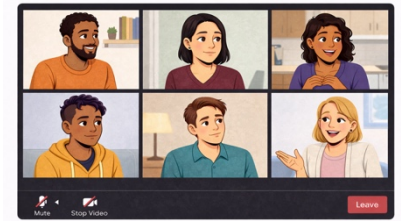


Event Recap: SEPAG Leaders - Connect, Share, & Grow!

Wednesday, February 25th, 2026, 6:30pm – 7:30pm

Connect, Share, & Grow brought SEPAG parent leaders together for a virtual discussion. Three experienced leaders opened the session by sharing how they grow their membership, run effective and engaging meetings, and build strong district partnerships. Participants then joined breakout-room discussions to continue those conversations, share ideas and resources, and build community.



Note: This meeting recap is intended to summarize the main ideas shared by featured leaders and others in breakout room discussions. It is not intended to represent all groups, and The BRIDGE Initiative does not necessarily endorse the views expressed below.

Theme 1: Growing Your Membership

Create Meaningful Opportunities for Connection

- ⇒ Invite speakers or consider a speaker series on topics parents care about.
- ⇒ Host inclusive playdates or community-based social events such as attending a baseball game.
 - Ask your district if you can use the gym or playgrounds on the weekend!
 - *“Try hosting informal sessions where people are just out to have fun and be together and build community.”*
- ⇒ Plan events where families leave with at least one helpful resource or takeaway.
 - *“Give your parents something they can look forward to.”*

Increase Visibility and Access

- ⇒ Make sure the district website includes up-to-date SEPAG contact information and shared resources.
- ⇒ Make your presence known by attending back-to-school night and other district events.
- ⇒ Partner with your HSA or PTO to share information at their events and increase awareness.
- ⇒ Set a regular meeting schedule and share it in advance.
- ⇒ Offer hybrid meeting options for increase accessibility.

Theme 2: Choosing Topics & Running Meetings

Meeting Format & Logistics

- ⇒ Start with a meeting format that increases access. Many groups begin with hybrid meetings and adjust over time based on parent feedback.
- ⇒ Work with the district to secure comfortable in-person spaces such as media centers or libraries.
- ⇒ Let families know in advance whether district staff will attend or if the meeting is parent-only. Some groups alternate formats.
 - *“Some months we’d have just parents, and would call that a ‘parent social’ so parents can come and feel comfortable to just talk. Every other month we’d invite the CST.”*
- ⇒ When planning topic-based meetings, consider inviting members of the Child Study Team to present. This can be easier than searching for outside speakers, especially for new groups.

Topic Selection & Parent Voices

- ⇒ Use surveys to gather topic and format preferences (virtual or in-person). Anonymous tools such as Google Forms or Qualtrics can increase honest feedback.
 - *“We’d try to get a feel for what parents want help with.”*
- ⇒ Set aside time during meetings to ask participants about future topics.
- ⇒ Repeat high-interest topics (such as IEPs or 504 plan guidance).
- ⇒ Leave time for open discussion. These conversations often highlight themes and concerns that can guide future planning and district advising.

Theme 3: Strong District Advising

Establish Communication Structures

- ⇒ After meetings, organize key themes and share them with the district in a timely way.
- ⇒ Consider establishing standing meeting times with district leadership, such as scheduling a follow-up conversation shortly after each SEPAG meeting.
- ⇒ When appropriate, Invite the special services staff to give brief updates at the start of meetings. This helps maintain transparency and build trust.
 - *“We feel that the more our community sees the special education director, the more accessible and approachable they become.”*
- ⇒ Leverage district support for marketing and distributing information about your SEPAG’s activities.

Center Parent Voices

- ⇒ Document feedback shared during meetings as well as input received outside of meetings (social media messages, emails, texts).
- ⇒ Organize themes and identify patterns before bringing concerns forward.
- ⇒ Focus on systemic trends rather than individual cases to maintain the advisory role of the SEPAG.

Lead with Partnership

- ⇒ Bring ideas, not demands. Share concerns with potential solutions or guiding questions.
- ⇒ Address root causes of recurring challenges rather than isolated incidents.
- ⇒ Approach collaboration with the understanding that shared goals (supporting students and families) remain constant even when perspectives differ.
 - *“We operate under the assumption that we [SEPAG & District] are on the same team. It’s never us against them, we are working together.”*

A Note on Fundraising

- ⇒ SEPAGs are advisory groups and typically do not raise or manage funds directly.
- ⇒ If support is needed for materials, speakers, or events, start by checking with your district’s special education department — many districts can help in small ways.
- ⇒ SEPAGs can also partner with established groups such as PTOs or HSAs when additional support makes sense.

