



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting April 13, 2016

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. PAC board member Co-Chairs Amanda Bailey and Bill Guthlein, Past Chair Nancy Sherburne, Secretary Kathy Luce, and Standing Committee Chair Blossom Davies as well as Director of Special Education Mary Emmons, Coordinator of Student Services K-6 Lynne Laramie, School Committee liaison to the PAC Paul Murphy, and seven other members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from February 10, 2016, were reviewed. A motion was made to approve the minutes and was passed unanimously. Minutes from March 9 will be reviewed at the May meeting.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Monthly Meeting with Director of Special Education (topics covered below)

B. Update on Progress toward PAC Goals for the Year

Amanda reported on outreach efforts made during the year, including the 1000+ person mailing list, outreach forms with new IEPs, reviving the parent-to-parent Yahoo group, attending open houses, joint PTO meetings, and attending community events (need volunteers to do more). The Parent Handbook will be updated once all the changes with programs and staff are done this year. Speakers are in planning for next year.

C. Executive Summary of 2015 Parent/Guardian Survey

The Executive Summary of the Parent/Guardian Survey was reviewed by Student Services. It will be posted online and in the newsletter. Key observations included:

- 1) Changes in Extended School Year (ESY) satisfaction among parents with children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs).
- 2) Continuing after-school programming concerns especially from parents with children with Autism.
- 3) The PAC remains concerned that 1 in 5 parents think communications between parents and school/district are strained.
- 4) Higher overall levels of dissatisfaction among parents with Out of District (OOD) students.

Bill gave some additional information about the survey and observations among subsets by disabilities.

Leadership and Structure Changes

The PAC has met with the Superintendent. Dr. Dawn Bentley will start July 1 as Assistant Superintendent for Student Services. The current Director of Special Education will be starting her new position in Lincoln and the district is conducting a search for her successor. Amanda noted the Director of Special Education responsibilities have been changed. The job has been posted online.

D. Increasing Understanding of Disabilities Among General Education Staff

The understanding of disabilities, particularly Autism (especially profiles formerly called Asperger's and high-functioning autism), seems varied among schools. The

Director of Special Education said she has met with the principals about this. Members asked if teachers could be available before the school year starts in August to meet with them about their children's specific needs. The K-6 Coordinator stated that the teacher contract has limitations about bringing everyone back, but teachers are very accommodating. A member talked about sharing her template of her children's needs with school staff at the beginning of the year and how helpful that has been. The PAC continues to emphasize the importance of training all staff and hiring dual-certified staff.

E. Obtaining Information about Certified Staff in Buildings

The Director of Special Education said schools need to follow up with her about this.

F. Parenting Support Hour

The next meeting is scheduled for May 11 at 10:30 a.m. at the Acton Memorial Library. They are making plans to meet in the evenings in the future.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A member brought a friend from another town who wanted to know about the new K-3 Pathways program for students with Autism. The Director of Special Education reviewed the program details. Bill reviewed some ratios he had been analyzing from the DESE website. He found that the district's per pupil spending was lower than comparable districts' spending and our MCAS scores were higher.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

VI. NEXT MEETING – Wednesday, May 11, 2016 at the R.J. Grey Library at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kathy Luce, Secretary