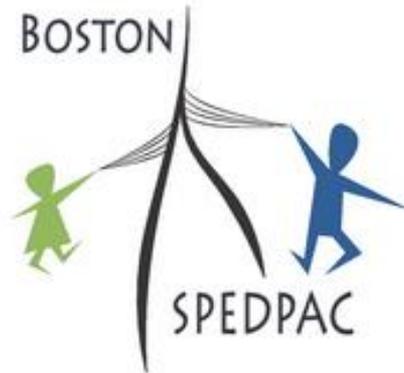


Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council



Presentation to
Boston School Committee and
Superintendent John McDonough
May 27, 2015

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 v. City-Wide Parent council (statute)

SpedPac's Partnership with BPS

- SpedPac has established a strong working relationship with BPS. The Executive Board meets quarterly with the Superintendent to discuss priorities.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair meet weekly with Deputy Superintendent Eileen Nash and share information.
- SpedPac uses a customized issue form for parents to use to help connect them with the appropriate personnel in Special Education.
- Sped and 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 transportation.

SpedPac's Outreach to Families

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 outside of BPS.
- SpedPac has its own website, phone number, email list, and YouTube channel. We are also receiving contacts from BPS for parents who opt into our email list, we have seen positive results from pockets in BPS on this effort, more work needs to be done. 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

Accomplishments

- BPS has made solid progress in the areas of ABA and Early Childhood. The ABA waiting list for evaluations and services has been eliminated.
- SWDs turning three years old are receiving their placements before they turn 3 and the waiting list for Early Childhood has been eliminated.

SpedPac's Work with BPS

- Sped Pac has played a role on the External Advisory Committee, the Quality Working Group, the Inclusion Task Force, the Henderson Innovation Team, and the new High School Redesign Team.
- SpedPac also met with Operations staff around transportation issues, including the issuance of MBTA passes for students to ensure safety issues for SWDs were considered and an action plan implemented.

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.

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

- We have made progress in decreasing the number of students with disabilities in substantially separate settings in BPS. However, BPS remains far above the State and National average.
- Most of the progress has been made in Early Childhood and kindergarten. More work needs to be done to educate older SWDs in inclusion, and that requires the commitment of all levels in BPS' administration, schools, 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 that those rights will never be adversely impacted by any collective bargaining agreement.* 2014 This also needs to extend to Summer programs!

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.
- Programs need to be created and implemented for transition services (i.e., Madison Park, Best Buddies, employment skills, life skills) BPS students need to be included in the Inclusion Concurrent Enrollment program as much as possible.
- 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) YEP.

Current Priority: High Schools

- Inclusion needs to exist at the High School level, and this needs to be a targeted focus of the new High School Redesign Team. Many students who drop out are SWDs who have remained in substantially separate classrooms and separate programs for years.
- High Schools need to provide a continuum of services for SWDs for inclusion and where necessary, highly specialized strands and prepare them for adult living. Application requirements for some BPS High schools are effectively excluding SWDs.

Behavioral Health

- All students need behavioral support, and too often children who had behavior issues are redirected to special education.
- The tiered model of Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model developed by Deputy Superintendent Nash's office needs to be available throughout the District and a major priority of the District.

Other Major Priorities

Implementation of the Sped Overlay Special Education Commitments.

- Comprehensive plan to expand the use of technology for students with disabilities, and to utilize outside resources to supplement our programming that need additional P&D for Universal Design and existing services for areas we need assistance. (YEP)
- Facilities Master Plan, Early Education expansion, WSF and budget issues, and other policy and strategic plans developed by BPS.

Together Connecting Parents with Outside Resources

We need to work together to connect parents with available outside resources, like DDS, who funds programs for SWDs including TILL supported after-school programs, Cerebral Palsy of Massachusetts who is willing to provide supplemental related services for free, MassHealth who will fund communication devices, etc.