

## **NISD Special Education Parent Advisory Council**

### **ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this organization shall be the Northwest Independent School District (NISD) Special Education Parent Advisory Council, hereinafter referred to as the SEPAC.

### **ARTICLE II: MISSION STATEMENT**

We believe that a parent-led council made up of district stakeholders (i.e., parents of students receiving special education services, student self-advocates, educators, administrators, and community members with and without disabilities, etc.) that can collaborate effectively and efficiently will:

1. Promote positive educational outcomes and well-being for all students, including those with disabilities.
2. Identify concerns and encourage appropriate interventions.
3. Help shape the development of programs, services, and policies; as well as improve district and community culture.

### **ARTICLE III: PURPOSE AND FUNCTION**

#### **Section 1:**

The purpose of the SEPAC shall be:

1. To create a network of district stakeholders (i.e., parents of students receiving special education services, student self-advocates, educators, administrators, and community members with and without disabilities, etc.) to collaborate and create a forum to share information.
2. To collaborate as stakeholders to promote positive educational outcomes and well-being for all students, including those with disabilities through information gathering, communication and feedback.
3. To promote understanding and communication between stakeholders, district, and community.
4. To promote communication, understanding, equity, and inclusion within the community.
5. To encourage a community commitment to quality education for all children and to support diversity within the educational setting and beyond.

#### **Section 2:**

The function of the SEPAC shall be:

1. To participate in the planning, development, evaluation, and implementation of programs related to but not limited to disability, education, and special education.
2. To provide an effective link between parents/guardians and school administration.

3. To provide information concerning disability, special education, outreach, and community engagement to all parents/guardians of children enrolled in NISD; and to provide a forum for stakeholders to maintain a dialogue with NISD.
4. To provide and promote information and educational opportunities for the community on topics related to special education services, disability, education, community, and advocacy.
5. To review and address yearly Texas Academic Performance Report for NISD.
6. To collaborate and communicate frequently with the Director of Special Education and others as deemed appropriate.

## **ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1: Council Formation**

1. The SEPAC shall initially consist of 30 members. As the district adds middle and high school campuses, the SEPAC number will increase in relation to campus additions.
2. Parent representatives and Student Self-Advocates
  - a. One representative will be selected each from every Middle School Campus and High School campus.
  - b. One Elementary School representative from two Elementary campuses within each middle school feeder pattern. Elementary representation will rotate yearly.
  - c. One representative from the transition programs (i.e. Rise).
  - d. One representative from the early childhood education program.
3. District stakeholders will account for the seats remaining.
4. Board Members will be elected from above members, by members.
5. Self-Advocates should be at least in sixth grade. Parental consents must be provided. SEPAC will provide accommodations as we are able and will provide an environment to implement necessary supports and services.

### **Section 2: Membership process**

1. NISD will send out notice/information about SEPAC and membership opportunities to all campuses YEARLY, as well as to stakeholder and community liaisons, in various diverse and accessible mediums. Ensuring that ALL parents and stakeholders across all district demographics are informed and given equal access to be involved and apply is a priority. Our SEPAC membership and application process must be representative of and accessible for our diverse community.
2. All applications will be submitted first, reviewed, then randomly selected through a lottery process, until all campus slots selected for representation and council slots are full.

3. The remaining slots of the SEPAC will be filled by interested district stakeholders (i.e., students, self-advocates, parents, educators, administrators, and community members with and without disabilities, etc.) through the same application process. With the exception of the inaugural year, the SEPAC application and membership will not be a Principal appointed/selection process.

### Section 3: Membership Terms

1. General SEPAC Membership: One-year term
2. SEPAC Executive Board Members:
  - President
  - Vice President
  - Secretary
  - Parliamentarian
3. Foundational SEPAC Members:
  - a. Anne Henshaw – Three Year Term in Leadership/Board position until resignation, departure from the NISD Stakeholder Community, or removal from Council by majority vote of Council.
  - b. Michelle Lunday – Three Year Term in Leadership/Board position until resignation, departure from the NISD Stakeholder Community, or removal from Council by majority vote of Council.

### ARTICLE V: MEETINGS

1. The SEPAC shall meet at least 6 times per year.
2. Additional meetings may be held on an as-needed basis, as determined by the Board.
3. All meeting dates, times, and locations shall be announced to all SEPAC members and notice given to the entire community in multiple, accessible mediums.
4. Official SEPAC Council meetings are only open to official SEPAC members. All other SEPAC events, communications, engagements, listening sessions, Q and A, trainings, etc. are open to all NISD District Stakeholders.
5. Minutes of all meetings shall be kept by the Secretary and posted to be accessible to District Stakeholders.
6. Meetings may be held in various formats and settings.

### ARTICLE VI: QUORUM AND VOTING PROCEDURES

1. 51% of Board Members and 51% of the Council is required at a meeting to constitute a quorum for the purposes of voting on SEPAC decisions.

