

**South Orange-Maplewood
Special Education Parent Advisory Committee
By-Laws (updated 5/19/2015)**

Article I – Name

The organization shall be named the South Orange-Maplewood Special Education Parent Advisory Committee, herein referred to as SOMA SEPAC.

Article II – Purpose

SOMA SEPAC shall serve as a representative body on behalf of Students With Special Needs and their Parents. This is in accordance with the state’s special education mandate: New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:14-1.2(h) which states “Each Board of Education shall ensure that a special education parent advisory group is in place in the district to provide input to the district on issues concerning students with disabilities”.

Article III – Mission

United with the district and its commitment to excellence for all our children, SOMA SEPAC will work for the understanding of, respect for, and support of Students With Special Needs who receive special education services in the South Orange-Maplewood School District.

To that end, SOMA SEPAC will:

- Provide a forum to share and discuss matters and interest for Parents of Students With Special Needs.
- Provide direct input to the BOE and district administration on policies, programs and practices that impact support for Students With Special Needs and their Parents.
- Advocate for the continual improvement of the district’s special education program.

Article IV – Policies

1. SOMA SEPAC shall operate for charitable, educational, nonpartisan, non-sectarian and non-commercial purposes and shall not discriminate based on age, sex, creed, or national origin.
2. SOMA SEPAC shall not conduct financial transactions of any kind, shall not establish or maintain bank accounts, and shall not accept or disburse monies for any purposes.
3. The name of SOMA SEPAC and the names of any of its members in their official capacities shall not be used in connection with a commercial concern or political interest or for any purpose not appropriately related to the Mission of SOMA SEPAC.

Article V – Membership

Any Parent of a Student With Special Needs in South Orange-Maplewood may become a Voting Member. Any concerned citizen or SOMA school district employee may attend SOMA SEPAC regular meetings.

Article VI – Executive Board

1. **Executive Board:** The Executive Board shall consist of five Officers.
2. **Officers:** The Officers shall consist of an elected President, Vice President, Policy Officer, Communications Officer, and Secretary.
3. **Temporary Committees:** Temporary Committees consisting of one or more persons may be created and disbanded as determined by the Executive Board. Creation and termination of such committees shall be announced at SOMA SEPAC regular meetings and recorded in the minutes.
4. **Elections:** Executive Board members shall be elected annually by the Voting Membership*. Candidates for the Executive Board shall be nominated by a Temporary Executive Board Nominating Committee which shall submit its nominations at the last SOMA SEPAC regular meeting of the school year. Elections shall take place at the first regular meeting of the following school year, and results shall be tallied and reported at that same meeting. The identity and contact information for the newly elected Executive Board members shall be communicated shortly thereafter to the SOMA Superintendent of Schools, the Director of Special Services, the SOMA Presidents' Council and the BOE as well as posted on the SOMA SEPAC website.
5. **Term of Service:** Executive Board members shall be elected for a term of one calendar year beginning October 1 and ending on September 30. An individual may not serve more than three consecutive years as an Officer. A person may hold only one Officer's position at a time.
6. **Voting:** All matters requiring a vote by the Executive Board shall be decided by a simple majority. Votes may be taken verbally or in written form at the discretion of the Executive Board.
7. **Interest:** All Executive Board members shall act in the best interest of SOMA SEPAC.
8. **Compensation:** No Executive Board member shall be compensated by SOMA SEPAC for his or her service.
9. **Attendance:** Each Executive Board member shall make best efforts to attend SOMA SEPAC Executive Board and regular meetings.
10. **Removal from Office:** Any Executive Board member may be removed from office, with or without cause, by a two-thirds vote of Voting Members present at a SOMA SEPAC regular meeting. Advance notice of the vote shall be given to the Membership at least one week prior to the meeting.

