2016-2017
Survey Results

http://www.sepac-berlin-boylston.org
Introduction

The Berlin/Boylston Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) created this survey in an effort to gain some insight from parents and the community about our visibility, mission and activities, and to get suggestions/feedback about additional needs the district may have.

In the Fall of 2016, this survey was prepared as a Google Form and an online link was disseminated to the community via social media (including the SEPAC Facebook page and SEPAC website), as well as press releases and announcements sent to all local newspapers, cable TV and school newsletters.

From our database of about 98 members, a total of 36* individuals responded and we have compiled those results here. In the near future and as we prepare for next year, we will be reviewing this data and using it to focus our programming and outreach more effectively. We will also be sharing our results with schools’ leadership and the administration, although we have withheld respondents’ names and other contact information.

Please let us know if you have questions or wish to discuss any of the information included here.

Sincerely,

2016-2017 SEPAC Board

Jessica Meltzer, Berlin Co-President

Rochelle Peret, Boylston Co-President

Karen Groccia, Vice President

Kerry Lavallee, Treasurer

Angela Allred, Secretary

* One of the responses could be a duplicate, based on the identical information provided in records appearing one after the other, but there was no contact information provided in either case. Since we cannot confirm the duplication both sets of responses are included.
Role (36 responses)

Name of School (35 responses)

I have a child on a(n) (35 responses)
My child(ren) receive the following services: (26 responses)

- Speech/Language: 5 (19.2%)
- Physical Therapy: 1 (3.8%)
- Occupational Therapy: 1 (3.8%)
- Counseling: 8 (30.8%)
- Academic Support: 17 (65.4%)
- Other: 8 (30.8%)

What is working well? What could be improved? (28 responses)

- Her aide is helpful, but at times my child tells me she feels degraded when the aid or main teacher calls her out in front of the other students. She feels dumb at times. Also states the teacher favors other students.

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- Most everything is OK - there was no information about the transition from 8th to 9th grade, particularly that agenda books were no longer provided in high school.

- Some teachers do not feel they need to abide by accommodations. I think there needs to be more assistance from the school in managing those issues. Our specific issue is around a time accommodation our child has and that his math teacher feels he doesn't need to respect.

- Good teachers and excellent course selections

- Academic Support has been very helpful.

- Clarification on counseling services offered.

- Counseling services have improved. I have hope that counseling reporting will better with the changes made.

- Classroom aids are very helpful to my student by helping with class notes. My concern has always been that the teachers are not aware of his 504 accommodation and many are not followed.
What is working well? What could be improved? (28 responses)

Your team is doing an amazing job with our son and helping him each day work and strive for further success.

I like the team teaching model. I hear good things about it but would like to learn more about it.

Individualized instruction to meet my child’s needs is working very well. I have no complaints about my child’s services. I have had an extremely bad experience with another school system regarding specialized education and Boylston far surpassed my child’s previous school in its honesty regarding the education laws in their willingness to help. The school system, starting at Boylston Elementary and now Tahanto has truly saved my child.

Support for ADD/ADHD students and parents. Our daughter suffers from both but probably not the capacity of the school stepping in. She does take medication to help her manage these. Support in knowing that she isn’t the only one who needs help.

The academic support is working well.

We are happy with the school programming.

I believe school personnel care about my child and want him to succeed.

Team is very good and attentive

More communication with teachers

I think everything is working well, and we will see how the remainder of the year goes.

The teacher/student relationship is positive. Children that have already graduated from Tahanto have been very well prepared for college.

Time to study and get ahead on homework. Student feels that a regular study would work just as well.

An improvement could be service delivery verification. Several times my child has missed seeing his specialist with apparently no make-up sessions. There should be a way to track services for parents and staff. It is possible the ‘rules’ suggest only a certain percentage of services actually have to be delivered. If that can be verified, I would like to increase my child’s services that exact amount in order for him to receive what is agreed upon.

