

Special Education Parent Advisory Council (TSEPAC) By Laws

APPROVED 1/16/2020

Article 1 Name of Organization The name of this organization shall be the Tewksbury Special Education Parent Advisory Council, also known as TSEPAC.

Article 2: Definitions

"Member Children" shall mean any student in the Tewksbury Public School district who has a disability/special needs and who have an Individual Education Plan ("IEP") or 504 Plan.

"Families" shall mean any relation to the Member Children, including, but not limited to parent(s), guardian(s), foster parent(s), sibling(s), and grandparent(s).

"Educators" shall mean all teachers and aides who work with Member Children in the School District, whether hired directly by the School District or via outside vendors.

"Board" shall be comprised of four(4) officers and up to 7 "Parents at large/Parent Liaisons." The four(4) officers are two (2) Co-Chairs and two secretaries(one recording secretary and one publicity secretary).

"Parents at Large" or "Parent Liaisons" shall mean individuals (parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of Member Children) who coordinate with a particular school in the district regarding Member Children and the community programs, as well as the other duties as described in Article 10.

"Co-Chair" shall mean the individuals (parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of Member Children) who lead TSEPAC and perform the duties as described in Article 10.

"Secretaries" shall mean the individuals (parent/legal guardian of Member Children) who are tasked with the duties as described in Article 10.

"Special Education Executive Board" shall mean at least two board members who meet with the Superintendent of Schools, Director of Student Services and two representatives of the Tewksbury School Committee.

Article 3 : Objectives

Section 1: To advise the district on matters pertaining to the education and safety of Member Children.

Section 2: To meet regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the district's special education programming.

Section 3: To advance the education, support, resources and opportunities available to Member Children and their Families as such services pertain to the Member Children.

Section 4: Provide opportunities for education, advocacy, support, and assistance for Member Children, as well as their Families, Educators, and Caregivers.

Section 5: Provide input to the Superintendent of Schools, School Committee, Director of Student Services, other Parent Advisory Councils, Principals and/or subcommittees on Special Education policy, procedures, and programming in the Tewksbury School District.

Section 6: As mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under MGL 603 CMR 28.07 (4) the parent advisory council duties shall include, but not be limited to: advising the school committee on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities (Member Children);

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meeting regularly with school officials (including the Director of Student Services) to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school committee's special education programs.

Section 7: Promote open and collaborative communication among members of TSEPAC, as well as with local, state and national organizations, councils and groups that support children with disabilities/special needs.

Section 8: Promote open and collaborative communication within the community to encourage understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of children with disabilities/special needs.

Section 9: Plan and promote programs and forums within the community (which includes all children enrolled in the Tewksbury Public School District) that raises (raise) awareness and encourages acceptance and inclusion of Member Children.

Article 4: Terms of General Membership

General Membership shall be open to parent(s)/guardian(s) of Member Children and other interested parties. We invite and welcome all who are interested in becoming actively involved in the TSEPAC to attend our meetings and events. We encourage all participants to help promote the programs and forums which aim to benefit Member Children, their Families, Educators and Caregivers. We also encourage all participants to share any suggestions, ideas and information in an effort to continue to sustain open and collaborative communication between the TSEPAC, Tewksbury Special Education Department, School Committee, and Tewksbury Public School District.

Article 5 : Meetings

Section 1: A general meeting is a public presentation and open discussion forum in which no quorum is necessary to meet. All TSEPAC meetings are subject to Open Meeting Laws. Meetings are held in public facilities and open to the public.

Section 2: A business meeting is a public meeting in which a quorum is necessary to conduct official TSEPAC business. A quorum is 50% plus one of the current elected officers. All TSEPAC meetings are subject to Open Meeting Laws. Meetings are held in public facilities and open to the public.

Section 3: At least two board members shall attend the Special Education Executive Committee meetings as scheduled during the year. Meetings can be scheduled at the request of any of the Executive Committee members.