2. When a quorum is present at any meeting; a majority of the votes cast by present Council and Board membership shall decide any question. Dissenting votes and subsequent opinions may be entered into the minutes upon request.
3. Election of Board Member voting is open to all general SEPAC members.
4. Proxy voting is permitted. The proxy will include action items up for a vote. A valid proxy will include a member's vote and signature. Any items brought to vote during the meeting, the member will abstain from voting.
5. Any member may bring an issue to the Board for possible votes outside of official agenda. Board members will decide if the matter is accepted for a vote, if the vote shall be immediate, or if the vote will be held at next meeting.

## **ARTICLE VII: BOARD MEMBERS, ELECTIONS, AND DUTIES**

### **Section I: Executive Board Members**

1. The Executive Board of the SEPAC and each term shall be the:
  - a. President
  - b. Vice President
  - c. Secretary
  - d. Parliamentarian
2. Nominations and applications of candidates for officers for the ensuing year shall be requested by April 15th of each year. Nominations may also occur at the April meeting.
3. Board Elections will be held at the May general meeting, by a majority of votes cast by all general membership present at time of vote, either in person or via electronic medium.
4. A Board Member may resign by giving notice in writing to the President or Vice-President of the SEPAC. In the event of a resignation, the Board shall hold an election for a successor to fill an unexpired term.
5. An Executive Board Member's term is two years. After the first year of their term, the Executive Board member's position will become an at-large member, if they were a campus representative. An Executive Board member is limited to one two-year term in the same position, after which one year must elapse before becoming eligible for re-election to the position previously held. If a Board Member has been elected to fill an unexpired term with less than one year remaining, he/she will then be eligible for an additional two-year term.

\*Offices may be shared by more than one person.

\* A person may hold more than one office.

### **Section 2: Duties of Office:**

1. President:
  - a. Preside at all meetings of the SEPAC and draft the agenda for each general meeting.

- b. Serve as coordinators to school liaisons.
  - c. Recommend the creation of and monitor the function of sub-committees. Monitor and oversee the activities of other Officers.
  - d. Monitor compliance with the Bylaws.
  - e. Act as liaison with district and school officials and representatives.
  - f. Lead efforts to advise the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities.
  - g. Coordinate regular meetings with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district's special education programs.
  - h. Report to the Director of Special Education and other administrative positions regarding SEPAC activities, needs, ideas, etc.
  - i. Identify and pursue ways to collaborate on common goals.
  - j. Funnel parent/guardian feedback to the SEPAC Board and the Special Education Administrator Act as liaison between parents/guardians of students with disabilities or suspected disabilities and the Administrator of Special Education.
  - k. Transition knowledge and expertise to the next President upon end of term.
  - l. Oversee and attend stakeholder listening sessions.
2. Vice President:
- a. Duties include aide to the President.
  - b. Preside in the absence of the President.
3. Secretary:
- a. Record and maintain meeting minutes for both the Board and General Meetings.
  - b. Draft and distribute approved general meeting minutes to Board, SEPAC members, Communication chair, and all interested parties.
  - c. Maintain an accurate attendance log of meeting attendees.
  - d. Count and record all vote results.
  - e. Responsible for public comment forms at meetings.
  - f. Coordinate meeting locations and ensure ADA accessibility.
  - g. Attend stakeholder listening sessions.
  - h. Maintain SEPAC Calendar.

4. Parliamentarian:
  - a. Advise the President about Parliamentarian procedure when asked.
  - b. Vote only when conducted by ballot.

#### **ARTICLE VIII: BYLAW AMENDMENTS**

1. These bylaws may be adopted, altered, repealed or amended at any SEPAC meeting provided that the proposed change is submitted in writing to all SEPAC Board members at least 15 calendar days prior to the scheduled meeting in which the vote is to be taken.
2. Proposed Bylaws changes may be adopted by a quorum of a SEPAC meeting.

#### **ARTICLE IX: MISCELLANEOUS**

1. Use of SEPAC name – Individuals who are members should be reminded not to publish information, articles, announcements, newspaper editorials, letters, or public testimonials under the SEPAC name without group consensus.
2. Members of SEPAC must protect and maintain the professional and public reputation of the SEPAC.
3. Confidentiality – Stakeholders need to be able to share concerns with the confidence that their input will not include personally identifiable information unless expressly stated their wish to do so.
4. Meeting participation – Commit to attend, be present and collaborative. SEPAC members, stakeholders, and district leaders must listen to each other. Collaboration is a group effort—multiple voices must come together for the sake of action.
5. Regular attendance is expected.
6. Stay true to the spirit of collaboration, working together as peers with diverse strengths and skills. Courtesy, collaboration, and friendliness in that working relationship is essential.

#### **ARTICLE X: REMOVAL OF SEPAC MEMBERS**

Any member can be removed from the SEPAC by 2/3 majority vote among Board and majority of General Members.

#### **ARTICLE XI: Rules of Order**

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall govern all meetings in all cases in which they are applicable, and in which they are not in conflict with these bylaws.