

SEPAC SOMA

SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SOUTH ORANGE MAPLEWOOD

SEPTEMBER 2026 COMMUNITY UPDATE

What has SEPAC been hearing and doing? How can you get involved?

TOPICS:

- Paraprofessionals
- IEP Transportation
- Out of District Families
- Frontline Access
- Self Contained Classrooms

MEETINGS:

- 9/8/26 President's Council
- 9/15/26 BOE Special Education Committee
- 9/22/26 Special Services Department Check-In
- 9/24/26 BOE Meeting
- 9/25/26 Cup Chat

LINKS:

- [SOMSD Special Services](#)
- [9/15/26 BOE Special Education Committee](#)
- [Para Survey Report](#)
- [Para Oversight Dashboard](#)
- [Bus Cards](#)
- [9/24/26 BOE Agenda](#)

9/8/26: President's Council Meeting

Two questions were posed about the status of the paraprofessional transition. Both were answered with a link to the district website, <https://www.somsk12.org/district/specialservices>.

9/9/26 to 10/1/26: Back to School Nights

Liaisons are attending Back to School Nights at their schools - keep an eye out for them if your Back to School Night has not happened yet!

9/15/26: Board of Education Special Education Committee Meeting

One member of the SEPAC board - normally the president - is invited to attend the first 15 minutes of the BOE Special Education Committee Meetings. We are invited to share one win and three topics for discussion. The committee has been gracious enough to extend that time and the number of topics we cover recently.

- We asked about the claim that the switch to W2 was the cause of the last-minute shortage of paraprofessionals. Delta-T has only shared that the paras they had counted took other opportunities.
- The [Paraprofessional Oversight Dashboard](#) is intended as an internal tracking mechanism. *(continued)*

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9/15/26: Board of Education Special Education Committee Meeting (*continued*)

- The district worked through an IEP access issue for the rollover of IEPs from pre-to kindergarten teachers with Frontline. While working out the issue with Frontline support, district administrators shared IEPs with students' teachers.
- The district has been talking about being more proactive in reaching our out-of-district families. **SEPAC approved a temporary Out of District Committee** (to be formally announced at the Sept 25 Cup Chat) that will work with Special Services, Transportation, and the Sussex County Regional Cooperative to develop FAQs for OOD families.

9/22/26: SEPAC Check-In with District Special Services Department

Despite not having seen the long list of questions ahead of time this month, Ms Gesumaria spent a full hour discussing a number of topics with the SEPAC Board. Some of the items shared include:

- **Bus cards and driver/aide training:** Moving forward, families will be asked to review the bus card for their child during IEP meetings. Case managers submit transportation request forms that cover a breadth of information, and they also submit a Google form that goes to Sussex County Cooperative (the district works with this co-op for transportation). SEPAC will get to see these forms so that we have a better idea of what information is included.
- It was confirmed that all paraprofessionals in classrooms have received **Handle with Care (HWC) training**. It is an annual certification, so the district is planning the next training session for those whose renewals are due October through December.
- Paraprofessional absences have been slightly more than we typically experience at the beginning of a school year. The district and building administrators are watching for patterns of absences that might indicate a problem. **Please follow up with your case manager** if you are concerned that your student has not had their assigned paraprofessional. (*continued*)

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9/22/26: SEPAC Check-In with District Special Services Department (*continued*)

- The district is considering ways to introduce families to the paraprofessionals working with their students. **If you have suggestions**, please come to our cup chat (see below) or email us at info@sepacsoma.org.
- Two of the district **self-contained classrooms** were notified of a change to their children's inclusion in specials (library, music, art, PE) over the weekend. SEPAC expressed concern about IEP violations due to a more restrictive environment. Ms Gesumaria will look more carefully into what exactly is happening.

9/24/26: Board of Education General Meeting

The next BOE meeting starts at **6:30pm** on **Sept 24**.

The agenda was posted on Tuesday at <https://somsd.schoolboard.net/node/3900>.

Looking over the agenda and linked attachments, **attending in person or via stream**, and even telling the district your opinion during public speaks are all very meaningful ways to advocate for the students in our district.

9/25/26: SEPAC Cup Chat, Back to School Edition

We hope you can join us at **10am** on **Fri, Sept 25** for our first cup chat of the year to talk about getting Back to School! We will be at the **Maplewood Memorial Library Community Room** this month.

For the families that are looking for opportunities to connect outside the work day: Don't worry, we are working on it!

KEEP IN TOUCH:

Sign up for our email list: eepurl.com/c8HMEH

 sepacsoma.org

 info@sepacsoma.org

 [@sepacsoma](https://www.instagram.com/sepacsoma)