



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting December 16, 2015

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 8:45 p.m. and thanked Superintendent Glenn Brand for coming to the PAC social prior to the business meeting. PAC board members Amanda Bailey, Bill Guthlein, and Kathy Luce were present as well as Director of Special Education Mary Emmons, School Committee liaison to the PAC Paul Murphy, and six other members.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from November 18, 2015, were reviewed. A motion was made to approve the minutes as written and was passed unanimously.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Preliminary Budget Items

Pathways Program for K-3 Students with Autism

The budget contains a proposed Pathways program for K-3 students with autism spectrum disorder. Six current pre-K students have been identified to move into this program in the fall. The program will be housed at Blanchard and can accommodate up to eight students under the current proposed funded levels. The PAC met with the Director of Special Education to discuss staffing levels. Staffing levels are similar to those in the comparable CASE program.

Reducing Learning Center Caseloads

Learning center caseloads were discussed. Two FTE have been added in the proposed budget at RJ Grey to accommodate next year's influx of current sixth graders who need additional support. The goal at the elementary level is to have three learning centers at each school with a focus on K-2, 3-4, and 5-6.

Increased Psychologist Support

A 0.8 FTE elementary psychologist was added to provide additional staffing resources for assessments and direct service to students.

B. Assistant Superintendent for Student Services Search Update

Amanda is serving as a parent representative on the committee for the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services search. While there are other district parents on the committee, it was noted that only one of the parents isn't a district employee.

C. Updates from Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director

The PAC hopes to offer programs on dyslexia and executive function in the spring and fall in partnership with Student Services as part of the follow-up plan from the APPLE Institute last April.

The Director of Special Education noted that the district previously had a language learning program. There was more discussion about a current delay in intervention

and significant frustration among families with a lack of organized district-wide curriculum for students with this disability. The Director of Special Education noted that she is excited to be chairing the committee on inclusionary practices and has much interest from elementary through high school levels.

The PAC Special Education Parent Handbook will be updated after the budget is finalized.

D. Parenting Support House Schedule for 2016

The parent support group will continue to meet the first Wednesday of the month (except in May when it will be the 2nd week) at the Acton Library from 10:30 a.m. until noon.

E. Expanding Extracurricular Opportunities and Access to Community Education

The PAC is looking for volunteers for a subcommittee to research existing resources of programs that are accessible for students with special needs. No one at the meeting was interested in volunteering at this time.

F. Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Decision RE: Public Review of Private Settlement Agreements (Michael Champa vs. Weston Public Schools & Others)

Bill summarized the decision about private settlement agreements, including out-of-district placements, between a public school and parents, which were found by the court to be public records and not exempt from disclosure. One member asked the Director of Special Education if anyone had requested records yet. She replied no.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A member raised issue of interventions for dyslexia. Mary Emmons talked about the different programs used in different buildings. Another member raised issue of physical access to programs and places, particularly the new outdoor spaces being constructed at each of the elementary schools. The issue of outreach came up and Amanda noted that there are more than 900 people on the PAC mailing list.

The Director of Special Education noted that there seems to be more need for programming and information on adult transition issues and guardianship. She spends a lot of time talking with families about this issue. She also highlighted that she wrote a grant that can be used for social/emotional health or wellness.

Following a parent question, Amanda noted that the Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate report on the Sandy Hook perpetrator noted many missed opportunities by the family, the school system, and mental health professionals to intervene.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

VI. NEXT MEETING – Wednesday, January 13, 2016 at the R.J. Grey Library at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kathy Luce, Secretary