



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting May 16, 2018

I. Call to Order

Amanda Bailey called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m. Chair Amanda Bailey, Past PAC Chair Bill Guthlein, Secretary Melissa Brown, Director of Special Education Pam Smith, and five other community members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from April 25, 2018, were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Monthly Meeting with Special Education Director

The Director of Special Education will provide an update with other department administrators on special education programming in the district on June 13 at 7 p.m. in the RJ Grey library. The SEPAC Annual Meeting will immediately follow at 7:30 p.m.

Families are encouraged to complete the IEP survey from DESE to share how technology platforms have impacted their experiences and to offer suggestions for how best to utilize these technologies in the future.

A number of families have noted challenges in getting evaluations and appropriate interventions for their child(ren) around Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs), particularly those identified privately as having or suspected to have dyslexia. Different approaches to evaluation and intervention for SLDs is noted across elementary schools. The Director of Special Education discussed district plans to develop a language-based learning program and clarified that reading specialist supports are part of the general education curriculum and are available to all students.

There have been several staffing changes, including the retirement of special educators from Douglas, Conant, and Merriam. A new special educator for Merriam has been hired. Additionally, an interim Educational Team Leader supporting Merriam and McCarthy-Towne has been hired through the end of the school year, with the permanent position recently posted. A special educator from the resource program at McT will transition to a Learning Center, and a new special educator for the resource program at McT has been hired. The Director of Special Education reviewed the hiring process for special educators, which now includes more oversight from the special education administration. Special education administrators meet with families of students who have IEPs moving into the district to facilitate successful placements.

The importance of professional development was also discussed in response to a question from a community member about whether each elementary school has staff that can support students with ASD. Both general education staff and special education staff are provided opportunities for additional education and training in supporting students with special education needs.

STEP (Student Transition Education Program) at RJ Grey will begin next year. Students will focus on academic and life skills, with opportunities for inclusion in general education settings. The district has hired a special educator for this program and is also consulting with the 3-21 Foundation to implement best practices.

The PACE (Practical Academics and Community Education) Program will also begin next year, targeting students who have earned their certificate of attendance or diploma and remain in the district to work toward additional goals. The program will emphasize life skills, including job training with multiple local businesses. ABRHS transition coordinator Kate Sullivan will lead this program.

B. Brainstorming PAC Goals and Priorities 2018-2019

Suggestions for areas of focus for the next school year include dyslexia. Specific aims would include supporting the eventual development of a language-based learning program, sponsoring speakers, and parent education. Other ideas include identifying best practices in developing IEPs for students with emotional support/mental health needs, developing strategies for integrating executive functioning skills training within the K-12 curriculums, and bullying education and prevention. The SEPAC hopes to partner with neighboring PACs and the district to sponsor workshops. Specific outputs include a summary document of MCAS performance among students with disabilities and findings from surveys targeting specific sub-populations as needed. Increasing parent engagement and facilitating more diverse parent representation were also suggested as goals.

C. Discussion and Vote on Amending Bylaws—Organization Name Change, Updated Language

The arguments for (“SpEd” is pejorative) and against (time and money; 501(c)(3) implications) changing the name of the organization were revisited. Procedural issues related to changing the organization name and the organizational by-laws were discussed.

A motion was made and seconded to change the organization name to Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council (AB SEPAC). All voted in favor of the name change, with one abstaining. Proposed edits to the bylaws were then reviewed, and a motion was made and seconded to approve the proposed changes. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Description of PAC Officer Positions for Election June 13

The SEPAC is seeking officers for the 2018-2019 school year. Interested parties should review the position descriptions in the by-laws or contact the Chair for more information.

E. Local Recreation Workshop Information

The Chair provided an update from a workshop by Certified Recreation Therapy Specialists from Access Rec Boston. Recreation entails more than sports and physical activities, including games, crafts, etc. Families are encouraged to be transparent about their children’s needs in order to access recreation. Oftentimes these accommodations benefit everyone. Fees cannot increase for our families as a result of necessary accommodations and some families have found recreation departments will pro-rate for partial participation. Families are also encouraged to teach children the rules of games, use specific language when describing the activity (e.g., shooting hoops is not playing

basketball), and to give every activity a two-week trial before deciding whether to discontinue. Recreation is a related service under IDEA.

IV. New Business

The door of the Admin Building is still unlocked during the day. There have been emails from several community members to the school committee about the issue. The district is in the process of reconfiguring office spaces and security plans will be updated in the fall.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

VI. Annual Meeting & Elections

Wednesday, June 13, 2018, at 7:30 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High Library

All AB SEPAC meetings are open to the public. We encourage parents of children with special needs and others interested in special education to attend. Please check our website (www.abspedpac.org) for information regarding upcoming events.

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Brown, Secretary