

GD SEPAC By-Laws

Adopted: 9/8/2010

Amended: 2/2026

Article I: NAME

The official name of the organization is the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District Special Education Parent Advisory Council, Inc. or GDRSD SEPAC, or GD SEPAC (hereinafter, SEPAC)

Article II: AUTHORITY

The SEPAC was established in September 1996 with the support of the Student Services Department of the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District (GDRSD) as required by the Massachusetts special education law, Chapter 766 regulations, section 600.0.

In September of 2010, in accordance with the Massachusetts DESE Guidance for Special Education Parent Advisory Council's guidelines dated March 2010, the GDRSD SpedPAC, Inc., as it was known, was dissolved, and the GDRSD SEPAC (hereto forth, "SEPAC") was established.

The SEPAC is formed pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of Chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws and 603 CMR 28 and is a self-governing public body that creates its own bylaws and operational procedures. Because SEPAC does not vest officers with independent authority, it is not subject to Open Meeting Law, per MA determination OML 2021-150.

Article III: MISSION

The SEPAC is charged, under Commonwealth law, to educate and advise the district and families on matters related to “Special” education. In doing so, this group works to create and to support a network of families who have children with disabilities and together, work to further inclusion and equity across GDRSD and our communities.

Specifically, the mission of the SEPAC is to provide a network in which families of children with unique needs and disabilities have access to relevant information, training, and support; and, to foster dialogue, education, and mutual respect throughout the Groton Dunstable Regional School District community.

Article IV: GOALS

MGL 71B and 603 CMR 28 state that the duties of the SEPAC, *“shall include but not be limited to advising the school committee on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities: meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school committee’s special education programs.”*

In addition to the provisions and description of a SEPAC set forth in Commonwealth law, this SEPAC aims to further the deepening and understanding of, dignity and respect for, and support of all children, especially those identified with disabilities or other unique needs within our community, the SEPAC will work to:

A. Support and promote a network of families of children with unique needs and provide a forum to share information specific to the experiences of supporting exceptional children.

B. Advise the Director of Student Services and School Committee on operations and development of special education programs, parent and teacher training needs, help to develop policy, and collaborate with the families we partner with.

1. This work includes, but is not limited to the collaboration on procedures related to planning, development, and evaluation of disability education in the district, participation in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts (including a seat on the School Committee's DEI Advisory Board), participation in Special Education Budget and Five-Year Planning process and other related School Committee business through the non-voting SEPAC seat on the GDRSD SC.
2. Promote communication between SEPAC members, local, state, and national organizations, including but not limited to disability/need specific councils and groups;
3. Communicate with the community and promote programs that serve to further the understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of disabled members of our communities, including state and national policy issues;
4. Serve as a resource for community members, including teachers, administrators, specialists, tutors, paraprofessionals, aides, or any other staff members;
5. Sponsor informational programs and events for parents, educators, students, and professionals based on community needs and interests. This may include informal meetings, workshops, speaker series, forums, meetings, or other activities to educate and support parents of children with unique needs, as well as the district administration, staff, and/or

other interested parties in areas such as, but not limited to: special education programs and services, inclusion, advocacy, learning disabilities, behavior issues, mental health, Massachusetts special education laws;

6. Support and promote equitable and appropriate educational opportunities for students, especially those with unique needs; and,
7. Collaborate with leaders in the school district and community, including parent-teacher organizations, faculty, staff, student councils, and community groups toward the inclusion and betterment of education of all students in the district.

Article V: MEMBERSHIP

A. Membership Status

1. General Membership shall be open to any resident of the towns of Groton or Dunstable, anyone affiliated with the Groton Dunstable Regional School District, or any member of the public residing in our two towns, regardless of housing status.

2. Voting Membership shall be any general member who is a parent or guardian of a child with a disability (special needs) as defined by Massachusetts Chapter 766 Regulations, residing in Groton or Dunstable, regardless of Individualized Education Plan/504 status; or is a parent or guardian of a child with a disability (special needs), as defined by Massachusetts Chapter 766 Regulations, who attends the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District.
3. Officers are elected by the voting membership and hold office for one or two years. The Chair/Co-Chair and Co-Chair/Vice-Chair may not hold the same office for consecutive terms except by 2/3-majority vote of the board members present at a board meeting. If any office becomes vacant, an election for that office shall be held immediately, with the term to expire at the next annual meeting. All positions may be shared by one or more individuals. Offices to be held include, but are not limited to: Chair/Co-Chair, Co/Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.