*prior to all votes at regular meetings, a member of the Executive Board will inform the attendees of the Voting Member requirement and request that only persons meeting the requirement participate

Article VII – Officer Duties

1. **President** - The President shall:
 - a. Preside over all SOMA SEPAC meetings.
 - b. Prepare each meeting's agenda.
 - c. Recommend the creation of Temporary Committees as needed, monitor their functions. and recommend their dissolution at appropriate times.
 - d. Act as the liaison to the Director of Special Services, the Superintendent and the BOE.
 - e. Attend, or appoint a SOMA SEPAC member to attend, PTA President's Council meetings on behalf of SOMA SEPAC.
2. **Vice President** – The Vice President shall:
 - a. Assist the President in his or her duties.
 - b. Perform the duties of the President in his or her absence.
 - c. Compile and maintain the Membership list.
 - d. Recruit Members.
3. **Secretary** – The Secretary shall:
 - a. Maintain all records of SOMA SEPAC, including organizational documents, correspondence, meeting minutes and related documents.
 - b. Record the meetings of the Executive Board and forward copies to Executive Board members within two weeks of the recorded meeting.
 - c. Record, or appoint a designee to record regular meetings, and distribute the minutes from the proceeding meeting at each regular meeting.
 - d. Post the regular meeting minutes on the SOMA SEPAC website.
 - e. Attend to the official correspondence of SOMA SEPAC.
 - f. Hold a copy of the SOMA SEPAC Bylaws and make it available upon request to any SOMA SEPAC member.
 - g. Provide a printed copy of these Bylaws to each newly elected Executive Board member prior to the date on which their terms shall commence.
4. **Communications/Outreach Officer** – The Communication Officer shall:
 - a. Publicize meetings, activities, workshops and events of SOMA SEPAC through notices, announcements and email lists.
 - b. Maintain the SOMA SEPAC website.
 - c. Secure district resources for meetings, functions and communications as needed.
 - d. Coordinate with the district on contact lists.
5. **Policy & Programming Officer** – The Policy Officer shall:
 - a. Monitor programs and policies related to achievement of students with special needs.
 - b. Collaborate with district administration and the BOE to continually improve educational opportunities that promote improved outcomes for students with special needs.
 - c. Provide direct input to district administrators and the BOE on policies, programs and practices that impact the district's special education students.

- d. Provide the Executive Board with updates and prepare reports related to the aforementioned duties.

Article VIII – School Liaisons

Each district school shall have a special education liaison identified in coordination with school PTA's. Additionally, a liaison will be identified to represent parents of out-of-district students. Each liaison will:

1. Serve as a "point of contact" and informational resource for parents, family members and guardians of students with special needs at his or her school.
2. Identify issues of concern at the school level and communicate these to the Executive Board.
3. Schedule and hold annual meetings with the school principal for parents, family members and guardians of special needs students.
4. Attend regular SOMA SEPAC meetings and make relevant announcements and/or provide relevant updates on issues regarding special education at his or her school.

Article IX – Meetings

1. Regular Meetings of SOMA SEPAC – A minimum of 4 regular meetings shall be held during each school year, at dates and times pre-established by the Executive Board. Regular meetings shall be open to SOMA SEPAC Members and the public. Dates and times of regular meetings shall be presented by the President at the first meeting of the school year and shall be posted on the SOMA SEPAC website.
2. Executive Board Meetings – Shall be held no less than quarterly on dates mutually agreed by Executive Board members.

Article X – ByLaws Amendment

These Bylaws may be amended under the following conditions: At least 5 Voting Members shall submit the revision request to the Secretary; and at least 14 calendar days prior notice shall be given to the Membership that a vote will be taken at the next regular meeting; and at least ten Voting Members are present at that regular meeting; and at least half the present Voting Members, plus one, vote to approve the amendment. All approved amendments shall become effective immediately and shall be recorded by the Secretary.

Article XI – Dissolution

SOMA SEPAC may be dissolved under the following conditions: At least 5 Voting Members shall submit the dissolution request to the Secretary; and at least 14 calendar days prior notice shall be given to the Membership that a vote will be taken at the next regular meeting; and at least ten Voting Members are present at that regular meeting; and at least two-thirds of the present Voting Members vote to approve the dissolution.

Article XII – Defined Terms

The following defined terms are used herein:

1. BOE: The South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education
2. Members / Membership: Persons who have registered to receive email from SOMA SEPAC and who are listed on its membership roll.
3. Parent: Parents, family members and guardians of a Student With Special Needs.
4. Student With Special Needs: Students with an IEP or a 504 plan.
5. Voting Member / Voting Membership: A Member who is a Parent of a Student With Special Needs in South Orange and Maplewood.

Update History

___/___/___ : Initial Bylaws approved by members.

5/19/2015 : Revised Bylaws approved by members.