



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Annual Meeting and Election of Officers Wednesday June 8, 2011

MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:16 pm. The following Board members attended the meeting: Bill Guthlein, Nancy Sherburne, Caroline Jarvis, Steve Lowe, Sasha Stavsky, and Valerie Ryan. Two other PAC members and school committee member Paul Murphy were also in attendance.
- II. Approval of May Minutes
The minutes for our May 11, 2011 meeting were reviewed and a motion was made to approve them as written. That motion was seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.
- III. Organizational/Business Issues
 - A. Speakers and Presentation Topics - Nancy asked for suggestions for speakers and speaker topics for the 2011-2012 school year. The following suggestions were made:
 1. Advocacy classes
 2. Health care
 - a. Assessments including behavioral health
 - b. State benefits including the new law pertaining to autism diagnoses
 - c. Mental health and/or body image with focus on special needs (the high school conducts an annual depression forum)
 - Carolyn Imperato (school psychologist) or a speaker from McLean hospital was suggested.
 - B. Discussion of PAC Goals for the 2011-2012 School Year. Three major goal areas were discussed – MCAS analyses; Survey Analysis and Community Outreach and Public Relations. Goals were discussed as follows:
 1. Bill will conduct an analysis of the district's spring 2011 MCAS test results for the special education population and create a report summarizing findings.
 2. Bill will analyze the results of the survey conducted in June 2011. The analysis will include a comparison of 2011 question responses to the parent responses received in our earlier 2008 parent survey;

reanalysis of the autism parent responses in comparison to the specific learning disability population; general summary of the results. Nancy shared that there have been 107 responses since the survey was opened, which is a little higher than the 2008 response rate. She pointed out that outcomes from the last survey included focus groups held with parents and Pupil Services staff to discuss areas of parent concern and recommendations for program enhancement. One parent forum topic that is currently under discussion is modifying the summer program to either include an opportunity for children on the spectrum to practice social skills with typically developing peers in the afternoon or create an integrated extended year model of service delivery.

3. Increasing outreach and PR
 - a. Updating and reorganizing the PAC website in order to make more information available at the top level. Nancy and Karl will lead this effort. It was suggested that we consider tapping into high school students' community service hours to support our website redesign. Students could reformat what we already have and leave placeholders while new content is being developed.
 - Adding a list of translators was suggested
 - Adding a useful feature that users would return to regularly – e.g. an event calendar was also suggested.
 - b. Developing a presence through articles or a regular column published in *The Beacon* was suggested.
 - c. The idea of including flyers in IEP Meeting mailings in order to reach all parents was suggested.
 - d. Coordinating with Mass PAC to promote our PAC
 - e. Public access TV – e.g. speakers who will agree to being recorded and/or interviews with administration/panel discussions once a month or sponsor a public service announcement.
 - f. Other suggestions: Determining the usefulness of developing flyers on specific disabilities for parents and/or a monthly newsletter on varied special education topics

- IV. Election of Officers –Nancy stated that most of the current officers will run again and asked if there was anyone present who would also like to run. She stated that the broader community had been solicited. No other members announced an intention to run. Nancy listed the slate of officers running for re-election:

Co-Chairs: Bill Guthlein and Nancy Sherburne
Secretaries – Cynthia Overman and Valerie Ryan
Treasurer – Caroline Jarvis
Past PAC Chair – Steve Lowe

Sasha made a motion to reinstate the current slate of officers as listed above and that motion was seconded. A vote was taken and all were in favor of the slate of officers proposed; there were no objections or abstentions and the slate of officers was unanimously approved.

- V. Additional Comments Before Closing:
- A. Issues to Follow: Usefulness of SGP measure from MCAS testing and the PAC's intention to continue to promote the use of SGP. There was interest in asking Deb Bookis which formative assessments are being used at each grade in each school – particularly for grades K-2 since there is no MCAS data available then. Nancy shared a handout about the RAVO reading program, which the district recently purchased for elementary students. And members discussed the value of purchasing universally designed textbooks to support greater differentiated instruction in the classroom.
 - B. A member present reminded the group that the Acton Commission on Disabilities would be grateful for information on public access issues with regard to physical handicaps. The member also mentioned that it was the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and that an event would be held. Nancy suggested sending her the information so she could let members know.
 - C. Bill mentioned some opportunities to influence decisions regarding the district budget. He suggested that the School Committee and Administration could increase funding and that Acton spends less per student than many other districts. He also pointed out that the Connections program prevents out-of-district placements at the Junior High level. Bill mentioned that Superintendent Mills could be encouraged by the PAC to use circuit breaker funds for a similar High School program. He also noted that the district could increase spending on textbooks and professional development in addition to working toward reducing the high student to teacher ratio. Bill suggested we use our clout to generate momentum for higher spending. Nancy suggested that there was a need to provide a presence at financial committee meetings. Steve and Julie mentioned reinvigorating community pride in the district's role in special education – via special education promotions (e.g. past promotion on access to the arboretum and film capturing what special education children do for others shown at recent ODP breakfast) might help build community support for our endeavors.
- VI. Adjournment – A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. That motion was seconded and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 pm.

Next Meeting – AB SpEd PAC Board Meeting September 13th at 7:30 pm in the Junior High Library.

Respectfully submitted by Valerie Ryan, Secretary.