



Acton-Boxborough Special Education
Parent Advisory Council
(AB SpEd PAC)
Business Meeting

Wednesday, March 8, 2017, at 7:30 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High library

Agenda

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of Minutes

Review and approval of November 16, 2016, and February 15, 2017, meeting minutes

III. Organization/Business Issues

- A. Updates from Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director
- B. Parent Participation in Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development
- C. Special Education Legal Updates
- D. Sarah Ward Executive Functioning & Resilience Presentation Summary
- E. Speaker & Support Group Schedule
 - 1. Next Support Group Meeting Saturday, April 8, from 1-3 p.m. at St. Matthews United Methodist Church, Acton
 - 2. Basic Rights in Special Education Workshop Wednesday, May 3, from 7-8:45 p.m. in the Fowler School Library, Maynard
 - 3. Presentation about Mental Health & the IEP?

IV. New Business – Other topics on people’s minds

V. Open Issues

- A. MCAS – 3rd & 4th grade ELA performance vulnerable for students with disabilities
- B. Concerns about the process for combining outside specialists’ recommendations with district evaluations/recommendations and appropriately incorporating those recommendations into the IEP
- C. Mandatory special education training/professional development for regular and special education staff – hiring dual-certified staff
- D. Enhanced Extended School Year, before-, and after-school programming
- E. Increased use of technology in IEP development, revision, & communication
- F. Out of District findings from 2015 parent/guardian survey counter overall positive trend
- G. Need for consistent K-12 executive functioning curriculum

VI. Adjournment

All AB SpEd PAC meetings are open to the public. We encourage parents of children with special needs and others interested in special education to attend. Please check our website (www.abspedpac.org) for information regarding upcoming events.

VII. Next Meeting

Wednesday, April 12, 2017, at 7:30 p.m. in the Parker Damon library



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting
November 16, 2016

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. Board member Chair Amanda Bailey, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Standing Committee Chair Blossom Davies, Secretary Ann Iandiorio, Special Education Director Pam Smith, and six other members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from September 14, 2016, and October 19, 2016, were reviewed and approved.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director

- School Committee member Diane Baum attended the meeting.
- The Procedural Safeguards have been sent out electronically.
- The PAC requested information about preliminary budget items.
- Student Services noted that during the state's Coordinated Program Review (CPR) 59 special education elements (areas) will be looked at by evaluators. This includes parent participation in IEP meetings, timeliness of responses, and IEPs from various categories.
- There is an ongoing discussion about designating the Autism disability category and ensuring consistency across the district. Parents need to understand what is going into those decisions. The form with IEP meeting minutes now includes a Chapter 57 (Autism-specific considerations) checklist. There needs to be explanation of what the district will do about each item. A new form will be more consistent and clear about actions taken as well as considering the criteria outlined in the MA educational definition of Autism, following the federal definition in IDEA. A question was raised about children who have a medical Autism diagnosis but do not meet an educational determination. How is this documented? More data is required on how often this happens.
- The issue of removing recess as punishment either for whole classes or for kids with self-regulation challenges was raised. Should this be addressed across the district given the Challenge Success emphasis on play time? This issue is not addressed in district policy so this risks treading on teacher discipline. There are other, more creative ways to discipline. Parents can specify recess cannot be removed from students in their IEPs.

B. 2016 MCAS Analysis Meeting with Student Services & Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning

The Assistant Superintendent for Student Services reported that the internal conversation went well with people looking at issues. The PAC is pleased with improved student outcomes, particularly in fourth grade ELA, but has concerns about all third grade ELA performance and ELA performance at McCarthy-Towne for Students with Disabilities.

The district is committed to universal implementation of the Massachusetts Tiered System of Support and is moving to support special education students in the regular education classroom instead of pull out services (i.e., speech, OT) where appropriate.

C. Challenge Success Presentation Summary

Parents should see the district's Challenge Success web page for more information on Denise Pope's presentation and can view a generic video of her message. Bill expressed concern about a seeming lessened emphasis on student outcomes as gauged by standardized testing. The PAC wonders how a shifting emphasis toward social and emotional wellness will particularly benefit students with special education needs.

D. Extended School Year Clarification RE: Qualifying & Programming Questions

ESY concerns around qualifying, length and duration, quality, and staff qualifications were discussed. Regression and/or recoupment issues for ESY eligibility will be revisited in spring because it is too early to determine before breaks in services. More data is needed. The PAC strongly emphasized that risk of regression is also to be used in making ESY eligibility determinations. Internal forms will be used by staff and faculty to keep track of issues. Issues will be discussed at Team meetings and paperwork will be with the IEP. Who is eligible for what kind of services will be analyzed in January. Parents can write letters to their Teams following breaks with anecdotal or other evidence bearing in mind that determination is based on regression, risk of regression, or recoupment concerns about skills targeted in IEP goals. Timing of notification as to when ESY will take place is a problem for parents. It has historically been late, making it very challenging for parents to find other or additional opportunities during the summer. Parents need both dates and hours of the program. Concerns were raised that if the hours are too short it may not be a worthwhile program. Student Services will look into the process; ideally, notification of dates should be before the Merriam camp fair in January.

