



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting

Wednesday, Nov 20, 2013 at 7:30 pm

Agenda

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of Minutes
Review and approval of Oct. 2013 meeting minutes
- III. Organization/Business Issues
 - A. Integrated Preschool update
 - B. Extended year programming update
 - C. Parent sense of proposed transition from 3 tiered to 2 tiered bus system
 - D. AB SpEd PAC input to superintendent qualifications
 - E. Implications of K-12 regionalization for AB SpEd PAC
 - Programmatic/service changes
 - AB SpEd PAC merge with Boxborough SEPAC
 - Revision of governing By-Laws, website and Parent Handbook
 - F. Requesting district routinely share formative test results with parents through conferences and report cards
- IV. New Business – Other topics on people's minds
- V. Open Issues
 - A. MCAS – 4th and 7th grade ELA performance for students with disabilities is weak
 - B. Futures Education findings that our student to assistant ratios are high by peer standards
 - C. Concerns about the process for combining outside specialists' recommendations with district evaluations/recommendations and appropriately incorporating those recommendations into the IEP
 - D. Mandatory special education training/professional development for regular and special education staff – hiring dual certified staff
 - E. Enhanced summer school and after school/extracurricular programming
 - F. Increased use of technology in IEP development/revision process
- VI. Adjournment

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 current information regarding upcoming events.

AB SpEd PAC Feedback on Superintendent Search

From Focus Group Dec. 10, 2008 & PAC Officers

The AB SpEd PAC seeks a superintendent who is committed to inclusion, early and effective intervention, and the involvement of parents in the education of their children with special needs.

Special Education Specific Qualities & Qualifications

- Someone who views special education and regular education as part of the same whole and is committed to integrating these worlds more fully. This perspective would be evidenced by encouraging a closer collaboration between regular and special education staff and shared vision, authority and responsibility for student outcomes (for example, principals should be responsible for all students in their building and included in the special education process)
- Someone who will invest the same commitment, energy and pride in special education programs and the performance of special education students as they do in regular education students
- Someone committed to identifying students' needs and providing intensive interventions (regular and special education) as early as possible in a student's life to maximum developmental impact
- Someone with a demonstrated commitment to inclusion, quality in-district programming, and the desire to educate all students in their home community to the maximum extent possible
- Someone who believes that differentiated instruction is necessary for successful mainstreaming/inclusion and is committed to providing the support needed for its effective implementation. This support would be evident in the allocation and professional development of personnel and by providing educators the tools they need to be successful in the classroom
- Someone who is committed to providing regular education staff and special education staff with the professional development (specifically special education related) they need to successfully teach and fully include students with diverse learning styles/needs in general education classrooms
- Someone with a demonstrated ability to manage and measure the performance of special education programs who is committed to transparent tracking of student progress through curriculum based measurements (CBM)
- Someone who has the financial and educational background to look at special education budget allocations, critically review/assess them, and work with the Special Education Director to ensure district dollars are spent for maximum student impact/benefit

General Superintendent Qualities & Qualifications

- Someone who has vision and is an educational innovator
- Someone who has strong leadership and communication skills, encourages parent involvement in education, and can work effectively with diverse groups of individuals, including parents of special needs children

AB SpEd PAC Feedback on Superintendent Search (cont'd)

General Superintendent Qualities & Qualifications (cont'd)

- Someone with a demonstrated commitment to transparent communications between parents, teachers, administrators and school staff
- Someone who encourages parent involvement in education and believes it benefits both students and schools alike
- Someone with demonstrated commitment to streamlining bureaucratic processes, instituting financially efficient practices, and maximizing use of technology to minimize cost and time demands on staff
- Someone with demonstrated commitment to school safety who understands the distinction between bullying prevention/social skills programs and bullying incident management and reporting and recognizes the need for district wide programming, management and reporting

