

## **WARWICK SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **2008/2009 Annual Report**

The Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is required by State Regulation One, X, 2.Opp. 55-57 to present a report to the School Committee on an annual basis.

**PURPOSE:** This report is to show the work of the Warwick SEAC, and to advise the School Committee on special education services currently offered, unmet needs of special education students, and Warwick's compliance with State and Federal regulations.

A dedicated and talented group of individuals continues to monitor how special education services are delivered in Warwick, following a mission, toward the goal of educating all children according to their needs. The Warwick SEAC supports the District's goal to improve overall education for all students. Therefore, the Warwick SEAC supports the expansion of programs such as the full inclusion models at both the elementary and secondary levels that will positively impact upon improving methods of education in all our schools.

Our monthly meetings have been devoted to fulfilling the requirements stated in our purpose, and further to promote an increase in parent participation and support.

The Warwick SEAC had another very active and productive year. Parent and professional interest in, and support of our Committee continues to grow and our monthly meetings have been well attended. In November, 2008 and January, 2009, the Warwick SEAC, in collaboration with the Warwick Special Services Administration, was able to provide two interactive workshops addressing the new Rhode Island elementary and secondary Individualized Education Plan documents. These were excellent, informative workshops and the Committee received very positive feedback from the attendees. We also had several WSEAC members actively representing our organization at the Statewide Special Education Advisory Network meetings, on the Warwick Strategic Planning Committee, as well as on the Warwick Parent Communication Advisory Committee.

Besides attending regular monthly meetings and reviewing implementation of the aforementioned Action Plan, the Warwick SEAC monitors all activities that impact education, special services, and families. We continued our outreach focus on inclusive education and high school transition issues. Though we still adamantly support inclusion for all students, transition also has many obstacles and misunderstandings for many of our children and their families, and therefore, we continue to need workshops to address these issues.

Inclusive education continues to be a major focus of the Warwick SEAC, as it is our belief that all students are entitled to an education in the Least Restrictive Environment, with supports and services intact, and therefore, we are dedicated to the training, education, and supports necessary for the inclusion of all children. With the success of the Drum Rock Early Childhood Learning Center, we are excited that Warwick continues to support those inclusive practices, developing "inclusive" classrooms with appropriate supports. It is the opinion of the Warwick SEAC that for these efforts to continue to be successful, it is imperative that ongoing professional development in the areas of inclusion, peer training and positive behavioral supports be provided to the administrators and educators of all of our schools. The committee would like to continue to see more opportunities for inclusion at all levels of our children's education. The overall success of these programs depends on the dedication and proper training of ALL the school personnel involved, as well as the families of the children.

The Extended School Year (ESY) summer program was completed in August.. As the Warwick SEAC expresses concern on this topic each year, we would like to continue to expand this program to include more peer models for the children that spend the summer weeks in the ESY program. We still continue to see issues with finding appropriate 'peer' models for our children. We understand that funding for these programs is always a concern, and there have been cutbacks in the amount of ESY programming that has been provided to our children, but it seems absurd to continue to move towards inclusive education during the regular school year, only to discontinue it during the summer. We would once again like to thank the administration for its continued support and creative use of resources to allow the ESY children to participate with peers in alternative programs over the summer.

By regularly attending School Committee meetings and informing the Warwick SEAC members of issues that impact education in our schools, we are able to keep up to date on issues and activities in a timely manner. In this way, we can support the administration, when appropriate, or voice our concerns. In addition, the School Committee is mandated to appoint a member to attend the SEAC's regular monthly meetings. We are pleased to have had representatives from the School Committee in attendance at many of our 2008-2009 monthly meetings. We are optimistic that School Committee members will continue to make an effort to attend the 2009-2010 WSEAC monthly meetings, supporting the mandate. It's always beneficial to us as well as the School Committee when information can be shared. The Warwick SEAC needs the ongoing support of the School Committee to assist us in our goals for Special Services.

It is our goal that the Warwick SEAC, and Special Services in general, inform families of the issues and challenges that our children face. To accomplish this, press releases, advertisements to showcase training and special events and distribution of brochures take place. A website is maintained for the Warwick SEAC, with our Home Page located at <http://mysite.verizon.net/flamingoland/WSEAC/advise.html> .

Recruitment of new parent and consumer members to assure a full quorum and a 51% roster representation of parents of children receiving special education is the function of this

subcommittee, as mandated, for our business to proceed. The Warwick SEAC brochure includes a membership application. As indicated on the new IEP forms, the school personnel is required to inform parents/distribute our brochure to parents as part of our outreach efforts. We continue to have new parent members joining our Committee and are pleased with our continued growth. We are always looking for more parents, teacher(s), and related services personnel representatives.

In closing, we thank Dr. Richard D'Agostino and the Assistant Special Education Directors, for their support of the Warwick Public School District's Special Services Department. They all continue to demonstrate a great commitment to quality education and families appreciate their accessibility to them.

Respectfully,

Eve Bisard, Co-Chair

Jessica Schad, Co-Chair

cc: Warwick School Committee

Rhode Island Department of Education