



QUICK FACTS



Special Education Parent Advisory Groups (SEPAGs) Engage Families to Support Learning for ALL Students

Special Education Parent Advisory Groups (SEPAGs) serve as models for building the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents seeking to get involved in their schools and facilitating deeper connections between families and schools. A local SEPAG gives parents the opportunity to provide direct input to their school district about policies, programs, practices, and services that have an impact on students with disabilities and their families. Its model also sets an example for family-school engagement that supports learning for ALL students.

Here are some ideas for building strong and effective partnerships that can impact overall student outcomes.

1. SEPAGs are hubs of information, support, and resources for the entire school community. Partnering with SEPAGs:

- ☀ Creates opportunities to share information, best practices, and tools to support student learning and optimize home-school connections.
- ☀ Helps engage families in strength-based, purposeful discussions about what matters most – our children.
- ☀ Provides public forums for asking questions, planning, problem-solving, and shared leadership.
- ☀ Shows an interest in families' priorities, expectations, and goals for their children's learning and development.
- ☀ Helps find common ground that can build relationships between diverse families and schools to ensure student success.
- ☀ Connects families and schools to community support systems and offers related resources to families and students who may need additional help.
- ☀ Supports families as leaders and recognizes them as critical and influential resources in enhancing school communities.

Also, see [Quick Guide "Tips for Parents to Participate in a Decision-Making Group"](#) and [Quick Guide "What are the Results of an Effective SEPAG?"](#)



2. SEPAGs gather direct input from diverse families and share it with the school district. Acknowledging the value of overall parent input as essential to school improvement efforts:

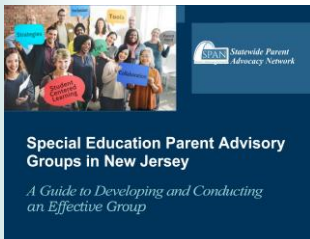
- ☀️ Raises awareness about the positive impact of active family engagement on student achievement, development, and post-school success.
- ☀️ Informs the school district about current needs, challenges, preferences, and hopes of the families they serve so they will be able to make timely, culturally responsive decisions.
- ☀️ Helps identify systemic issues that impact many students and their families and take action to resolve them while ensuring equity and transparency.
- ☀️ Improves the school district culture and climate.

Also, see [Quick Guide “How Can SEPAGs Build Diverse Family Engagement?”](#)

3. SEPAGs focus on ensuring family voices are represented and reflected in all school decisions impacting families. Engaging all families as valued, collaborative partners with schools:

- ☀️ Increases family participation in other school and district-based groups and committees.
- ☀️ Expands families’ knowledge base about the school system and increases confidence in their ability to participate in shared decision making.
- ☀️ Helps support high quality, inclusive, and equitable educational opportunities for all students.
- ☀️ Leads to real, lasting changes impacting the education, health, safety, and well-being of students.
- ☀️ Fosters mutual understanding and builds trust and respect.
- ☀️ Strengthens commitment and buy-in from families.
- ☀️ Establishes ongoing *two-way communication* between families and schools to ensure that the school environment is welcoming and that systems are in place to effectively address the diverse needs of all students and families.

Also, see [“Family Engagement Inventory Tool for School Reopening and Recovery”](#) and [Instructional Guide for using this tool](#)



For a complete guide to starting and supporting a SEPAG in your school, district or community, visit the START-EPSD Project web-page (bit.ly/startepsd) and/or connect with a Parent Group Specialist in your region.

Access the SEPAG Guide:
tiny.cc/SEPAGguideEnglish

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