



SEPAC NEWS

Special Education Parent/Professional Advisory Council

End of Schoolyear 2010 Edition

3330 Monte Villa Parkway, Bothell, WA 98021

425.408.6008

www.sepacnsd.org

Message from the Chair: Co-opted or Collaborative?

SEPAC turns 30 this year and I've been mulling over an interesting dichotomy. Some individuals feel that SEPAC is not independent enough and question whether or not it's been co-opted. Others appreciate the relationship that SEPAC has worked to build with the district. This organizational juxtaposition is really a balance, and one we need to continuously watch. To be effective in its advocacy, SEPAC needs to be in the middle, providing a forum for dialogue. Dialogue moves us forward and opens avenues for resolution.

SEPAC Board members spend countless hours talking to parents about issues their children face. Some are minor and some horrendous. Sometimes we don't find resolution and families have left us in frustration and/or sought due process. But we also have resolved issues and made changes within the district that have positively influenced all of our students. Our recent survey results reflect that we need to be more transparent about this. Board members say meetings provide information that is unobtainable elsewhere and appreciate the opportunity to learn about and work with dedicated district staff. District professionals attend each meeting and support our efforts, providing invaluable perspective. It is also a forum to remind us of legal, fiscal and civil rights accountability to our students. We can't shy away from those discussions but we can create a respectful forum in which to have them. Advocacy issues on which SEPAC works are multifaceted. Take, for example, the issue of late arrival and

early dismissal of special education students for bussing purposes. From a parent's perspective, it results in weeks of lost instruction time throughout the school year. It is expensive for transportation to change tightly regulated transit routes between schools. There aren't enough hours, busses, or personnel. Para-educators, responsible for getting students to and from busses, aren't paid before or after the school day. Some students with disabilities need accommodation time to get to the bus. Others don't need extra time, but are being sent early anyway. Principals, trying to regulate parking lots, need to get busses out of the way as quickly as possible. All these opinions need to be considered in order to reach resolution.

Education is at times messy, imperfect, slow to change, and full of well-meaning professionals and families who want to do the right thing by students with disability-related services. It is the responsibility of SEPAC to invite as many voices to the table as we can, to tackle issues and find common ground so our kids can reach their potential. We have to cultivate respectful relationships so we can have complex and difficult conversations that will move us forward toward resolution. It really does take a village to raise our children and SEPAC is invested in building and supporting this village. If you want to be part of the village and part of the solution, we welcome your voice, your wisdom and expertise at our table.

Andrea Kadlec, SEPAC Chair

Directors' Letter

First, we want to say how excited we are about how the district teacher training day on January 4th went on embracing all students as part of general education. The staff development activities focused on recognizing the needs of all kids, the unique needs of students with disabilities and how important the participation of general education staff is in their education. The emphasis can even be seen at a larger, district-wide impact as all planned curriculum adoptions will now include the needs of special education students and teachers in the planning and implementation of curriculum.

Next, we want to announce the hiring of an Assistant Superintendent for Special Services: Sue Dedrick. Sue comes to us from the Everett School District and has a wealth of experience in special education, categorical programs, and educational leadership. Her responsibilities include supervision of special education, Title 1, Learning Assistance Program (LAP), English Language Learners (ELL), Headstart and Gifted. She will start on July 1, 2010. The SEPAC representative on the interview committee was Nancy Burrows. We are excited about having someone representing special education at the Assistant Superintendent level.

We and the rest of the special education department are busy with the transition process for next year. We are meeting with teams as they plan their efforts to move students from one

(continued on inside left page...)

Parents and Professionals Page

SEPAC Advocacy Initiatives

Many peripherally involved with SEPAC don't see the behind-the-scenes discussion, time, thought, research and energy that goes into advocacy on behalf of Northshore students. There have been number of successes and also progress made with the ones still being worked on.

