

Importance of SEPAC in Somerset Berkley Regional School District

Regardless of each student's disability, the needs and priorities of students at the high school level (ages 14-22) are greatly different in comparison to the needs and priorities that they may have had when they were between the ages of 3-14.

- Educational
- Social
- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Vocational

Although a student's disability may be constant over time, the way specialized services are provided and prioritized look very different to young adults at the high school level, in comparison to youngsters at the pre-K to middle school level.

- Educational: Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech/Language Therapy, Mobility Training, Sensory Integration, Assistive Technology
- Clinical: Social Skills, Problem Solving/Coping Strategies
- Vocational: Community awareness, Job Exploration, Employment
- Transitional: Assessments, Situational Learning Experiences, Self Determination
- Post Secondary: Employment, Higher Education, Trade School, Application Process, Activities of Daily Living, Housing, Adult Agencies
- Legal: Age of Majority, Public Benefits, SPED Trusts, Guardianship, Disability Insurance
- Financial: Protecting eligibility for Federal/State services: caregiver planning, SSDI, Medicaid, Medicare, SSI
- Technical: Assistive Technology, Transportation
- As students reach adulthood, it is essential that they, as individuals, become self-advocates by understanding implications of their disability (s). A great deal of work is done to support this goal and there are many opportunities throughout the high school experience and after that each student and their family can participate in. Parents, school, community must be involved and informed. This can happen through a SEPAC.

A parent group is a positive initiative to the school district's community. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) mandate the formation of the parent group. This special education parent advisory group is seen as a continuum of services, a way in which to provide information, a time to discuss resources and opportunities, a venue to support parent/community collaboration, which can be specific to students/families, in grades 9-12 and up to the age of 22.

The function of this formalized special education parent advisory council (SEPAC) would facilitate commitment to collaboration with all the stakeholders, including the current PAC in the Somerset Public School District, and supporting our young adults and their families, in the Somerset Berkley Regional School District. The goal of this group is to contribute to providing a pathway full of resources, knowledge, and services that will enable our students in becoming independent, productive citizens, regardless of their levels of functioning and learning needs.

This group would help support the Somerset Berkley Regional School District community and interested parties in ensuring that students with special needs receive the necessary programming from the time they enter the district until they graduate, receive a certificate of attainment or reach the age of 22.