I love my son’s paraprofessional. What could be improved is the weak IEP goals - the team seems unwilling to do more than the bare minimum for services. For a child with multiple social diagnoses, the unwillingness to provide social services is concerning.

I am unsure when the speech pathologist meets with my child. COMMUNICATION other than just the progress reports would be nice.

Responses continue on next page...
What is working well? What could be improved? (28 responses)

Home and school communication is a huge issue. There also seems to be a problem following the simple 504 plan. When I find out about the violations I have to fight with the teacher(s) about it when it is already spelled out in black and white. The 504 works great when it is being followed, but there are a few things that can be added to make it even more effective for my child and with communication.

It would be nice if the teachers would connect with us to understand each child’s needs since not all kids present the same, display similar symptoms or experience the same anxieties etc.

Teacher flexibility

The team worked very hard while my daughter had an IEP. They raised her performance until it met the bare minimum to no longer justify an IEP. And then they removed services. This does not make sense to me. If it took all those resources and support to get her to the bare minimum, what do you expect to happen when support is removed? We need to strive for better than bare minimum.

If you have any safety concerns regarding your child(ren) at school, what are they?
(23 responses)

![Pie chart showing 13.04% Yes and 86.96% No]

None
None
None
None
None
None
None

Responses continue on next page...
If you have any safety concerns regarding your child(ren) at school, what are they?
(23 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
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<td>no</td>
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<td>no</td>
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<tr>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slight concern for him being bullied, but that lessens every passing year. Some frustration with the information that is available/updated on the teachers’ websites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at Tahanto. We did have safety concerns at BMS because the principal stated it wasn't bullying if weapons weren't involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am concerned about the widespread unkindness in the middle school. Also concerned with amount of students “cutting”, doing drugs, and who are depressed or suffering from anxiety. Also lack of social connections if students are not in sports or band.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None at this time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, although focus still needs to be given to potential bullying situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hear that a lot of children have major issues before gym class and in the locker rooms where they are not being supervised. Having my child in those areas at those times (witnessing this) makes me nervous that something will happen to them as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses continue on next page...
Are you treated as an equal participant on your child’s Team? (30 responses)

- Yes: 90.00%
- No: 10.00%

Responses continue on next page...

Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes

Yes:
Yes:
yes. We are consulted about the scheduling options for meetings, we are aware of when/what evaluations/testing is taking place.

I don't interact with school for my child

yes - I have a meeting middle of next week to discuss her progress

Yes, very much so.

Absolutely Yes!
Are you treated as an equal participant on your child’s Team?  (30 responses)

<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. My child, who is now old enough to attend team meetings, and I are always asked for our opinions, concerns and suggestions. If I ask for something different than what is current being offered to my child, the school always considers the request and more often than not actually makes it happen. For example, my child is extremely dyslexic therefore I knew it was going to be very difficult to almost impossible for her to successfully learn a foreign language when she is still trying to master her first language. I was concerned about her potential college opportunities as many colleges have a foreign language requirement. I suggested sign language, which was not a standard class taught at the school or on the on-line school Tahanto is affiliated with, for my child as her foreign language. The team did recognize it as being a very good option for someone with a reading learning disability to access another language as it only requires the child to learn the signing (spoken) portion of the language and the written portion of the language is the same as English, so my child could still concentrate on her weak encoding issues in her first language but still have the opportunity to acquire a second language that colleges would be looking for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she has no team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has been responsive to questions or issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I feel like my voice is heard in meetings and my input is including in planning for my child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure have not participated with this school since we are new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I feel that my input is important with decisions being made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. The team allows all my questions and comments in a very professional manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the most part - they don’t really ask me what I want but seem to have a good handle on my child’s progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are you treated as an equal participant on your child's Team?  (30 responses)

No. The testing is the know all and say all regardless of what the teachers have to say, what has been observed in the classroom, outside eval's, or my input. I am spoke over at meetings and dismissed. The plans are not written until I leave the meetings so I do not get a say. Once I receive them in the mail, that is when I fight to make the changes and the long process begins.

