



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]

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.

Respectfully submitted by Ann Iandiorio, Secretary