



SEPAG Drop-in Support Recap

Wednesday, September 23rd, 2026 | 1:00pm-2:00pm

Thanks to everyone who joined us this week! We had a smaller group, which gave us the opportunity to dig a little deeper into some familiar SEPAG challenges: building parent participation, creating opportunities for meaningful family input, and keeping a SEPAG moving forward through leadership changes.

Below are a few highlights and resources from the discussion.

Building Participation Takes Time and Persistence

Parent participation was once again a major topic of conversation. Participants shared a variety of approaches they have tried, including Facebook groups, websites, playground meetups, parent coffees, community events, presentations, flyers, emails, phone calls, and Back-to-School Night outreach.

Even with all of those efforts, getting families to take the next step and actually participate in a SEPAG meeting can be (and often is) still difficult.

The group discussed a few strategies that may help:

- Ask district leaders to share information through multiple communication channels, and do so often.
- Give administrators both the flyer you want sent out, and ready-to-use language they can easily copy into an email, newsletter, or announcement.
- Share materials with principals, case managers, PTOs/PTAs, and other school-level contacts who can help extend the SEPAG's reach.
- Ask administrators about the process and timeline for approving and distributing SEPAG communications so outreach can be planned accordingly.
- Consider sharing general SEPAG information with the broader school community, not only families whose children currently receive special education services.

One participant also shared a helpful example of progress: after consistently promoting their SEPAG over time, educators who previously did not know the group existed now recognize it and understand its role. Visibility and participation may not grow overnight, but consistent outreach can make a difference.

Creating Space for Parent Voice

The group also discussed what a SEPAG community meeting looks like for their groups, and creative ways to ensure parents have regular opportunities to share their thoughts:

One meeting model shared during the session combines a brief district update with an open forum for families. District representatives can provide important updates at the beginning of the meeting, followed by time for parents to raise questions, concerns, or broader issues they are seeing.

If families are hesitant to speak up, having a few conversation prompts ready can help get things started. Questions might invite parents to reflect on what is working well, what has been challenging, or what they would like to see improved.

- > *Tip: it can be helpful to advertise to your communities when district leaders will be in attendance, as some families may not feel comfortable openly sharing outside of “closed” (parent-only) meetings.*

Another strategy is to survey families about the topics they want to learn more about. Responses can help SEPAG leaders identify future meeting topics and presenters while ensuring that programming reflects families’ actual interests and needs.

Keeping a SEPAG Going Through Leadership Changes

What happens when leaders step down, responsibilities become overwhelming, or a SEPAG’s original leadership structure no longer seems to fit the people doing the work?

That question led to a broader conversation about building a leadership structure that is manageable and sustainable. Ideas from the discussion included:

- Frequently revisit who currently has the time and interest to participate in leadership with your leaders.
- Clearly discuss what each person can realistically commit to.
- Divide responsibilities based on people’s strengths and interests.
- Consider shared leadership or co-leader roles so that responsibility does not fall entirely on one person.
- Establish simple expectations for new leaders so they understand how the group currently operates.
- Revisit existing procedures when needed so that the structure supports the group rather than becoming a barrier to moving forward.

One participant summed up an important reality: **SEPAGs can face challenges whether they have one person trying to do everything or several people trying to work together.** Finding a structure that works for the people who are actually involved can help make leadership more sustainable.

Going through a leadership change in your district? BRIDGE can provide individualized support to your group through our upon-request office hours. Sign up using the link at the bottom of this page!

Want to talk through your group’s specific situation? Request a 1:1 office hour with a member of our staff:

go.rutgers.edu/sepagsupportofficehours

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