

**PVCICS SEPAC Meeting
April 13, 2016**

Present:

Diane Preston, SEPAC Chair

Kathy Wang, Principal

Rose Carr, Special Education Administrator

Christin Glodek, Dee Dice - parents

Meeting called to order at 9:00 AM by Diane Preston

Public Comments:

A parent asked for an explanation of what type of training for special needs / disabilities students is required for all teachers, including general education teachers, and specifically when does training happen and what is the frequency of the training. The school administrators responded that training is provided during the 10 days prior to the start of the academic year and during the 3 curriculum days during the school year. The content of the training varies depending on identified issues or needs. The parent suggested that such training is more effective if provided throughout the school year rather than during the first ten days when so much new information is disseminated to teachers. *The SEPAC would like more information about the content and timing of such training.*

A parent shared information about the Brain Analysis & Neuro-Development Center, LLC (BAND Center) in Hadley, BANDCenterllc.com. Flyers were distributed summarizing the BAND Center's new services in Executive Functioning Coaching, Social Thinking Groups and Transition Services Consultation.

MCAS "Opt-out"

Diane Preston, on behalf of a family not present, asked the administrators about the procedure for "opting out" of MCAS, in particular for students with anxiety issues. Kathy Wang shared Commissioner Chester's Letter from October 15, 2014, which says that state law "does not contain an 'opt-out' provision for parents to remove their children from participating. In short, participation in the statewide student assessment program is mandatory." Also, the Commissioner's Weekly Update on January 29, 2016, restates this information and discusses how principals should encourage families to participate in the testing.

The parents at the meeting and Diane Preston said that they had read conflicting information. *Diane Preston said that she would research the issue and provide a summary at a later date.*

Bylaws:

The proposed draft bylaws were distributed for review. Diane Preston is accepting suggestions, edits, and revisions until the next General Meeting in May. A vote to accept the Bylaws will be taken at the May meeting. See Appendix for Bylaws.

There was a discussion about how to provide required notice of meeting times, agendas and meeting minutes. *Diane Preston will provide this information to the Principal to post on the Parent Information section of the school website. Diane Preston will research other methods for providing notice.*

Officer Nominations:

The SEPAC is accepting nominations for the officer positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Elections will be held at the next meeting in May. Diane Preston nominated herself for Chair. Another parent seconded the nomination.

Recognition for Excellence Awards:

A nomination form was distributed and ideas were discussed about how to honor the nominees. One parent suggested that a pot-luck luncheon could be provided by the parents. Posters, certificates, and flowers or plants were all mentioned, but a final decision was not made.

Flyer for SEPAC to be distributed at IEP / 504 Meetings

Rose Carr was given flyers announcing upcoming meetings to be provided to parents at IEP / 504 meetings.

Staff Chart / Diagram:

Parents expressed confusion regarding the different roles and specialty areas of administrative staff and counselors. The roles and grade levels served by staff have changed during the school year and the administrative structure for special ed and counseling is unclear to some. The SEPAC asked the school for an organizational diagram with job descriptions and responsibilities of staff, as well as to which grades each member is assigned. *Rose Carr said that she would ask the Principal for such a diagram.* (At this time, Kathy Wang was not present due to the meeting lasting longer than planned and conflicting with another appointment.)

A parent asked how many students with IEPs, students with 504 Plans and students in RtI are currently enrolled at the school, and Rose Carr said she did not have exact numbers, but she estimated approximately 26 with IEPs and 26 with 504 Plans. She did not have any data for RtI. *The SEPAC would like such data when available.*

Substitute Policy:

Two parents shared their experiences with substitute teachers not being notified of their children's 504 Plans and having had negative consequences as a result. One family had this problem so frequently that a substitute teacher plan was written in the student's 504 Plan, but the family stated that the plan had not been followed.

There was some discussion about which staff member should be responsible for providing such information to substitutes. It was noted that classroom teachers could provide the information when they are planning to be absent, but a protocol should be established for unplanned absences (illnesses, emergencies). *Rose Carr said that she is writing a handbook for 504 Plans for the PVCICS staff and will add a section for notifying substitute teachers. The SEPAC would like to receive a copy of the handbook and policy when completed.*

Mental Health First Aid Training:

Diane Preston discussed meeting with Colleen Osten who has received a significant grant to train middle school and high school educators in the Pioneer Valley in Mental Health First Aid, www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org. Hadley and South Hadley have already registered 50 and 75 educators for the 8-hour training. The training and materials are free for schools until the grant runs out. *Diane Preston will try to set up a subsequent meeting with Ms. Osten and the administration.*

Future Discussion Topic: When should a student attend their IEP/504 meeting?

Rose Carr stated that the law mandates that students must be invited to their meetings at age 14. However, in her experience, most students find the meetings intimidated and do not stay for the entire meeting. Students may attend at younger ages, but they often prefer not to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25AM.

The next meeting had been scheduled for May 11th, but this date may change due to MCAS testing in the building.

Appendix A

Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School Special Education Parent Advisory Council By-laws

Article I: Name

The name of this organization shall be the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School Special Education Parent Advisory Council, also known as PVCICS SEPAC (hereinafter referred to as "SEPAC").

Article II: Purpose

A. **Statutory Authority.** The SEPAC receives its statutory authority from the Chapter 71B, Section 3 of the Massachusetts General Laws. This authority is also codified in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR), 603 CMR 28.07(4).

