



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting March 8, 2017

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. Board member Chair Amanda Bailey, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Standing Committee Chair Blossom Davies, Secretary Ann Iandiorio, Special Education Director Pamela Smith, and seven other members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from November 16, 2017 and February 15, 2017 were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Updates from Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director

Response to questions about role of school principals in IEP meetings– reasons vary

1. Involved in issues of attendance/discipline
2. Attend at the request of parents/staff
3. Learn more about the students in their schools
4. Purpose of staff evaluation

The Special Education Director will send a memo to principals expressing parent concerns and have them added to the meeting invitations.

Updated procedures and forms from the Student Services office to date include the Team Meeting Summary Form, an expanded Autism form (Chapter 57), Age of Majority Paperwork (now requires two witnesses), the form to request observation by an outside agency, and written ESY procedures.

Translation services are readily available. They are subcontracted to the Language School International. The office is working on what documents need to be translated.

The Special Education Director is observing all district special education programs but given her direct oversight of two buildings this year and the CPR she has had limited time to see some programs.

There have been parent question about the use of a dyslexia diagnosis (does an MD need to diagnose?). If a student needs a Tier 1 intervention within MTSS and teachers need to screen is there an opportunity to add a formal assessment? The Special Education Director will contact outside resources to get information about training teachers to assess for dyslexia.

B. Parent Participation in Individualized Education Program Development

Issue of amount of time spent on updates from teachers and therapists discussed. This takes considerable time, leaving only time to discuss the service delivery grid with no parent involvement in discussion of goals, benchmarks, and accommodations. Parents have to wait for the new IEP to see and then respond to new goals and benchmarks.

Student Services will look at sending reports to parents in advance in order to truncate the

update part of the meeting. The new Team Meeting Summary Form may help expedite by keeping the team on task.

C. Special Education Legal Updates

165,000 IEPs in Massachusetts; 10,800 rejected in full or in part; 778 mediations (85% agreements); 23 full decisions at hearing (4 in which parent prevailed); 135 facilitated meetings and 66 unmet requests for facilitated meetings.

It is important for families to understand what they are consenting to in a settlement. Note considerable weight is given to experts, but not from MDs from the hospitals as they have limited ability to make educational recommendations and/or to observe placements. Text messages are subject to discovery in disputes.

D. Sarah Ward Executive Functioning & Resilience Presentation Summary

She presented to a full auditorium and was well received. The slides from the presentation are available online.

E. Speakers and Support Group Schedule

1. Next Support Group Meeting Saturday, April 8, from 1-3 p.m. at St. Matthews United Methodist Church, Acton – Reported that attendance is variable with new people joining. Some people are from out of district. Many families are dealing with a new diagnosis. The meetings would benefit from more publicity.
2. Basic Rights in Education Workshop Wednesday, May 3, from 7-8:45 p.m. in the Fowler School Library, Maynard –we are cosponsoring with Maynard and Sudbury.
3. Presentations about Mental Health & the IEP
 - PPAL (Parent Professional Advocacy League) resource for children’s mental health
 - Family Education Program next year to focus on resilience
 - Speaker suggestions include “Paper Tigers” screening and discussion (trauma-informed approaches to education)

IV. New Business

MTSS discussion – more services to be pushed-in based on student needs. Principals will be meeting with consultants about this process. It is easier to push-in OT than it is to push-in speech therapy. Concerns were raised about more transparency when repeated Tier II or Tier III interventions are required. Questions were raised about when parents are notified when students are being observed/evaluated/referred for different tiers or special education evaluation. Principals should be involved in the notification. Question about tiers for social/emotional and behavioral issues.

V. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

VI. Next Meeting

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

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