

Sept 15, 2009 Sepac Board Sped Admin mtg.

In attendance NPS Admin: M. Lammi, V. Flynn, C. Brumbach, C. Heller

SEPAC: T. Stock, M. Callahan, K. Rogers, S. Cisternelli, D. Springer recording

Mtg began @ 12:40.

C. Brumbach suggested moving through the quicker things in the agenda first and then discuss how to set the agenda and how to work together/better going forward this year. T. Stock thanked NPS for the Mass PAC renewal. A packet of information should be coming to them. T. Stock thanked Admin for their support of speakers. CB couldn't remember that Admin agreed to pay for: S. Ward and FCSN's How to Communicate with your IEP team. S. Cisternelli will forward the info previously sent to Chris again. November speaker fell thru and SC trying to secure Beth Edelstein who we had speak a few years ago. Her website is Think Kids.

CB brought up the Jan talk on Disability Awareness and wondered how this will dovetail with their work on the topic. M. Lammi would like to form and do some committee work prior to the Jan talk. She will follow up in an email to go forward with recruiting a well rounded initial group. CB feels it is important to get the all the PTC's to participate in /sanction this. De was unsure how to tap these other sources and thought that the Jan. mtg would be a start, but supports Admin taking the lead to recruit prior to the Jan. talk. M. Callahan will address this effort at the district PTC chairs' meeting. ML feels targeting a teacher in the school will help this along and she will need to lay groundwork with the principals as well. CB has concerns about the unseen disabilities getting covered – that the current program at Hillside and Eliot addresses concrete or more physical therefore “seen” disabilities. Tee notes there is a progression to this DA program and that unseen disabilities are addressed in the later grades (4,5). S. Cisternelli said she would like to see a DA program at the middle and h.s. V. Flynn stated that she wanted to see how the program develops at the Elementary level and that Advisory might be the place for it. K. Rogers asked, “How do we know that Advisory is doing what it is supposed to do?” VF and CB are both looking at this: teachers and students were both asked to assess Advisory, and Admin has administered a survey. Reminder: Advisory is new, only rolled out a year ago and they are working to make it better. Other data may come from the Metro West Adolescent Survey which has items within it about connections in grades 7-12 which will help them see over time how it is working.

T. Stock asked if the school parent liaisons can come to a board mtg to meet Admin in November, like last year. Answer – Yes. A review of the Board mtg dates followed. Oct 13, Nov 10, Dec 1, Feb 2, March 2, April 6, May 4, June 8.

K Rogers asked if a link from Admin's “What's New in Needham Special Education” could be put on the website. C. Brumbach said she will send it along.

Next item addressed was the list of professional development which is still being developed. Sept 22 is the first one. At the elementary level the PD is with a behavior specialist and strategies to de-escalate behaviors. This PD is for TA's and new teachers.

At the middle school level, V. Flynn is having George Maranakis come train on positive behavioral supports for the TA's, liaisons and social workers. The principal wants to address team building with the rest of the teaching staff. At the high school level Cathy Heller has a parent coming in addressing Asperger's and Inclusion of Special Needs kids and the 2nd half of the day is on behavior management/positive behavior techniques. The entire faculty there attends.

S. Cisternelli opened the discussion for an integrated summer program for the older kids (non-preschool), similar to what Newton offers at Camp Echo Bridge. A discussion followed about the possibility of EASE being a context for such a program. V. Flynn spoke how she did this kind of a program when she first came to the district w/Park and Rec and that it was problematic – she noted that they can control only a small aspect of it; the Park and Rec aspect of it is beyond Admin's control. EASE is more manageable.

Next, CB said all the directors will be looking at the inefficiencies in the budget and the Extended School Year programs and will be making a lot of changes for the upcoming summer. CB will be reviewing what the law mandates as ESY has ballooned for NPS. Some parents accept services and then go away for part of the time and NPS has to pay for it. Admin will attempt to set up the summer services earlier in the year.

Tee brought up the questions that were sent ahead of Monday night's general membership meeting. Two questions were not answered at the meeting to the satisfaction of some parents by the directors, nor Chris, and the rest of the questions went unaddressed and unanswered. Directors stated they had not seen the questions sent to CB. (The questions were: Do they have a BCBA at each school? Where and when do they use ABA? Is there a program for kids with dyslexia? What is in place for kids who need social programs? What specialists does Needham consult with for their programs?) T. asked again, "Is there a BCBA at every school?" C. Heller said this question had been answered. Parent board members disagreed. CB did not like the question because she wondered what is it that parents really want to know? CB continued that an answer rested on discussing the needs of the child. De objected: many sped children are treated by doctors whose treatment recommends that certain children be followed by a BCBA and if current best practice for some disabilities recommends a BCBA, parents ought to be able to know if the school has such a person. C. Brumbach said she doesn't know for sure: some teachers are hired w/o a BCBA but could get it later and Admin would not know. Other points made were: There are BCBA's consulting to both Middle Schools; Admin felt other behavior providers were often as good as or better than some BCBA's. Or perhaps some teachers have BCBA's, but aren't practicing. Tee requested that the question be attempted to be answered the way it was asked. Further information could be offered by the district but avoiding the question is unsatisfactory and makes parents feel bad. De affirmed this.

In the end, C. Brumbach directed this question to the child's sped director or liaison. K. Rogers noted many parents are not comfortable coming forward, but prefer anonymity. C. Heller agreed, but suggested that these questions be submitted to admin or in some other way have a dialogue on these kinds of questions outside of the board meeting or the Sepac mtg.

Due to time constraints the 2nd question on SS and the other remaining questions went unaddressed. M. Lammi offered that there are a lot of different ways a parent can get their questions answered. Group agreed to discuss how best to work together top of the agenda at October mtg. Adjourn 2:05.