

# Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council



Presentation to  
Boston School Committee and  
Superintendent John McDonough  
April 30, 2014

# Role of Boston SpedPac

SpedPac is the organization that the School Committee is required to establish under Massachusetts General Law 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 Outreach to Families

There are about 11,000 students with disabilities in the BPS.

- SpedPac holds monthly meetings for its membership that have include various workshops on Special Education rights, laws and procedures, and information about programs and resources outside of BPS. Our meetings are recorded and available on our Website for all parents to watch. This has enabled us to reach many more families.
- We need more support from BPS to reach our membership. We receive no support from OFSE. Over 3 years ago we were promised that parents would be able to sign up for SpedPac's email list through the IEP process, that remains an un-fulfilled promise, and our monthly flyers are not reaching the majority of our parents.

# SpedPac's Work with BPS

- SpedPac is made of up parent volunteers. We meet regularly with the Superintendent, we talk weekly with Eileen Nash, and we have representatives on the Inclusion Task Force, the Superintendent's search committee, and the Quality Working group.
- SpedPac also worked with BPS on the recent transportation policy change to ensure that any child with an IEP who continues to require BPS bus service will receive it. SpedPac also participated on the Innovation Committee for the Henderson K-12.

# Current Priority:

## Increase Inclusion Programs District-wide

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.

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

- Currently 43% of students with disabilities are in substantially separate settings in BPS. This remains far above the State and National average .
- While there are projected increases to Early Childhood inclusion classes (27 next year), more work needs to be done to educate older children in inclusion, and that requires the commitment of all levels in BPS' administration and in our classrooms.
- The SC and BPS need to institute policies and issue mandates that reflect that SWDs' rights to be educated with their non-disabled peers is a District priority and those rights will never be adversely impacted by any collective bargaining agreement.

# Current Priority: 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 4,500 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
- Programs need to be created and implemented for transition services (i.e., Madison Park, Best Buddies, employment skills, life skills)
- Community Partnerships need to be established to support integrated employment with businesses across the City (including supported employment) job coaching, mentoring and pre-employment skills (interviewing, job applications, job searches and resume creation)



# Current Priority: Expand Highly Specialized Strands to High Schools

- Highly Specialized strands were developed and implemented to provide continuity of programming and specialized programs for students in substantially separate settings
- These programs do not currently extend into our high schools leaving students exiting middle school with no continuation of their current programs.

# Other Major Priorities

- Establish Pathways to Middle and High School for SWDs currently in inclusion. (Manning)
- Implementation of the Sped Overlay approved by School Committee and Special Education Commitments.
- Comprehensive plan to expand the use of technology for students with disabilities.