



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Board Meeting

Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2011

MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. The following Board members attended the meeting: Bill Guthlein, Nancy Sherburne, Caroline Jarvis and Sasha Stavsky. Also in attendance was Pupil Services representative Julie Towell.
- II. Approval of Minutes
The October 13, 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. Treasurer's Report – Sasha shared the Treasurer's report. Recent account activity included a \$40 MA filing fee for the Friends of AB SpEd PAC Articles of Incorporation. The AB SpEd PAC's account balance at the time of the meeting was \$2017.78. The balance in the new Friends of AB SpEd PAC account was \$385 as a result of donations from our recent direct appeal campaign. Total PAC funds available are \$2402.78.
 - B. Open Meeting Law Certification – Nancy requested a signed OML certification form from each officer attending the meeting who hadn't previously submitted one.
 - C. School Committee/Pupil Services Updates:
 - i. The School Committee's Joint Budget meeting with the Finance Committee – Budget outlook is still uncertain. It is unclear whether or not the house and senate will support the Governor's proposed budget or reduce Ch. 70 and other community aid. Finance Committee members were lobbying for a return of all FY '11 school budget capacity to town reserves and E&D. Dr. Mill's was proposing spending some of those available funds on real needs that exist in the school system such as textbooks, technology and staff. The district doesn't have a regular schedule for replacing textbooks and some are 20 years or more out of date at this time.
 - ii. Possible State Changes Regarding Teacher Compensation – There is discussion at the state level right now regarding whether or not teacher performance/student outcomes should be part of annual teacher evaluations and compensation. The district expects to hear more about this in the coming months.

- iii. Change in McCarthy-Towne MCAS Status – Following a successful petition from the school district the DESE changed McCarthy-Towne’s MCAS status from “Needs Improvement” to “No Status.”
 - iv. Summer Programming – Julie said she was actively working on it and hoped to have a date for a meeting with Liza Huber, Nancy Sherburne, Bill Guthlein and Erin Bettez scheduled within the week.
- D. PAC Follow-up Survey Input– Nancy asked if anyone had any additional input they would like to propose to the 2011 PAC Parent survey. She shared feedback from Heather Stouch regarding Question #11. Heather recommended removing the 5-10 day reference since that concept was already covered in Question #10, which made good sense. Julie recommended adding language to the survey invitation that let families know they could request a translation if English wasn’t their primary language. She offered to provide a statement we could include that was translated into multiple languages. Bill suggested adding a question about how much families spend on outside services to complement what their children receive from the district. Because of the length of the survey already it was decided not to do that at this time. Bill also suggested adding a question about pullout services being scheduled at times during the school day to minimize the loss of academic time for students in the regular classroom, which was included.
- E. MCAS Analysis – Nancy shared copies of the two final MCAS Analyses that Bill created – one for R.J. Grey and the other for McCarthy-Towne. Bill explained that at R. J. Grey in 2009 students experienced a significant drop in math SGP scores. In 2010 there was a 20-point drop in English SGP. While all students experienced this growth slump the drop in special education student performance was much more dramatic, which is unusual since the state SGP average in 6th and 8th grade is trending upwards. He also explained that at McCarthy-Towne student SGP performance in English Language Arts has materially lagged the Acton district average for the last 3 years and fallen behind the state average for the last 2 years. Special education student SGP in Mathematics is more than 20 points below the Acton district average (at 31.5) and 10 points below the state average. Julie shared a memo from Liza Huber regarding the PAC’s proposed Parent Survey and the MCAS interventions the district had put in place this year to address special education student performance at R. J. Grey.
- F. Parent Handbook Status – Nancy shared that we’re making good progress on the Parent Handbook. All but 3 or 4 sections are complete at this time. Nancy, Heather and Steve are continuing to work on the remaining sections. She said that the PAC will distribute the handbook this year and include as much of the content as we’re able to complete prior to publication. Any remaining sections will be finished at a later time and distributed as an update to the original release.

- IV. New Business –
- i. Special education questions for School Committee Candidates – Bill shared the 3 questions he was proposing we ask the School Committee candidates this year and asked for input on those questions. Question #1 asked candidates what factors they would consider when deciding what initiatives to fund, including textbooks, professional development, technology and new staff positions. Caroline suggested that in regards to textbook purchases we ask whether or not they would support the purchase of some number of universally designed/adaptive curriculum textbooks to allow students of all abilities to better access the general education curriculum. This was considered a good addition. Question #2 asked candidates if they supported establishing academic growth goals and reviewing achievement of those goals using SGP and other available assessment tools at the Administration and School Committee level. There was some discussion about the PISA study regarding Finland and South Korea. Question #3 asked candidates if they would support an initiative to expand the teaching hours of special education teachers as necessary to minimize “pullout” time. Caroline suggested that we might want to expand this question to include more joint teacher planning time including universal design to reduce the amount of “pullout” time necessary for students. It was agreed this would be a good addition.
 - ii. Paul Murphy shared that he was running for School Committee and asked what he could do for the PAC as a member of that board. Some of the priorities mentioned included hiring more dual certified staff, mandatory special education training for all teachers, more child-focused educational decision making at the SC level, preparing students for college and/or post school life, growing each child to their full potential, and reducing class sizes.
- V. Adjournment – A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. That motion was seconded and unanimously approved.
- VI. Next Meeting – Our Annual Meeting & Election of Officers on Wednesday, June 8, 2011 at 7:00 pm in the R. J. Grey Library.

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Sherburne