

MIDDLEBOROUGH SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENTS’ ADVISORY COUNCIL BY-LAWS

(Revised 5/2019)

MISSION STATEMENT:

- To educate families with workshops, presentations, resources and materials regarding topics of interest to caregivers of children and adolescents with disabilities and to the community.
- To create awareness and successfully empower families’ involvement in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of all aspects of special education within the Middleborough Public School district, as well as participate in the school district's budgetary process as it pertains to special education students.
- To advise the district on matters which pertain to the education and safety of children and adolescents with disabilities, ensuring equal access to educational and school-based opportunities.
- To raise funds for the purpose of promoting inclusion in all aspects of the community, for example: to provide scholarships for children with disabilities to enjoy extracurricular activities, to run events that provide families with the opportunities to experience community activities in a safe and understanding environment, to sponsor local sports teams that foster inclusion and cater to children with special needs

ARTICLE I: Name

Middleborough Special Education Parents Advisory Council (hereinafter referred to as SEPAC).

ARTICLE II: Purpose

- To share information and provide support for all parents or guardians of children and adolescents receiving special education services.
- To actively participate with school department staff and personnel in the planning, development, and evaluation of the School Committee’s special education program.
- To foster better understanding, improve communication, and strengthen the partnership among staff, educators, parents/guardians, students, administrators, School Committee members, and the Middleborough community concerning all aspects of special education programming.
- To be a community resource for children and families in Middleborough that aids in ensuring that those with special needs are treated with respect and dignity, and are being included in as many aspects of the community/society as they are able to/would like to.

ARTICLE III: Membership

SEPAC general membership shall be open to all interested persons in the community. Voting membership will be limited to parents and guardians of children and adolescents with disabilities (those receiving special education services /on IEP’s or 504 plans) who reside in, or whose child attends school in Middleborough- including those who reside in Middleborough but are in out of district placements.

ARTICLE IV: Officers

The officers of the council shall consist of at least one chairperson, a treasurer, and secretary. This minimum is meant to ensure a “majority” Board vote is possible. Co-chairpersons (hereinafter referred to as President/Vice President), a treasurer, and a secretary and committee chairs can be elected by simple majority vote of the members. Nominations for officers (hereinafter referred to as the Board) shall be made bi-annually during the Spring (at an agreed upon date decided by the Board, in general around the time of Spring break) with elections conducted during the following meeting of the school year. Vacancies can be filled by vote mid-year, as needed. This timeline allows the new Board to prepare for planning the upcoming schoolyear. The term for each Board is to be two years.

ARTICLE V: Duties of the Officers

Roles in general will be as follows, however can be delegated as necessary for the size of the Board, to ensure that responsibilities are appropriately accounted for.

- President/Vice President: The specifics for each role are to be determined between them, granted there is both a president and vice president elected. If there is only one, all responsibilities will be divided amongst the Board as necessary/agreed upon
 - a) Submit notice of upcoming meetings to local/social media
 - b) Draft an agenda for each meeting
 - c) Attend and preside over all regularly scheduled meetings
 - d) Design and/or approve designs of brochures, flyers, and promotional materials
 - e) Serve as resource and point of contact for parents and others seeking information about the council
 - f) Act as a liaison between families and the district/school officials, including the Superintendent, Director of Pupil Personnel, Special Education Coordinators, the School Committee, and principals/educators
 - g) Identify common goals/issues and lead efforts to advise the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities
 - h) With the help of other board members and members, spearhead fundraising efforts
 - i) Help transition knowledge and expertise to the next Board upon end of term
- Treasurer :
 - a) Maintain complete and accurate records of receipts and expenditures in accordance with the SEPAC’s budget
 - b) Provide a financial statement to members at regularly scheduled meetings, as necessary and/or if requested
 - c) Coordinate efforts to apply for grants, solicit donations and/or reimbursements and any other funds for which the SEPAC may be eligible.
- Secretary:
 - a) Record minutes at every meeting, both general and Board
 - b) Draft and distribute (via listserv/email) approved general meeting minutes
 - c) Maintain an accurate attendance log of meeting attendees

- d) Maintain an accurate list of members/contact information
- e) Count and record all vote results

In addition, the Board will be responsible for communicating and collaborating with School Committee members to provide an annual update to the School Board on the status and needs of Middleborough's special education system.

Board members are also required to be in attendance at *all* Board and general SEPAC meetings, as well as special events, unless otherwise agreed upon by consensus of the Board. If a Board member cannot be present at a general SEPAC meeting, he or she must delegate their duties to another person prior to the meeting. While there are many reasons a person may be unable to attend a meeting/event, excessive absenteeism may be cause for impeachment.

