



March 12, 2021 SEPAC Monthly Meeting

Attendance - Val Frias, Alessandra DiCressio, Beth Kaufman- Kramer, Rebecca Sapolsky, Wendy Estrada, Andrea Parzen, Julie Jette, Carol Seidman, Kelly, Leora Faiber, Pamela Palmucci, Amy Grayson, James, Lori Preston, Danna Perry, Katherine Marshall
SEPAC Executive Committee: Faith Dantowitz - Co-Chair, Linda Monach - Co-Chair
Lisa Scher - Secretary.

PSB Representatives: Casey Ngo-Miller - Deputy Superintendent of Student Services, Melissa Devine - Director of Autism and Inclusion Programming

School Committee Members; Andy Liu - School Committee SEPAC Liaison

Meeting was held via Zoom from 8:30-9:40 am

Meeting proceedings;

Welcome and Updates by Linda Monach, Co-Chair, Brookline SEPAC

The SEPAC Community wishes Wendy Ryder well during her time away from us. Please contact us if she needs anything and we hope she comes back to us soon!

School Committee Update by Andy Liu - School Committee Liaison to SEPAC

Not a lot specifically about Special Education from the School Committee this month. There have been three big preoccupations; getting kids back into school full time, the Superintendent Search, and starting to work on the budget for next school year.

For getting students back; Grades 2-5 are coming back on March 29. Dr. Marini will be telling the community later today that Grades 6-8 will be back on April 12, 9th grade is the hardest case because of the very congested conditions at Old Lincoln School but we will be phasing students in with reduced distancing, although I can't give specific dates for that yet.

As far as the Superintendent search goes, the School Committee is very very grateful to Linda for her two years of service on the Search Committee. She gave the SEPAC Community a really strong voice in that process. I think everyone I've talked to, myself included, is very pleased with the selection of Dr. Gillory. He seems very eager to come to grips with some of the challenges that he knows he faces once

he gets here. We are all looking forward to a period of stability so we can address some of the root causes of our problems here.

As far as budgeting, we are in the middle of this ongoing process that will culminate at the May Town Meeting. There's a huge amount of uncertainty about our revenue, mainly that we don't know yet what's coming to us from this American REscue Plan that just passed Congress. That could be a huge deal. This is my first year on the School Committee and one thing that's becoming clear to me is that the way we structure our budget can make it hard for the layperson to understand the broad purposes of the money we spend. This in turn makes it really hard to set priorities. The accounting we have to do doesn't always align very well with how we want to intuitively think about the budget in terms of broad areas of endeavor for example special education. If we are able to set up a discussion in the School Committee on how we spend money in Special Education, I'll certainly let you know so you can participate in that.

Presentations;

Greg Austin from Inclusive Fitness

Opened in 2019 it combines the right people, best programming, and the perfect place where neurotypical and neurodiverse people alike can come to create a healthy lifestyle together.

Inclusive Fitness provides 1:1 and very small group training for neurodiverse people and their caregivers and families. The idea is to create a healthy lifestyle for everyone.

Follows a specific protocol called the PAC profile; Physical, Adaptive, and Cognitive aspects of exercise and fitness and wellness. We do exercise. There are not "autism" or "cerebral palsy" or "muscular dystrophy" exercises. There are simply exercises that are taught more or less effectively. We believe that the PAC program teaches more effectively by providing instruction on patterns and how to master movement.

Planning to open three facilities in the Boston area in the next three years. Inclusive Fitness is not a nonprofit - it is a business. The long term plan is to have a facility in every major metropolitan area in the US within the next 10 years. We want to be the employer of choice and the leading employer of neurodivergent people in the US.

We do have a philosophy here - We're not a gym. We love to work out but we have three pillars we go by;

Fundamentals - we teach the basics through the PAC profile (good biomechanics,

progression/regression, how to succeed) and what are the right exercises for each athlete

Instill Ownership - we do everything we can to make our athletes know they are in control of their workout. We give them options, choice, and control.

Instill Habits - WE work to establish habits so you are not necessarily tied to Inclusive Fitness but you establish these habits

We support the ecosystem - we work with everyone who works with the athlete

Fees - don't have a sliding scale but do have different packages. We sell packs of 4, 8, and 16 packages. The larger the package, the lower the cost per session. We are working with the

Doug Flutie Fund to provide scholarships but are just getting started. Parents are able to work out with their athlete at no additional cost. (call for rates)

We are working with Brookline Rec on inclusive and summer programming. Should see marketing materials soon!

Presentation Slides;

Questions from the chat;

1) Can the facility accommodate younger siblings?

Yes. The facility is hiring a staff person to provide programming for younger siblings. It is not just about "giving them something to do" but to help them to process the idea of their place in their family.

2) Does a parent need to attend with the child?

