

**Special Education Parent Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**January 27, 2026**

The Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC) met on Tuesday, January 27, 2026 with 13 attendees joining via a TEAMS Webinar.

SEPAC Stakeholders Present: Katy Barnum, Shelby DiFonzo, Julie Emery Hetland, Siew Hoon Lim, Kirstin Hanson

SEPAC Stakeholders Absent: Kelly Ehli, Sarah Weisse, Kelli Bourke, Scott Hanson, Jason Cresap

Attendees: Cassie Jorgenson, Jolene Schue, Kim Myers, Sydney Azure, Amber Tarr, Jeff Anderson; Marijo, Nicole Schuler

Chairperson Katy Barnum called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm

**Agenda was presented:**

- Approval of Minutes
  - [Meeting Notes SEPAC 10-21-25](#)
- Approval of Agenda
- Review of SEPAC Bylaws
- Election of Officers
- Director of Student Support Services Committee Presentation:
- Spotlight: Catalyst
- Special Education Updates:
  - Eligibility Updates: Other Health Impairment and Emotional Disability
  - Extended School Year (ESY)
    - Dates and Changes from prior years
- IDEA Landscape: Reflections and Reactions
- Guest Speaker: Dr. Steiner (potential)-Deferred to March 31, 2026 meeting
- Recognition of Audience
  - a. a. (Please sign up through the chat option of the webinar. Each participant who signs up will have 3 minutes to make a public comment. This meeting is open to the public, but it is not a public forum. The primary focus of the meeting is the business listed on the agenda. Generally only the Council person will acknowledge public commentary. Please be assured, however, that all members welcome and appreciate your comments.)
- Success Stories/ Feedback
- Community Events/Resources Available
- Establish Next Meeting Date
- Adjournment of meeting

Siew Hoon Lim moved to approve the meeting notes from October 21, 2025, Katy Barnum second the motion.

Siew Hoon Lim moved to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting, Katy Barnum seconded the motion.

- Review of Bylaws: [Fargo Public Schools Special Education Parent Advisory Committee](#)
- Election of officers
  - Siew Hoon Lim nominated Katy Barum to continue as Chairperson, and Kirstin Hanson seconded the motion. Katy Barum accepted the nomination.
  - Kirstin Hanson nominated Julie Emery Hetland to continue as Co-Chair, and Siew Hoon Lim seconded the motion. Julie Emery Hetland accepted the nomination.

**Special Education Parent Advisory Committee  
Meeting Notes  
January 27, 2026**

**Director of Student Support Services Committee Presentation:**

Shelby DiFonzo

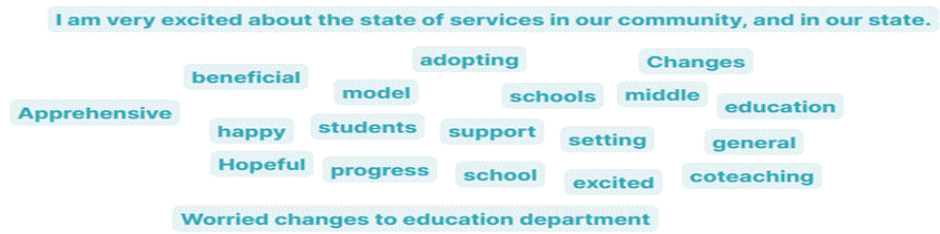
- **SEPAC 1\_27\_26**
  - Eligibility category of Emotional Disturbance has been retitled Emotional Disability
  - Discussed changes to Other Health Impairment eligibility
  - Provided information on Extended School Year (ESY) for Summer 2026
  - Word Cloud:

What are you excited about right now?

What are you wondering about?

What are you worried about — even if it's a "what if" that may or may not happen?

Review answers >



Sydney Azure, Student Engagement Facilitator K-12

- Presented information on the Catalyst Approach that incorporates foundational skills, speciality skills, keeping students in the room skills, essential skills for co-regulation; connected response plans and Catalyst coach feedback skills.

**Recognition of Audience**

Chairperson Katy Burnum opened the floor for public comment.

- Marijo asked what FPS does to help students transition from one school to another.
  - Kirstin Hanson, Principal informed attendees how Ben Franklin Middle School helps their students with transitioning.

**Success Stories/Feedback**

- Kirstin Hanson, Principal at Ben Franklin Middle School gave a shout out to staff on the growth that they have had within the school.

**Community Events/Resources Available**

- No updates at this time

**Meeting Timeline**

- The next FPS SEPAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 31, 2026 at 5:30 pm

The meeting adjourned at 6:43 pm

**Are there topics you would like to discuss?**

Please email Shelby DiFonzo @ [difonzs@fargoschools.org](mailto:difonzs@fargoschools.org)