



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting March 21, 2018

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m. PAC Board Chair Amanda Bailey, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Secretary Melissa Brown, Special Education Director Pam Smith, and three other community members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from December 6, 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

There were two different percentages of students with IEPs reported in the district budget binder. The discrepancy arose from the state's data, which is 15.6% as of October 1. Student Services reports 16.4% of A-B students currently have IEPs. The statewide percentage of Students with Disabilities is 17.7% as of October 1.

The Federation for Children with Special Needs has Basic Rights workshops available in languages other than English. PAC leadership is attending a webinar through Mass Advocates for Children about supporting immigrant parents through the special education process.

The PAC discussed kindergarten placements regarding preschool students with IEPs. Parents are encouraged to research the Least Restrictive Environment for their students, which may or may not be a half-day resource room/half-day general ed kindergarten placement. The PAC will follow up with Student Services and provide more parent education on this issue.

Families are also encouraged to have conversations with their teams regarding Extended School Year (ESY). Some families continue to report being told their child(ren) must regress over a break to qualify for ESY, but there are other conditions under which a child may qualify for ESY services, including risk of regression and issues with recoupment.

The School Committee policy subcommittee is working with Student Services on an updated and revised discipline policy for students with disabilities in response to corrective action dictated by the DESE Coordinated Program Review. The PAC has provided feedback to the policy subcommittee on language.

The PAC report on MCAS performance is pending, with initial findings suggesting 4th grade math and English growth percentiles are lower than expected for students with disabilities.

B. Superintendent Search Process & Outcome

The PAC was engaged throughout the entire superintendent search process and actively involved in interviewing and finalizing candidates as part of the superintendent search screening subcommittee. Peter Light (current Franklin Public Schools assistant superintendent) has been appointed as the new superintendent for ABRSD. The PAC also participated on the Merriam principal search committee. Julianna Schneider (current Merriam School assistant principal) has been appointed Merriam principal following Ed Kaufman's retirement at the end of this school year.

C. FY '19 Special Education Budget Items & Identified Programming Needs

There has been a reduction of three FTE special education assistants, the addition of a special educator at McCarthy-Towne, and the addition of a special educator/team chair at Conant. There are long-term plans to build programming for students who need intensive language-based supports and to offer components of the high school Occupational Development Program at the junior high. A programming continuum needs to be considered for current Pathways students when they reach junior high.

D. New District Section 504 Policy

The School Committee has been reviewing all policies as part of regionalization. The PAC has offered feedback on those policies pertaining to students with disabilities, including the new Section 504 policy (File: IHBA). The PAC notes the importance of this policy given the development of and potential confusion with the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP), general education accommodations available to all students. Students with documented disabilities requiring accommodations have additional protections and rights under the law.

E. Individualized Education Program Progress Reporting

IEP progress reports are to be issued concurrently with general education report cards per IDEA. Delays have been noted, particularly at the preschool, Blanchard, and Merriam. The PAC has asked for earlier progress reporting for the elementary schools that do not issue general education report cards. IEP teams face barriers in determining eligibility for ESY and developing goals for the next school year when reports are delayed. The Special Education Director noted that it can be challenging for a few office staff to package and mail so many reports at once, but they recognize this is an issue and are taking steps to remedy it. The new PowerSchool Special Education software has also been a source of document turnaround issues.

Additionally, parents are reporting missing information (vision statements, parent concerns, accommodations, etc.) in IEPs following the PowerSchool transition. Parents are strongly encouraged to review IEPs carefully to ensure all information is included.

F. Emergency Situation Preparation & Planning for Students with Disabilities

Emergency preparedness for students with disabilities is being looked at state-wide. Notably, the Medford SEPAC interviewed their district stakeholders to document needs and gaps in this area. The PAC asked Student Services about preparations in CASE classrooms, the degree of coordination within schools, and education of law enforcement regarding the locations and needs of our most vulnerable populations. Parents are encouraged to have conversations with their child's IEP team if they feel their child needs

differentiated instruction on drills. The administration is currently exploring solutions for the Admin Building front door, which is in unlocked during the school day in violation of district policy.

IV. New Business

The PAC attended sessions on bullying and regional PAC support (PAC-2-PAC and the Regional SEPAC Leadership group on Facebook) at the annual Federation for Children with Special Needs Visions of Community conference.

Parenting Support Hour will not convene in April. The moderators are seeking volunteers with younger and/or high-school-aged children who can speak to the experiences of parents with similarly-aged children. Many seeking support have children at transition ages (EI to preschool, preschool to kindergarten, etc.) or in crisis situations. Mental health and more specific support is available through other local organizations (NAMI).

The PAC reviewed its goals for the year, including increasing access and inclusion opportunities within the schools and across the community. Notably, the superintendent and Merriam principal searches took up a significant amount of time and more immediate action items always arise. Parents seeking individual support is at an all-time high; it would be helpful to have a set of resources to give people as a first step. Basic Rights and An IEP for My Child webinars from the Federation for Children with Special Needs have been useful. Staff have also asked for resources to provide families dealing with new diagnoses. The PAC will hold elections in June and strongly encourages greater involvement to increase organizational capacity.

The website was hacked and took seven hours to debug.

The PAC encourages everyone to vote in the upcoming local elections. There are three Acton seats open on the School Committee, including one contested seat for a one-year term due to a resignation. Candidate profiles will be published in *The Beacon*.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

VI. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, April 25, 2018, at 7:30 p.m. in the Parker Damon Building 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