

Chelsea Special Education Parent Advisory Council By-Laws

Article I: Name of Organization

The name of this self-governed organization shall be the Chelsea Special Education Parent Advisory Council, also known as Chelsea SEPAC.

Article II: Authority

The Chelsea SEPAC is formed pursuant to the provisions of the Massachusetts General Law [Section 3 of Chapter 71B].

Article III: Purpose of the Chelsea SEPAC

The mission of the Chelsea Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is to work towards the understanding of, respect for, support, and appropriated education for all children with special needs in the community. To that end, the Chelsea SEPAC will work to:

1. Promote a network of parents, guardians, educational surrogates, including but not limited to parents of children with special needs (developed through active outreach), provide a forum to share information and discuss matters of concern and interest regarding children with special needs. This will include providing a network of support for parents including access to relevant information, training and resources, and sharing timely information with membership and the community in Chelsea, Chelsea Public School administration and School Committee.
2. Meet regularly with school officials (Administrator of Special Education, School Committee, etc.) to advise, participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the district's special education programs [CMR 306:28.07(b)]. This includes providing input to the development of policy and procedures, and parent and teacher training; advising and participating may include development and review of the Three-Year Program Plan and six-year Corrective Action Plan (as appropriated), prior to submission to the DESE. This will include the ability to provide input, review revise and comment on any/all regular reports and plans pertaining to Special Education sent to the Department of Education (DESE), prior their being finalized and submitted.
3. Promote a network of parents, guardians, educational surrogates, including but not limited to parents of children with special needs (developed through active outreach), and provide a forum to share information and discuss matters of concern and interest regarding children with special needs. This will include providing a network of support for parents including access to relevant information, training, and resources, and sharing timely information with the membership and community, as well as Chelsea Public School administration and School Committee.
4. Provide information forums to parents, educators, students and other professionals. This will include collaboration with parents/teacher groups, school councils, administrators, and other school community organizations to promote the achievement of district goals and the SEPAC mission, and provide opportunities for parents and school personnel to participate in joint training to foster mutual understanding.

5. Promote communication and programs within the community to encourage understanding, acceptance and inclusion of children with special needs, thereby encouraging an atmosphere of open communication, understanding and mutual respect among all students, parents, teachers in the Chelsea community at large.
6. Promote communication between Chelsea SEPAC members, 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.
7. Promote the interest of special needs parents in regarding to matters that come before the Chelsea Public School system.
8. The SEPAC will not make any political endorsements. This does not preclude the SEPAC from participating in advocacy for proposed legislation or discussions on issues effecting general or public education in Chelsea or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Article IV: Terms of Membership

1. Qualifications:

a. General membership shall be open to:

- A parent, guardian or educational surrogate of a student or former student on an IEP or 504 Plan with the City of Chelsea,
- A parent, guardian or educational surrogate of a child under the age of three with a disability resident of City of Chelsea,
- A student or former student on an IEP or 504 Plan with the City of Chelsea,
- Any person affiliated with a child whose education is partial or entire responsibility of Chelsea Public School [CMR 603.28.10], such as other interested parties who have a stake in the education of Chelsea students with disabilities may also become general members, with the exception of school administrators and elected officials.

A general member must attend at least one SEPAC event or meeting during the past 12 months.

b. Voting:

- Voting membership is subset of the general membership. Voting membership is open to any of the Chelsea residents listed above for general membership, and PAC officers. Voting membership is not open to other interested parties.
- Voting membership is required to vote in annual elections and any other business that comes before Chelsea SEPAC meeting.
- Voting members must attend at least one (1) SPED PAC business meeting in the past 12 months, before the date of the vote.

Article V: Organizational Structure of the Chelsea Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

1. Special Education Administrator rule on SEPAC:

It is the duty of the Special Education Administrator to represent all children with special needs and their families within our schools and communities.

a. The Special Education Administrator shall be responsible for keeping accurate membership, attendance and outreach files. Membership listing shall be recorded and kept only for the use of the SEPAC and cannot be shared or sold to anyone.

b. The Special Education Administrator, in collaboration with the SEPAC (Co) Chairperson (s), shall be responsible for scheduling and planning SEPAC meetings during the school year as described under Article VI. With regards to these meetings, Special Education Administrator will arrange for meetings space, as well as foreign language interpreters, as requested. The Coordinator will always arrange interpreters for the Basic Rights workshop.

c. The Special Education Administrator shall be responsible for the PAC newsletter, emails and other forms of communications, including translations of materials, as needed.

d. The Special Education Administrator shall be responsible for notifying the media and schools of upcoming meetings and events through the use of such communication outputs as newsletters, fliers, emails press releases, and internet post including social media.

e. The Special Education Administrator shall be our link to the Chelsea Public Schools and will be responsible for disseminating information as needed.

The Special Education Administrator is a Chelsea Public School position.

When the present Administrator isn't available temporary or otherwise, a substitute Administrator will take place.

1. SEPAC Chairperson/ Co-Chairperson:

It is the duty of the SEPAC (Co)Chairperson to represent all children with special needs and their families within our schools and communities.

-There shall be one Chairperson or 2 Co-Chairperson who will be elected by the Voting Members as dictated by Article IV of these By-Laws. The responsibilities of the SEPAC (Co) Chairperson(s) will include:

- a. Being the first point of contact for the SEPAC.
- b. Presiding at all meetings of the Chelsea SEPAC.
- c. Setting the agenda for the meeting of the Chelsea SEPAC in collaboration with Special Education Administrator.
- d. Creating subcommittees as needed.
- e. Recommend the organization and monitor the function of sub-committees.
- f. Representing the SEPAC at community meetings, such as meetings of the Chelsea School Committee or any other meeting or activity that have impact on or be of interest to the Chelsea Special Needs community.
- g. Prepare periodic reports for the Special Education Administration regarding Chelsea SEPAC activities and needs.

