

SEPAC Board/Needham SPED Administrator Meeting
 Tuesday, December 1, 2009
 12:30 pm

In Attendance:

Cathy Aikman – Mitchell liaison
 Maureen Callahan – SEPAC Board Co-Chair, Broadmeadow liaison
 Sandy Cisternelli – SEPAC Board Programming Chair, Mitchell liaison
 Bridget Dangel – Eliot liaison
 Valerie Flynn – Director of Special Education/Middle School Level
 Margaret Gray – SEPAC member
 Karen Julien – Needham High School liaison
 Mary Lammi – Director of Special Education, Preschool to Grade 5
 Mona Maas – Team Chairperson for Mitchell, Hillside and Eliot
 Diane Novick – Pollard Middle School liaison
 Kori Rogers – SEPAC Board Co-Secretary, Newman liaison
 Margie Sockol – High Rock liaison
 De Springer – SEPAC Board Co-Secretary,
 Tee Stock – SEPAC Board Co-Chair, Broadmeadow liaison
 Sean Taylor – Newman liaison

Introductions—Everyone

We started the meeting by going around the table and introducing ourselves.

Needham SEPAC Survey of Parents’ Impressions of District Social Skills Services—Cathy Aikman and Sean Taylor

Cathy provided an overview of the survey. The survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey. The response rate was 26%, which is considered strong. Findings include:

- Social Skills are on IEP of 76% of respondents
- 86% of respondents think their kids need special help with SS
- 63% of respondents are or have paid for private SS
- 39% of respondents did not know if their child was exposed to Responsive Classroom or Second Step
- 48 % Satisfaction with SS training of own kids vs. 21% satisfaction with SS training of all kids

Click [PowerPoint Presentation](#) to see the complete presentation.

Sean presented the four following recommendations for collaborative program improvements:

- Implement a district-wide disability awareness program
- Provide additional training for teaching assistants and recess staff
- Include an analysis of social skills programming as part of the ARRA funded special education program review
- Provide a “Social exchange” to help children to practice their social skills outside of school

Click [Social Skills Recommendations](#) to read full report.

Mary Lammi offered her appreciation for the work that’s been done and noted that it is timely given the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Survey just completed by staff. She looks forward to sharing this information, which she believes is particularly important for Principals to receive.

Cathy Aikman added that one for the Social Skills Sub-Committee’s recommendations is to share this presentation with Principals at the January SEPAC meeting to which they’ve been invited.

Discussion ensued about the format of the January meeting, including the possibility of starting the presentation at 7:00 pm, which is usually reserved for the socializing portion of the meeting. There was some concern that Principals, who have already been invited for 7:30 pm, may not be able attend the meeting earlier.

Karen Julien suggested that the information could be sent to Principals via email, or liaisons could arrange to meet with their Principals to share the information.

Mary Lammi observed that one thing that stood out to her was the fact that parents do not seem to know about Second Step. Principals would want to know this.

Tee Stock added that Christine Brumbach stated during a recent presentation to the School Committee that not all teachers are using Second Step.

De Springer commented that at that meeting, School Committee member Heidi Black stated that materials about Second Step are supposed to be sent home to parents, but that as a parent she had never seen them.

SEPAC Meeting Sign-In Sheet Discussion—Valerie Flynn and Tee Stock

The discussion issue is whether or not staff (or other attendees) can reference the sign-in sheet to get names of other attendees.

Background—we ask attendees at our meetings to sign in. We announce that the sign-in sheet is confidential. To further ensure privacy, we offer notecards so that attendees can ask questions or make comments anonymously.

However, many people choose to ask questions or make comments publicly. It can be hard to hear people, and, in an effort to follow up personally with those who raise issues, Special Education staff have occasionally referenced the sign-in sheet to get their names. At the last meeting, for example, someone raised a number of issues about “the Middle School,” and Valerie, who was surprised by the issues wanted to follow up. It turned out that the speaker was not from Needham.

Tee noted that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) does not require parents to sign in for meetings. The DESE does require a record of administrators in attendance because they represent the district. The DESE also requires a head count of meeting attendees as well as a record of topics presented.

De indicated that many parents don’t attend meetings because they don’t want to be identified as parents of children with special needs, so maintaining confidentiality for those who do attend and want to remain anonymous is imperative. However, the opportunity to get facetime with staff is a benefit for parents.

Tee noted that it's important for staff to wear nametags, so parents know with whom they are speaking.

Maureen noted that the desire for anonymity might explain why people from out of district attend our meetings.

There was general agreement to the following:

- We will continue to introduce staff at the beginning of each meeting. We will also mention that staff may offer to follow up after the meeting with parents who raise questions/concerns/compliments during the meeting.
- For those who prefer anonymity, we will continue to distribute blank notecards for questions/concerns/compliments.
- Following meetings, staff can approach parents whose questions/concerns/compliments they want to offer to address.

Sean asked if we've ever surveyed parents to find out why SEPAC involvement is so minimal.

Tee suggested including a survey in the August mailing.

Cathy suggested having a presence at curriculum nights.

Mary had a couple of thoughts, including that curriculum nights seem like a great venue, and that we might want to reconsider the timing of our mailing because parents receive so much information in August/September. It's overwhelming.

Tee asked about the DESE's New Growth Model. According to **Valerie**, the DESE has established a new policy to chart student progress over time. She has not yet had time to read the lengthy documentation of this new policy but will report back to the group.

Other

Diane reported that she had received the amended IEP of a student who is not her child. **Diane** shredded the amendment and contacted staff. However, **Diane's** husband was then concerned that their child's IEP may have been sent to someone else. It had not.

Kori added that she had a similar experience last year.

Mary and **Valerie** observed that given the sheer volume of IEPs that are mailed out each year, errors are extremely rare, but they will review and reinforce the mailing procedures.

Action Items

Valerie Flynn will report back on the New Growth Model

Respectfully Submitted,
Kori Rogers