



# Special Education Parent Advisory Council

## Minutes

January 29, 2019 Meeting  
Barnstable Intermediate School

**Attendance Head Count:** 13 including officers, parents, and district personnel

**Children in Daycare:** 2

**Guest:** Mike Judge, School Committee, Susan Powers (CORD)

### SEPAC Business Meeting

President Kathy Bent called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., welcomed everyone, and thanked Principal Anderson for hosting the meeting. She mentioned that the original speaker had cancelled and an all-call message made to inform parents of the change.

Kathy stated the purpose of the meeting is to gather input for improving special education to submit to the district administration. Your input can be shared by emailing [barnsepac@gmail.com](mailto:barnsepac@gmail.com), submitting a Comment Form on the SEPAC website ([BarnstableSEPAC.com](http://BarnstableSEPAC.com)), or mailing a printed Comment Form (or sending a note) to P.O. Box 623, Centerville, MA 02632.

### Procedure for Reporting to Administration

The first reporting using the Procedure for Reporting to Administration. Concerns brought forth last school year, and suggestions will be sent forward.

Nicole Gambino, Executive Function Coach had to postpone her presentation because of a family emergency.

Mike Judge, School Committee member, attended to gather input from parents.

### Comments/Suggestions from Parents Included

- A parent mentioned that she would like to see a more collaborative effort, especially with the special education coordinators in the school. It is critical to respect and support the special education coordinators in the schools and help them work with parents to support student needs.
- A staff member asked if the School Committee seeks input about school administrators from staff. The survey available to solicit input for the Executive Director of Special Education was the first time input regarding administration was available. A request was made that all administrators have evaluations that staff can use to provide feedback.
- A staff member requested that special education coordinators who will be able to work on retaining special education staff needs to be priority. The turnover of staff, especially PCA and SPED assistants makes it difficult to meet student needs.
- A parent felt it is important to have a Special Education leader who is capable of ensuring student needs will be met -- especially given the increase in the number of students receiving special education services. Currently, the district appears to have one-size-fits-all programs and students are receiving services based on programs offered at individual schools. The parent questioned whether this is in line with MA law/regulations. She thought the delivery of services was supposed to be student-centered.
- A parent of three children, one on an IEP, communicated that the IEP process was very negative and there wasn't support for a parent asking for basic services that every other

student receive with no success. They felt it was important to pull her child on the IEP from Barnstable and place the student in another school (CC Tech) where they found a positive, supportive attitude and culture stating the school said, "...we would love to try..., happy to do anything we can to help her ..." There was a true team approach where the parent was expected to be part of the team. The administration was so different from Barnstable's in the way they treated the parents. There are so many differences in the attitude at CCT-- they are giving the student a chance – parents did not have to “fight” for services – teachers behind supporting the student 100% and expects the students to graduate. This was so unlike Barnstable who only wanted the student to be on MCAS-Alt which essentially means there is absolutely no chance of earning a diploma.

- Staff member responded that services are team decision – The parent responded that this attitude/culture is being driven from the top. A top special education administrator attends the team meeting when parents continue to request academic instruction and do not accept the “program” being “offered” by the District.
- Another parent shared that in October, this administrator said he questioned the appropriateness of the student attending the general education classroom because the student would never get a diploma. This is a violation of her civil rights. He would only support placing the student in a special education room to learn life services.
- A student from BHS mentioned an experience she had with a staff member who didn't respect her. The student did not feel welcome at BHS.
- A parent mentioned that the even the most simple requests are denied in Barnstable. After moving to another school, it was like a 360—very welcoming, they worked to find the appropriate shop to place the student in and are now providing remedial instruction to prepare her for MCAS.
- A parent mentioned that she was disappointed that staff would indicate the student “reached her/her ceiling – we are not obligated to make much more progress.”
- A parent suggested that moving forward, if you are trying to find something that will trickle down, a breath of fresh air s needed for the new director to come in with a positive attitude. This needs to be an outsider who will focus on changing the culture in Barnstable.
- A parent mentioned there seems to be a push for students to be placed on MCAS-Alt so that the district doesn't have more students fail MCAS.
- A staff member mentioned that, in general, professional development is geared toward general education teachers. More professional development is needed for special education teachers and other SPED service providers.
- Response from a staff member when asked [by Mike Judge] if PD has gotten better with the half days was “no.”
- Question to staff [by Mike Judge]: Do you feel you are supported from above. Response was that at times, yes. But at time, no.
- Elementary staff member mentioned that years ago, the elementary sped coordinator was eliminated and the school psychologists were assigned as team chairs. This responsibility is overwhelming to some.
- Not one professional development offered has benefited a staff member – from those who attended.
- A parent asked when the IEP software issue would be resolved.
- **Comment forms are available at each meeting and on the SEPAC website for those parents who cannot make meetings or who prefer to submit comments anonymously.**

Mike provided an update on the Search – mentioned two people are being interviewed tomorrow. Opened last year, completed interviews, no candidate was put forward. So the search was reopened. The process changed for the reopened search. Last year the Search Committee review all applications, determined who to interview, conducted interviews, then

sent recommendations to the Superintendent. This time, the Superintendent is reviewing applicants, interviewing first, and sending those she feels are qualified to the Committee for input.

**REMINDERS** → Child care is available at every meeting. Meetings are always the last Tuesday of the month. Remember to check Facebook for the updated information or the SEPAC website-- [www.barnstablesepac.com](http://www.barnstablesepac.com).

### **Announcements**

The next meeting is Tuesday, February 26 at Barnstable Intermediate School (Falmouth Road (Rt. 28), Hyannis, MA). The SEPAC meeting begins at 6:00. The presentation, **Fostering Independence in Young Adults** begins at 6:30. This presentation is appropriate for parents of high school students.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathleen Bent