



Interim Report Prepared For
Michael O'Keefe, Head of School, and the Rising Tide Charter Public School Board of Trustees

The following is a summary of the activities conducted by the RT-SEPAC from July 2021 to the present.

SEPAC Overview: A **SEPAC** is a **Special Education Parent Advisory Council**. Since 1986, Massachusetts special education law ([MGL 71B](#)) requires all public school districts to maintain a SEPAC and assigns both an advisory and a participatory function to the SEPAC. Membership is offered to all parents/caregivers of children with disabilities (IEPs and 504 Plans) and other interested parties. The SEPAC is a self-governing public body which creates its own by-laws and operational procedures. A SEPAC is different from other parent groups in a school district such as a PTA, PTO, or School Council in that it specifically represents all families of children with disabilities within the school district.

In accordance with federal and state special education laws and regulations and in adherence with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ([DESE 603 CMR 28:07\(4\)](#)) directives and advisories pertaining to the creation and functioning of special education parent advisory councils, Rising Tide Charter Public School has established and will continue to foster the RT Special Education Parent Advisory Council (RT-SEPAC).

RT-SEPAC Mission Statement: The mission of the SEPAC is to work for the understanding of, respect for, and support of children with disabilities who receive special education services from Rising Tide.

- To promote a network of parents of students with disabilities who receive special education services from Rising Tide and to provide a forum to share information and concerns.
- To advise the Student Support Director, the Head of School, and the Board of Trustees regarding professional development and parent concerns.
- To promote communication among RT-SEPAC members, local, state, and national organizations, councils, and groups.
- To promote communication and programs within the community to encourage understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of all children with disabilities.

SEPAC Board Members: For the 2022-2023 school year, the SEPAC Board is Marisa C. Ronan, Co-Chair; Jenna O'Donnell, Co-Chair; and Maureen Patroliia, Secretary.

SEPAC Meetings: The Board meets via Zoom approximately every other month on a Thursday evening. The meeting schedule is set at the beginning of the school year and published on the school website and in the RT-SEPAC Facebook Group. Reminders, agendas, and Zoom links are published in the Monday Memo two weeks in advance of each meeting. Meeting minutes are kept and posted to the Facebook Group. All documents are available to the public.

SEPAC Accomplishments: We continue our efforts to reach out to and engage with parents/guardians. Some highlights from 2021-2023 are:

- Created an email account to enable parents/caregivers to contact the SEPAC directly.
- Created and maintain a RT-SEPAC Facebook Group for parents/caregivers to share information and resources and serve as a means of communication to and with parents/caregivers.
- Set and post a bi-monthly schedule of Board meetings for the school year for continuity and predictability.
- Conducted a survey in the Fall of 2021 among parents/caregivers of students receiving special education services.
- Organized several informative public presentations for parents/caregivers and staff.
- Developed a logo for the RT-SEPAC to promote awareness and recognition.
- Created newsletters sent to all SEPAC members (October, November, and December).
- SEPAC parents organized recognition and gifts for special education staff at RT for National Special Education Day on December 2, 2022.

SEPAC Presentations: We hosted the following free and open to the public virtual presentations:

- May 2, 2022 – ***Executive Function Strategies for Creating Successful Students***. This virtual presentation was given by Dan Levine of Engaging Minds in Natick and Newton.
- October 18, 2022 – ***Understanding Your Teen's Anxiety and Collaborating with Your School to Support Them***. This virtual presentation was given by Transition Specialist and Psychoeducational Counselor Kristen Simon of NESCA (Neuropsychology & Education Services for Children & Adolescents) in Newton, MA.
- November 17, 2022 – ***The Basics of Transition Services: Learn the important basics about postsecondary education transition planning***. This virtual presentation was given by Transition Specialist Tabitha Monahan of NESCA (Neuropsychology & Education Services for Children & Adolescents) in Newton, MA.

SEPAC Outreach: SEPAC information and notices are routinely submitted for distribution through the Rising Tide Monday Memo and/or direct emails from the school. In addition, all notices and information are also posted and available on the SEPAC Facebook Group (RT-SEPAC). Private parent/caregiver group meetings are held virtually. Information and notices are also posted on the Rising Tide Parent Facebook Page.

SEPAC Goals:

- Continue outreach initiatives to increase the awareness of our organization with parents/guardians, educators, and other interested parties by providing informative programs and resources to parents and educators and encouraging parent involvement; and,
- Collaborate with the Rising Tide administration and Student Support Director to the benefit of students receiving special education services.

We look forward to furthering the RT-SEPAC's mission and goals for the remainder of the 2022-2023 school year and beyond.

Respectfully submitted,

Marisa Carnevale Ronan, Co-Chair
Jenna O'Donnell, Co-Chair
Maureen Patroliia, Secretary
RT-SEPAC

March 20, 2023