Section 4: In addition to general meetings, the Board will meet when the Board deems necessary. All Board meetings will follow open meeting laws.

Section 5: During the May meeting, the newly elected Board shall take recommendations for the calendar of meetings for the following school year.

Section 6: The Director of Student Services (or designee) is encouraged to attend all TSEPAC meetings.

Article 6: Minutes of Meetings

A record of all TSEPAC meetings shall be recorded in the form of handwritten or typed minutes, and shall be retained as a matter of public record. If, in the event that written minutes are unable to be kept at any meeting, minutes may be made in the form of either audio taping or videotaping and shall be archived. Notification of the intent to make audio or videotaping must be made to the Co-Chairs at the beginning of the meetings, as well as to those in attendance.

Article 7: Voting During Meetings

Section 1: Voting is limited to individuals who are parent(s)/guardian(s) of Member Children who are in attendance at the TSEPAC meeting.

Section 2: Voting will be conducted by Motions. A Motion may only be brought by a voting member. To be successful, a Motion must be seconded by another voting member. After a Motion is seconded, all participating eligible voting members will be called to affirm the vote. A second call of all participating eligible voting members will be made to deny the vote. Simple majority of affirmative votes will confirm a Motion, or a majority of negative votes will deny a Motion. Tie votes will be tabled until the next meeting session and will be recalled for a revote.

Article 8: Elections

Section 1: Elections shall be the first order of business during the May Meeting. Elections shall be decided by a simple majority vote of the voting membership in attendance at the meeting.

Section 2: If a member wishes to make a nomination for any Board position, they can do so in writing to the Board (via email addressed to the TSEPAC's general email address or by letter handed to a board member) no less than ten (10) days prior to the May election. The nomination must include the complete contact information (name, address, telephone number and email address) for the nominee in order to give the Co-Chair the ability to contact the nominee to determine whether he/she accepts or declines the nomination. The Co-Chair will report his/her findings at the May Election Meeting.

Section 3: During the May general meeting, the Co-Chair will coordinate all activities necessary to complete the election. At the meeting in which the election is held, the Co-Chair or designee will tally the nominations and announce nominees. Nominees, if present at the general meeting, will be asked to verbally accept or decline their nomination for the announced position. Nominees are not required to be present if they have already accepted the nomination with the Co-Chair prior to the May general meeting. After the nomination has either been confirmed by the Co-Chair, or accepted by the nominee, the Co-Chair or designee will prepare the voting ballots (in paper form). A ballot must be available to all voting members. Voting will then take place by a show of hands-

Section 4: New board members shall take office immediately following their election.

Section 5: After the elections, the school district will be informed, by the recording Secretary, of the results of the annual elections.

Article 9: Board

Section 1: The Board shall consist of two (2) Co-Chairs, a recording Secretary, a publicity secretary and up to seven (7) Members at Large. All positions can be job-shared, i.e. a Co-Chair may take on the duties of a Secretary until the position has been filled, or two people can share duties of one job.

Section 2: Board Members of TSEPAC are elected by the voting membership and hold office for a one year term, unless re-elected to the same position during the May general meeting.

Section 3: At the end of the final term as a Board Member, that individual may then become a Parliamentarian, who shall only serve in the capacity as an advisor to the TSEPAC for the remainder of the school year.

Section 4: In the event that a position becomes vacant or remains vacant after the May general meeting, the Board shall run with a minimum of one officer until another general meeting, where a vote shall be taken to elect an individual to the current vacant position(s). The vacancy shall be posted immediately to the general public and nominations will be taken up to ten days prior to the next meeting. A vote will be taken at the next general meeting for someone to serve in this position for the remainder of the term. In the event that no nominations are put forth at the May General Meeting, the co-chairs can appoint an interim co-chair.

Section 5: The Board will have the authority to allocate specific fund distribution where a general distribution has been previously voted upon by voting members.