B. Duties

All members shall endeavor to support the SEPAC to further the purposes stated in Articles III and IV of these By-Laws. All voting board members (officers) shall endeavor to attend all regular meetings of the SEPAC. All members who wish to

receive notices or other communications from the SEPAC shall deliver all of the necessary information required to receive such notices and other information in the form in which such notices or information is delivered.

Article VI: OFFICERS AND ELECTIONS

A. Officers

The SEPAC shall have a Chair/Co-Chair, Co or Vice-Chair, and Secretary / Treasurer (herein referred to collectively sometimes as the “Officers”). Any voting member of the SEPAC shall be qualified to be an Officer.

B. Duties

All Officers shall use their offices to support the SEPAC to further the purposes stated in Article III of these By-Laws. In addition, each Officer shall have the duties set forth below. Each position can be served by no more than two (2) people at one time. If two people serve in the same position, the duties must be equally shared.

The duties of officers may include but are not limited to what is described below. However, all officers may perform such other functions as the SEPAC shall require and/or determine based on need.

1. Chair/Co-Chair

- a. Set the agenda for and preside over all meetings of the SEPAC.
- b. Execute and supervise responsibilities related to contracts and agreements on the organization's behalf, and sign any such contracts and agreements.
- c. Recommend the organization of and oversee the functioning of the SEPAC sub-committees, special projects, and events.

d. Act as liaison with the Director of Student Services and the Groton Dunstable School Committee, in the event that there is not an appointed officer currently serving in that capacity.

e. Approve expenditures.

f. Lead and work with the Co-Chair/Vice Chair to coordinate all communication between the SEPAC and its membership. As well as school leadership, staff and community.

G. Oversee recruitment for new members

2. Vice-Chair/Co-Chair

a. Perform the duties of the Chairperson in their absence or as requested by the Chairperson

b. Assist the Chair/Co-Chair in setting the agenda for the general meetings.

c. Assist the Chair to act as liaison with the Director of Student Services and/or School Committee. .

d. Perform such other functions as the SEPAC shall determine, such as fundraising.

e. External communications: website updates, social meeting marketing, SEPAC email and drive, etc.

f. Lead school communication of events to the community, school representatives, social media, etc. as well as communication between the SEPAC and its membership.

g . Oversee recruitment of new members

3. Secretary

a. Coordinate the recording and filing of minutes of the SEPAC and subcommittees; admin meetings, BOD and general meetings.

- b. Assist with recruitment of new members.

4. Treasurer

- a. Lead efforts to apply for grants, donations, reimbursements, or any other funds for which the SEPAC may be eligible.

- b. Manage and account for funds collected, donated, and spent for SEPAC

5. Other Officers/Members at Large

- a. Any other Officer position is to perform such duties as may be provided for by these by-laws in support of SEPAC's mission and goals.

C. Election of Officers and Terms

Elections shall be the first order of business during the last board of director's meeting of the given school year. Nominations will be made verbally by the voting officers present at the meeting. All voting officers are eligible to make nominations. Elections shall be decided by a single majority vote of the voting officers present. New officers shall take office immediately following their election.

Members at Large will be elected or appointed, as needed and based on specific and related skills that are beneficial to furthering SEPAC's mission and goals. Such special and related skills may include but are not limited to: educators, advocates, clinicians, disability specialists, and medical providers.

D. Removal of Officers

Any Officer who does not perform the duties of that office may be relieved of the position by a majority vote of the remaining Officers (either by email, in person, or written submission).

If any such Officer shall be removed pursuant to the provisions of this Section D of this Article V, the vacancy shall be filled as outlined in Section E of this Article V of these by-laws.

E. Vacancy

If a vacancy shall occur for any reason, the remaining Officers shall appoint a successor who shall serve in such capacity for the remainder of the term. If there are no remaining Officers, the voting member of longest standing shall assume the duties of Chairperson until the members elect a successor at the next meeting of the SEPAC board or general meeting.

