

Dear Parents,

As Co Chairs of the WSEAC we feel it is important to address some parents' concerns regarding the WSEAC's position (or lack thereof) on the issue surrounding the recent school closures. The closures of the 3 schools were announced March 25, and the WSEAC, as a whole, has not met since that decision by the school committee was made.

The WSEAC has been kept up to date through updates on the redistricting process, provided by Dr. D'Agostino, Director of Special Education and a member of the redistricting committee, and WSEAC members who attended the redistricting committee meetings. These updates were given during our WSEAC monthly meetings. Dr. D'Agostino answered questions the WSEAC members asked and he encouraged all members to attend the public hearings on this matter to voice their concerns to the school committee on the proposed plan(s).

Prior to the March 25th School Committee decision, the WSEAC did not take a position on one side of the issue or the other. Part of our mission is to disseminate information on district, state and federal special education issues, provide a forum for parent information and support, and act as a local resource for families with concerns about their child's educational needs. Our committee is comprised of a diverse group of individuals, representing many of the schools throughout the district, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, school committee members, therapists, and anyone else with a concern for our children who receive special education services. The WSEAC is interested in what is happening with all of our children, in all of our schools, in the area of special education. As our meeting attendance numbers continue to grow, we do our best to assist each and every parent that comes to us with a concern with locating the resources they need, or direct them to the appropriate professionals, that can address their individual concerns. We feel the WSEAC has done just that with the issue of redistricting.

We, with the help of a redistricting committee member, Dr. D'Agostino, through our WSEAC meetings, disseminated information to our WSEAC members on the redistricting process and provided a forum for parent information, giving parents information on where they could go to get further information or to voice their concerns – (ie. contacting school committee members, attending the public hearings, identifying website locations where parents could locate proposals and minutes from redistricting meetings, etc.).

With that said, it is our opinion that it is not the WSEAC's position to take a position on the issue of school closings. It is our role to assist families by providing support and information they seek during this process. It is not the role of the WSEAC, as a whole, to determine what is/was/will be considered an appropriate placement, program, or school, for any particular, individual child, whether it be their home school, a school across town, a self-contained placement or an inclusion placement. That is what the IEP team is for. We, the WSEAC Co-Chairs, personally, are disappointed that any school had to close. We admire all of the professionals and parents that are advocating to reverse

the decision that was made. But the WSEAC will respond to the school committee decision that has been made, and any future decisions that may be made, by continuing to support our mission of providing support and assistance to any parent who has a concern regarding their child and the special education services that they receive. It is up to each parent and the rest of their child's IEP team, for each individual child affected by the school closures, to determine what is an appropriate transition plan to the next placement, where that placement may be, etc. As many on our committee can confirm, we have many parent members whose children with special needs have attended several different schools before the time they had even reached 6th grade. Many have never been in their home schools. I believe our committee members are a valuable resource and can share their experiences, how their IEP teams assisted with successful transitions to new classrooms, new buildings, new peers, new educators, related service providers, and share their knowledge with, and offer support to, parents who will be experiencing transition due to the school closings.

As we continue to receive information from parents and professionals in regards to the students with special needs affected by this ongoing process, the WSEAC will continue to keep our membership informed.

Respectfully,

Eve Bisard, WSEAC Co-Chair
Jessica Schad, WSEAC Co-Chair