E. Mini Survey to Monitor Issues from 2015 Parent/Guardian Survey Findings

The PAC needs to resurvey to see how experiences are changing over time with particular focus on communication, ESY, and OOD/preschool families.

F. Speaker & Support Group

1. Next support group meeting Saturday, November 19, 1-3 p.m. at St. Matthews United Methodist Church, Acton
2. Cohosted presentation with Student Services by Jessica Minahan for December 14 is now a part of the Family Learning Series – Do we want to offer an honorarium?

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Social skills were under Additional Information but not on some IEP service delivery grids. The school counselors were doing the work and they are considered regular and not special education staff. The PAC maintains social skills instruction including lunch bunch is by definition a special education service if it is targeting IEP goals and benchmarks. Parents were concerned if not in the grid it may not be a protected service. Student Services will explore the issue for consistency.

A suggestion for a possible speaker was brought up—Jeanine Fitzgerald, author of *The Dance of Interaction: A Guide to Managing Children's Challenging Behaviors*. She is the founder of the Better Behavior Bureau and offers a different, child-focused perspective.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

VI. NEXT MEETING

Date and location for a December holiday gathering will be announced soon.

Wednesday, January 11, 2017 [cancelled due to Maria Trozzi Good Grief presentation]

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Respectfully submitted by Ann Iandiorio, Secretary



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting
February 15, 2017

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. PAC Board member Chair Amanda Bailey, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Standing Committee Chair Blossom Davies, Secretary Ann Iandiorio, Special Education Director Pam Smith, and six other members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from November 16, 2016, were not yet available.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director

A brief meeting occurred due to the Student Services department's work with the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) team. Procedures around Extended School Year eligibility were discussed.

B. Coordinated Program Review Update

CPR has been Tuesday – Thursday of this week (February 14-16). File review went well. Program Quality Assurance is changing its name and branching out from compliance to include outcomes (closing achievement gaps) and working to help PACs be more effective. The PAC met with the state team today to provide feedback. Surveys to random families will be coming. Only one family has requested to speak to the CPR team.

C. Budget Items

Staff requested include a 0.8 psychologist for Douglas and the preschool. A licensed social worker for high school will let guidance counselors return to advising. An elementary Educational Team Leader (ETL) will take over coverage of at least two schools and Out of District (OOD) elementary oversight responsibilities. The Special Education Director currently covers McCarthy-Towne and Merriam and OOD is contracted. The long-term plan would be to have three ETLs with responsibility for two schools each. With more ETLs the special educators would have more time for direct service to students. ETLs would do more 3-year reviews and work with placement of new students. Special educators would still do annual IEPs. There is a necessary expansion proposed for the K-3 Pathways program at Blanchard. A second Pathways classroom would be added with a special educator and a 0.2 speech and language pathologist. A plan to add another elementary special educator (Conant) is still being considered.

D. Extended School Year Clarification RE: Qualifying & Programming Questions.

Families have been told ESY eligibility requires regression. The PAC requested a copy of the district policy and procedures for determining ESY eligibility. Student Services provided a copy of the form used to determine the need for ESY. The procedure manual for the district is being written this year, hence the lack of a policy document. Once the manual is completed, parent access to procedures will depend on request. Some districts have procedures online for parents to access.

E. Speakers and Support Group Schedule

1. Next support group meeting Saturday, March 4, from 1-3 p.m. at St. Matthews United Methodist Church, Acton – The group is thinking of publishing notes to attract more attendees and looks to reach out to younger families. The notes would be about topics discussed not about individuals.
2. Sarah Ward on Executive Functioning & Resilience Tuesday, March 7, from 7-8:30 p.m. at RJ Grey Junior High. The PAC is cosponsoring the event.
3. Basic Rights in Special Education & the transition presentation will be rescheduled.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

The Federation for Children with Special Needs Visions of Community Conference is March 4 at Seaport World Trade Center. The PAC has one free ticket to be assigned at random from those who express interest by noon Friday.

Emphasis on transitions was mentioned in the CPR interview. Currently there is not much data on how kids do after high school. The school only hears from people who want to reply to a survey after graduation. Massachusetts starts planning as of 14 years old. Students must be invited to Team meetings at 14, but some are not ready for that at 14. There are many workshops offered in the state and resources available in the district.

Parents are looking for clarification as to why principals attend Team meetings and what their role is there. They are sometimes left off meeting invitation forms and their participation and input varies greatly among schools. Student Services will follow up.

Professional Development – Social emotional training is ongoing. Blanchard did a school-wide Autism training to help support students in the new Pathways program.

Massachusetts Tiered System of Support – Research is being conducted this year about what general education teachers will require to put supports in place.

Outreach – Looking for PAC members to serve as a liaison to Danny's Place or Acton Committee on Disabilities.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

VI. NEXT MEETING –

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