

**SEPAC Board/Needham SPED Administrator Meeting**

Tuesday, October 13, 2009

12:30 pm

**In Attendance:**

Maureen Callahan

Sandy Cisternelli

Valerie Flynn

Cathy Heller

Mary Lammi

Kori Rogers

De Springer

Tee Stock

**Updates/Announcements --Valerie**

Valerie asked to add Updates/Announcements to our regular agenda as a way to capture things that usually get squeezed in at the end when we don't have time to discuss.

Tee distributed an updated contact list of the School SEPAC liaisons.

Valerie made two announcements:

1. All students with IEPs at Pollard and High Rock (including those who did well on the MCAS) and the Special Education Teachers have software licenses for Study Island, a computer tutoring program for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. Study Island has measurable programs built in. Special Education teachers are being trained to implement Study Island.
2. The Special Education staff is reviewing MCAS tutoring programs and will select one to use as part of an MCAS after-school tutoring program for students with IEPs

Discussion re MCAS scoring followed. Cathy explained that at the High School level 220 or above is considered passing. However, students receiving scores of 220-238 must have an improvement plan in place.

Tee reminded everyone that the school liaisons will be invited to our November 10<sup>th</sup> board meeting, and asked Mary to extend an invitation to Preschool Director, Diane Dunham.

Sandy asked for an update on the Extended School Year (ESY) Program. Maureen noted that last year there was a last-minute change to the schedule that was difficult for parents.

Mary responded that the administrative staff is reviewing the program now in order to give timely information to parents and teaching staff. Areas being reviewed include: the process used to identify students who qualify for summer services; program content, and; the tutoring program, which has been working somewhat independently.

Cathy added that last year the High School collaborated with Mass Rehab to conduct a vocational assessment of all STRIVE students. This assessment does not need to be conducted annually, so she is now developing a summer program from scratch for the STRIVE students.

### **How SEPAC and Admin. Will Work Together in Future – Maureen**

Massachusetts General Law sets forth the regulations for PACS. The parent advisory council duties shall include but not be limited to:

- advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities;
- meeting regularly with school officials
- to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district's special education programs.

Maureen noted that we are doing well with the meetings, but we would like to further develop the areas of advising and planning.

Cathy noted that the Board does well advising re individual student issues at the lower grade levels, but not at the High School level.

Maureen responded that we are broadening our base and now have two liaisons at the High School.

Kori noted several High School parents attended the SEPAC meeting on October 19.

Tee added that we're now accessing surveys to reach a broader group. Our email list has more than 200 names.

Cathy asked to have Diane Dunham, Mary Lammi, Valerie Flynn, and herself added to the email list.

Mary asked how preschool parents learn about SEPAC meetings.

Board parents are in general agreement that the preschool community is very involved and has strong attendance at meetings.

Kori asked, as a follow up to Cathy's initial comment on individual students. How much time do we want to devote to individual student issues (at any level) at this meeting, as we have previously discussed communicating via email about individual issues, in order to focus these meetings on district-wide issues.

The group agreed to include individual issues under Updates/Announcements.

Maureen indicated that most of us have done a lot of research on Special Education topics, and while we're not the experts, we believe we have a lot to offer in terms of participating in the planning, development, and evaluation of Needham's special education programs.

Mary agreed, and noted that she has been thinking the same thing.

Discussion followed about how to get parent participation. Should we make announcements at general SEPAC meetings? Mary would like to focus on Board feedback initially. She will

present brief overview of ESY program review at November Board meeting to get feedback from board members and liaisons.

Cathy suggested that we also get input about how the discussion feels. How does it feel when we're shifting?

Sandy added that the Board can gather information about what's happening in other communities.

Valerie noted that it's important to look at communities that have a similar demographic to Needham's. We have about 5,000 students.

Mary indicated that parents will play a role in the Program Evaluation. The consultant who will implement the review has not yet signed the contract, but an announcement will be made soon.

De acknowledged that there has been progress since former Superintendent Theall announced at a meeting that Needham had a Special Education program second to none, and a parent stood up to disagree with his assessment. At the time Needham had the highest percentage of rejected IEPs in the state. De complimented the staff that since that parent and others have come forward with their concerns, the rejected IEP issue has been resolved, and she listed 4 other initiatives since then that have been implemented in response to those concerns. While there is still much to be done, De states these are successful examples of where parents and staff have worked together to improve the Special Education program.

#### **Process for Review of SEPAC/Admin. Mtg. Minutes - Kori**

Kori noted that she needs a procedure in place to help her get minutes out in a timely manner. Who needs to review minutes before they are posted? And, how much time is appropriate?

Discussion followed around procedures and different ways organizations handle minutes. Cathy noted that many organizations start their monthly meetings by reviewing and approving the minutes from the previous month's meeting.

Tee noted that we want to post minutes on the website quickly, since there is often time sensitive information.

We agreed to try an email approval process and see how it goes. We will aim for a two-week turnaround time.

#### **SEPAC Fundraising (to cover speaker honorariums) - Sandy**

Sandy introduced the topic of fundraising. We need a better way to cover speaker fees. We do not have a budget, and while the administration graciously funds some speakers, we have nothing to offer other speakers.

Valerie suggested that the group file to become a nonprofit, so we could officially raise funds privately. The Board agreed that we do not have the human power to do that now.

Tee noted that Framingham and other communities combine SEPAC speakers with their professional development programs, giving staff professional development points (PDPs) for

attending presentations. This allows them to fund speakers through professional development budgets.

Mary noted that she does not have a line item in her budget for professional development, and with the current budget crunch, there's less money than ever before for professional development.

Kori suggested asking PTCs to contribute, but others in the group noted they are not comfortable asking PTCs when programs are being cut.

The group agreed to look at in-district speakers. SEPAC had asked for help in spring with a speaker for sensory diet and differentiated instruction and not heard back. Now Sandy and Kori have found speakers.

#### **Social Skills Update –Tee**

Tee noted the SEPAC social skills committee has met several times and is coming up with some recommendations.

#### **Update on Disability Awareness Committee – has meeting date been set? – De**

Mary has met with Mark McAneny at Newman and Emily Gaberman at Broadmeadow, and had a long conversation with Mitchell parent Alisa Skatrud. She has not yet spoken with Mike Schwinden.

The initial meeting will take place on October 21 or 28, at which time the committee will start to develop a framework for disability-awareness programming.

#### **Sped Programs Being Listed on Pollard Web Site –Valerie**

The Middle School SPED Programs appeared in detail on the Middle School website. Valerie is very frustrated because she has made every effort not to name programs, in order to protect the privacy of students and to avoid stigmatizing them.

Tee suggested we seek feedback on this issue from Middle School parents. Perhaps we can post this information on the SEPAC website, but not the schools' website.

#### **When Do You Present Budget to School Committee? – Tee**

Unknown at this time. Mary will find out and advise.

#### **Action Items**

##### **Mary:**

- Invite Diane Dunham to next SEPAC Board/Admin. meeting (November 10 at 12:30 pm)
- Advise SEPAC board of planned date(s) for SPED administration to present budget to School Committee
- Prepare quick overview of ESY program to present at November Board meeting, to get feedback from Board and liaisons.

##### **Valerie:**

Book the conference room for the remainder of our meetings

**Maureen:**

Give Mary the date for the PTC President's Meeting

**Tee:**

Add Diane Dunham, Mary Lammi, Valerie Flynn, and Cathy Heller to SEPAC email list.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kori Rogers