

Grafton Special Education Parent Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes for September 26th, 2019

Topics Discussed:

Discussion with Special Education Administrator

Bob Wall, Special Education Administrator, went to Touchstone Community School and we discussed proportionate sharing and "who qualifies for FAPE."

SEPAC asked why the Parent's Notice of Procedural Safeguards was not sent out at the beginning of the school year as it has in previous years. Mr. Wall stated the link was embedded in a list of multiple links sent to parents in documentation sent home the first week of school. Mr. Wall stated the cost of paper and "there were better uses of his time" as the reasons he chose not to send home hard copies. He stated the special education office was short staffed and the document must be sent out to over 600 students. SEPAC offered to coordinate volunteers to help assemble the packets. Mr. Wall reiterated that he feels a digital copy will suffice. SEPAC stated that if that is the case, a digital communication should be explicitly sent to all parents regarding this subject as the method that was employed lends itself to obscurity. SEPAC asked if a digital only transmission is lawful. Mr. Wall stated that he would follow-up with an answer. SEPAC stated that this is one of the most important communications to go out each year and should be provided in the most accessible way possible.

SEPAC raised a concern that N1 meeting summaries continue to be sent home saying "data was used" rather than citing specific data to justify the proposal. The lack of specific data and "cogent explanation" as per the Endrew case does not meet the legal standard for prior written notice.

Additionally, a concern was raised regarding new "Ground Rules" that have been implemented to govern IEP team meetings. These ground rules are only being sent to some parents and are being embedded into meeting agendas instead of being provided as a stand-alone document. Not all parents are being provided meeting agendas or even meeting invitations. One parent mentioned that they had received a subject line only e-mail from a team chair that proposed an IEP team meeting that would convene at the same time their children would normally be boarding the bus. Mr. Wall stated that he not sure the district is legally required to provide meeting agendas. Another concern raised was that the ground rules require parents to agree to place topics of disagreement into a "parking lot" to be discussed at a later meeting. SEPAC stated that this is considering tabling and is a violation of procedural safeguards. SEPAC stated tabling allows a district to infinitely delay the provision of prior written notice of the acceptance or refusal of a proposal. SEPAC stated that the new IEP team meeting ground rules in combination with obscure communication of the Parent's Notice of Procedural Safeguards seem to be intended to curtail the ability of parents to advocate for their students and make informed decisions. Mr. Wall stated that the district would continue to use the ground rules but agreed to remove the "parking lot" provision. Mr. Wall also stated he would get back to SEPAC about team meeting agendas. SEPAC advised that meeting agendas that include parent input should be a standard practice for all IEP team meetings. SEPAC also advised that meeting agendas should be specific and not general.

SEPAC requested clarification regarding the re-designation of Behavior Learning Assistant (BLA) and Instructional Assistant (IA) to Paraprofessional. Given the diversity and varied complexity of work, who will provide training and supervision to these staff members? In light of these changes, how will parents be informed of the changes and what changes will be needed to the IEP documents to ensure there is no

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change to service delivery. Mr. Wall stated there are presently "union issues" and he would get back to SEPAC with an answer. SEPAC agreed to send a follow-up e-mail to reiterate the questions asked during the meeting.

SEPAC raised a concern that more staff need to be CALM certified and more trainers are needed to facilitate this training.

SEPAC raised a concern about reading scores and reading curriculum including the dyslexia legislation and how it is being satisfied. Mr. Wall reported that MCAS scores are "good". SEPAC raised a concern that certain categories of students are not making effective progress. Mr. Wall stated that Mr. Cummings, Ms. Calo, and Ms. Rice are looking at patterns in the data to see what is significant and what is noise. SEPAC stated that at least three years' worth of data needs to be analyzed to identify a trend. SEPAC also raised a concern that more training is needed for faculty and staff citing the "Fake Readers v. Real Readers" worksheet that was given to students in the fall. Ms. Calo said it was provided by "an old reading specialist that no longer works for the district" and sent a directive to discontinue the use of this worksheet. SEPAC stated that the worksheet exposes a gap in the Child Find process and would like to further discuss this topic with the School Committee. The worksheet attributes behaviors to "fake readers" that are red flags for multiple disability categories. The fact that this was not obvious to the multiple educators across the district using the worksheet is an indication that there are serious deficits in teacher training regarding Child Find. The worksheet is discriminatory and shames students with disabilities of all reading levels who may exhibit these behaviors. SEPAC requested the curriculum be audited to remove any similar material. Mr. Wall stated that Fountas and Pinnell reading program would be used moving forward. Mr. Wall stated he would get back to SEPAC regarding the content of the reading curriculum.

We discussed the need to have a shared understanding regarding progress monitoring.

SEPAC raised a concern that the aggregate number of service hours in the service the service delivery grid of all IEPs should not exceed the number service man/hours available. It has been reported to SEPAC that students who have Reading Specialist hours in their IEP have not received services from a reading specialist. Mr. Wall replied that the grid will often say "Reading Specialist or Special Education Teacher". SEPAC asked how the determination is made whether the student will be served by the Reading Specialist or Special Education Teacher in these circumstances. SEPAC also asked the service hours be audited to see if they are oversubscribed. Mr. Wall stated that he would be unable to fulfill that request because he does not have the time required. Mr. Wall stated it is the principal's responsibility to ensure staff coverage. SEPAC offered to wait three months for an answer. Mr. Wall stated he would get back to SEPAC with an answer.

SEPAC requested a copy of the SWCEC Paraprofessional Report and the Crossroads report of the Life Skills Program at Grafton High School.

Resource Packet

SEPAC stated that the previous Special Education Administrator agreed to facilitate the distribution of a resource packet for parents (generated by SEPAC) to be enclosed with evaluation consent forms and distributed at IEP team meetings as well as other logical times. Subject was tabled to future meeting.

SPAN Parent Clinic

Special Needs Advocacy Network (SPAN) offered to do a free parent IEP clinic. Potential times, dates, and locations were discussed. Methods of publicity were discussed.

School Committee Liaison

Continued discussion of outstanding request for a SEPAC Liaison from the School Committee. Requested that person be experienced in matters of special education and an experienced school committee member.

Everyday Heroes

Leadership for Everyday Heroes has not been selected at this time. Discussed changes to criteria and who may submit a nomination. Discussed refocusing to parent centered ceremony. Tabled to future meeting.

Child Find

Discussed developing a survey to go out to teachers about Child Find. Are there barriers to their professional capacity? Do teachers understand the eligibility flow chart? What training have they received? Who provides the training?

Discussed having related service providers visit each classroom to aid in early identification.

Dyslexia Legislation

Is there a strategic plan to implement / comply with the new Dyslexia legislation? Request a review of the current curriculum.

School Committee Presentation

Sarah will make a worksheet of talking points for the School Committee Presentation.

Community Outreach

Discussed various ideas to facilitate inclusion in school and community events such as Oktoberfest and Fun Fair.