



Shrewsbury SEPAC

**Special Education
Parent Advisory Council
June 6, 2018**



Acknowledgements

- o School Committee
- o Dr. Sawyer
- o Meg Belsito and Meghan Bartlett
- o Special Education Staff
- o Parents and Caregivers



Preview

- o About Shrewsbury SEPAC
- o 2017-18 Review
- o 2018-19 Events
- o Community Outreach
- o Looking Forward
- o SEPAC Goals



Leadership Team

- o Colleen Corbett, President & Secretary
- o Jill DeBender, Outreach Chair & Treasurer
- o Blake Poggi, Membership Chair

**Leadership is practiced not so
much in words as in attitude
and in actions.**

Harold S. Geneen



SEPAC Facts

- o A SEPAC is a parent run organization, but is not a PTO.
- o Since 1986, MA Law has required that all public school districts maintain a SEPAC.
- o The school district is charged with assisting the SEPAC in maintaining its operations and activities.
- o Membership in SEPAC is offered to all parents and caregivers of students found eligible for special education services, as well as other interested parties.
- o SEPAC collaborates with the school district to provide the required Basic Rights of Special Education Training for parents and professionals annually.



Mission Statement

We believe in the power of parents working together to make an impact.

- o Shrewsbury Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is a volunteer organization made up of parents and caregivers whose children receive special education services through Shrewsbury Public Schools.
- o We serve as a voice for parents by advising the Shrewsbury school administration and School Committee on matters related to the education of students with disabilities.
- o The SEPAC provides a forum for parents and caregivers to share experiences and exchange information. Together, we work for understanding, respect, support and the appropriate education of all children with special needs in our community.



What we do

We strive to help families participate effectively in the special education process by:

- Hosting opportunities for families to connect through meetings and coffees, where they can find support and advice from other members.
- Providing trainings, workshops, and presentations to inform families and help them advocate for their children.
- Informing families about their rights regarding Special Education.
- Maintaining a Facebook page offering community resources and services, news articles, and a forum for members to post questions.



Topics of Interest

- When we surveyed our membership about topics of interest in 2015-16, their primary interest was preparation of the IEP and understanding of the IEP process.
 - In response, last year we offered two IEP 101 workshops: one in the fall and one in the spring.





2017-2018 Events

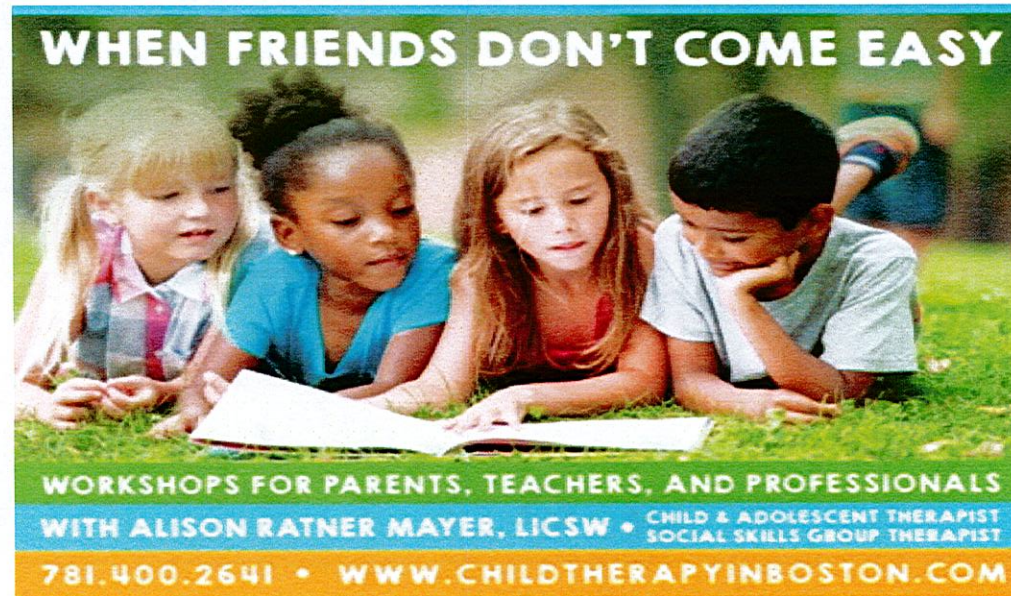
- o The second most popular topic of interest among our members was developing social skills. We began this year with an event about making and maintaining friendships.
- o Like last year, we teamed up with neighboring SEPACs to offer workshops on Executive Functioning Skills, a presentation about Neuropsychological Evaluations, and Music Therapy.
- o We also had two events with our SE Director and Assistant Director: a Meet and Greet in the Fall and an overview of building to building transitions and departmental goals and objectives in the spring.



