

Westwood Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

Meeting Minutes

September 8th, 2020

1. Megan Brenk did an introduction of what SEPAC is, what the entity does, the role of the committee and how to access any of the board members.
2. Introduced SEPAC Board Members for 2020/2021 School Year:
Megan Brenk & Kerry Aglugub, Co-Chairs; Aravind Movva & Liz Polin, Co-Secretaries;
Jennifer Ellis & Jared Jones, Co-Treasurers
3. Introduced school liaisons:
Integrated Preschool: Asanka Moehring
Martha Jones-Megan Brenk
Sheehan-Sue Kagan
Downey-Liz Polin
Deerfield-Doris Forteith
Hanlon- Stephanie Finegold
Thurston Middle School-Kelly Anderson
High School-Tracie Charland
Out of District- We are still looking for someone
4. Amanda Phillips, SEPAC School Committee Liaison, provided brief comments on school committee meetings
5. Approved Meeting Minutes from August 25th SEPAC Meeting
6. SEPAC Survey
Reminded everyone to fill-out a survey to determine the best schedule for meetings, what parents are looking for: trainings, workshops and speakers. Due: 9/11/2020
7. SEPAC Events for 2020/2021 School Year
Moving bi-weekly SEPAC Zoom meetings to monthly due to fall school re-opening
Fall-District Overview & Autism Parent Training (11/12)
Winter-Basic Rights Transition & Advocacy Workshop

Please send any ideas/comments/questions to westwoodsepac@gmail.com

8. District Administration Report-Fall Reopening

Abby Hanscom, director of student services, gave an update on fall reopening

Overall top priority for the district is to provide in-person as much as it is feasible while ensuring safety of the community.

There are 5 different Unions for teachers largest among them is the Westwood Teachers Association (WTS). Emily Parks and team has worked closely with the union on Memorandum of Approval (MOA) for 2020-21. It has been approved by School Committee last week. This is significant milestone as many neighboring school districts have not reached MOA's. It is comprehensive agreement covering fine details that includes the amount of services, non-academic services, Covid mitigation strategies (ventilation systems, etc).

The district has completed all the hiring for the academic year. This include replacement teachers for teachers that requested leave of absence and contract services.

All families should have been reached by school liaison to walk-thru the plan for fall re-opening. This includes 1) School start-up 2) Saying Hello 3) Document any changes to grid. All minutes listed in the service grid of the IEP will be implemented. But there will be changes based on feasibility of implementation. If parents don't hear from liaison by 9/10, please reach out to Abby Hanscom.

Students that require assessment fall into two categories: 1. new placement into district 2. Existing students that require new assessments. For new students, there will be in-person assessments. Special provisions (plexi glass, face shields, etc) have already been made. For existing students, there is currently a backlog of 40 students that require testing. MOA addressed this specific backlog in assessments. The plan is do testing with current teacher after school. If that is not feasible, it will be performed by another competent authority in the school district. Depending on the need, outside vendor will also used for assessments. Outside assessments from parents will be considered but will only be used to supplement school assessments.

Questions & Answers:

1. Are there any metrics in MOA that will trigger a full remote depending on situation during the school year?

Ans. The decision to change from hybrid to full remote will be determined based on local situation and metrics. The biggest contributor will be the state color coding for each school district. School Committee will decide after seeking all the information.

2. How the transportation work in fall?

Ans. If you are eligible for transportation as listed in IEP, there are two options: 1. Van Pool transportation 2. Drive the kid to school and get reimbursed at \$0.55/mile. For Van, there is an entry and exit strategy at school to ensure safety of everyone. If you are dropping-off at school, please follow instructions and more importantly be patient during the first 2-3weeks as we adjust to new normal. (For Van Pool, please work with Leeann Plouffe; Contact: lplouffe@westwood.k12.ma.us)

3. Can you accommodate high-needs students if we change to full remote?

Ans. Highly dependent on the metrics. No specifics in MOA. High needs is a priority for the district which is why the district has made it feasible for in-person services in summer.

4. Is there a reason why time block differences in middle school?

Ans. There will be some changes to time blocks (i.e. adding minutes/subtracting minutes) depending the implementation. The immediate goal is make sure total minutes are consistent with IEP and the discussion can move towards structure at a later date depending on feasibility.

5. Is there scheduled drop-off/pick-up? If you have multiple kids would tardiness an issue?

Ans. Please work with your school liaison. Matt Coughlin is the POC. Tardiness will not be considered during the initial 2-3weeks as we settle down for new normal.

6. Is there a camera in school classrooms? How does it work for kids in K and 1st grade?

Ans. The district has invested in Zoom Software, Camera and microphone. The software is flexible to allow for classroom experience. For pre-k, K and 1st grade, the interaction is more practical through email and getting some programs home for remote learning.

7. Will there be less number of snow days since remote is an option?

Ans. For majority for snow days, the classroom will move to remote. But there will be circumstances where there could be snow days (i.e. loss of power, etc).

8. How is attendance tracked given the 3 categories (Full Remote, Hybrid, in-person)?

Ans. There is significant push from department of education. Attendance will be taken every day for all the models at school.

9. How is mask policy exemption implemented?

Ans. Masks are mandatory for everyone. There are some exemptions for some students where masks are not practical due to their disability. A doctor's note is required for these students.

10. Will be changes to volume of homework for students given that parents don't have lot of time due to Covid situation.

Ans. There are guidelines for homework in district. Please direct any questions to school principals.

Next SEPAC meeting: Tuesday October 6th at 7:30pm.

(SEPAC Board Meeting is scheduled for September 19th, 2020 at 8AM on Zoom. Please email westwoodsepac@gmail.com if you are interested in attending)