Interview Questions/Discussion Topics for Candidates

- Discuss an application of your philosophy of education and special education that involves teachers, administrators, principals and parents working together
- Describe a good communication model between parents and special education administrators
- Discuss how you hold yourself responsible for your model of parent – administrator interactions (how you gather information, measure it, etc.)
- Have School Committee members speak with the Special Education PAC Chair in each candidate's district to ascertain parent perception of candidate's special education knowledge and leadership and to determine the relationship between parents and administrators in that district as well as the relationship between regular education teachers and administrators – from a parent perspective
- Have School Committee members review and ask candidates to discuss their district's last DOE Coordinated Program Review
- Discuss areas of non-compliance and ask how the candidate would address/solve those areas of challenge/non-compliance



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting

October 9, 2013

I. Call to Order

Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:40 pm. The following AB SpEd PAC Board members attended the meeting: Nancy Sherburne, Bill Guthlein, Carolyn Sprague and Paul Murphy. Four other members also attended the meeting plus Pupil Services' Liaison, Julie Towell.

II. Approval of Minutes

Review and approve minutes – The meeting minutes from Sept. 2013 were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

- A. Revised contact list for AB SpED PAC & Friends Organizations – Nancy forgot to bring these with her to the meeting, so will distribute them at our next meeting.
- B. Open Meeting Law officer certificates for current school year - Nancy collected signed certificates from the AB SpEd PAC officers for 2013-14.
- C. MCAS meeting with Liza Huber & Deb Bookis – Nancy and Bill shared highlights from their meeting with Deb Bookis and Liza Huber.
 - Preliminary 2013 MCAS highlights – The three areas of primary concern revealed by Bill's analysis are 4th grade English Language Arts (ELA) student growth; 7th grade ELA student growth; and Douglas' special education student growth. In addition, Nancy shared that the proficiency gap is widening for students with special needs at the elementary and junior high levels instead of closing. The state has set a goal to close the proficiency gap for each group by 50% by 2017. Our district is not on target to reach that goal for special ed. students in elementary and junior high school.
 - Writing interventions – Deb is focused on improving writing across all grades this year. She has proposed multiple interventions including creating new rubrics for narrative, informational and argumentative writing; asking students to do on demand prompt writing 3 times/year; and having teachers create pre-assessment tools to use with formative assessments. The high school showed superb student growth this year by implementing some of these strategies.
 - Changing assessment environment – Common Core & PARCC – There is a lot of flux in standards right now as the district moves to adopt the common core standards. In addition, it is likely that the state will adopt the PARCC test in place of MCAS next year for English and math. The district is awaiting a decision by the state Department of Elementary

and Secondary Education. In the event that PARCC is adopted MCAS would still be administered for science each year. The PARCC requires a lot more hours of testing each year as well as testing in grades 3-11.

- Special education budget priorities – Liza Huber would like to increase the newly hired special education staff position from .4 to 1.0 FTE at Gates, build out the Autism Spectrum program at Blanchard, and build a continuum of services at Douglas.
- Curriculum budget priorities – Deb Bookis would like to hire a new K-6 ELA coordinator for the district to mirror the K-6 math coordinator that we have. This individual would provide research and training for staff as well as modeling of teaching techniques and enhancement of district curriculum.

IV. New Business

Danny's Place – Carolyn Sprague suggested that the PAC consider offering special programs/time for high school special education students at Danny's Place. She had spoken with the Director of the program about that possibility and he was interested in exploring it further. As the group discussed this idea some logistical concerns were raised particularly around staffing the events with parents and special education trained teachers. There would be liability issues to be considered. It was suggested that the high school already offers Saturday night programming for all students that has parents and staff volunteers in place. The current high school program often has a movie, arcade games, TVs with X-boxes, musical instruments in a sound proof room, pool table and concession stand. There was concern that we would be trying to reinvent the wheel with limited resources through Danny's Place. The suggestion was made that perhaps we should work with the staff running the program at the high school to enhance offerings for students with special needs within that already existing framework. We could survey parents and students to gather their feedback and ask parents if their children required extra support to participate. It was decided that Carolyn and Blossom would meet with the Director at Danny's Place to get his feedback on these options as well as suggestions for student programming for this age group.

V. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

VI. Next Meeting – November 13, 2013, 7:30 pm at the R. J. Grey Library.

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Sherburne, AB SpEd PAC Co-Chair