



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting

Nov. 20, 2013

- I. Call to Order

Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. The following AB SpEd PAC Board members attended the meeting: Nancy Sherburne, Carolyn Sprague and Paul Murphy. Eight other members also attended the meeting.
- II. Approval of Minutes

Review and approve minutes – The meeting minutes from Oct. 9, 2013 were reviewed. A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes as written with the addition of three bullet points to Section III. C added by Carolyn Sprague (see attached notes). The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
- III. Organizational/Business Issues
 - A. Integrated Preschool Update – Nancy reported there are changes in the works for the Integrated Preschool as a result of regionalization. Negotiations are underway for the gradual integration of the two preschool programs in Acton and Boxborough. They will be combined and consolidated at the Blanchard location over a two-year period, with the merger completed by fall of 2016. Some benefits to families are that Blanchard is a newer facility than the Administration building with more space and a larger, safer playground. The move would allow nursing staff to be housed on site for the preschool program, which is currently not the case in Acton. It would also allow class sizes to be reduced. While people tend to perceive Blanchard as far away from Acton, it's only four miles down the road. There are multiple steps to the proposed merger, one of which is joint preschool registration. The future capacity of the combined preschool at Blanchard is unknown at present. Currently Acton has two full day preschool classes (two each in the morning and the afternoon with sixteen children in each class). Typically the classes are comprised of 50/50 special needs and typical children. Boxborough has two full-day preschool classes of ten students with integrated enrollment – typically including one or two special needs students per class.
 - B. Extended Year Programming Update - Blanchard and Acton currently have two separate programs with different service models and program durations. Boxborough's extended year program is six weeks long, and uses a tutorial model with low ratios (1:1 or 1:2) in the afternoon. This past year Boxborough began offering integrated social skills opportunities through the town's Flerra Camp program, which will be relocated to Blanchard so programming can be held even when it rains. Acton's extended year program is four weeks long and uses a classroom model

with larger groups of students. Nancy expects normalization of services over time; however, Liza Huber has assured parents that this coming year both models of service will be available to children in both towns based on the recommendations of each child's IEP Team.

- C. Parent Sense of Proposed Transition from 3 Tiered to 2 Tiered Bus System – The district is considering a change from a 3-tiered bus schedule to a 2-tiered one, which would eliminate the alternating years of early and late starts for the different elementary schools. The three-tiered system is difficult for working families to accommodate when they have children attending multiple schools and/or need to reschedule their own work hours to parallel their child's school hours. ***All of the parents present strongly and unanimously support having all elementary schools start at the same time.*** The alternating early and late start times each year are universally disliked. The proposal to move to a two-tiered bus schedule has been on the table for a long time in Acton because of the increased cost for additional buses and concerns related to traffic congestion in local neighborhoods as well as on the school campus. Regionalization is expected to provide greater transportation reimbursement from the state as well as provide for the reallocation of some buses from Boxborough. The two schedule tiers being discussed are 1) high school and junior high school bus schedule and 2) elementary school bus schedule.
- D. AB SpEd PAC Input to Superintendent Qualifications – The AB SpEd PAC put together a list of qualifications for the 2008 Superintendent search process, which Nancy shared with the group. As a group we reviewed that list of qualifications and updated it for the current Superintendent search. Nancy will update the document per parent feedback and share it with the School Committee's Superintendent Search subcommittee so that special education student and family needs will be considered/reflected in the current selection process.
- E. Implications of K-12 Regionalization for AB SpEd PAC – The Boxborough SpEd PAC was part of the Acton-Boxborough SpEd PAC seven years ago when Nancy Sherburne and Paul Clough reinvigorated the AB SpEd PAC. However, there was a group of parents in Boxborough who felt there were issues unique to Blanchard that they'd like to focus on. Consequently, those parents chose to create a separate Boxborough SpEd PAC. However, for the last few years that organization has only existed in the form of a parent contact liaison and email distribution list – it has not met regularly during that time. Each school district is allowed/required to have its own SpEd PAC. However, as a result of K-12 regionalization we will be one united school district and will need to merge our two separate SpEd PACs.
- Programmatic/Service Changes – See the discussion above about preschool and extended year service changes.
 - AB SpEd PAC Merge with Boxborough SEPAC – Multiple Boxborough parents and past PAC Chairs attended this meeting to provide input to the process. Since the Boxborough PAC is essentially defunct at this time the Boxborough parents present suggested that the AB SpEd PAC subsume their organization. However, Nancy Sherburne

really wanted the merging of these two organizations to be a collaboration to ensure that Boxborough's family and student needs were fully represented in the AB organization.

- Revision of Governing By-Laws – Our AB SpEd PAC By-Laws will need to be revised to reflect the merging of our two districts. Nancy Settle-Murphy from the Boxborough SpEd PAC will share their most recent By-Laws and Parent Handbook with Nancy Sherburne, so that we can merge the documents. We should plan to have a merged set of By-Laws in place prior to the districts officially merging on July 1, 2014.
- F. Requesting district routinely share formative test results with parents through conferences and report cards – Nancy and Bill recently met with Boxborough Superintendent, Curt Bates to discuss how the results of formative assessments are shared with parents in that school district. He said that parents routinely receive formative test results for their children via student report cards and parent-teacher conferences. Such formative assessments as AMC, BASC, GMADE and DIBELS are used and routinely shared with families. Results from these tests enhance the information parents receive throughout the year and inform teacher instruction as well. This type of feedback greatly enhances the MCAS results families receive. We would like to encourage Acton to share this same type of information routinely with families across the district.

IV. New Business

Danny's Place – Danny's Place is in flux right now. Its lease is up for renewal at the end of the year and there is some tension between Danny's Place and the school district around perceived competition with school programs and restrictions on facility use. The SpEd PAC decided to postpone consideration of holding events at Danny's Place for older SpED students until the future location and format of Danny's Place are resolved.

Extracurricular Programming – There was group discussion about the continued desire for more weekend and afternoon classes/activities where kids with special needs can connect with other kids socially.

Resending Membership Invitation – A suggestion was made to ask Pupil Services to resend our AB SpEd PAC membership letter to all parents.

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

VI. Next Meeting – Dec. 11, 2013, 7:30 pm at the R. J. Grey Library.

Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Sprague, Secretary