Advocacy Successes:

- ◆ transportation - making sure time to load/unload students doesn't cut into instructional time
- ◆ special education leadership and vision in school district cabinet
- ◆ special education vision and leadership among school board input into hiring superintendent
- ◆ consistent meetings and hiring with superintendent input in hiring process of third assistant superintendent
- ◆ supported expansion of adult transition program
- ◆ support districtwide inclusion: survey for secondary; support for districtwide meeting; speakers and continued work
- ◆ anti-bullying resource provision
- ◆ youth inclusion and disability awareness campaign support
- ◆ youth advocacy campaign support
- ◆ support for disability awareness month legislative initiative
- ◆ support for Kevin's law - students participate in graduation, even when going on to 18-21 school programs
- ◆ dialogue regarding curriculum modification, differentiated instruction, curriculum standards

meaningful curriculum and response to intervention

- ◆ research provision of higher learning and literacy rates for students with significant cognitive disabilities

Current advocacy being worked on:

- ◆ anti-bullying initiatives
- ◆ curriculum standards for those in special education
- ◆ access to general education in conjunction with specially-designed instruction
- ◆ inclusion
- ◆ expulsion and/or suspension for disability-related behavior
- ◆ behavior plans that are not implemented effectively
- ◆ parent access to general and special education classrooms
- ◆ avoiding restraint & seclusion, and/or using appropriately when needed
- ◆ ESY qualification
- ◆ Cross-staff communication on student accommodations and educational goals
- ◆ Shared vision and leadership for Northshore's Special Education program

Andrea Kadlec, SEPAC Chair

SEPAC Leadership



Parents:

- Chair - Andrea Kadlec
- Vice Chair - Angela Jordan
- Past Chair - Kathryn Williams
- Treasurer - Dave Tronson
- Secretary - Nancy Burrows

Professionals:

- Elementary Grades - Carrie Matthews
Director Elementary Special Education
425-408-7736
- Secondary Grades - Ed Koehl
Director Secondary Special Education
425-408-7735

Directors' Letter (continued...)

level to the next: preschool to elementary, elementary to junior high, junior high to high school, and then high school to the adult transition program. As you go forward with your participation, please work with your current team who knows your child best and in the fall, begin collaborating early with your new team to get the year started well.

Finally, please complete and return the ethnicity report request you recently received. This request went to every parent in the district and is in response to changing federal and state reporting requirements.

We wish you a wonderful and safe summer!

Carrie Matthews, Director of
Elementary Special Education
Ed Koehl, Director of
Secondary Special Education

SEPAC

*(Special Education Parent/Professional Advisory Council)
is a group of parents, professionals and administrators who
work together for the benefit of children who have special needs
in the Northshore School District.*

*To learn more, please send an email: nsdsepac@yahoo.com
or visit our website: www.sepacnsd.org.*

SEPAC, etc.

School Transitions

Transitions mean change and change causes stress. But with preparation and planning it can be less frightening. The following strategies will help you and your child as they transition through the school system.

Increase your comfort level:

- ◆ In late spring become familiar with your child's new school by arranging a visit. Schedule a tour of the building and a time to observe. Contact Carrie Matthews (elementary special ed director) or Ed Koehl (secondary special ed director) to help with this.
- ◆ Arrange to meet with the new team members. The meeting could include, teachers, therapists, principal and school psychologist. The special ed directors should be able to help with this and you may feel it helpful to have one of them present at the meeting. Communicate to the team about your child – what motivators him/her and what triggers inappropriate behavior. Let them see your "whole" child. Assemble some photos or a scrap book about your child's interests, activities, family life and skills. Give as much background as you can but try not to overwhelm them with too much information.
- ◆ Find out the important dates for the school year: registration, open house, orientation, back-to-school, etc.
- ◆ Familiarize yourself with the bus schedule or drop off point and the plan for your child's arrival at school. How do they get to their classroom and do they head out to the playground first? What is the plan at the end of the day to ensure they get to the right bus?
- ◆ Let the staff know which forms of communication work best for you. Strong home-school communication not only gives you piece of mind but also positively impacts your child's academic and social achievement. Be sure you have all the important contact information for the teacher, main office, transportation department and that they have yours.

