

LEXINGTON



SEPAC / SEPTA

*Parents Supporting Parents of Children with
Special Needs in Lexington Public Schools*

Visit our new website lexsepta.org

End of School Year, Message from the Co-Chairs

Dear Members,

The 2019-2020 academic school year has come to end and what a year it has been! We know that the past few months have been especially difficult for children with special education / 504 needs and their families. Please know that as we move forward, LexSEPAC/SEPTA is continually committed to sharing parent voices and feedback with the school committee and administration, to hopefully help shape your child's experience with remote learning and school re-opening in the months that lie ahead.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the member parents who participated in the numerous events throughout the year. We hope you found the workshops, speakers, movie screenings, Special Education Updates, and Parent Coffees valuable and informative. A special THANK YOU to all of our board members, school liaisons, and parent volunteers for planning and executing these fantastic events.

Throughout this school year, we have maintained and continued to foster a strong relationship with the LPS Administration. We started the school year with goals to increase awareness, improve communication, increase membership, and provide education / information for our community. Some of this year's achievements include:

- LexSEPAC/SEPTA membership increased by 33% this year. We are now at 135 members and received an award from the Massachusetts PTA for growing our membership, for the second year in a row.
- We launched the 2019 LexSEPAC/SEPTA parent survey in November 2019, partnered with the administration to develop recommendations, disseminated the survey report and parent comments, and presented results at the School Committee meeting on May 12, 2020. Here is the link to the [report](#) and the School Committee [presentation](#), which starts at the 2:00 mark.

- We continued to help support the expansion of the Understanding Our Differences curriculum, with five elementary schools now committed to implementing the curriculum. The District, with the support of the parent coordinators, successfully obtained a LEF grant in the amount of \$13,000 to purchase the supplies needed to adopt the remaining Blindness/Low Vision unit. While the UOD roll-out is currently on hold due to COVID-19, we are always looking for volunteers. If you are interested in helping to roll-out Understanding Our Differences across Lexington, please email cobopowell@gmail.com.
- We represented LexSEPAC/SEPTA on the Inclusion Community Input Team meetings, held in January and February this year. The CIT includes a wide range of stakeholders, from Central Administration, building Principals and administrators, teachers, specialists, and parents. A draft for LPS's inclusion philosophy was created and the team began visiting other local schools to assess inclusive practices outside of Lexington. Given school closings and restrictions likely in the Fall, the Inclusion CIT is likely to be on hold through this time.
- We met with the Superintendent, Special Education Director, Assistant Special Education Director and School Committee representatives on a quarterly basis, enabling us to share parent's feedback and advocate effectively.
- We partnered with the Superintendent's Office to help disseminate information to all parents. Also, our PTA/O President's Council Chair continued to support LexSEPAC/SEPTA by sharing information and events with all local school PTA/Os.
- We had parent coffees with School Committee representatives and the Superintendent, with a commitment to hold more parent coffees next school year.

With regards to Remote Learning in the Spring of 2020:

- We launched a [petition](#) to stop a Senator-proposed COVID-19 waiver of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act), collecting over 1750 signatures, which was sent to our Federal and State representatives as well as the Massachusetts' Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- We engaged with the Superintendent, Special Education Director, and School Committee representatives at the start of the school closure and advocated for direct services and 1-to-1 student contact, and continued to do so throughout the remote learning phase.
- We organized zoom meetings with the Superintendent and our School Committee representatives, to enable direct feedback from parents during the course of school close this spring.
- We advised the School Committee on special education matters as it relates to remote learning and provided resources and support to special education families. Here is the link to the [LexSEPAC COVID-19 Resources page](#).

With regards to the potential return to school in Fall 2020:

- We collected parent feedback regarding remote learning and parent hopes for the Fall of 2020 and submitted on behalf of members to Superintendent and School Committee on June 11th.
- We collaborated on a [letter](#), signed by close to 900 special education parents and SEPAC leaders from more than 150 school districts in Massachusetts, to advocate for the provision of direct instruction and related services to special

education students this coming fall, which was sent to the Massachusetts' Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Return-to-School Working Group on June 15th.

- We collected questions from members regarding the [Back-to-School Blueprint](#) and delivered to administration. Answers were sent to members on July 10th and can be found [here](#).