No. We meet the family and the athlete where they are. In fact, we would rather you not be. Frankly, Mom and Dad can be a distraction. The athlete needs to develop a trusting relationship with their coach. We have spaces for families to go to wait and we really encourage families to work out in a different part of the gym while we are working with your athlete.

3) How long is a session?

We are open 7 days per week. We start our sessions at 9am and go through the day. Our last session begins at 7pm. Sessions are scheduled for 45 minutes. Sometimes they may last 10 minutes at the beginning. We generally see athletes begin at 20-25 minutes and develop tolerance from there.

4) Do you have a wait list?

There is no wait list at this time and we are adding staff to enable us to grow.

5) Do you accept insurance?

We do not accept insurance at this time. We are all private pay, although we did just have our first parent successfully negotiate payment through DDS. I just presented to DDS Executive Board on Tuesday and will be following up to see if we can continue to work with them on family support budgets as a means of supporting the self direct initiatives they have underway. Eventually, I expect we will be able to accept insurance, but as a start up, we're not quite ready to go down that path.

6) Do you have scholarships or a sliding scale?

Not at this time, but we are working with the Doug Flutie Foundation to try to make that happen. I don't want finances to be a barrier to anyone who wants to participate so people should reach out with questions.

Teri Alves Hunter - Parent Professional Advocacy League (PPAL)

PPAL is a statewide family and parent organization dedicated to improving the mental health of children, youth, and families through education, advocacy, and partnership

As a professional, I am the Multicultural Outreach Advocate for PPAL. As a parent, I am the SEPAC co-chair for Falmouth. So, even if I can't answer your questions or provide support through my professional affiliations, I am happy to do so as a parent who is walking the same path.

Our organization approaches everything from the context that the very first thing everyone needs is safety. If you don't have safety, you can't learn. You have to have a clear mind in order to learn. With virtual learning, kids were being bullied on camera so we had to advocate for allowing them to turn their cameras off or use a virtual background so they were not being picked on for what their house looked like or the clothes they were wearing.

Presentation slides;

School District Update - Casey Ngo-Miller, Deputy Superintendent of Student Services

Personnel

Wendy Ryder, the Director of Special Education at BHS is on a temporary personal leave of absence. I'm in contact with her so we have a better idea of when she may return but I did want folks to know. Everyone who works with Wendy at the high school and families who work with her directly already know this, but I just wanted the larger community to know that and to have the list of who to go to in Wendy's absence. [Please see contacts on BrooklineSEPAC.org](https://www.brookline-sepac.org/);

Contacts will also be posted to the SEPAC website and included in the BHS PTO Blast.

Question from the chat;

Who will participate in scheduled mediations in Wendy's absence?

The district will have a representative at the meeting. We will do our best to have representation at all currently scheduled meetings and mediations. Someone will attend from PSB.

HR will be posting the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning position this week. Hopefully we are still on track for getting some really great candidates. I will be begging for SEPAC to have a seat on the search committee because special education will be a big piece for me when looking at candidates.

DESE update

The federal government directs states to identify school districts that have a significant disproportionality in terms of identifying students with disabilities that are in a particular subgroup. Once districts are identified with a significant disproportionality, there are a set of steps that a district is required to take. For this school year, the Public Schools of Brookline has been identified as disproportionately identifying students who identify as African-American with a specific learning disability. In other words, Brookline is overidentifying students who identify as African-American with a disability and putting them on IEP's. The steps that we are required to take;

- 1) DESE is requiring us to take a pretty deep and overall look at our policies, practices, and procedures so we can come back in compliance with IDEA. We do need to publicly report on what it is we revise and we have to set aside 15% of our IDEA funding to remediate the root causes that are identified as the drivers of the problem. We do have a group of folks who have been working on this since last year because we did get notification from the state that we were at risk of being noncompliant with overidentification.
 - a) One of the things we noticed is that 50% of the students in this group are either in the Steps to Success program or in METCO. 40-45% of this group did not receive any academic interventions prior to qualifying for an IEP.
 - b) We also want to work with ETF's and special education staff to better identify students who are eligible for special education. There will be much more information to come. For the past year and a half, we have been pulling together a group from special education and general education to look at student profiles and identify some common trends we are seeing.

- 2) We have started to do a root cause analysis. We started to look at our Child Study Teams and how they function. The idea of these multidisciplinary teams is to offer tiered supports so students don't end up in special education.
 - a) We found that there are inconsistent practices on our CST across schools so while we are not done with our action planning piece, it looks like there is going to be a more thorough and consistent training for our Child Study teams.

This is really an introduction to let folks know what we are working on. There will be more coming from us both here to the SEPAC community but also to the full School Committee audience so it's clear what it is our office is working on.

Vote on approval of February minutes

The wrong minutes were accidentally attached to the agenda, so we will need to wait until April to vote on the February minutes!

[Link to meeting recording and materials](#)