- ◆ Be involved in organizations like SEPAC – learn more about the district, special education, your options, your rights and your responsibilities.
- ◆ From the earliest pre-school years always look toward adulthood. What do you envision for your child at the end of his/her school career? Let that be your guide and work backwards from that point. You can always re-evaluate. It is very hard to raise expectations and effectively communicate that fact to everyone involved with your child once lower expectations have been established.

Increase your child's comfort level:

- ◆ Have your student visit the new school/classroom to meet the team members and become familiar with their new environment. This works best if done over several visits. Take your child through the school arrival routine the week prior to the beginning of school so they are comfortable with the first day and their new routine.
- ◆ Throughout the summer talk positively about the new school. Visit regularly during the summer to play or look around campus to help foster ownership of the new school.
- ◆ Be sure they attend the school orientation which is usually held a week or two before school starts.
- ◆ Familiarize them with the lunch routine and how it works. Have someone lined up to eat lunch with your child on the first day.

Be aware of differences when moving on to secondary education:

- ◆ There are six classes per day and possibly six teachers who may each be responsible for 150 students. Each will have their own expectations but no experience or history with your child.
- ◆ Campuses are much larger with students moving between classes all day long. Teachers expect much more student responsibility and less parental "hands-on" involvement. They foster independence and self-advocacy. Encourage that at home.
- ◆ Students are much more aware of differences and feel the need to "fit in" or establish their own identity.
- ◆ School rules are enforced strictly and absences count more.
- ◆ There is no recess or playing on the playground at secondary school.

What parents and students can do:

- ◆ Keep expectations high and communicate your expectations to your child's teachers frequently. They will value your input and the support you give your student at home.
- ◆ Model expected school behavior at home - remember habits allowed at home often travel to school (voice tones, language, response to adult directives, social skills, etc).
- ◆ Communicate often with your child's teacher (particularly the IEP case manager if you have one).
- ◆ Parents stay involved. Be active in SEPAC or your school's PTSA. Volunteer when you can at the school. Know what's going on. Ask questions. Help the school and school district to know you - and therefore your child - better.
- ◆ Before your student transitions to the junior high, clear the clothing and accessories out of their closet that are not appropriate for secondary school. Notice what other students wear to help your child "fit in".
- ◆ Find your child a lunch buddy for the first few days at the new school.
- ◆ Start to prepare for life beyond school by compiling lists of your child's skills, accomplishments and what he/she enjoys doing. Always look ahead!

Kathryn Williams, SEPAC Past Chair

SEPAC Outstanding Service Awards

Thank you to everyone who nominated some very outstanding people who are making a difference in the lives of students with special needs in the Northshore School District every day. We received a record number of nominations this year and unfortunately could not present awards to everyone even though they were all deserving. The recipients will be announced and presented with their awards before the end of the school year and a complete list of the recipients will be posted on the SEPAC website. Congratulations to the recipients and to EVERYONE who was nominated! You are all very special people.

SEPAC

Meetings

*Meetings are held
Monday evenings
from 6:30-8:30 pm*

*Location: NSD
Administrative Center
All parents, teachers,
principals and special
education adminis-
trators are welcome*

For more information send an email:
nsdsepac@yahoo.com or check the
website: www.sepacnsd.org

Fall 2010-11 Presentations

October 27, 2010
- Bullying

November 17, 2010
- Social Thinking

January 19, 2011
- Inclusive Practices

February 16, 2011
- State of the District II
(curriculum updates)

March 23, 2011
- Smooth Transitions

April 27, 2011
- Dyslexia

May 25, 2011
- Adult Transition

*Presentations
are held Wednesday
evenings from 7-9 pm at
the NSD Administrative
Center. Bring a friend!*

Childcare for District
families is available.
Call 206-579-2321
to reserve a spot.

SEPAC NEWS

Administrative Center
Northshore Special Education Dept.
3330 Monte Villa Parkway
Bothell, WA 98021-8972

Non-profit org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Bothell, WA
Permit #6