

NORWALK SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL BYLAWS REV. 09/16/2020

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this organization shall be Norwalk Special Education Parent Advisory Council, referred to as the NSpedPAC.

ARTICLE II: MISSION STATEMENT

1. The mission of the Norwalk Special Education Parent Advisory Council (“NSpedPAC”) is as follows:
 - a. to provide education and information to parents/guardians and the broader community on special education issues and services;
 - b. to establish better understanding of, respect for, and support of special education in Norwalk;
 - c. to advise the Norwalk Public School District (“NPS”) on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities to ensure that every student receives a Free and Appropriate Education (“FAPE”) and students needs are being met
 - d. to report annually to the Norwalk Board of Education (“BOE”) on matters related the education of students with disabilities.

ARTICLE III: PURPOSE AND FUNCTION

1. Section 1: The purpose of the NSpedPAC shall be:
 - a. To promote better understanding, improved communication and collaboration between the parents/guardians of children with disabilities and the NPS;
 - b. To promote a network of parents/guardians of children with disabilities and provide the forum to share information;
 - c. To provide support for special education services and for meeting the individualized needs of all students who are enrolled in special education programs in NPS through communication with and feedback to the Chief of Specialized Learning and BOE;
 - d. To promote communication, understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of students with disabilities within the community;
 - e. To encourage a community commitment to quality education for all children and to support diversity within the educational setting.
 - f. To work collaboratively with the special needs community to make workshops available to the public dealing with special needs.
2. Section 2: The function of NSpedPAC shall be:
 - a. To participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of special education programs;
 - b. To provide an effective link between parents/guardians and school administration regarding issues around special education;
 - c. To provide information concerning special education issues to all parents/guardians of children enrolled in NPS or outplaced therethrough;
 - d. To provide a forum for parents/guardians and other interested citizens to maintain a dialogue with NPS on concerns and issues relating to the education, health, and safety of all students enrolled in special education programs;
 - e. To provide and promote information and educational opportunities for the community on topics related to special education services;

- f. To meet with the Chief of Specialized Learning and the BOE on a regular basis to advise them on issues pertaining to special education in Norwalk.
- g. Submit a report on an annual basis to the BOE regarding the state of special education in the City of Norwalk including recommendations for improvement thereof.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

1. Section One: General Council membership
 - a. General membership shall be open to any interested parent or guardian of a child with a disability, previously known to have a disability, or suspected of having a disability, under the IDEA or Section 504, or who is currently eligible to receive Special Education or 504 accommodations and services, from ages 3-21, and who are both residents of the City of Norwalk.
 - b. Parents/guardians of children receiving Special Education or 504 services from NPS shall be considered General Members of the NSpedPAC and included in NSpedPAC mailings.
 - c. For the purpose of confidentiality, the NPS does not share the email addresses of families receiving special education services with the NSpedPAC. Therefore, all NSpedPAC mailings will be distributed by the Chief of Specialized Learning on the NSpedPAC's behalf.
 - d. General members who do not have children receiving Special Education services through the City of Norwalk and who would like to be included in the NSpedPAC mailings should contact the NSpedPAC as directed with their request. They will be added to the NSpedPAC's direct mailing list and will receive mailings directly from NSpedPAC.
 - e. Parents/guardians of children receiving Special Education services may opt into the NSpedPAC's direct mailing list by contacting the NSpedPAC as directed.
 - f. All contact and personal information shall be kept confidential and used only NSpedPAC purpose to protect the privacy rights of children.
2. Section Two: Voting Council membership Voting membership shall be limited to the NSpedPAC Voting Council Members (see article VII).

ARTICLE V: MEETINGS

1. The NSpedPAC shall plan to hold at least four to five regular meetings each school year. The schedule of meeting dates shall be determined at the last meeting of the previous school year.
2. Additional meetings may be held on an as-need basis determined by the Executive Committee.
3. All meetings shall be announced to all NSpedPAC Council members and notice given to the entire community.
4. Minutes of all meetings shall be kept by the Recording Secretary.
5. The purpose of the annual meeting will be to:
 - a. Elect officers and members as needed
 - b. Receive and consider any final reports of committees
 - c. Conduct a final review of the Final Report
6. The Annual Meeting of the NSpedPAC shall be held in the spring of each year, no later than the 15th day of May.

ARTICLE VI: QUORUM AND VOTING PROCEDURES

1. A minimum of 11 Voting Council Members is required at a meeting to constitute a quorum for the purposes of voting on NSpedPAC business decisions
2. At least 51% of the Voting Council Members present at a meeting must be parents/guardians of students with disabilities to constitute a quorum.
3. When a quorum is present at any meeting; a majority of the votes cast by Voting Council Members present shall decide any question unless the vote concerns an item that requires a $\frac{2}{3}$ full Council vote.
4. All Voting on matters before the NSpedPAC Council will be limited to the members of the NSpedPAC Voting Council
5. Council members may attend a meeting and be considered present to that meeting through acceptable electronic means.
6. The Chief of Specialized Learning shall serve as an ex officio member of the Council subject to the following provisions:
 - a. Their presence shall not count toward the calculation of a quorum; and
 - b. They shall have no vote in any meeting except in case of a tie vote among the regular members of the Voting Council present.

