

**PVCICS SEPAC Meeting
May 4, 2016**

Present:
Diane Preston, SEPAC Chair
Kathy Wang, Principal
Rose Carr, Special Education Administrator
Various parents

Meeting called to order at 9:10 AM by Diane Preston

Recognition for Excellence Awards:

The SEPAC had only received two nominations for the awards to date. There was a discussion about the benefit and/or detriment of recognizing some staff and not others. It was decided to cancel the awards for this school year and perhaps revisit the topic at a future date.

MCAS “Opt-out”

After the April 13th meeting, Diane Preston contacted the DESE Office of Student Assessment Services and discussed Commissioner Chester’s 2014 letter and Weekly Update on 1/29/16 with a DESE employee, Bob McGregor. In that conversation, Mr. McGregor said that students are not permitted to “opt-out” of statewide assessments. However, Mr. McGregor suggested that, if a child is experiencing overwhelming anxiety, a family should request a team meeting to discuss an accommodation in an IEP or 504 Plan. After sharing this information with Kathy Wang, she contacted the ESE regarding this issue. She inquired whether there is an “accommodation to not participate in MCAS” due to a disability, and she received this written response:

----- from ESE -----

"There is no accommodation for non-participation, if the student’s disability precludes them from taking the standardized test, they should be scheduled to take the ALT.

There is no opt-out in Massachusetts, for any student not taking the PARCC, MCAS, or MCAS-Alt, it is considered a refusal of testing. Any student who refuses testing is coded as Absent and counts against a school’s participation rate.

_____end of ESE response_____

Rose Carr confirmed that exclusion from a state assessment is not considered an accommodation to access the curriculum and, therefore, should not be written in a student’s plan. Further, the criteria to qualify for the MCAS-Alt is quite stringent and

must be submitted to the ESE early in the school year to begin the process. If a student's disabilities are such that they may qualify for the MCAS-Alt, this should be discussed with the administration early in the fall.

It was noted that the discussion regarding accommodations for testing is a separate issue from medical exemptions. Diane Preston gave the example of a student who is suffering from a concussion and a physician has written that he/she may not participate in testing that day. A medical professional may write a letter to the school that a student is suffering from a medical condition and is unable to participate in testing on the test date. This would still count against the school's participation rate, but it would be documented as a medical exemption rather than a refusal of testing.

Bylaws Adoption / Elections:

The proposed bylaws were distributed for review. A vote of the attending members was taken to adopt the Bylaws. The vote was unanimous to adopt the Bylaws with one abstention.

See Appendix A for Bylaws.

Next, there was a motion and a vote to create the Officer position of Chair per Article IV of the Blyaws. The Officer position of Chair was created by unanimous vote of the attending membership.

Next, it was acknowledged that Diane Preston had been nominated as Chair. There was a request for other nominations. There were no other nominations. Diane Preston was elected as Chair by a unanimous vote of the attending membership.

Staff Chart / Diagram and PBIS

Due to the extended discussion regarding MCAS testing and anxiety issues, there was not sufficient time for the remaining agenda items: "Follow-up regarding staff diagram / chart" and "Discussion Topic: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports." These items will be included on the agenda for the next monthly meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15AM.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 8th, 2016, at 9:00AM.

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: May 4, 2016