I have had no interaction with anyone at the school except the guidance counselor, Greg, who extremely patient and helpful and the social studies teacher who reached out to me to say thay she read my daughters file and understood her needs but wanted to run things by me first.

Yes parent input was integrated into plany

I believe so. They had good communication throughout the process and included us in regular meetings.

Is home/school communication sufficient for your child(ren)'s needs?  
(29 responses)

48.28% Yes
51.72% No

Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
I have not read many emails this year regarding class work. Some have explained the teachers 'side of the story' I believe when she fears my child will come home and share something. A couple time I had to discretely ask my child about a situation

Responses continue on next page...
Is home/school communication sufficient for your child(ren)'s needs?
(29 responses)

Sometimes it is lacking, particularly regarding electives. There have been band assignments that we were not aware of, poster projects in gym, homework in electives.

At the moment yes

yes

Google classroom is excellent. For the less organized student, it is critical.

Yes, our student is very verbal with her needs and the school has been responsive to us in addressing them.

There has been very little home/school communication in the 5 years he has attended Tahanto. Most communication has been initiated by me in response to a concern (poor grades, for example). Timely communications would be more effective to keeping him on track.

Not at all - like I said my daughter has ADD/ADHD, the school relies on students to get the information home to parents and that doesn't always work.

Yes

Yes.

I would like there to be more communication about staffing changes, such as who is my child's aide and when a new BCBA was hired. I don't always know who is working with my child.

Not all communication from English teacher explained to our needs

At this point yes

I like emailing teachers directly to request a meeting or just have an idea how my child is performing in class. I haven't had any issues so can't comment on that - but I do touch base with the teachers to make sure all is well. This information is important to me because I want to reinforce good study skills and behavior in class.

Yes, currently there is no concern regarding communication excepting the service delivery schedule being complete.

It's not always consistent. I hear a month later "oh, when this behavior happened..." and hadn't heard earlier.

No! There's no communication unless I bump into the speech pathologist.

NO! I am the one who has to reach out when there is an issue, not the teachers. There are also some teachers who do not even respond to emails! This is frustrating when you have a question because your child is in tears and does not understand the assignment. Then my child is penalized for not doing the work because THEY did not get back to either one of us to clarify. The only way to get a response from them is when I cc administration. This should NOT have to happen.

Once again no interaction with anyone teachers except one so I would say no

Now that she is off of IEP, there is less communication but her current teacher is accessible and responsive by email.
Did you know that the SEPAC is a resource for information and/or support? (35 responses)

![Pie chart showing 28.6% for Yes and 71.4% for No]

If yes, please describe the information or assistance you received: (16 responses)

None

None

I have not participated, but know I should

I have not participated, but know I should

Talks and Facebook links

I receive regular updates via email

Due to us living far away I have been unable to attend the meetings. I do appreciate the communication of support and resources.

I have been to a few presentations and all have been very helpful.

Emails are always sent out

I know it’s a place where if things change for my child I can turn to this group for support and help.

Emails of programs offered

I received information and assistance when my son was in kindergarten with some testing we had done for him at the school (BMS). I believe I receive all the notices about SEPAC events and presentations during the school year.

I know it is a resource for information but I have never actively used it. I had already researched quite a bit on my own (reading books, searching on-line, talking to doctors, educational advocates, and lawyers) in the early years when my child was at her previous school. By the time my daughter got to the Boylston school district and I became more familiar with SEPAC, I felt I had the information and skills I needed to properly advocate for my child.

Responses continue on next page...
If yes, please describe the information or assistance you received: (15 responses)

- Camaraderie and support. Interesting meeting topics.
- Information regarding meetings.
- I received information on basic rights. I learned of SEPAC’s support with scholarships during fundraising.

If no, can you suggest how we might be more visible/helpful in the district? (6 responses)

- It’s my own fault for not being active w sepac
- We are a new family to the school and we don’t know what programs are out there. It would be nice if the school would be more informative on these items.
- I’m not sure. Perhaps have information posted re: what support is available through the PTO news letter.
- Specific information home to parents with children in these plans
- Send information out to each family with a child who has special needs.

