

CLOSTER SEPAG

March 16, 2023

Introductions:

Meet the Closter SEPAG committee:

- Kelly Martins
- Danit Schwartz
- Jannie Chung
- Yael Shafrir
- Juana Reyes



**CLOSTER
SEPAG**

What is a SEPAG?

What is a Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG)?

A Special Education Parent Advisory Group, or SEPAG (sea-pag) is a state-mandated, district-level, parent-driven group charged with providing input to the local school district on system-level challenges in special education and related services.



What is the purpose and function of a SEPAG?

A SEPAG gives parents the opportunity to provide direct input to their school district about policies, programs, practices, and services that have an impact on students with disabilities and their families. An effective SEPAG can increase the proactive involvement of families by inviting input that can be used to shape local special education policy.

An effective SEPAG that uses parental input can:

- help improve educational outcomes and well-being for all students, including those with disabilities;
- help identify unmet needs;
- help shape the development of programs, services, and policies; and,
- improve district culture and climate.

Privacy and Code of Conduct:

In order to have good working relationships and effective communication:

- Be respectful in tone, volume, language, and content
 - No raising of voices
 - No foul language
 - Open and positive communication
- Listen attentively
 - No conversations while others are speaking
 - No speaking over or interrupting others
- Confidentiality
 - No sharing of personal information, names, student, teacher, or staff information outside of the group
- No use of SEPAG meetings to air personal grievances – these should be directed to the child study team
- Be mindful about what you post on social media/posting online – same code of conduct applies

Parent Questionnaire Data:

- 6 parents/guardians completed the Parent Questionnaire
- All parents/guardians reported their children had IEPs and attended Hillside and Tenakill
- We would love your contribution so please complete the questionnaire.



Strengths of Closter Special Education:

- Special education teachers
- The addition of new staff – qualified and helpful
- Child study team is responsive
- Overall improvement this year compared to previous years



Concerns:

- A steep learning curve
 - A need for more information about evaluations, IEPs, what services are available, and understanding what to ask for
 - The need for faster identification of an issue and early intervention
 - Increased transparency around services and IEP/504 processes
- The need for additional training for teachers and paras in special education areas, including learning disabilities and neurodiversity, the accommodations that students need and how these accommodations help students

Concerns:

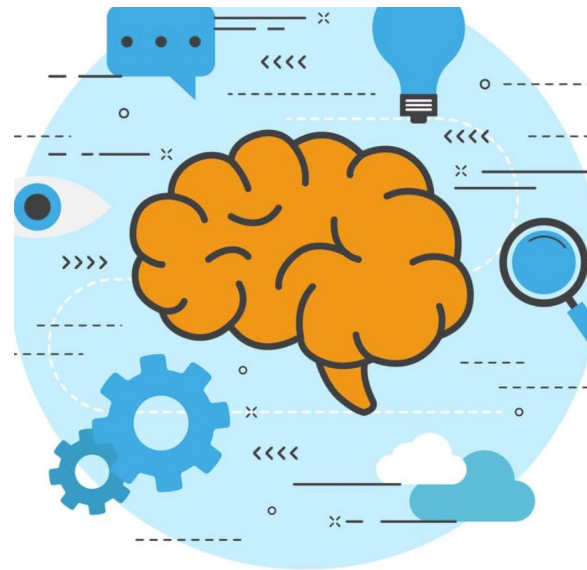
- The need for better communication between the child study team, teachers and parents
- The need for increased school and district support of special education
 - Staff seems overwhelmed, at times, due to high demand

What programs, services or activities would you like to see the district change, add or expand?

- 2E or Twice Exceptional resources
- Social skills classes (available)
- Lunch buddy system/Social support at recess
- The inclusion of neurodiversity in inclusion and diversity education
- Modification of Wellness/ICARE to meet needs and learning styles of special education children
- Better inclusion of special education children in specials
- Additional information and resources for parents
- Inclusion summer camp
- Support group for parents and students
- Presentations to students, teachers and staff by disabled/neurodivergent people

Brainstorm Solutions/Suggestions:

- Addition of resources/information to Closter School websites
- List and description of services available



— BRAINSTORMING —

Concern: A steep learning curve-
A need for more information about evaluations,
IEPs, what services are available, and
understanding what to ask for

- Transparency of processes
- Desire for faster identification of a problem/referral to child study team

**Concern: Need for Better Communication
between Parents, Teachers, and Child Study
Team**

Concern: The need for additional training for teachers and paras in special education areas:

- learning disabilities, neurodiversity, emotion dysregulation**
- accommodations**
- how these accommodations help students**
- gold standard interventions – best approach**

**Concern: Inclusion of Special Education
Children In Specials and After School Programs**

**Concern: Need for increased support of
special education staff and teachers**

Next Steps

- Information gathered through our questionnaire and our meeting will be shared with administration (without identifying information)
- We will share feedback from administration with you at our next meeting
- We will continue to collect data from parents about systemic concerns and possible solutions
- Minutes of each meeting will be emailed to group members who have signed up to receive emails from us
- Next meeting: April 20th – 7-8 PM - Tenakill

Thank you for attending today!

- Your input is invaluable and we appreciate your attendance and contributions.
- Please tell your friends – we would love to build this community.
- Please complete our questionnaire or email us at ClosterSEPAG@gmail.com with your thoughts, if that's easier for you!
- Please sign up as a SEPAG member so that we can contact you with important information, resources, and upcoming meetings.