



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting
December 6, 2017

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:47 p.m. Board Chair Amanda Bailey, Secretary Melissa Brown, Standing Committee Chair Blossom Davies, Special Education Director Pam Smith, School Committee Liaison to the PAC Maya Minkin, and seven other community members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from November 1, 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. Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director

Special education staff recently completed training on the new electronic IEP system, PowerSchool Special Education. The system went live on December 1, replacing the E-SPED program. PowerSchool Special Education is an online platform synchronized with PowerSchool, allowing staff to access relevant portions of a student's IEP. This system will record which user has opened each portion of the document, addressing PAC concerns about ensuring all those responsible for implementing IEPs are familiar with them. Parents and/or guardians will be able to read, review, and eventually electronically sign IEPs. The district hopes the system will facilitate effective communication among all team members. Special education staff have been encouraged to use the software to update current levels of performance and share draft goals and objectives with parents at least two business days prior to annual IEP meetings. Similarly, parents are encouraged to share their concerns with the team prior to the annual meeting. This electronic system will also lead to a faster turn-around for proposed IEPs by eliminating mail delays. Initial staff feedback has been very positive. Families with one or more students with an IEP interested in piloting and providing feedback on the new system should contact the Special Education Director.

The Special Education Director noted accommodations should address individual student needs, not listing what constitutes good teaching practices for all students. The PAC encourages parents to document any accommodation a student may need as a function of his or her disability.

The PAC asked about awareness regarding participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities. The PAC stressed 1) understanding students' rights regarding access to extracurricular activities; 2) communicating this information to all relevant parties; 3) determining responsibility for funding additional supports as needed; and 4) establishing a chain of escalation for concerns.

Community members discussed the importance of parents sharing resources and ideas. One parent expressed desire for an event featuring activities that have been successful for other students with disabilities. The Special Education Director noted financial assistance for supports may be available for qualifying families (see district site).

The discussion also included issues regarding access and inclusion with Community Education programming. There is need for more education regarding invisible disabilities and improved physical access.

Finally, the Special Education Director shared that administration is actively working to resolve equity issues dating to regionalization between the early childhood program sites.

B. Accessibility & Inclusion in the Schools and Community

Acton and Boxborough held special town meetings on December 4. Both towns voted overwhelmingly to fund the feasibility study for the Massachusetts School Building Authority project. The PAC submitted a letter to the editor published in *The Beacon* prior to the meeting outlining accessibility and civil rights issues. Future advocacy will be necessary to support overrides in both towns to fund the project. The PAC will provide feedback to the building committee as the project progresses and invites community members to share input.

A community member expressed interest in addressing the current needs of students with disabilities. The PAC stressed the importance of having necessary accommodations in place before students arrive in the fall. Accessibility at the Administration Building was noted, including the non-functioning automatic button on the front doors. The Special Education Director shared a wiring issue has prevented a timely resolution of this issue. A meeting attendee shared an experience highlighting issues with accessibility at the elementary level. There was a thoughtful discussion about the need for timely, flexible solutions that also align with ADA compliance standards.

The PAC encourages people to attend the monthly Acton Commission on Disabilities meeting.

C. Extended School Year (ESY) Eligibility Information

The PAC provided an informational handout on ESY and eligibility considerations.

D. PAC Participation on District Search Committees

The PAC is participating on the search committee for a new Merriam principal. Merriam parents are strongly encouraged to complete the online survey. The PAC is also participating on the search committee for a new superintendent.

E. Outreach

The monthly PAC coffee and tea hour is ongoing. Parenting Support Hour is the first Sunday of each month from 2:30-4 p.m. at the Acton Memorial Library.

The Friends of AB SpEd PAC 501(c)(3) is seeking new officers and event planners. The organization's main purpose is to raise funds for speakers and workshops. Volunteers are needed for Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Chair Nancy Sherburne is stepping down in June when her term ends. The time commitment is minimal; meetings are typically held quarterly and minutes are brief. Only an e-postcard is required for IRS filing. Please contact the PAC for more information about how to get involved.

F. Open Issues

A community member inquired about a student eating a potential allergen on a school bus. The transportation department does not allow students to eat or drink on buses.

A parent reported that the recent ARC transition (14+) conference was helpful. This conference is held every other year. Other transition workshops are available for those interested. The PAC will host a presentation on ABRSD transition resources and self-determination in lieu of the monthly business meeting on January 10 at 7:15 p.m. in the RJ Grey library.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

V. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, February 7, 2018, 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) for information regarding upcoming events.

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Brown, Secretary