Looking forward, we are excited to continue the following work in the upcoming school year:

- We will continue to build on our partnership with the Central Administration and School Committee by continuing to advise on special education matters as it relates to remote learning and school reopening.
- We will continue to provide resources and support for special education parents as it relates to remote learning and school reopening.
- We will continue to broaden LexSEPAC/SEPTA's presence and to increase LexSEPAC/SEPTA membership by building closer relationships with parent and community organizations throughout next year.
- We will continue to work with the administration on implementation of the recommendations of the [SEPAC 2019 Parent Survey](#)
- We will continue to represent LexSEPAC/SEPTA as stakeholder on the Inclusion Community Input Team and the Diversity and Equity Community Input Teams as part of the The Diversity Equity and Inclusion work spearheaded by the district.
- We will continue to work to support and expand Understanding Our Differences implementation across the district. An overview of this curriculum is located [here](#). To volunteer at your school, please contact cobopowell@gmail.com.

Thank you for your continued commitment to LexSEPAC/SEPTA as we continue to navigate this uncertain time together. We wish you a safe and healthy summer!

Carissa Black & Colette Powell

Incoming LexSEPAC/SEPTA Co-Chairs

Emma Harding & Patricia Jacotin
Outgoing LexSEPAC/SEPTA Co-Chairs

presidents@lexsepta.org

A Warm Welcome to Our New 2020-21 Board Members

LexSEPAC / LexSEPTA Board 2020-21

Co-Chairs: Carissa Black & Colette Powell

Secretary: Carol Webb

Treasurer: Roseanne Bonardi

Membership Co-Chairs: Georgia Swann & Maria Bertram

Presentations & Special Events: Lisa O'Brien & Kathy Cunningham

Communications: Marina Levit

Web/Tech: Jaina Morgan

Lexington Public School Parent Liaisons

Bowman: Lori Wright

Bridge: OPEN

Clarke: Sarah Carter & Tanya Stamoulis

Diamond: Deb Osber

Estabrook: Rian Chen

Fiske: Arvind Sudarsanam & Georgia Swann

Hastings: Christy Waller

Harrington: Heidi Mann

LCP (Lexington Children's Place): Jenna Martin

LHS: Robin Abrams, Mona Roy, Carol Webb, & Myriam Wright

Out of District: Jennifer Yaar

School Committee Liaisons: Bronte Abraham, Arvind Sudarsanam, & Georgia Swann



LEXINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLUEPRINT

LPS MISSION: JOY IN LEARNING | CURIOSITY IN LIFE | COMPASSION IN ALL WE DO

Upcoming Events Regarding the Back-To-School Plan

We encourage members to be involved in these events and to fill out the feedback form linked below.

July 15th: [Feedback Form](#) closes; The LPS Back-to-School Planning Team will analyze data trends and make revisions to the DRAFT Blueprint.

Week of July 20th: Dr. Hackett will hold additional Superintendent Chats for students, staff, and parents who wish to weigh in on the plans (the schedule is forthcoming).

July 21st: The Superintendent will give a preliminary presentation of the DRAFT Blueprint to the School Committee, along with a summary of feedback received to date. This presentation will include findings from the feasibility study of the full return-to-school option.

July 24th-26th: The LPS Planning Team will review feedback a final time and make any necessary revisions and incorporate into the final LPS Back-to-School Blueprint.

July 28th: The School Committee will hear final recommendations from Dr. Hackett and vote on the plan.

Lexington Public Schools Communications regarding Special Education COVID-19

Special Education Update Letter 06-16-20

[Extended School Year Letter 06-10-20](#)

Update for Parents of Students with Disabilities_04-07-20

The Lexington SEPAC is the Special Education Parent Advisory Council, a group of parents with children on IEPs or 504 plans, who meet regularly as a group and also with the LPS administration to advise on the planning, evaluation and development of special education programs in our district.

The LexSEPTA, the Lexington Special Education PTA, supports LexSEPAC, offering parents a way of connecting with one another, valuable speaker events and workshops and also social gatherings with other parents, the school committee and more. LexSEPTA is a 501(c) volunteer-run organization.

Please visit lexsepta.org for a wealth of information about special education, resources and an overview of LPS Programs in our district.

[Unsubscribe](#)