



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting
Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2010

Meeting Minutes

- I. Call to Order- Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:12pm. The following Board members attended the meeting: Nancy Sherburne, Bill Guthlein, Caroline Jarvis and Cynthia Overman. Also in attendance were Standing Committee Chair, Heather Stouch, and four other PAC members.
- II. Approval of Minutes
The June 9, 2010 minutes were reviewed and a motion was made to approve the minutes as written. That motion was seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.
- III. Organizational/Business Issues
 - A. Friends of AB SpEd PAC Direct Appeal Letter
We decided last spring to establish a separate Friends of AB SpEd PAC to raise funds to support the PAC's mission. By-Laws for Friends of AB SpEd PAC are being finalized now. Once they're completed we will file for 501(c)(3) status and send out a direct appeal letter, which has already been written. Liza Huber has agreed to copy and distribute the appeal letter to all special education families in the district on the organization's behalf. The Friends of AB SpEd PAC will be a private fundraising organization that is separate and distinct from the AB SpEd PAC.
 - B. Changes in Open Meeting Law
The town held an Open Meeting Law training session last week, which Nancy attended. As an advisory body to the School Committee the PAC has to adhere to Open Meeting law. Nancy distributed certification forms to all Board members present and emailed the District Attorney's Guide on Open Meeting Law to all Board members prior to the meeting. Recent changes in the Open Meeting Law affect a number of areas including:
 1. Deliberation - If you are on a Board, you cannot talk about any business before the Board outside of posted, public Board Meetings.
 2. Meeting Minutes - While you can distribute meeting minutes to participants by email, you cannot incorporate changes to the minutes until the Board has discussed them at a posted, public meeting, unless changes are simple grammatical corrections. Minutes must now include a reference to all documents used in the meeting and a copy of all documents referenced should be kept on file. In addition, the Secretary's draft minutes also need to be kept on file.

3. Meeting Notices - All meetings must be posted at Town Hall at least 48 hours prior to the meeting - not including holidays or weekends. Notices must be posted in an area to which the public has access 24/7. All agenda items that could be reasonably anticipated by the Board Chair must be included in the public meeting notice 48 hours prior to the meeting. If an item is not listed on the agenda prior to the meeting and could reasonably have been anticipated by the Chair, it cannot be discussed at that meeting.
4. There are significant penalties if you knowingly violate the law- \$1000 fine per incident. All Board members must sign a certification form and it must be on file with the town. If someone were to file an Open Meeting Law complaint, the Board would have ten days in which to respond by providing all information pertinent to the alleged violation.

C. Treasurer's Report - Caroline provided a handout entitled "Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council Treasurer's Report for the Period September 2009 through September 2010". During that time period the PAC earned \$1402 through fundraising, paid half of those funds back to the flower bulb company as part of the fundraiser, paid two speaker engagement fees, and received a check, which represented Intel's donation to our organization in compensation for the hours Karl contributed to the PAC as webmaster.

D. MCAS Performance of Special Education Students

In 2009 Conant Elementary and R. J. Grey Jr. High did not make AYP for the special education student subgroup. However, Dr. Price did a phenomenal job at Conant and that school did make AYP in 2010 for that subgroup of students. Unfortunately, the Special Education student group at the Jr. High has failed to make AYP for 4 consecutive years now. Last year the Jr. High got serious about addressing the underperformance of this subgroup. The school did an extensive evaluation and studied individual student performance, gaps in education and curriculum. A comprehensive analysis was done in mathematics by individual curriculum strand. As a result additional training was provided for special education teachers in Mathematics last year. This year McCarthy-Towne was designated as a first year "Needs Improvement" school for the special education subgroup, which means it is the second consecutive year that this subgroup has been unable to achieve AYP.

Bill Guthlein has done a preliminary analysis of the 2010 MCAS data for R. J. Grey and McCarthy-Towne. (Note: results posted this year represent last year's student performance) His analysis showed an improvement in math at the Jr. High for the special education population. The school was close to achieving AYP this year. He did a comparison of ten schools in the State who were designated as first year "Needs Improvement" schools the same year that R. J. Grey was. Of those 10 schools 3 no longer carried

any NCLB designation, 4 were designated as 2nd year “Needs Improvement” schools, and 3 were designated for “Corrective Action” like R. J. Grey. Bill noted that the district has increased its use of the MCAS-Alt test, which translates into higher CPI scores without necessarily improving student learning. The MCAS-Alt Test is intended for students who have significant cognitive challenges or are otherwise unable to access the standard MCAS test.

E. IEP Technology Task Force Outcomes

Nancy explained that Pupil Services is piloting a new program this year in which special educators will create draft IEPs for some families with input from all team members. These drafts will be shared with all Team members prior to the Team meeting in an effort to expedite the IEP Development process and allow Teams to complete a thorough discussion of the entire IEP during the allotted meeting time. Some concerns were voiced regarding the potential for district personnel to abuse the draft process by creating documents without parent input thus circumventing the Team process altogether. The point was made that any process can be abused, including our current one in which parts of the IEP are sometimes completed by district staff following the IEP meeting outside of the Team process.

F. There was discussion on which movie to show at our first Family Movie Night on Oct. 1st. Multiple titles were discussed, but ultimately we settled on “The Incredibles” by Disney.

G. PAC Follow-up Survey

Nancy shared that the PAC will be creating a task force to develop a follow-up survey to the comprehensive parent survey we issued in 2008. The thought at this time is to create a survey which represents a smaller subset of the original questions asked. She invited anyone interested in participating on this task force to contact her so they could be included in the activity. To date Sasha Stavsky, Valerie Ryan, Nancy Sherburne and Pat Bickimer have expressed interest in participating on this subcommittee.

H. Change in Board Meeting Location

All future Board Meetings will be held in the Superintendent’s Conference Room located across from the Main Office in the Jr. High School.

I. Upcoming Events

- Family Movie Night is October 1st
- Basic Rights Workshop is October 20th- no location at this time
- Parent Workshop on October 29th at Congregation Beth Elohim

IV. New Business

1. The LA Times got SGP scores by teacher and published them (under the FOI Act), which created a good deal of public debate. The U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, went on the record in support of parents having access to teacher performance data, while Teachers' Unions generally opposed the idea.
2. Nancy Sherburne addressed this issue privately with Superintendent Steve Mills who supports including teacher performance data in annual teacher evaluation. Currently teachers' compensation is based on years of experience and educational course work, not on teaching effectiveness. Also, apparently the district does not always evaluate teachers on an annual basis at this time.

- V. Adjournment - A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. That motion was Seconded and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10pm.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Overman, Co-Secretary