEPAC members.
- f. Act as liaison with the representative(s) of the Lawrence Special Learning Services department, Lawrence School Committee and members of the Lawrence administration.
- g. Prepare reports for the Special Learning Services Administration regarding Lawrence SEPAC activities and needs
- h. Act as liaison to community and state groups and agencies.
- i. Prepare next Chair by sharing knowledge and expertise at the end of term.

2. The Co-Chairperson shall:

- a. Preside at all meetings of the Lawrence SEPAC in the absence of, or at the request of, the Chairperson.
- b. Coordinate other public communications, not including those that are the responsibility of the Secretary
- c. Assist the Chairperson as appropriate and perform responsibilities of the Chairperson at his/her request.

3. The Secretary shall:

- a. Record and file Minutes of the meetings of the Lawrence SEPAC and its subcommittees.
- b. Maintain attendance log

- c. Provide copies of official Minutes as requested
- d. Distribute notices and other information to membership and other interested parties on a regular basis
- e. Advertise meetings and events
- f. Maintain SEPAC presence within the community through different channels of communication, including social media

4. The School Representatives:

- a. Act as liaisons between his/her representative school and the SEPAC
- b. Communicate SEPAC information to his/her representative school.
- c. Build awareness at his/her representative school of SEPAC and SEPAC workshops and events.

Article VI: Voting and Elections

All decisions requiring a vote will be made by simple majority (50% plus one) of the voting members present at any SEPAC meeting. A quorum of no less than five voting members must be present in order to cast a vote.

Elections for positions on the SEPAC Board will take every other spring. New Board members will take office immediately following the vote. All voting members are eligible to make nominations. Elections shall be decided by a simple majority vote.

Matters that require a vote of the voting membership to be taken include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. A change in Bylaws (can only be done at general meetings)
- b. Elections for Executive Board Members (Officers)

Matters that require a vote of the Executive Board Members to be taken include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Any expense greater than \$200, needs to be approved by a majority vote of the Board members.

Article VII: Meetings

- a. All meetings are open to the general public.
- b. Meetings will be held at least five (5) times per school year from September to June.
- c. Notice of all general meeting dates and elections shall meet Open Meeting Law requirements.
- d. Minutes of all executive board and general meetings will be recorded and retained for public record.
- e. Reasonable attempts shall be made to notify the general membership of meeting times and proposed agenda prior to the meeting.

- f. During the last meeting of the academic year, the chairperson shall take recommendations for the calendar of meetings for the following year. The calendar shall include dates and times for the meetings and projected activities for the year, and will be made available to all Lawrence SEPAC members, to public officials and school administrators at the beginning of each academic year.

Meetings are defined as any SEPAC meetings, activities or committees at which attendance is taken and member has signed in.

Article VIII: Subcommittees

Subcommittees shall be created as needed at the discretion of the Officers and shall report on activities to the Chairperson and members at regular meetings. Each subcommittee will select an individual to act as a liaison to provide information to the Chairperson, and SEPAC members, as well as a secretary to take Meeting notes that will be provided to the Executive Board Secretary.

Article IX: 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 X: 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 VI) votes unanimously to approve the change.

Article XI: Review of By-Laws

The Board shall review these bylaws every two (2) years.