

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL BY-LAWS

Article I: Name of Organization

The name of this organization shall be the Wachusett Regional School District Special Education Parent Advisory Council, also known as WRSD SEPAC.

Article II: Mission

As a state mandated district-wide volunteer, self-governed organization [603 CMR 28.07(4)] the mission of WRSD SEPAC is to:

- Work toward the understanding of, respect, support, and appropriate education for all children with special needs.
- Advise District Administration and the School Committee on matters pertaining to the education, health, and safety of students with special needs, as well as to advocate on behalf of those students and their families to District Administration, the School Committee and the Regional School District community.
- Meet regularly with District Administration and the School Committee to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the District's special education programs.
- Provide annual training on the rights of students and their parents and guardians under state and federal special education law, in cooperation with District Administration.
- Promote education of and facilitate communication with parents and the broader community on special education issues and services.
- Create a constituency and presence in the District, representing parents of children with special needs, as well as be a forum for family to family networking.

Article III: Terms of Membership

General membership shall be open to any parent or guardian of a child with special needs who resides and/or attends schools (with or without an individualized education plan "IEP" or 504 Plan) in the Wachusett Regional School District communities, as well as any educator or resident of the WRSD communities interested in special education.

Voting membership for business that requires a vote during WRSD SEPAC meetings shall be limited to members who have a child with special needs on an IEP or 504 Plan who resides in and/or attends schools in the Wachusett Regional School District.

Article IV: Meetings

Meetings are defined as any WRSD SEPAC-sponsored meeting, activity, or committee(s) at which attendance is taken. General meetings shall be held at least monthly, from September through June. Advance notice of any and all general meetings, elections, informational lectures, meetings with Administration officials, etc. will be published/posted on the SEPAC website, and as many places as possible to encourage participation from all interested parties. This will be done on a "best effort" basis by

designated members/volunteers within each of their respective towns. These will include notices in the local press, postings at town halls, and/or other public places (town libraries, local cable, bulletin boards, town/school internet websites, connect-ed message, etc.) and a notice sent to each voting member whenever possible.

To the extent possible, a calendar of meetings will be developed at the beginning of each school year. During the June meeting the Steering Committee shall take recommendations for the calendar of meetings for the following school year. The calendar shall include dates and times of the meetings and projected activities for the year. Updates and reminders of upcoming meetings, elections, lectures, etc. will be communicated as necessary.

Unless otherwise stated in the bylaws, matters requiring a vote by the voting membership shall be decided by a simple majority vote, provided there is a minimum of ten (10) voting members present. These matters include, but are not limited to the following items:

- A change in the bylaws (which can only be voted on at a general meeting);
- A commitment of financial resources in excess of \$100;

Elections require a vote as described in Article VI.

Minutes of all WRSD SEPAC meetings shall be recorded and retained by the WRSD SEPAC secretary for the SEPAC's records, and will be posted on the WRSD SEPAC website or listserv within one week of the meeting.

A detailed written summary of all Chairpersons and/or Steering Committee meetings with District Administration will be posted on the WRSD SEPAC website or listserv within one week of the meeting.

Article V: Officers of the Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Officers of the WRSD SEPAC are elected according to the election procedures detailed in Article VI and hold office for one year. If any office becomes vacant, an election for that office shall be held at the next business meeting, with the term to expire June 30.

There shall be a Family Steering Committee with the following parameters:

- The Officers of WRSD SEPAC shall serve on the Steering Committee, along with four (4) Directors.
- The Steering Committee is responsible for planning and executing WRSD SEPAC activities, newsletters, correspondence, and website maintenance. All other matters will be brought forth to the general membership for discussion.
- Notice of Steering Committee meetings will be posted on the WRSD SEPAC website and/or listserv.

- Directors shall be equal voting members of the Steering Committee. The intention of these positions is to allow for the division of responsibilities amongst a larger group of active volunteers. Each of their activities shall be executed in coordination with the WRSD SEPAC's goals and objectives.
- All matters requiring a vote by the Steering Committee shall be decided by a simple majority. Votes may be taken verbally or in written form at the discretion of the Steering Committee. If there is a tie vote and, in the opinion of the Chairpersons, the Steering Committee is deadlocked, then the full membership of WRSD SEPAC shall vote on the matter during the next regular or special meeting of WRSD SEPAC at which there is a quorum to vote.
- The Steering Committee must approve outgoing funds in excess of \$100. The general membership must approve outgoing funds in excess of \$500. The Steering Committee will oversee the monetary aspects of fund raising activities and coordinate efforts to apply for grants, donations, reimbursements, or any other funds for which the WRSD SEPAC may be eligible.
- The Steering Committee shall act on behalf of the WRSD SEPAC with respect to the purposes set forth in Article II of these by-laws.
- No member of the WRSD SEPAC is authorized to send written communication or speak publicly on behalf of the SEPAC, without prior approval from the Steering Committee.

All Steering Committee members (Officers and Directors) shall:

- Regularly attend scheduled meetings, serve on sub-committees deemed necessary and appropriate by the Steering Committee and fulfill the responsibilities of such positions.
- Provide written reports during each regularly scheduled business meeting of the WRSD SEPAC.

