



**WOBURN SPECIAL EDUCATION  
PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
THE HEART AT WORK.....

August 17, 2021

Hello All,

Recently, we were made aware of several issues at the ACE program. We don't feel we need to go into detail about the specific concerns, but we would like to address some of our broader concerns about the program. These issues impact the students in the program as well as their families. We are concerned that these issues are systemic in nature and affect the students' equitable participation in the school community.

We have asked for more information, such as program descriptions for ACE and other programs that are part of Woburn's Special Education Department, on behalf of Woburn families. These requests date back several years now. Without the information in the program descriptions, which include entrance and exit criteria, parents are being asked to enroll and keep their children in a program, but are unaware of what they can expect from the program and what their children need to do in order to leave the program. Information like this should be available and transparent to all.

We would like to see more transparency from the district and to see the ACE program immediately revamped. We have requested this several times before and have been told it's "on the list." We are now asking to have ACE moved to the top of the list. We have outlined some of the issues we'd like to see addressed on the second page of this letter. Additionally, we would like SEPAC to be involved in conversations about changes to all programs.

We believe that the recent events impacting students in the ACE program are not only detrimental to those students, but that an overall tone has been set for how students with special needs are treated in our district. If the district does indeed value students with special needs, it's time to show it by revamping ACE and making program descriptions available to families before the start of the 2021-2022 school year. SEPAC looks forward to helping the district work toward both goals.

Thank you for your time,

The Woburn SEPAC Board  
Elissa Milto, President  
Julie Cotton, Vice President  
Adam Chapman, Treasurer

### Timeline for Addressing ACE Programmatic Issues

<b>1. Data Gathering</b>	<b>Reach out to the community</b> for more input on student and family experiences.
<b>2.1 Local Accountability: Organization</b>	<p><b>Compile data</b></p> <p><b>Issues raised so far:</b>  School culture and staff attitudes towards disability  Lack of supervision  Lack of intellectual engagement  Environmental distance from peers  Limited inclusion opportunities  Communication challenges  Concerns about adequate staffing of program (no FT behaviorist)  Program description out of date</p>
<b>2.2 Local Accountability: Communication</b>	<p><b>Send email outlining concerns to:</b>  Maureen Ryan  Carl Nelson  Matt Crowley  Mike Baldassarre  Ellen Crowley</p>
<b>3. Community Accountability</b>	<p><b>Update members</b> on status of advocacy work</p> <p><b>Outreach</b> to PTO, school council, other groups at the Kennedy</p>
<b>4. School Committee Presentation</b>	<p><b>Present compiled data, process so far, and ongoing work to School Committee</b> and ask for support in obtaining solutions to ongoing ACE issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Focus group?</li> <li>2) Brain trust of families to troubleshoot issues?</li> </ol>
<b>5. Ongoing Consultation with District</b>	<p>Continue to <b>monitor</b> and seek accountability for program reform</p> <p><b>Active collaboration</b> with district utilizing SEPAC as a resource for community input and engagement</p> <p>As needed: <b>call DESE</b> if emergent district compliance and collaboration is not possible</p>
<b>6. Ongoing Data Collection</b>	<p><b>Continued data collection</b> from the community to stay fully informed and properly advise district</p>