

## **New Milford SEPAG Bylaws**

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### **Article I: Name**

The name of this self-governed organization shall be the New Milford Special Education Parent Advisory Group, also known as the New Milford SEPAG.

### **Article II: Purpose**

Special Education Parent Advisory Groups are required for all school districts in New Jersey. The purpose of the SEPAG is to:

1. Offer an opportunity for parents to increase involvement, and have a discussion on critical issues related to students with special needs, and serve as a resource by giving information to other parents in New Milford Township.
2. Work with the New Milford School District administration and teachers, and advise the Board of Education on the policies, programs, and practices that effect services and supports for students with special needs and their families.
3. Advise on matters pertaining to the education, health, and safety of students with special needs.
4. Advise on possible unmet needs of students with special needs.
5. Establish a venue to demonstrate mutual respect for the roles of parent leadership and school leadership.

### **Article III: Mission Statement**

The mission of the New Milford Public Schools Special Education Parental Advisory Group (SEPAG) is to encourage and facilitate honest and effective communication, understanding, and mutual respect in a supportive partnership, inclusive of all students, parents, educators, and the community at large. The SEPAG collaborates with the district's Director of Special Services and administrators regularly, and strives to ensure the delivery of appropriate services to students with disabilities for the purpose of improving the quality of district-wide special education policies, programs, and practices. It is our goal to empower parents to become effective advocates for their students, and offer a supportive, informative, and encouraging forum to raise questions, voice concerns, and provide direct input to administrators regarding Special Services.

### **Article IV: Authorization**

The New Milford SEPAG was established by the New Milford Board of Education under the provision of New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.):6A:14-1.2(h), which states: Each district 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.

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### **Article V: Membership**

General membership shall be open to all New Milford parents and guardians of a student with special needs or learning differences who is eligible for or receiving services under an IEP or 504 Plan, is enrolled in the New Milford public schools, or whose designated home school district is New Milford, but currently attends an Out-of-District placement. The Director of Special Services, special education staff, and other district representatives may attend meetings upon written request and approval from the SEPAG President, but without voting privileges, and have two seats, one for the Director of Special Services and one for any other district personnel. Voting membership will include the parent or guardian members of students aged 3 to 22, who are eligible for or receive special education services via an IEP or 504 Plan from the New Milford School District, and are officers/school representatives on the SEPAG. There should be a representation of all schools in the district, as well as preschool and out-of-district.

### **Article VI: Officers and School Representatives**

The Executive Board of the SEPAG shall be comprised of a President, Vice President, and Secretary. The members of the executive board can also fill in the position that represents their student's school if no other representative is available.

1. The Officers of the New Milford SEPAG shall be the President, Vice President, and Secretary. Officers shall be selected from the voting membership as per these Bylaws.
2. Officers will hold office for a 2-year term.
3. All voting members are eligible to hold office.
4. The President shall accept nominations from the floor at the regular meeting in May or June.
5. Election of officers will take place at the last meeting of the year, held in May or June, and new officers will take office on July 1st.
6. All officers have the option to run for re-election.
7. A special election may be held to fill a vacancy if an officer or representative resigns or is otherwise unable to serve as an officer or representative during the year. The new officer or representative will complete the remainder of the term. All resignations must be done in writing.
8. School representatives have a term of 1 year and may re-volunteer, if not contested. Volunteer forms will be sent out each year, as well as when there is a vacancy.
9. School PTO, Child Study Team, NMSPA, Director of Special Services, and previous school representatives may recommend a new School Representative.
10. Positions are available to any parent whose student is eligible for or receives special education services via an IEP or 504 Plan from the New Milford School District.

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### **Article VII: Duties and Responsibilities of Officers**

#### **President Responsibilities:**

- Presiding officer of the SEPAG
- Set the agenda for each general meeting
- Act as a liaison with the Director of Special Services and the Board of Education
- Organize and facilitate all meetings of the SEPAG
- Recommend the organization and monitor the function of committees and subcommittees, as well as assign committee members
- Oversee the creation, approval, and distribution of informational materials from the SEPAG
- Coordinate and lead all the SEPAG meetings and elections

#### **Vice President Responsibilities:**

- Support the President at all the SEPAG meetings
- Perform all duties of the President in the absence of or at the request of the President
- Work with the President to distribute approved information and materials from the SEPAG
- Attend and co-facilitate all meetings of the SEPAG
- Provide assistance to the President in matters pertaining to the SEPAG functions and committees

#### **Secretary Responsibilities:**

- Record, draft, and forward meeting minutes to the President and Vice President for the purpose of public posting on the district website
- Post meeting notices and agendas according to state Open Meeting Law
- Coordinate all communications between the SEPAG and its membership
- Coordinate the recording and filing of minutes of the SEPAG
- Collect and review all correspondence of the SEPAG
- Maintain meeting attendance logs
- Count and record all votes results
- Provide copies of posted meeting agendas, attendance, and meeting minutes to the office of the Director of Special Services where these records shall be maintained

### **Article VIII: Committees**

The President, with input from the Executive Board, may create standing and special committees to promote the purpose and interest of the SEPAG. Committee involvement shall be on a voluntary basis. The President and Vice President shall be ex-officio of all standing and special committees. Standing committees include the SEPAG School Representative Committee and NMSPA Committee.