When Friends Don't Come Easy

9/26/17 @ Floral Street School

- Workshop by Alison Ratner Mayer, LICSW from Child Therapy Boston, focused on helping children with social skills.
- Approximately 25 parents attended event and connections between members with similar aged students were made.
- Co-hosted event with Westborough SEPAC.

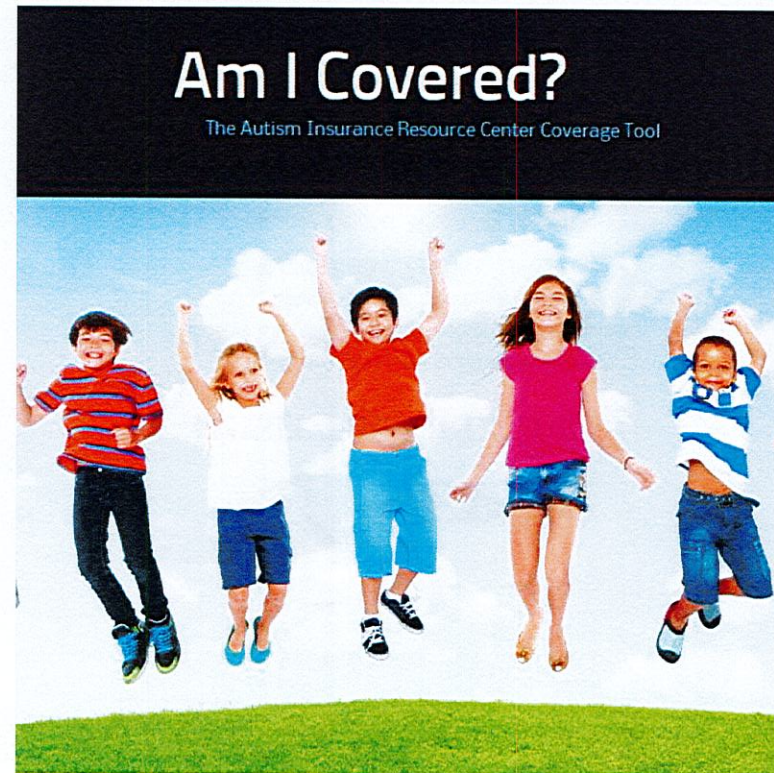




Autism Insurance in Massachusetts

10/17/17 @ Mill Pond
School, Westborough

- o Terri Farrell, Project Director, Autism Insurance Center at UMass Medical School discussed eligibility and covered treatments through private insurance, MassHealth and the Health Connector.
- o This event was co-hosted with Westborough SEPAC





Meet the Directors

10/24/17 @ Floral Street School

- o *We welcomed Meg Belsito, Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel and Meghan Bartlett, Assistant Director, to our meeting.*
- o *They provided an overview of Special Education Services and took questions from members.*



MEET THE DIRECTORS

Join the Shrewsbury Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) in welcoming Meg Belsito, Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel and Meghan Bartlett, Assistant Director

Tuesday, October 24, 2017 @ 7:00 pm
Floral Street School Media Center
57 Floral Street, Shrewsbury

RSVP to shrewsbury.sepac@gmail.com by October 20.

Walk-ins are always welcome.

Refreshments will be provided.