- The (Co) Chairperson (s) may seek assistance from the Special Education Administrator to:
- a. Preside at meetings in the absence of or at the request of (Co)Chairperson (s).
 - b. Assist the (Co)Chairperson (s) as appropriate and perform responsibilities of the (Co)Chairperson(s) at his/her/their request.

2. SEPAC Secretary/ Outreach Officer (s):

- a. The SEPAC Secretary shall coordinate the Record and file Minutes of the meetings of the Chelsea SEPAC and its sub-committees in accordance with the Massachusetts Public Record Law.
- b. If needed, the SEPAC Secretary shall prepare periodic reports for the Chelsea Special Education Administration regarding PAC activities and needs, including copies of official Minutes, attendance.
- c. The SEPAC Secretary shall assist the (Co)Chairperson (s) and the SEPAC Coordinator with any communications, newsletters, emails, correspondence, etc. as may be required or requested by the (Co)Chairperson (s) and/or the Coordinator.
- d. The SEPAC Secretary shall disseminate notices and other information to membership and other interested parties on a regular basis.
- e. The SEPAC Secretary shall maintain Chelsea SEPAC present on Social Media, advertise meetings and events.

Article VI - Elections:

- a. Elections will be held yearly for the positions of (Co) Chairperson (s) and Secretary.
- b. For the office of Chairperson, a single person or pair of people may be nominated to be Chairperson or Co-Chairpersons, nominations will be made by ballot nomination ballots will be made available to voting members at Chelsea SEPAC at the last meeting of the Chelsea SEPAC in the School year.
- c. Elections shall be decided by simple majority vote of the voting membership, subject to the presence of at least four (4) eligible voting members. All voting members are eligible to make nominations.
- d. If there is a tie, all other candidates will be dropped from the roster and second vote is taken for just the tied candidates. If there still is a tie, then they will automatically serve as Co-Chairperson or Co-Secretaries, unless one opts out.
- e. The newly elected officers shall take office immediately following their election, and will hold office for one year, if re-elected, an officer may serve multi-consecutive terms. If a position becomes vacant, an election for the position shall be held immediately, to finish out the remaining term. If a Co-Chairperson cannot fill out the term, the remaining Co-Chair can opt to serve independently or request a special election to fill the vacancy.
- f. The Chelsea Special Education Administrator and the Chelsea School Committee will be informed of the annual elections; and will be given the names, addresses and phone numbers of the newly elected officers by the end of June of that year.

Article VII – Meetings:

- a. In accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law Regulations [940 CMR 29:00 and M.G.L.c 30A, §18-25] all meetings shall be open to the public.
- b. Advanced notice of any and all meetings dates and elections will be published/ posted with a minimum of 48 hours advance notice comply with Massachusetts Open Law Meeting Regulations. Notice shall be published in Chelsea Record (the newspaper of public record for the City of Chelsea) and shall be disseminated by other means including other local press, social media and notices sent to families.
- c. SEPAC General Meetings shall September to June. Meetings postponed due to weather may or may not be reschedule, at the discretion of the Chairperson in consideration of logistics and availability of speakers and location.
- d. Meetings may consist of 15 minutes of business meetings (members only), either at the beginning or at the end of the General Meeting and continue with some other activity such as workshop. This would constitute on meeting even if both parts are attended. One meeting *must* be a Basic Rights Workshop, in parent friendly terms, thereby meetings the State’s requirement of the district pursuant to CMR 28:03 (1)(a)(4). The remaining 5 meetings will be designed to offer families advocacy help, support and disability related information through workshops.
- e. The Chelsea Special Education Administrator shall be invited to these business meetings to keep the PAC updated and receive advice regarding operations and development of special education programs, parent & teacher training needs, and help to develop policy.
- f. If needed, time may be allotted at the beginning of the monthly meeting to discuss any communication issue or other issues that may arise and need the attention of the Chelsea SEPAC.
- g. During the last meeting of the academic year, the Chairperson shall take recommendations for workshop topics and projected activities for the calendar of meetings for the following year. The calendar shall include dates and times of the meetings and projected activities for the year. The calendar shall be made available to all Chelsea SEPAC members, to public officials and schools administrators at the beginning of each academic year.
- h. Matters which require a vote to be taken by Voting Members (as described in Article VI) include, but are not limited to the following items:
 - A change in the By-Laws can only be voted on at a business meeting.
 - Elections require a vote as described in Article VI.
 - If appropriated, a commitment of financial resources requires a simple majority of members of the Advisory Board present.
- i. Minutes of all Chelsea Special Education Parent Advisory Council business meetings shall be recorded and retained for public record as described in Article VII. They will also be posted on the Chelsea Public School webpage.
- j. During Support Group meetings minutes will be taken respecting parent anonymity when sharing their experience or opinion.

Article VIII–Sub-committees:

- a. Sub-committees shall be created as needed at the discretion of the Officers and shall report on activities to the Chairperson (s) and members at Regular Meetings.

Article IX –Amendments:

- a. These By-Laws may be amended by simple majority of the Voting Members at a business meeting, but changes to the By-Laws may not be voted upon in the same meeting as they are proposed, unless the majority (as described in Article V) votes unanimously to approve the change.