B. **Duties.** The SEPAC's duties include, but are not limited to:

1. Advising the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School ("PVCICS") on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities;
2. Meeting regularly with PVCICS officials; and
3. Participating in the planning, development, and evaluation of PVCICS's special education programs.

C. **Mission.** The mission of the SEPAC is to work for understanding of, respect for, and support of all children with special needs in the community. To that end, the SEPAC will work to:

1. Advise PVCICS on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities;
2. Meet regularly with PVCICS school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the PVCICS's special education programs;
3. Assist PVCICS in coordinating the presentation of at least one workshop annually on the rights of students and their parents and guardians under state and federal special education laws;
4. Promote a support network of parents of children with special needs, and provide a forum to share information; and

5. Provide educational and informational forums to parents, educators and students.

Article III: Membership

- A. **General.** General membership shall be open to any interested person.
- B. **Voting.** Voting membership shall be limited to any general member who is a parent or guardian of a student attending PVCICS.
- C. **Member.** As used in these by-laws, the word “member” means general members, voting members or both, as the context indicates.

Article IV: Officers

- A. **Officer Positions.** The SEPAC may, by majority vote, create any of the following officer positions, and eliminate the same by majority vote: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer (“Officers”). Officers shall be voting members of the SEPAC, elected per the provisions of Article VI. Officers may, from time to time, delegate any of their duties to another Officer.
- B. **Officer Duties.** The duties of the Officers shall include:
 1. Chair:
 - a. Set the agenda for each general meeting.
 - b. Preside at all meetings of the SEPAC.
 - c. Recommend the organization and monitor the function of committees and subcommittees and appoint committee members.
 - d. Act as liaison between parents of students with disabilities or suspected disabilities and the PVCICS administration.
 - e. Prepare periodic reports for the PVCICS administration regarding SEPAC activities and needs.
 - f. Represent and speak on behalf of the SEPAC at meetings of the PVCICS Board of Trustees.
 - g. Make an annual presentation to the PVCICS Board of Trustees.
 2. Vice-Chair:
 - a. Preside at meetings in the absence of the Chair, or at the request of the Chair.

- b. Coordinate public communications (if needed), not including those communications that are the Secretary's.
 - c. Assist the Chair as appropriate and perform those responsibilities of the Chair at his/her request.
3. Secretary:
- a. Coordinate all communication between SEPAC and its membership.
 - b. Maintain a list of the voting members and a list of general members.
 - c. Coordinate the recording, filing and posting of minutes of the SEPAC and its committees.
 - d. Collect and review all correspondence of the SEPAC.
4. Treasurer:
- a. Keep a full and accurate account of receipts and expenditures, and in accordance with the budget adopted by the SEPAC.
 - b. Arrange disbursements as authorized by the Officers or SEPAC. Disbursement for non-budgeted items must be approved by the Officers and is limited to \$50.00. Disbursement for non-budgeted items exceeding this amount must be approved by a majority vote of the members at the monthly SEPAC meeting.
 - c. Present a financial statement at all SEPAC meetings and at other times when requested.
 - d. Coordinate efforts to apply for grants, donations, reimbursements or any other funds for which the SEPAC may be eligible.

Article V: Meetings

- A. The number of meetings to be held each year and the dates of those meetings shall be determined by the Officers, but there shall be no less than four meetings annually.
- B. Advance notice of any and all meetings and elections will be published/posted with a minimum of 48 hours advance notice and comply with the MA Open Meeting Law regulations.
- C. Minutes of all SEPAC meetings shall be recorded and posted in accordance with the MA Public Records law.
- D. The SEPAC shall hold an Annual Meeting of the voting members each year to vote on any matters as shall be specified in the notice of such meeting. Each member in attendance shall have one vote. The majority of members in

attendance at a membership meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and shall be entitled to take action on behalf of the SEPAC.

Article VI: Elections

- A. Officers of the SEPAC are elected by the voting membership and hold office for two years unless removed by majority vote. Elections shall occur by ballot at a general meeting in the month of May before the end of an Officer’s term.
- B. All voting members are eligible to make nominations.
- C. Elections shall be decided by a simple majority vote of the voting membership. New Officers shall take office on the first day of June following an election.
- D. If any office becomes vacant, an election for that office may be held at the next monthly meeting, provided notice is posted, with a term to expire at the next scheduled election for that position.
- E. Any Officer may resign by delivering a written notice of resignation by mail, in person, or by email to the PVCICS Principal. Resignation shall be effective immediately upon such delivery unless the resignation is slated to be effective at another time.
- F. The SEPAC will inform the PVCICS Principal of the outcome of elections and the names, addresses and phone numbers of the new Officers within 30 days after an election.

Article VIII: Conflict of Interest

Any Officer who has a financial, personal, or official interest in, or conflict (or appearance of a conflict) with any matter pending before the SEPAC, of such nature that it prevents or may prevent that member from acting on the matter in an impartial manner, will voluntarily excuse him/herself and will vacate his seat and refrain from discussion and voting on said item.

Article IX: Amendments

These by-laws may be amended by a simple majority of the voting members at a general meeting, but by-law changes may not be voted upon in the same meeting as they are proposed, unless all voting members vote unanimously to approve the change.

Approved: (Date) _____