<https://www.facebook.com/shrewsburysepac>

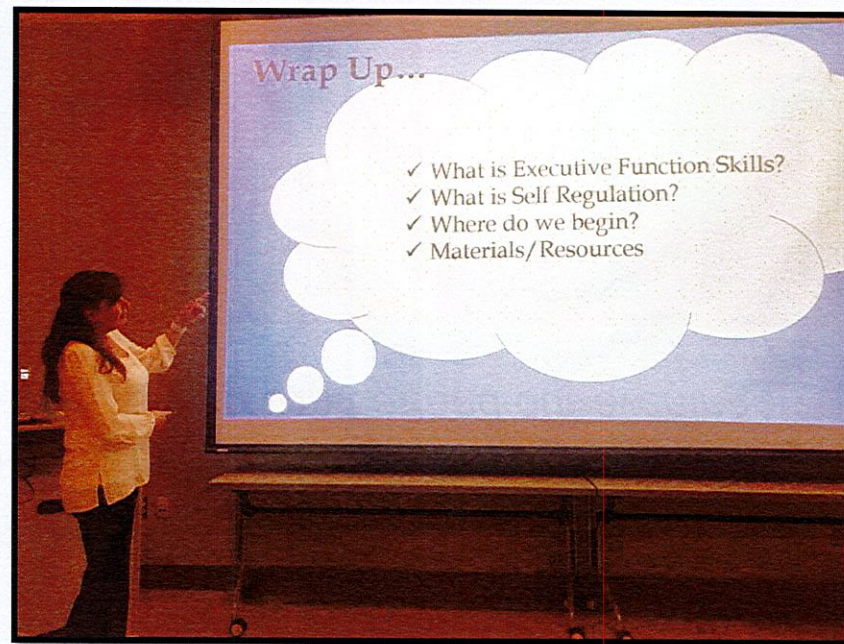
SEPAC is a volunteer organization made up of parents and caregivers whose children receive special education services through the Shrewsbury Public Schools. We provide a forum for parents and caregivers to share experiences and exchange information. Together, we work for understanding, respect, support and the appropriate education of all children with special needs in our community.



Executive Functioning Skills for Life and Learning

11/13/17 @ Shrewsbury
Public Library

- Workshop presented by Jessica Pedula, MS, from Speech & Language Specialities, Inc., to help your child become a Successful Independent Learner through executive function and self-regulation skills.
- Co-hosted with Westborough SEPAC
- With over 100 attendees this event had mainstream appeal and expanded our audience.

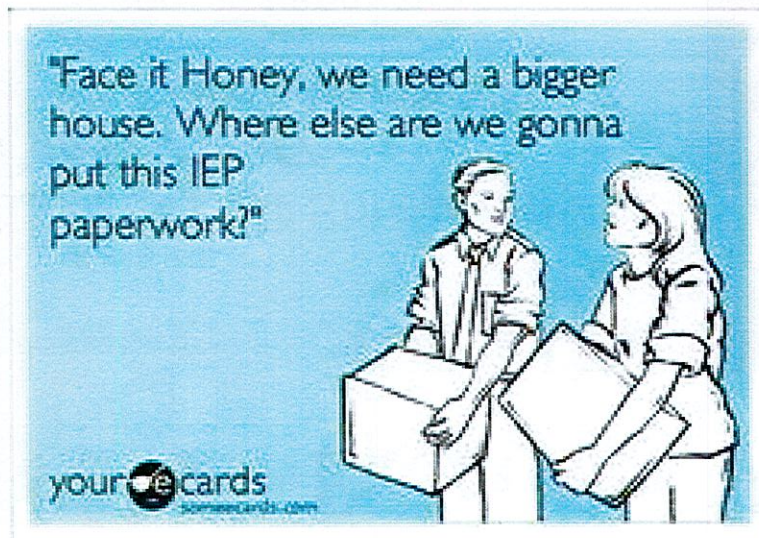




SEPAC Coffees

11/18/17 & 4/10/18 @ Café Noir

- o Met with members at local cafe mid-morning.
- o Daytime hours work for members who can't attend our evening meetings.





SEPAC General Meeting

1/30/18 @ Floral Street School

- o We hosted Dale MaGee and Jason Palitsch from the School Committee at our January general meeting.
- o They spoke with our members about issues facing the District and took questions.
- o Co-hosted with Floral Street School PTO.



Understanding Neuropsychological Evaluations

2/13/18 @ West
Boylston High School

- o *Presentation by Dr. Joseph Moldover, a Developmental Neuropsychologist*
- o *This event was co-hosted by West Boylston SEPAC.*
- o *35 people attended this event.*



Please join West Boylston and Shrewsbury
SEPACs for a presentation by

**Dr. Joseph Moldover on
Understanding Neuropsychological
Evaluations**

Date: Tuesday, February 13, 2018 **Time:** 7:00PM

Location: West Boylston High School Media Center
125 Crescent Street, West Boylston



Dr. Moldover is a clinical psychologist with specialty training in developmental neuropsychology. He works with children and adolescents with psychiatric, developmental, and learning needs. He will be talking with our group about evaluation strategies for working with children with varied diagnoses and the issues in translating those evaluations into the educational system.