Article 10: Duties of Board Members

Section 1: The Co-Chairs will:

- Preside over and set the agenda for monthly TSEPAC and Board meetings and other meetings (e.g. subcommittee meetings) as needed.
- Act as representative at town wide PAC meetings, informational events, School Committee meetings and others as needed.
- Ensure that the TSEPAC is kept in compliance with the Open Meeting Law guidelines and regulations as required by the State and/or other agencies, in collaboration with the Recording Secretary.
- Update and maintain by-laws and other necessary documentation as required.
- Establish and maintain friendly and cooperative relations with local government officials.
- Recommend the organization of and monitor the function of all sub-committees.
- Act as liaisons (or delegate liaisons) to the Director of Student Services.
- Collaborate with the Special Education Department and other organizations which advocate on behalf of/for children with disabilities/special needs to present the mandatory yearly Basic Rights Workshop.
- Maintain communication with members and monitor TSEPAC email address.
- At least one co-chair shall attend executive committee meetings when scheduled.
- Will request of the School Committee Chair a yearly date, or more often if requested, to conduct presentations to the school committee regarding the activities of the TSEPAC

Section 2: The Recording Secretary will:

- Attend all TSEPAC meetings.
- Coordinate all board-approved communication between the TSEPAC and its membership.

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- File agenda for TSEPAC meetings with the Town Clerk in accordance with the Open Meeting Law guidelines and regulations.
- Type, print and distribute agenda and sign-in sheets, record the minutes of Board and general meetings and file such minutes with the Town Clerk in accordance with the Open Meeting Law guidelines and regulations.
- Prepare and file a facilities request form for meeting space.
- Prepare periodic reports for the Special Education Administration or School Committee regarding TSEPAC activities, programs and needs.
- Able to attend special education executive meetings as needed, as one of the two board members.

Section 3: The Publicity Secretary will

- Attend all TSEPAC meetings.
- Update and maintain the TSEPAC website.
- Monitor and post news to the TSEPAC Facebook page.
- Promote TSEPAC events and meetings within the community and school district in consultation with board members.
- Able to attend special education executive meetings as needed, as one of the two board members.
- Collect and review all correspondence of the TSEPAC.
- Send out periodic informational emails to TSEPAC membership
- Will perform recording secretary duties in the event the recording secretary is absent from a meeting

Section 4: The Parents-at-Large (a.k.a. Parent Liaisons) will:

- Bring concerns/questions/needs of the school(s) he/she represents to the TSEPAC Board for discussion and actions.
- Communicate TSEPAC information to the school(s) he/she represents
- Work with the other Board members to conduct forums and presentations (including professional speaker presentations) to the general membership.
- Work to ensure that TSEPAC brochures are copied and distributed to each school and are kept in ample supply.
- Try to attend all TSEPAC meetings as well as the PAC meetings of the school he/she represents.
- Able to attend special education executive meetings, as needed, as one of the two board members.

Section 5: Subcommittees shall be created as needed. The subcommittee shall

be made up of volunteers or willing nominees accepted by a simple majority vote of members present at a general meeting. Each subcommittee shall be charged with reporting back its activities to the Board and general membership as requested. Subcommittee tasks can include, but are not limited to school safety, transportation, civil rights compliance or other matters of general interest to the TSEPAC.

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Article 11: Amendments

Section 1:These By Laws may be amended by a simple majority of the voting members at a general meeting where a quorum is present.

Article 12: Default Procedures

Roberts Rules of Order are the default procedures for this organization.

Article 13 Conduct of Members

Section 1:Members shall be held to the conduct as described in the Open Meeting Laws.

Section 2: The names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of general members are to be used only for TSEPAC purposes and in accordance with Public Meeting Laws and guidelines.

Article 14 Adoption Clause

The By Laws prescribed above, by the TSEPAC, are hereby adopted by the Board as follows.

Signed this 16th day of January, 2020

X _____
Anne Seichter, Co-Chair

X _____
Dina Mancini, Co-Chair