

SEPAG Minutes

Meeting Minutes

Date: November 13, 2025

Committee Members present:

Yael Shafrir
Juana Trejo-Reyes
Kelly Martins

Administration and Staff Present:

Lori Cohen

I. Welcoming remarks

II. Special Services Staffing Overview by Mrs. Cohen

- Ms. Cohen reviewed the Special Services team, including case managers, related services providers, behaviorists, counseling staff, and special education teachers at Hillside and Tenakill.
- All staff members were identified and their roles explained.
- A new psychologist will be joining the team this year to support grades 6 and 7.
- An OT-in-training has joined the department part-time and is currently working under supervision.
- A physical therapist has joined the district and will be available 1.5 days per week.
- A West Bergen clinician is now on staff and can complete school clearances, reducing the need to send students out for assessments.

III. Department Goals

Hillside Elementary:

- Related service providers will fully implement the 3:1 related services model.

Tenakill Middle School:

- Special education staff will increase confidence, skill, and consistency in supporting students with behavioral and emotional challenges.
- A recent presentation provided teachers with strategies for supporting students in these areas.

IV 504 Plans and IEPs

504 Plan:

- Provides accommodations to ensure students can access the general education curriculum.

IEP:

- Student must qualify under disability eligibility criteria.
- The disability must adversely impact educational performance.
- Student must require special education and related services.

V. Special Education Timelines

- A meeting must be held within 20 days of a request to determine if evaluations are needed. Attendees include the psychologist, social worker, special education teacher, and general education teacher.
- Parental consent is required before evaluations begin.
- The evaluation process takes 90 days.
- Parents receive evaluation reports 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting.
- An IEP is developed and must be signed by the parent to take effect.
- Annual reviews occur each year, with earlier meetings available upon request.
- Triennial reevaluations occur every 3 years and may be waived.

VI . Legal Updates (Effective July 2026)

- Districts must provide parents/guardians with required written information at least 2 business days before the annual IEP meeting.
- Information must be sent via regular mail, and also electronically if an email address is on file.
- Team members may be excused from a meeting if their written input is submitted.
- Parents must be asked for input regarding placement during the meeting.

VII. Student Support Offerings

- Counseling groups run by CST members
- VIP tours for 4th-grade students
- Grade-level visits
- Summer visits
- Character education programs
- Groups for students experiencing separation/divorce
- Groups for students in single-parent homes
- New student support groups

VIII. Discussion Items

- A parent requested a transition meeting for students moving from middle to high school. This was provided last year and will be explored again for the current year.
- Concerns were raised regarding sleepover trips and the support available for students receiving special education services.
 - It was noted that information about supports has been limited in the past.
 - Dr. Cohen attended this year's trip to assist students directly.
 - It was clarified that all students are included in the trip.
 - Parents were encouraged to contact their case manager to share concerns and discuss necessary and available supports.

Closing Remarks

Parents asked about the support available for special education students during school overnight field trips. They were encouraged to discuss any specific needs or accommodations with their child's case manager. Overall, support may be available to ensure students' needs are met, but arrangements should be coordinated in advance through communication with the school.

Upcoming SEPAG Meeting Dates

December 18, 2025

SEPAG INFORMATION

SEPAG website: <https://www.closterschools.org/SEPAG>

If you or someone you know would like to be added to the email list please send an email to DrRenataMartins@gmail.com