RSVP to sepac@wbschools.com or shrewsbury.sepac@gmail.com

All interested parties from the school and community are encouraged to attend.



Basic Rights in Special Education

3/20/18 @ Floral Street School

- o This workshop, for parents and professionals, provides a basic understanding of complex special education laws and procedures.*

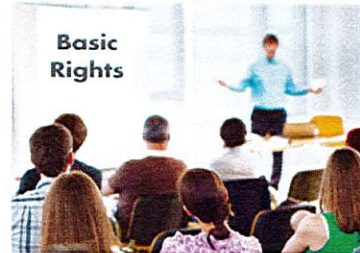


FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

FREE WORKSHOP

Basic Rights In Special Education

A Workshop for Parents and Professionals



Basic Rights

This workshop provides a basic understanding of the complex special education laws and procedures.

Date: Tuesday, 3/20/18

Time: 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Location: Floral Street School
Media Center
57 Floral Street
Shrewsbury, MA

Hosted by

Shrewsbury SEPAC

Presenter: Jessica Sales Cohen

Please RSVP by 3/15/18 at
shrewsbury.sepac@gmail.com

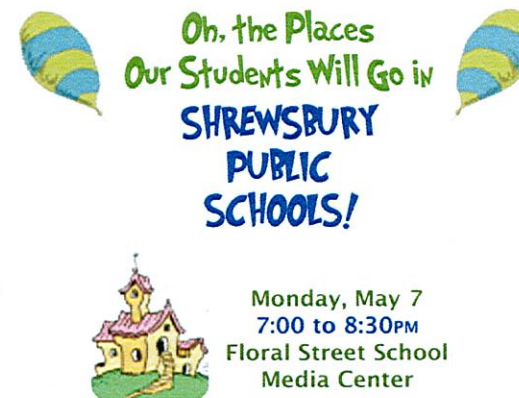
Walk-ins are always welcome.



Oh, the Places Our Students Will Go in Shrewsbury Public Schools

5/7/18 @ Floral Street School

- o *Meg Belsito, Meghan Bartlett, and Kristin Herrick presented an overview of building to building transitions, new district strategic priorities, and department goals and objectives.*
- o *They presented slides and video from special education classrooms, and took questions from members.*



Please join us for a presentation with our Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services, Meg Belsito, and other department leaders to hear about building to building transition overviews, new district strategic priorities and department goals and objectives.



RSVP to shrewsbury.sepac@gmail.com. Walk-ins are welcome!
<https://www.facebook.com/shrewsburysepac>



Music Therapy Workshop

5/31/18 @ Shrewsbury
Public Library

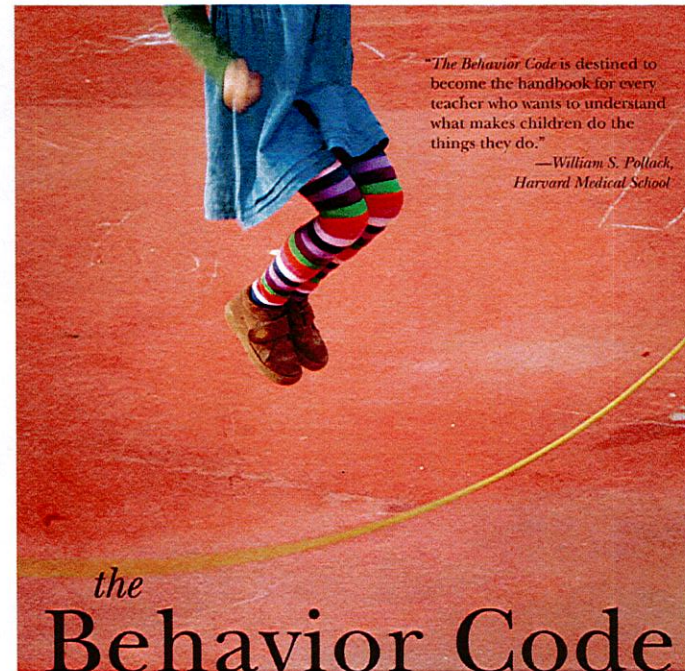
- o *Jen Lentz, a Board-Certified Music Therapist, conducted an interactive workshop for parents and children about the benefits of music therapy for students with special needs.*





2018-19 Events

- o Looking forward, we're hoping to welcome Jessica Minahan, a board-certified behavior analyst and special educator. She is coauthor of *The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students*.
- o As Shrewsbury Special Education staff have been reading the *Behavior Code Workbook for Teachers*, we thought a presentation by Jessica for parents would be a nice supplement.



