

Quick Guide to Starting a SEPAC

It takes time, effort, and patience to build an effective Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAC). Use a structured and transparent process to boost parent input and build an effective partnership.

- ❖ First, parents should contact school district leaders and ask if the district has a SEPAC. If YES, a parent can ask about the meeting schedule and who to contact to learn more.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PARENTS

- If there is NO active SEPAC, work with District leaders to identify other interested parents.
- Connect with MassPAC for help in starting or developing a SEPAC.
- Review the **DESE SEPAC Guide** and national **Advocacy in Action Guide**.
- Join regional special education parent leadership groups/pages on Facebook.
- Work with the District to hold an organizational meeting, establish an Interim Leadership Team.
- Develop a short mission statement to explain the function and purpose of the SEPAC.
- Form a committee to review, revise or develop a set of SEPAC by-laws
 - Establish basic ground rules for membership and activities.
 - Define member roles and responsibilities.
 - Set requirements for elections.
- Work with the District to communicate activities, share draft by-laws – website, flyers, messages
- Hold a public meeting to adopt by-laws, set date for elections.
- Plan and hold SEPAC elections.

BEST PRACTICES FOR DISTRICTS

- Develop a list of potential parent leaders; SEPAC membership should reflect the diversity of families in the school district.
- Invite all parents of children receiving special education or related services, including those with 504 plans, to an organizational meeting.
- Work with an Interim Leadership team to develop a mission statement and by-laws. Districts should retain copies of SEPAC by-laws for reference.
- Invite Interim Leadership Team to School Committee so they can outline the plan to establish a SEPAC and ask for support.
- Offer to send out notices or a needs assessment survey to parents.
- Work with Interim Leadership Team to plan meetings and develop a meeting schedule.
- Offer meeting assistance with respect to technology or translation.
- Establish a schedule of regular meetings with Interim Leadership Team.
- Set up a communication plan through district channels.