



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting October 19, 2016

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. PAC Board member Chair Amanda Bailey, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Standing Committee Chair Blossom Davies, Special Education Director Pam Smith, School Committee liaison to the PAC Diane Baum, and nine other members were in attendance.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from September 14, 2016 will be reviewed for approval at the November 16, 2016 meeting due to lack of a Secretary at the September meeting.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director

Transition is going well for the new Director. The Parent's Notice of Procedural Safeguards will be distributed by the end of the week. This will be an electronic distribution with a paper option offered.

B. 2013-2014 Absenteeism Data for Students with Disabilities

Bill Guthlein presented the data. Chronic absenteeism is considered 15 or more days absent per year. Findings show students with special education needs are more often chronically absent than peers and girls were more chronically absent than boys, particularly at the junior high and high school. No details are available on reasons for absence (medical issues, social emotional, hospitalizations, etc.) and there are no notes on excused versus unexcused. Some students are medically fragile. The group discussed what, if anything, should be done to address chronic absenteeism.

C. Challenge Success & Social Emotional Emphasis

How will this impact students with disabilities, particularly emotional disabilities, and how will this be tracked? How are students with emotional disabilities qualified for services? Will this focus minimize the very real concerns students with these disabilities face? The group noted that standardized testing is very stressful on students. Will this be addressed?

D. 2016 MCAS Analysis for Special Education Students

PAC leadership intends to meet with the District to discuss MCAS results and historically weak growth in 4th grade ELA in terms of SGP. There was a multi-year trend of poor performance. It was noted that Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) was implemented in all elementary schools except McCarthy-Towne. The Student Services and Curriculum departments covered the cost of training the staff. Math has seen growth in general. Concerns were raised about the 3rd grade ELA proficiency for all students. Will this be an area where additional support will be needed going forward? There has been growth in 4th grade ELA, but historically there is a decreasing trend. By school, Douglas and Gates saw the biggest gains with McCarthy-Towne making gains but at a significantly lower rate. Fifth and 6th grade

scores dropped from year to year. The PAC stresses the need for more data points other than MCAS to evaluate how the district is performing.

E. Fall 2016 School Committee Presentation on September 20

The Friends of AB SpEd PAC will recognize its 2016 Staff Recognition/Teaching Excellence Award winner ABRHS special educator Nikki Jeannotte. The PAC will outline its annual goals and show a care map for a child with special needs to offer others perspective on all that is involved in raising a child with special needs.

F. Seek Candidates for Secretary & Elect New Officer(s)

Ann Iandiorio was nominated for Secretary. Amanda asked for objections and, seeing none, moved to a vote. The members voted unanimously to accept nomination.

G. Speaker & Support Group

1. Next Support Group Meeting is Saturday, November 19, 1-3 p.m. at St. Matthew's United Methodist Church in Acton

2. Cohosting with Student Services BCBA Jessica Minahan on reducing student anxiety December 14, 7-9 p.m. in the RJ Grey auditorium

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- Teacher absenteeism is high compared to other districts. At the high school there are concerns regarding insufficient numbers of substitute teachers. Students are given a free period when teachers are absent and no substitute is available.
- Now that it is possible to examine settlement agreements is there value in looking at these? Things to consider are cost and time spent to do this well versus value of the information retrieved. Historically we would be comparing different administrations over time, making comparisons difficult. Some lawyer groups suggest that focusing on the disparity of individuals' ability to get representation is more important.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

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.

VI. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, November 16, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High library – moved from November 9 due to a conflict with the District Master Plan Study Report Community Presentation.

Respectfully submitted by Ann Iandiorio, Secretary