ARTICLE VII: COUNCIL MEMBERS, ELECTIONS, AND DUTIES

1. Section 1
 - a. Council Members
 - (a) The Voting Council of the NSpedPAC shall consist of the following members:
 - (i) Thirteen (13) parents or guardians who are eligible general members.
 - (ii) Seven (7) 'educators' within Norwalk Public Schools.
 - (iii) One (1) representative member from the Community
 - (iv) Two high school/transition students recommended by educators and voted in by the Board to serve a one-year term.
 - (v) Ideally, there will be six (6) alternates, four (4) being parents/guardians and two (2) being educators. Alternates may be appointed to the board upon a majority vote thereof when a vacancy occurs.
 - b. Attendance. A Voting Council Member must attend 3 of 5 meetings in a school year as well as participate in at least one committee. Participation may be in person or arranged virtually. After the fourth absence the NSpedPAC Executive Committee shall move to the full board to replace that member with one of the alternates from the appropriate category. This vote would need to be a simple majority of the quorum at the meeting this business was conducted.
 - c. A Voting Council Member may resign by giving notice in writing to the Chairperson or Co-Vice-Chairperson of the NSpedPAC. In the event of a resignation, the NSpedPAC Executive Committee shall move to the full board to replace that member with one of the alternates from the appropriate category. This vote would need to be a simple majority of the quorum at the meeting this business was conducted.
 - d. The Original Voting Council shall be comprised of Six (6) parents and three (3) educators serving initial two (2) year terms and Seven (7) parents and Four (4) Educators serving initial one (1) year terms. Thereafter all Board members shall be eligible to serve one (1) additional two (2) year term.

- e. Thereafter, if a Voting Council Member has been elected to fill an unexpired term, he/she will serve the remainder of such term. Any council member shall be able to serve one additional two-year term.
- f. A Community member shall be nominated by the Membership Committee and voted by the Voting Council to serve a two-year term. This term will follow the standard terms of the full Council.

2. Section 2: Executive Committee and Officers

- a. Nominations of candidates for officers for the ensuing year shall be requested in April or May of each year. Nominations may also occur at the Annual Meeting.
 - i. Officers shall be elected at the Annual Meeting by a majority of votes cast by all general membership actually present at the time of the vote
 - ii. Each elected officer shall hold office for a term of at least one year (July 1 through June 30).
- b. The Executive Committee of the NSpedPAC shall be the Chair, two (2) Vice-Chairs (one each of whom will be a parent and an 'educator'), Recording Secretary and Corresponding Secretary. The Chief of Specialized Learning will serve in an advisory role to the Executive Committee.
- c. The responsibilities of the members of the Executive Committee are as follows:
 - i. Chairman
 - i. Preside at all meetings of the NSpedPAC
 - ii. Draft the agenda for each general meeting in consultation with the Executive Committee.
 - iii. Recommend the creation of and monitor the function of sub-committees
 - iv. Monitor and facilitate the activities of other Officers
 - v. Monitor compliance with the Bylaws
 - vi. Act as liaison with district and school officials and representatives, including the Chief of Specialized Learning, the Board of Education, and the Superintendent.
 - vii. Lead efforts to advise the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities
 - viii. Coordinate regular meetings with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district's special education programs.
 - ix. Update the Chief of Specialized Learning regarding NSpedPAC activities and needs
 - x. Identify and pursue ways to collaborate on common goals
 - xi. Act as liaison between parents/guardians of students with disabilities or suspected disabilities and the Chief of Specialized Learning.
 - xii. Transition knowledge and expertise to the next Chair/Vice-Chair upon end of term
 - ii. Co-Vice Chair
 - i. In the absence of the Chair
 - 1. The vice chair representing parents shall preside over the meeting
 - 2. In the absence of the chair and vice chair of the parents the Educator vice chair would preside over the meeting.
 - ii. Duties
 - 1. As assigned by the Executive Committee
 - iii. Recording Secretary
 - i. Take meeting minutes
 - ii. Draft and distribute approved general meeting minutes for public posting
 - iii. Maintain an accurate attendance log of meeting attendees

- iv. Count and record all vote results
- v. Responsible for public comment forms at meetings
- vi. Arrange meeting locations in an accessible facility
- iv. Corresponding Secretary
 - i. Be responsible for all correspondence and communications pertaining to the NSpedPAC including emails and social media/web postings.
 - ii. Maintain a list of all General, Board and Executive members of the NSpedPAC including their contact information
 - iii. Be responsible for delivering to all General and Board members copies of any Agenda for an upcoming regular or special meeting of the Board in a timely fashion and the delivery of any and all Minutes of any such meetings of the board and committees thereof.
- v. Advisor to the Executive Committee: The Chief of Specialized Learning or designee shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE VIII: BYLAW AMENDMENTS

1. These bylaws may be adopted, altered, repealed or amended at any NSpedPAC meeting provided that the proposed change is submitted in writing to all NSpedPAC Voting Council 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 two-thirds majority of the Voting Council Members present at a meeting.