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### **SEPAG School Representative Committee:**

Parent representation of all 5 school campuses consisting of: 2 Elementary Schools, 1 Middle School, 1 High School, 3 Preschools, and # from Out-of-District. Executive Board members may also serve as school representatives, if left unfilled. Each committee member must be the parent or guardian of a student who is eligible for or receives special education services via an IEP or 504 Plan from the New Milford School District.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Attend all the SEPAG meetings
- Bring forward any questions, concerns, needs or issues specific to the school they represent to the SEPAG board for inclusion on meeting agendas
- Communicate approved information and materials from the SEPAG to their representative school
- Provide input and possible solutions on systemic issues, district policies and practices
- Maintain the confidentiality of parents and/or students
- Direct parents to appropriate school personnel on matters regarding a student's IEP or 504 Plan
- Be familiar with P.R.I.S.E.: Parental Rights in Special Education

### **New Milford Special Parent Association (NMSPA) Committee:**

- Consists of 2 members who may alternate attendance
- Provides and coordinates educational and informative meetings for parents within the district
- Provides input on the needs of parents and coordinates with the district to help facilitate parent workshops and transition or career fairs to assist and educate parents

### **Article IX: Voting/Quorum**

A quorum of no less than 3 voting members must be present to constitute a meeting, and for any motion to be adopted by vote. Voting on business matters such as Bylaws, amendments, and elections will be based a simple two-thirds majority vote.

### **Article X: Elections**

Officers of the SEPAG are elected by the general membership who have voting privileges and hold office until June 30th of their second year. Elections shall occur by verbal vote if uncontested, and if contested, with ballot and two-thirds majority vote at the end of their term during the May or June meeting. All voting members, as defined in Article V, are eligible to make nominations. Nominees shall be voting members and shall either accept or decline prior to the election. Names of those nominated for election or appointment will be made available to the voting SEPAG members at least one week prior to elections.

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Elections shall be decided by a simple two-thirds majority vote of the general members present at the May/June meeting, subject to the presence of a quorum, and by written ballot of voting members. New officers shall take office on July 1st, following the election.

Any office may resign by delivering a written notice of resignation by mail, in person, or by email to the President. If the President resigns, a letter of resignation is submitted to the Director of Special Services. Resignation shall be effective immediately and upon such delivery, unless the resignation is slated to be effective at another time. An officer may be removed with cause by vote of the voting members.

The SEPAG will inform the school district of the outcome of the annual elections with the names and contact information of the new board by July 1st of the election year.

1. Nominations for Officers of the board will be accepted at the May meeting. Nominated individuals will need to accept or decline their nomination. Elections will be held prior to the completion of the current officer(s) term. Elections are held at the May or June meeting following a nomination to fill an open position. Elections can take place as a verbal vote of agreement by the voting membership if the position(s) are uncontested. If contested, elections shall be held by a ballot and a simple two-thirds majority vote.

2. All officers may have the option to run for re-election.

3. If any office becomes vacant, an election for that office shall be held at the next monthly meeting, with the term to expire on June 30th following the election.

### **Article XI: Meetings**

1. Meetings and procedures for this organization will follow the Robert's Rules of Order (latest revision).

2. Meetings shall be facilitated by the President, who will set the agenda, determine the length of the discussions, recognize participation, and conduct the votes of the voting membership as needed.

3. Meetings are defined as any New Milford SEPAG meeting, activity, or committee at which a quorum is met, including executive meetings (reporting meeting for the SEPAG representatives and district personnel), parent information/training meetings, and parent/SEPAG input meetings. Meeting agendas will be adhered to and attendance shall be maintained for public record.

4. The number of meetings to be held each year and the dates/times of those meetings shall be determined annually by the Executive Board, and when appropriate in coordination with the District Representative.

5. The SEPAG representatives volunteer their time in coordination with the school and faculty to assist and share their experiences with the New Milford School District Special Education

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programs & services. Speakers, other district leaders, and individual staff members may be invited, based upon requests from the SEPAG.

6. Additional meetings may be held on an as-needed basis, as determined by the Executive Board and its members.

7. All meetings shall be announced to the SEPAG members and notice given to the entire school community via e-mail, District Weekly e-Newsletter, the SEPAG website, and PTO e-mail blasts. There must be at least a one week notice of any and all meetings.

8. Minutes of all meetings shall be kept by the Secretary and posted on the SEPAG website.

9. Schedule of all meetings shall be posted on the SEPAG website.

10. The annual meeting for elections will be held in May or June of each year, when a position becomes available, and will be noted on such meeting notice.

11. During the meetings, concerns related to a group of students are shared and discussed, and district representatives provide updates related to special services in the school district and at the state and national levels.

12. Parents shall have adequate time to discuss these issues and plan the agenda for the next meeting.

### **Article XII: Amendments**

These Bylaws may be amended by a simple two-thirds majority of the voting members at a general meeting, but Bylaw changes may not be voted upon in the same meeting as they are proposed, unless a quorum (as described in Article IX) votes unanimously to approve the change. Proposed amendments to these Bylaws shall be distributed to all voting members at least one week prior to any anticipated action or vote. The enactment of proposed amendments to these Bylaws requires a two-thirds affirmative vote on a quorum of the SEPAG members present and voting.

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