

# Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council

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Presentation to  
Boston School Committee and  
Superintendent Dr. Tommy Chang  
June 22, 2016

# Role of Boston SpedPac

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

- o 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

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- SpedPac has established a strong working relationship with BPS. That collaboration has continued with the new administration. The Executive Board meets quarterly with the Superintendent to discuss priorities.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair have a standing weekly conference call with Dr. Estrada and Asst. Supt. Cindie Neilson.
- 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

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There are just under 11,000 students with disabilities in BPS. Almost 3,500 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, email list, and YouTube channel. 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

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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.<sup>33</sup>

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

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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.

- More work needs to be done to increase inclusion and meet the requirements of federal and state law. Progress has been made primarily in the younger grades K-2, we also need targeted focus on moving older SWDs into partial or full inclusion, and that requires the commitment of all levels in BPS' administration, schools, and in our classrooms. It requires work on enrollment, assignment, and district culture.
- The new investment of inclusion teams to assist schools with meeting the needs of SWDs in inclusion is a positive step forward, inclusion is an experience NOT a location and each child's inclusion experience needs to be meaningful.



# Inclusion Pathways

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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 know that this took years to accomplish at the Henderson, and we need to be more strategic and purposeful in our planning to meet the needs and rights of other students to continue in inclusion. (i.e, the Manning School needs to be expanded)

# Transition Services and Plans

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“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

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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.

- This is the first budget cycle where BPS has made targeted investments in the area of transition. We are pleased with the approximately \$1 million dollar investment for transition of the 2016-2017 school year. BPS will now partner in stronger ways with Best Buddies, Work Inc., Easter Seals, Goodwill, Triangle, Jewish Vocational Services, Youth Entrepreneurial Program.
- BPS is also expanding its Strive Program and investing in professional development for transition services. This is a solid start but we have students who have been waiting years for transition services, and we have other students who become eligible for transition services next year.

# Tiered Approaches to Intervention

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- 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.

# Other Major Priorities

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For years the District has continued to invest money in an IEP system that is difficult for school personnel and parents, a new investment next year is aimed at resolving our need for a high-quality and functional IEP program.

We need a comprehensive plan to expand the use of technology for students with disabilities. Universal design means that each child should be accessing the curriculum at their current access point; through various modes of technology and modified instruction. These tools support teaching and student learning.

SPEDPAC should be included in on-going communications that impact the programming for our students; the Facilities Master Plan decision making not just community engagement, High School Re-design, WSF and budget issues, and other policy and strategic plans developed by BPS, BEFORE decisions are made.



# Together Connecting Parents with Outside Resources

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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.