ARTICLE VI: Resignation/Removal of officers

The Board members and committee chairs are voluntary positions. Those who are filling those positions are committing their time and efforts to meet the needs of the SEPAC and our community. If at any time a Board member or committee chair cannot meet these standards and complete their duties, they may choose to step down. If at any time a Board member or committee chair cannot meet these standards, another Board member/committee member may motion for a referendum to remove them from office. This must include the stated cause for removal and will be decided by a simple majority of the voting members, resulting in impeachment. When impeached, an officer will be removed from office, and a special election to elect a replacement for the vacant position will be held. The Board will request nominations from the SEPAC via written (email) notification of the vacancy and will give a limited (preferably one month) window in which to submit them. A vote will follow, unless there is only one nominee- in which case, they will automatically be inducted.

ARTICLE VII: Meetings

- At least 6 meetings will be held each school year, with an initial meeting in September and subsequent meetings planned for the remainder of the school year according to a calendar identified by Board members at the end of the previous school year. Summer meetings can be scheduled at the discretion of the membership.
- All meetings shall be open to the public and advance notice will be made in the local media/social media.
- There will be, every year, a "Basic Rights" training for families, preferably in the Fall, scheduled with the Director of Pupil Personnel.

ARTICLE VIII: Voting

Voting privileges are reserved for those SEPAC members described in Article III, including those families with children in out-of-district placements. "Voting membership" per se will additionally be determined by attendance at meetings, and/or by specific request made by an individual to receive email updates, if they are unable to be in attendance at meetings. To protect the integrity of a well-informed group, members may not simply show up for the first time only to vote on business if they have never attended previously. You must have attended at least one other meeting within the past year to vote. Voting membership is required to vote in bi-annual officer elections, mid-year vacancy elections, and all other business that comes before the SEPAC at a regular meeting, for which a vote is called by a Board member.

ARTICLE IX: Social Media/Email

Social media accounts bearing the name and influence of Middleborough SEPAC shall be controlled by one person. This shall be the Chairperson (President/Vice President), unless it is otherwise delegated. All posts on social media shall be approved by the board and posted via the MPAC profile at the discretion of that *one* person in charge, to prevent repeat or conflicting posts.

In addition, to ensure the privacy of sensitive personal health and education information that may be shared within the SEPAC, the listserv will not serve as a method by which to conduct a virtual meeting. The Board may send out emails to inform the members as necessary and agreed upon, however, all such messages will be blind carbon copied, and should not result in back and forth group emails. Any issues arising in regard to SEPAC business should be directly communicated to a Board member, or at an upcoming scheduled SEPAC meeting.

ARTICLE X: Committees

If at such time the SEPAC has grown and members seek to volunteer their time and expertise to fulfill a certain need in the group, committees may be created. Committees will be created by consensus of the Board, either by their own volition or by request, and each committee must consist of at least two members: a chairperson and a member. Committee chairpersons will be required to speak about the status of a committee matter, if and when they are called upon during regular SEPAC meetings or invited to attend Board meetings. Committees will be overseen and regulated by the Board, however the committee will have the ability to call their own separate meetings to discuss related business, so long as the Board is made aware. Board members may send a representative should they wish to, however, it is not required. Committee meetings may not interfere with scheduled general SEPAC meetings or events. Any by-laws and regulations relating to committees that may be created going forward may be added as an addendum to these by-laws without requiring formal amendment procedure.

ARTICLE XI: Conflicts of Interest

If there is a conflict of interest with regard to any matter coming before the SEPAC, the member with whom the conflict exists must exclude themselves from voting on the matter at hand.

ARTICLE XII: Non-profit status

The treasurer will seek, and continue to research, the benefits of the SEPAC applying for 501c3 non-profit organization status. This possibility helps broaden the SEPAC's ability to raise funds. If the Board so decides, the treasurer may then apply for 501c3 status. 501c3 status will be maintained as long as the Board decides it is in the SEPAC's best interests by a simple majority vote, and this matter can be readdressed annually as necessary.

ARTICLE XIII: Funding Requests

Any individual or organization desiring a donation/funds from the SEPAC must provide, in writing, a request and itemization of how any funds received will be utilized. After funds are dispersed, the SEPAC will collect a receipt or invoice for goods/services purchased with SEPAC funds, if available and appropriate.

ARTICLE XIV: Amending

These by-laws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Board by a majority vote, or, if the Board cannot come to a consensus, by a majority vote at a regular SEPAC meeting, so long as the matter has been addressed at a previous meeting .