In the event of the resignation of the Chair, if there is a Co-Chair, they shall serve alone for the duration of the term. If there is no Co-Chair, the Vice-Chair shall succeed the Chair for the duration of the term.

F. Resignation

Any Officer shall have the right to resign their office at any time for any reason by written notice to the remaining Officers. Such resignation shall become effective upon the date the same shall be received by the Officers. An interim successor shall be appointed or determined in accordance with the provisions of Section E of this Article V.

G. Multiple Offices

Nothing contained in this Article V shall be construed to limit or prohibit one member from holding more than one office of the SEPAC.

Article VII: SUBCOMMITTEES

The SEPAC shall have the right to create one or more subcommittees to fulfill the purposes or to carry out the work of the SEPAC. The subcommittee chairperson shall be a volunteer or willing nominee accepted by a simple majority vote of the voting members present at a general meeting. Each subcommittee shall designate a spokesperson who shall report to the SEPAC at such times as the Chairperson shall direct.

Article VIII: MEETINGS

A. General Meetings

General Meetings shall be held at least every other month, from September through June. Notice of all general meeting dates will be requested to be published in individual school newsletters/principal updates and shared electronically (e.g. district websites, social media, digital school newsletters, or a SEPAC website if one should exist) to the best of the ability of SEPAC.

B. Additional Meetings

The Chair or Vice-Chair / Co-chairs or any three (3) voting members of the SEPAC may call additional meetings of the SEPAC with respect to matters that require attention prior to the next annual meeting. If a meeting of the SEPAC is called, the Secretary shall notify as many of the members of the SEPAC as is reasonably practical of the date of such meeting at least five (5) days prior to the date of such meeting.

Meetings of a casual nature, such as SEPAC-hosted parent networking/meet and greets or ad-hoc school-specific events will be publicized as would all general meetings. Occasionally, some general meetings will be casual in nature.

Other events and activities such as speaker series, workshops, discussion groups, forums, etc. will be held, for the purpose of training and education, and funded by the SEPAC during the school calendar year.

C. Meeting Requirements

All meetings of the SEPAC shall be open to the public, provided, however, that the Officers may meet in “*executive session*” or hold “*leadership meetings*” as the Officers

shall deem necessary or appropriate to discuss matters which are for strategic purposes, of a sensitive or confidential nature.

D. Meeting Procedures

The Chair (along with the Co-Chair when such a role is being utilized) shall preside over all regular meetings. If the Chair is not present, the Co-Chair/Vice-Chair shall preside over such meeting if the Co-Chair/Vice-Chair shall be present. If the Chair and the Vice-Chair are not present, the Secretary shall preside over such a meeting if the Secretary shall be present. If no Officer is present, the voting member of the longest standing is present.

1. Voting Matters which require a vote to be taken of the voting membership include, but are not limited to the following items:

a. Change in the By-laws can only be voted on at a general meeting.
Simple majority rules.

b. A commitment to financial resources requires a simple majority of voting members present at a general meeting.

c. Elections require a vote as described in Article V, Section C.

d. A commitment to provide support of a matter such as but not limited to district, town, and/or state finances/matters, curriculum, policy and/or any other pertinent issue regarding staff, students and/or community matters will require a simple majority vote of SEPAC officers only. All statements will be given on behalf of the SEPAC Board of Directors.

Article IX: AMENDMENTS

These By-laws may be amended by a simple majority vote of the officers and voting members present at a general meeting, provided that no amendment shall authorize the officers to conduct the affairs of this Council in any manner or for any purpose contrary to the provisions of the Massachusetts DESE Special Education PAC Guidelines (March 2010).

Article X: FUNDING

The SEPAC will actively pursue grants, donations, and fundraising activities to support its mission.

Article XI:EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

Expenditure of funds in excess of \$50 requires the approval of a majority by the SEPAC officers. Expenditures by the SEPAC officers of less than \$50 are reimbursable by submitting receipts to the Treasurer, but these expenditures must be discussed in advance.

Article XII: SEVERABILITY

If any provision of these By-Laws shall to any extent be invalid, the remainder of these By-Laws shall not be affected thereby.

Article XIII: DISSOLUTION

Upon dissolution of the GDRSD SEPAC, assets shall be distributed to the Student Services Department of the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District.