Are there any special education-related topics you would like more information about? (17 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>504 Plans</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Function</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP Process</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MassHealth</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCAS/PARCC</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling Support</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Thinking</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions (specific)</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 17
Please share about anything else you think it's important for the SEPAC to know!

(4 responses)

You are a vibrant and active group with a continuation of great leadership over the years. You are an asset to our school community. Thanks!

WE are new to the area, most people would not realize that our daughter struggles with ADD/ADHD because on the surface she seem like a normal 12 year old. She holds it together at school but when she comes home its a struggle. It would be nice for her teachers to know this that way they can assist more and know that she is just not a student who is looking for a handout or lazy. She works hard and makes good grade. But when she comes home things fall apart and its hard for her to stay focused like she does at school. She also doesn't learn well from some teachers, just a different teaching method that doesn't always get through to her. So yeah....I am not sure what kind of help SEPAC could give us....I am sure the school doesn't even know that she is ADD/ADHD.

Thank you for volunteering on behalf of our families.

You are doing an outstanding job! Thank you for supporting our kiddos!
Screen Capture of Survey

The following pages include a screen capture of the full 2016-1017 SEPAC Survey as viewed by the respondents.
2016-17 SEPAC Parent Survey

The Berlin/Boylston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) strives to help and support district families that have students with special needs.

Your responses to the questions in this survey will help us to determine future programs, presentations, activities and shed some light on policies and/or procedures that may need focus and attention.

*****Specific responses to this survey will be kept confidential, so please be as candid as possible*****

If you have any questions about the survey itself, please contact Karen Grocota (kg@sepac-berlin-boylston.org).

For other information about the SEPAC and our current activities, please visit http://www.sepac-berlin-boylston.org.

*****You may see links to this survey in more than one place on the web. Please complete it only once*****

Thanks for taking the time to give us your feedback!

Berlin-Boylston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

Name
OPTIONAL - First and Last Name

Short answer text

Email Address
OPTIONAL - First and Last Name

Short answer text

Role
Please choose ONE

- Parent
- Guardian
- Student
- Other

Name of School
Check the school for each child receiving special needs services.

- Berlin Memorial School
- Boylston Elementary School
- Tahanto Regional Middle High School
- Out of District Placement
- Home School
- Other
I have a child on a(n)
Check the appropriate box for each child receiving special needs services.

☐ Individual Education Plan (IEP)
☐ 504 Plan
☐ Neither of the above — may need services
☐ Neither of the above — does NOT need services
☐ Other...

My child(ren) receive the following services:
Check all that apply.

☐ Speech/Language
☐ Physical Therapy
☐ Occupational Therapy
☐ Counseling
☐ Academic Support Classes/Services
☐ Other

What is working well? What could be improved?
Please be as specific as possible.

Long answer text

If you have any safety concerns regarding your child(ren) at school, what are they?
Please be as specific as possible.

Long answer text

Are you treated as an equal participant on your child's Team?
Example(s) of how this is/is not true for you.

Long answer text

Is home/school communication sufficient for your child(ren)'s needs?
Example(s) of how this is/is not true for you.

Long answer text

Did you know that the SEPAC is a resource for information and/or support?

☐ Yes
☐ No
If yes, please describe the information or assistance you received:

Long answer text

If no, can you suggest how we might be more visible/helpful in the district?

Long answer text

Are there any special education-related topics you would like more information about?

Check all that apply.

☐ 504 Plans
☐ ADHD
☐ Autism
☐ Bullying
☐ Executive Functioning
☐ IEP Process
☐ MassHealth
☐ MCAS/PARCC Testing
☐ Sibling Support
☐ Social Thinking/Social Skills
☐ Transitions (start of school, move to middle school/high school, graduation/college/career)
☐ Other...

Please share about anything else you think it’s important for the SEPAC to know!

Long answer text