

Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council



Presentation to
Boston School Committee and
Superintendent Laura Perille
May 8, 2019

Role of Boston SpedPac

SpedPac is the organization that the School Committee is required to establish under, c. 71B, Sec. 3

- SpedPac duties include:

- Advising the District on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities.

- Meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the school district's special education programs.



SpedPac's Partnership with BPS

- SpedPac has established a strong working relationship with BPS. The Chair meets weekly with Cindie Neilson. That collaboration has continued with the new administration. The Executive Board meets quarterly with the Superintendent to discuss priorities.
- SpedPac facilitates connecting parents with appropriate personnel in Special Education to resolve issues of services and programming. BPS staff are present at SpedPac's monthly general meetings to work directly with parents who have issues with their child's IEP, services, or placement.

SpedPac's Outreach to Families

There are just under 11,000 students with disabilities in BPS. Almost one third are also ELL students.

- SpedPac holds monthly meetings for its membership that include various workshops on Special Education rights, laws and procedures, and information about programs and resources within and outside of BPS.

- SpedPac has its own website, phone number, and email list. SpedPac is also very active on social media, providing links to valuable resources and information to BPS families and the larger community through our Face book page and Twitter accounts

Increase Inclusion Programs District-wide Remains a Priority

Federal and State law require that children with disabilities are

- To be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Removal of student's with disabilities from the general education environment is to occur ONLY when the nature or severity of the student's disability is such that the education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.³³

See: 20 U.S.C. § 1412 (5)(A), 34 C.F.R. 300.114, M.G.L. c.71B § 3, 603
CMR 28.02(2)(12)

Students with Disabilities in Substantially Separate Settings/ Inclusion

We have made progress in decreasing the number of students with disabilities in substantially separate settings in BPS over the last several years. However, BPS still remains far above the State and National average with 36% of SWDs currently in substantially separate settings.

- More work needs to be done to increase inclusion and meet the requirements of federal and state law. For more progress to be made in this area, the district needs to invest more funding to expand existing inclusion programs to all grade levels, to build new programs within BPS to avoid the continuing need for students to be placed out-of-district, and most importantly to require that all BPS staff; the Superintendent, Central Office, School leader, teachers, related service providers and paraprofessionals understand that the education of SWDs belongs to every person employed by BPS not just special education staff.



Inclusion Pathways

For our students who are in inclusion, we need to develop intentional pathways that continue their inclusion experience as required by their IEP **and the law** and not have inclusion be a temporary experience in elementary school. We need to be more strategic and purposeful in planning to meet the needs and rights of other students to be in and continue in inclusion.

Transition Services and Plans

“Beginning age 14 or sooner, if determined appropriate by an individualized education program team, school age children with disabilities shall be entitled to transition services and measurable postsecondary goals, as provided under the Federal Individual Disabilities with Education Act, 20 USC sec. 1400, et sec.”

See: Mass Gen. Law. c. 71B, § 2

Transition Services

There are over 4,300 SWDs in BPS ages 14-22.

- Appropriate evaluation tools need to be utilized to develop transition plans that are based on the student's strengths, preferences and interests.
- The 2016-2017 school year was the first budget cycle where BPS made targeted investments in the area of transition. That investment has been maintained but there have been no increases.

FY20 Budget

FY20 Budget Highlights:

7 ABA specialists, 1 ABA Program Director, and \$221K in ABA contracts

6-member team to provide services to eligible students on IEPs at private/parochial schools

1 leadership role in central office focused on School Supports

Stipends to allow school-based Special Education Coordinators to receive mentoring and guidance from peers

Tiered Approaches to Intervention

- All students need behavioral support, and too often children who had behavior and/or emotional issues are redirected to special education. The tiered model of Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model expanded throughout the District needs to be available throughout the District.
- Students who struggle academically also need tiered interventions, our high percentage of students with disabilities demands it of our school system. Before a student is referred to special education they need a tiered approach to academic interventions. All students are the responsibility of all of our schools and all of our teachers, we need to intervene early and remediate academic struggles before they become a disability, wherever that is possible.



Together Connecting Parents with Outside Resources

We need to work together to help connect parents with available outside resources, like the Department of Developmental Services, the Department of Mental Health, MassHealth, Mass Rehabilitation Commission, Children's Behavioral Health Initiative, the Inclusion Concurrent Enrollment Program. We also need to assist parents with understanding and accessing Adult services.