Co-Chairpersons responsibilities shall include:

- Advising District Administration and the WRSD School Committee on matters pertaining to the education, health, and safety of students with special needs
- Advocating on behalf of those students and their families to District Administration, the School Committee and the Regional School District community.
- Acting as liaison to the District.
- Setting the agenda for each general meeting.
- Presiding at all meetings of the WRSD SEPAC.
- Recommending the organization of and coordinate the function of sub-committees.
- Agreeing on division of duties, such as who will preside over meetings, etc.
- Coordinating public communications (if needed), not including those communications that are the responsibility of the Secretary.

Secretary responsibilities shall include:

- Coordinating communication between the WRSD SEPAC and its membership
- Coordinating the recording and filing of minutes of the WRSD SEPAC and its sub-committees.
- Collecting and reviewing all correspondence of the WRSD SEPAC.
- Preparing periodic reports for the Special Education Administration regarding WRSD SEPAC activities and needs.

Treasurer responsibilities shall include:

- Managing and accounting for funds collected, donated, and spent for WRSD SEPAC.
- Preparing and presenting a financial report at monthly business meetings.
- Coordinating fundraising finances. However, specific fundraising can be done by any SEPAC member as approved by the Steering Committee.
- Coordinating efforts to apply for grants, donations, reimbursements or any other funds for which the WRSD SEPAC may be eligible. However, specific activities can be done by any SEPAC member as approved by the Steering Committee.

Director of Parent Education responsibilities shall include:

- Identifying topics of interest to the SEPAC membership and securing educational resources (workshops, printed materials, etc.) to promote education.
- Recruiting and coordinating subcommittees and/or volunteers as appropriate.

Director of Membership Outreach responsibilities shall include:

- Identifying and executing avenues to connect with SEPAC members and to support a network of members.
- Recruiting and coordinating subcommittees and/or volunteers as appropriate.

Director of Fundraising responsibilities shall include:

- Identifying fundraising events and opportunities of interest and benefit to SEPAC membership.
- Recruiting and coordinating subcommittees and/or volunteers as appropriate.

Director of Family Activities responsibilities shall include:

- Identifying events of interest to SEPAC membership and their families. These events may be of educational or recreational interest.
- Recruiting and coordinating subcommittees and/or volunteers as appropriate.

Article VI: Elections

Elections shall be the first order of business during the last business meeting in May. Elections shall be decided by a simple majority vote of the members present. The new Steering Committee shall take office July 1. Outgoing Officers are expected to meet with incoming Officers to review duties, record keeping responsibilities, etc. to ensure a smooth transition.

The District Administration and School Committee will be informed of the annual elections with the names, addresses and phone numbers of the new board no later than one week after elections.

Nominations will be made by ballot beginning in March. All nominees must be voting members of SEPAC. All members are eligible to make nominations.

Prior to the nomination meeting, a volunteer will be recruited from the voting membership of the WRSD SEPAC for the temporary position of election coordinator. The selection of the volunteer will be decided by lottery of the names of volunteers (an election coordinator prevents potential conflicts of interest).

The election coordinator will coordinate the activities necessary to complete the election. At the nominating meeting, the election coordinator will tally the nominations. Within two days, the election coordinator shall announce/notify individuals nominated. To remain on the ballot nominees shall accept or decline their nominations within one week of being notified of their nomination. The election coordinator shall compile the list and prepare the ballots. A ballot must be available for each voting member.

Article VII: Removal of any Steering Committee Member

The Steering Committee shall be authorized to remove a member from the committee for malfeasance in office or disregard or failure to perform his/her duties. The Steering Committee shall afford the committee member reasonable notice and an opportunity to be heard by the committee before any vote is taken on his/her removal. Any member of the Steering Committee may be removed from the committee by a majority vote of the general membership at a regularly scheduled meeting, provided that a written notice of such vote is given to the general membership seven (7) days prior to such meetings. A Steering Committee member, who is removed from membership by forgoing procedure may appeal such removal by sending written notification to the Steering Committee within thirty days. The committee's response to such an appeal shall be an opportunity for the removed member to address the general membership at their next scheduled meeting and a vote to reinstate the removed member will occur. The member may be reinstated to office by a majority vote of the general membership.

Article VIII: Amendments

Before any vote may be taken to amend these bylaws, a 15-day written notice of the proposed amendment(s), including the full text thereof, shall be distributed to all voting members.

Bylaw changes/amendments require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the voting members present. A minimum of ten (10) voting members must be present when a vote is taken to amend the bylaws.

Article IX: Parliamentary Authority

Responsibility for maintaining order is the responsibility of the Chairpersons.

In order to ensure the orderly and timely conduct of business at meetings, the WRSD SEPAC agrees to authorize the Chairpersons to use discretion in deciding whether or not to allow discussion to exceed twenty (20) minutes on any topics of discussion, or agenda items. The Chairpersons will be responsible for directing the discussions to the business at hand and will limit discussion to the relevant issues and restrict arguments, which are unnecessarily repetitive. The Chairpersons may extend the discussion by consensus of members present. The Chairpersons will abide by the majority vote of the membership.