



## Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

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### **Business Meeting October 4, 2017**

#### **I. Call to Order**

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m. Chair Amanda Bailey, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Secretary Melissa Brown, Special Education Director Pam Smith, Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee liaison to the PAC Diane Baum, and ten other community members were present.

#### **II. Approval of Minutes**

Meeting minutes from September 13, 2017, were reviewed. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to amend the notes to clarify that the district contracts with a mobility orientation specialist. A motion was then made, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the amended notes.

#### **III. Organizational/Business Issues**

##### **A. Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director**

Preliminary reports indicate that a pilot coteaching effort at the high school with a special educator teaching in tandem with a general educator is going well. This practice benefits all students and promotes inclusion.

Student Services reminds parents to utilize the district communication map to prevent unnecessary escalation of issues and provide guidance for parents unsure of whom to contact regarding questions. The PAC will share the map with families.

The district is transitioning IEPs to an electronic format via PowerSchool. Which components of IEPs to make available to general education staff is still being considered. PowerSchool keeps a log of who accesses the system, therefore the previously discussed need for a sign-off policy for teachers to demonstrate that they have read the IEPs may not be required. Staff training on the new electronic system will occur later this fall. Behavior plans will continue to be sent home to parents and shared with teachers through the current process. The Special Education Director noted that the number of IEPs assigned to each educator varies by school and grade. The PAC shared that parents have had success preparing 'one-pagers' on their children transitioning to a new school/grade in order to ensure all staff will be familiar with key aspects of the education plan.

The district is working to better distinguish among English Language Learners who require supports with language acquisition and those who additionally have special education needs.

#### B. Coordinated Program Review (CPR)

The CPR is a state-mandated program review conducted every six years to monitor district compliance regarding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and special education programming, English Learner Education, and civil rights. The program review was very favorable. Two issues were highlighted regarding special education practices, one regarding the district's procedures for responding to a request for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) for students receiving free or reduced cost lunch and the need for clarifying language regarding manifestation determination hearing procedures. The full report is available on the Student Services site. The Special Education Director noted the state is in the process of changing the content and frequency of its CPR audits and reporting.

#### C. Review Key Spring 2017 Parent/Guardian Survey Findings

The shorter survey had the best response rate of PAC surveys to date and results represented 39% of students with IEPs. Most respondents continue to be satisfied with the special education services that their child(ren) receive. An outlier to this is Extended School Year services, with a quarter of parents responding to the ESY question disagreeing that their child was offered appropriate extended year programming if at risk of regression over the summer. This past summer, 205 in-district students qualified for ESY; 167 participated in some capacity. Future PAC surveys will explore why some families decline ESY services and why some partially attend. Specific questions to include in future surveys will be discussed at a future meeting.

The Special Education Director noted ESY eligibility is determined in part by regression, determined by progress reporting occurring after all breaks. The PAC added that a diagnosis placing a student at “significant risk of regression” is also a qualifier for ESY. Parents are encouraged to document regressions at home during and after breaks and note additional services their child is receiving independent of any school-based and/or ESY services provided.

#### D. Accessibility & Inclusion in the School and Community

The Acton-Boxborough Family Network (ABFN) is hosting a sensory-friendly Halloween party from 9:30-10 a.m. on Saturday, October 28, at RJ Grey Junior High before their larger annual Halloween festivities. The PAC has been invited to give a presentation on inclusion and accessibility to the ABFN board next month.

Starting at the secondary level, the district will be conducting an equity audit to explore student outcomes as a function of various socio-demographic variables, including disability status.

#### E. Outreach

With the exceptions of the high school and Douglas, PAC representatives attended at least one Back to School Night event at each school. The PAC continues to participate in

the monthly School Committee-sponsored joint PTO/PTSO/PTF chairs meeting. A PAC-sponsored coffee and tea hour will be held Monday, October 16, 9:30-10:30 a.m., location by RSVP. Parenting Support Hour will continue to be offered the first Sunday of the month from 2:30-4:30 p.m. in the Acton Memorial Library upstairs conference room.

**IV. New Business**

The homework policy was revisited, with both the Special Education Director and the PAC reiterating that there is a distinction between homework and accommodations in an IEP, such as previewing and reviewing material at home. Some students require multiple opportunities to generalize concepts. Parents continue to report misunderstandings with staff around homework for their children with IEPs. A homework policy forum with district leaders and principals will be held October 24.

The Director of Special Education shared that an electronic feedback survey will be sent to parents following an IEP meeting, replacing the paper survey previously sent with the IEP. Feedback will be aggregated at the school level.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

**VI. NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday, November 1, 2017, at 7:30 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High 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](http://www.abspedpac.org)) for information regarding upcoming events.*

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Brown, Secretary