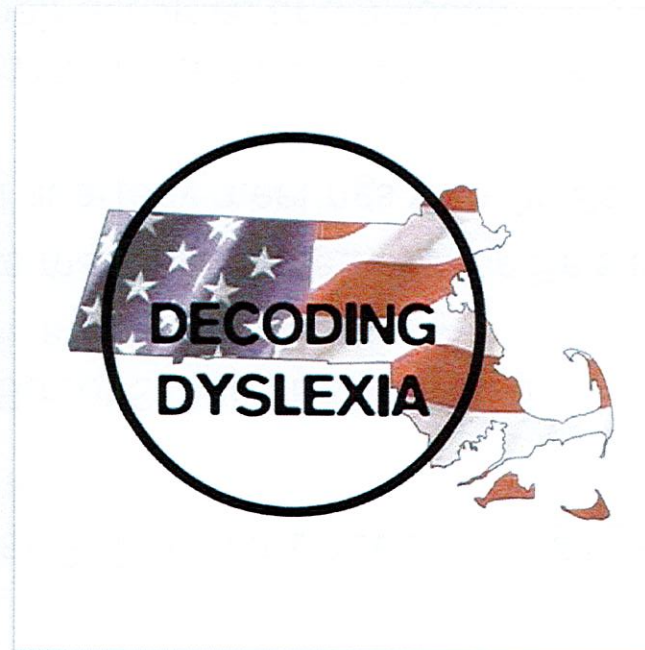
A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students

JESSICA MINAHAN & NANCY RAPPAPORT, MD



2018-19 Events

- o We're also hoping to host Nancy Duggan from Decoding Dyslexia of Massachusetts.
- o 20 years ago, Nancy heard the word dyslexia and it started her on a journey of learning to help her daughter.
- o She is a trained reading therapist and a licensed school counselor. As co-founder of Decoding Dyslexia, she and her team of parents, educators, and professionals aim to raise awareness about this learning disability and to empower students with dyslexia and their families.





SEPAC Community Outreach

In addition to our events, this past year SEPAC continued to engage with the school community and beyond:

- o Attended PTO meetings at Floral Street School, Parker Road Preschool, Calvin Coolidge School, and Beal School.
- o Attended Special Education Leads meeting, hosted by Meg Belsito.
- o Attended PTO Presidents' Council quarterly meetings with Dr. Sawyer throughout the year.
- o Attended Westborough, Northboro/Southboro, and West Boylston SEPAC meetings to learn about their activities and discuss collaborations.
- o Attended Visions of Community conference at Seaport World Trade Center in Boston on March 3, 2018
 - Sponsored by the Federation for Children with Special Needs.



Outreach Benefits

- Our outreach efforts have further established SEPAC in the community, deepened our connections and relationships, and allowed us to successfully fundraise.
- We've also strengthened our relationships with Special Education Director, Meg Belsito, and Assistant Director, Meghan Bartlett through frequent meetings and planning sessions.
- Earlier this year, we also began quarterly meetings with Erin Canzano and Dr. Sawyer.



Looking Forward

- o Create a website for SEPAC documents and resources.
- o Working with SE Administration, develop an Introduction to Special Education document that defines commonly used words like inclusion, co-teaching, small groups, etc..
- o Given the current climate in schools across the country, we'd like to work with SE Administration to create a SEPAC event that explains how Shrewsbury Schools support students with social, emotional and/or mental health issues.
 - What school personnel are involved and what is the process for identifying students struggling with social, emotional, and/or mental health issues?
 - How are targeted interventions for these students developed and implemented?



SEPAC Goals

- Establish a vibrant forum for parents and caregivers in the Shrewsbury Special Education Community.
- Offer multiple opportunities for families to socialize and participate in special education related topics at meetings, workshops and coffee hours.
- Provide resources and assistance to parents to help them navigate the system and simplify challenges.
- Actively reach families and address their questions and concerns via social media and email.
- Build new areas of communication and collaboration with school professionals and administrators.

