

# Medford Parent Advisory Council for Special Education

## Business Meeting

Location: Medford Public Library, Medford, MA

Meeting Date: July 25, 2011 (Reviewed & Approved at business meeting Oct 25, 2011)

Attendance was taken and consisted of: 3 Board Members (Kathy Aluia, Jen Maunsell and Kelly Tello)

Agenda: Powerpoint slides were used. The meeting was facilitated by Kathy Aluia.

**April 2011 Business Meeting Notes:** Were reviewed. No edits were suggested.

**Organization Overview:** The intent of this meeting was to discuss the SEPAC organization, its presence, how we have participated in the District this past year, and next steps for the upcoming academic year.

**SEPAC Organization:** 1) The current board restructured the organization in July 2010. In doing so, we created board positions that represented each Medford school at the local level. Our intent was to create more opportunities for SEPAC to work at the local school level which included: improve communication to administration, teachers & parents; encourage special education parent involvement in individual school activities & school committees, and to facilitate problem resolution at as low a level as possible as well. 2) The by-laws are current as of July 2010 as well. Kathy Aluia suggested we revisit the by-laws in the fall, so that they properly reflect the current SEPAC organization. It was noted that we have parent, community, administration and teacher attendance during our events, but attendance during business/planning meetings is lacking outside of board members.

**SEPAC Presence:** As a self-evaluation, we reviewed some individual segments of our community (School Committee, Administration, Teachers, Parent Community, Medford Community, Beyond Medford...Paraprofessionals were added during the meeting as well), talked about those which our board has developed a presence, and determined which could use an increased visibility through board participation or a SEPAC initiative.

School Committee: We attend School Committee meetings and have participated at that level.

Administration: Board members have met with all levels of the administration. It was noted that we have met with all the Principals/Headmaster, K. Medaglio, Program Directors, D. Finn, S. Gross, M. Cassidy, J. Hollenbeck, ETLs/Case Managers, and T. Volpe.

Teachers: We have not had any specific initiatives around or with teachers. This would be an area to focus on for the upcoming year. Jen Maunsell asked how we would do that. She shared concerns that for teachers to participate on the board that there may be some conflict of interest. Kathy suggested that we conduct teacher surveys and obtain information about teaching to different learning styles, inclusion opportunities offered to students, understand their views of behavior and current techniques they use, etc... From a survey, we could provide recommendations to teachers and administration (e.g. training and possibly work with administration to coordinate training sessions).

Parent Community: While there is familiarity with Medford SEPAC in the parent community, there is not as much parent involvement in Medford SEPAC as there could be and there are still parents who do not understand SEPACs (e.g. who they are and what we do). Kathy noted that parent attendance is one way for parents to be involved and we should also consider parent input through surveys as another form of parent involvement. We plan to increase our presence to parents this year.

Medford Community: There is advertising in the Medford Transcript and we can expand our advertising to more of the online news media (e.g. Patch, Boston Globe). The City's Disability Council that is led by Diane McLeod is a good opportunity to expand awareness about Medford SEPAC. Kathy Aluia shared that Mary Finn has offered to represent SEPAC at and attend the City's Disability Council monthly meetings.

Beyond Medford: Members are active in organizations, yahoo groups, and training outside of Medford. We receive calls and emails from outside parents, SEPACs and special education organizations. We are well known at the Federation for Children with Special Needs, have received positive comments (e.g. "You are doing a great job.", "Medford has a strong SEPAC") and believe this feedback is indicative of our visibility.

Paraprofessionals: Up to now, we have not discussed training, experience or position requirements of paraprofessionals with administration. This is an area we plan to focus on in the upcoming academic year as well.

### **How we have participated in the District:**

- We have provided input to and impacted school policy (e.g. Bullying, Social Probation). This was done both formally in writing and as participation in the School Committee policy review sessions.
- Identified a flow-chart for a problem resolution process for special education parents and administration.
- Participate on district-wide and school-based committees (School Committee meetings, PTO, School Council, Principal search committee, etc..) and as volunteer in the district.
- Inform parents (Early Intervention to Grade 12 and emphasized periods of transition) through workshops, E-newsletter, high school transition fair, "Turning Three", "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition", fliers, and MPS webpage.

### **Continue with Initiatives:**

- Follow-through with previous initiatives
  - o Rollout Problem Resolution Process This has been reviewed with Elementary Principals, D. Caldwell, K. Medaglio and various special education administration. Next steps would be to share with Mr. Belson and members of School Committee.
  - o Confidentiality: Continue to have conversations with Principals and Administration and ask that they discuss confidentiality at staff meetings.
  - o Advocates: What makes an individual an advocate in MPS?
  - o Bullying: Discuss bullying behaviors with administration. As part of status report to School Committee, remind that adults are models and we should not take part in that behavior as well.
  - o Transitions: Continue working with District to support transitions. Transitions take place from Early Intervention to Public School-based Services; Preschool to Kindergarten; Grade level to Grade level; Elementary to Middle School; Middle to High School; and Beyond High School.
- Coordinate Fall Workshops: Increase workshops to at least 1 per month (topic-based around disability awareness month)
- Improve web presence
  - o MPS webpage (event date; board members; by-laws open meeting law, public records law)
  - o Explore website option resources for parents
- Surveys (parents, teachers)
- Review by-laws