

TOOLS FOR CHANGE

Local SEPAC Start Up Checklist

- Identify SEPAC Mission, purpose and function.
- Determine the role of the Special Education Director.
- Create a diverse membership.
- Build Stakeholder representation.
- Establish operating procedures (bylaws, norms).
- Hold orientation/planning meeting.
- Advertise and promote meetings.
- Set priorities.
- Establish communication and consensus-building strategies.
- Determine annual activities and projects.
- Review annual accomplishments and decide on next steps.

Adapted from 'A Guide for Local Special Education Advisory Committees in Colorado,' © 2010 produced by the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC) and Colorado Department of Education, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/CSEAC.asp> (303) 866-6943.

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Sample SEPAC Job Description

This position has primary responsibility for working with other SEPAC members to fulfill the following functions outlined:

- Advise the local school district of needs in the education of children with disabilities.
- Participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities.
- Submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of children with disabilities to the division superintendent for transmission to the local school board.
- Assist the local school district in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services.
- Review the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services prior to submission to the local school board.
- Participate in the review of the local school district's annual plan.

Individuals in this position work closely with the local director of special education. Other responsibilities include:

- Review and abide by SEPAC bylaws.
- Attend regularly scheduled local SEPAC meetings.
- Maintain an ongoing knowledge of special education law.
- Be informed of activities of the committee and familiar with current school division special education plans.
- Read the minutes of each meeting; advise the chair of any corrections or additions.
- Participate in the work of the SEPAC, including serving on subcommittees when required.
- Encourage parents and other community members to join/attend the SEPAC.
- Participate in community awareness activities to increase visibility of the local SEPAC.
- Focus on systems change, not personal grievances or individual advocacy.
- Work collaboratively with other SEPAC members and school division leadership and personnel.

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Sample Mission Statements

- 1 Our mission is to facilitate communication between students, parents, community members, administrators, and the Board of Education, for the purpose of improving the quality of district-wide special education policies, programs, and practices. The (district name) SEPAC offers the opportunity to raise questions, to voice your concerns, and to provide direct input to administrators regarding Special Services and the Board of Education.
- 2 The mission of the (district name) SEPAC is to facilitate collaboration between students, parents, staff, the Board of Education, and the community in order to promote inclusion, understanding of, respect for, and support of all children with special needs in our community.
- 3 The (district name) Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is a district-wide volunteer organization. We offer advice, provide information, and make available resources to parents of children with special educational needs. We work closely with the (district name) Child Study Team to identify areas of need from (grade levels). We are parents of children with learning differences and we are willing to share our experience and information with you. The (district name) SEPAC is a supportive, informative, and encouraging forum for you and your child. It is our goal to empower you, the parent, to become an effective advocate for your child.
- 4 The mission of the (district name) Special Education Parental Advisory Council (SEPAC) is to encourage honest and effective communication, understanding, and mutual respect in a supportive partnership inclusive of all students, parents, educators, and the community at large in an effort to ensure the delivery of appropriate services to students with disabilities.

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Sample Copy for a Flyer

SEPAC's role:

- To provide direct input on the policies, programs, and practices that affect services and supports for students with disabilities.
- To increase the involvement of families of children with special needs.
- To advise on issues that affect the education, health, and safety of students with special needs.

Who should attend a SEPAC meeting?

- Anyone in the district with a student or students with disabilities.
- Anyone with a student or students eligible for or receiving services under an IEP or 504 plan.

What happens at a SEPAC meeting?

- Concerns related to a group of students are shared and discussed.
- District representatives provide updates related to special services in the school district and at the state and national levels.
- Parents have adequate time to discuss issues among themselves and plan the agenda for the next meeting.
- Speakers, other district leaders, and individual staff members may be invited, based upon requests from the SEPAC.

What else can a member of the SEPAC do to advance the mission?

- Volunteer to be a parent representative regarding issues and concerns raised at your individual school.
- Remember that SEPAC meetings are not the forum for a discussion about individual students or a child's IEP. Topics are limited to those which impact all students or a group of students. Additionally, these meetings are for parents only. It is not appropriate to have your child attend these meetings.

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Sample SEPAC Bylaws

The SEPAC will provide input and make recommendations on special education policy, programs, and practices to the district.

SEPAC members will act as liaisons to share comments and concerns with school leaders.

A secretary will be appointed to coordinate activities, attend meetings, and take minutes at SEPAC meetings. Meeting minutes and an agenda will be distributed prior to all meetings.

