



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 shared that in recent years the district has really focused on reading interventions and professional development for staff. This year the focus is on improving writing across all grades. The district is exploring and providing professional development for staff in new writing techniques such as SRSD and WAVD. In addition, Deb 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 piloting the PARCC assessment this year in certain grades and classes selected by the state. The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will make a decision about whether or not to adopt the PARCC assessment moving forward. 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. The PARCC assessment is more focused on critical thinking skills than the MCAS.

- 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.
- All in all it was a great meeting. There was valuable information shared and we all seem to be working on the same page.

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