Meetings will be held at a variety of times and locations and will be announced on the SEPAC website. Notices will be available in every school and will be distributed to parents, including those in out-of-district placements, via print and email.

Principals, PTO Presidents, and Child Study Teams will assist in identifying parents who may want to be part of the SEPAC.

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall govern all meetings in all cases in which they are applicable, and in which they are not in conflict with these bylaws.

The SEPAC will work to ensure that membership reflects the linguistic, religious, racial, cultural and socio-economic diversity of the local school community and includes members from each preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school, as well as at least one parent of a student receiving services out-of-district.

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Members Present: _____
 Recorder: _____

Today's Date: _____
 Date/Time/Place of Next Meeting: _____

Agenda Item	Person Initiating	Summary of Discussion/Task List	Action Decision	Person to Follow Up	Target Date Completion
Parent Input- Access to Library- Elem school	SEPAC	Students in third grade are unable to use the library. There are stairs and one child is in a wheelchair so the entire class does not go to library.	Build a ramp so all students have access to the library.	TD will contact the principal and set a deadline for completion.	Principal by Dec 1. Deadline for completion Dec 20.
Parent Input- Social Skills instruction needed	SEPAC	Parents concerned that lack of social skills instruction impacts education, students are bullied and having difficulty participating in group projects. DSS had no funding for social skills.	DSS and SEPAC leaders will reach out to local universities to find students interested in running social skills programs as interns.	DSS & TD SEPAC Co-Leader	Dec 12
SEPAC Input	SEPAC	SEPAC would like visible location on district website and on each school website, ability to share contact and meeting information.	SEPAC information will be posted on district and school websites. Parent reps of schools to check to make sure information is updated on school websites.	DSS will contact webmaster to add SEPAC to website under Student Services	At last one week before next meeting
District Input- New Transition Coordinator	DSS	The district Transition Coordinator will be looking at improving programs and transition services.	Parents would like a meeting with Transition Coordinator to share concerns, discuss programs and how parents can help with community job coaching locations.	DSS TD	Hire date Dec Meeting date in Jan
District Input Professional Development	DSS	113 district paraprofessionals will be attending a training on Positive Behavior Supports.	This training may reduce the use of restraint by teaching staff de-escalation techniques and to help students self-regulate their behaviors.		Training is on PD Half day Nov 30
Possible Agenda Items for Next Meeting:			Odds and Ends List Next Meeting Date:		
1. 2. 3.			1. 2. 3.		

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Members Present: _____
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Today's Date: _____
 Date/Time/Place of Next Meeting: _____

Agenda Item	Person Initiating	Summary of Discussion/Task List	Action Decision	Person to Follow Up	Target Date Completion
Possible Agenda Items for Next Meeting:			Odds and Ends List Next Meeting Date:		
1.			1.		
2.			2.		
3.			3.		
4.			4.		
5.			5.		

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List possible topics for discussion at a SEPAC meeting.	Is this topic...		What are some ways that this issue can be addressed/resolved?
	Individual? (address through IEP)	Systemic? (affects most/ all students)	
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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What information do you still need?
With whom will you share the information you learned today?
Who do you need to speak with to move forward with your local SEPAC?
What are your next steps?

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What outcome do we want?
Observable Indicator: How will we know we've achieved that outcome?
What action will we take to achieve that outcome?
What help do we need to achieve this?

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The following form can be used by SEPAC members and the director of special education to get an impression of how well the SEPAC is doing. Each member and director of special education should complete the form about four weeks before the meeting at which the results will be reviewed. Ideally, a subcommittee of the SEPAC will receive the completed forms, collate the results, and write a report indicating the number of respondents who rated the SEPAC for each of the 12 considerations.

Considerations	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
1. SEPAC members have full and common understanding of the functions, roles, and responsibilities of the SEPAC.					
2. The SEPAC has clear and easy to understand by-laws.					
3. The SEPAC has clear priorities based on objective assessment of needs.					
4. The SEPAC has established procedures for reporting needs for the education of children with disabilities and making recommendations to the school board.					
5. The SEPAC seeks diverse input in developing recommendations to the school board.					
6. The SEPAC effectively outreaches to special education constituencies.					

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Considerations	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
7. SEPAC meetings facilitate focus and progress on important issues and matters.					
8. The SEPAC receives regular reports on budgets, program performance, and other important matters.					
9. The SEPAC regularly monitors and evaluates progress on priority issues.					
10. All necessary skills and stakeholders are represented on the SEPAC.					
11. The SEPAC conducts ongoing training for its members.					
12. School board and division personnel are responsive to the work of the SEPAC.					

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