

Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee

2009/2010 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 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 a fairly quiet year. We held meetings on a bi-monthly basis. The meetings were not as well attended compared to prior years and our membership has declined. At the end of the 2009-2010 school year the Warwick SEAC reports six (6) "voting" members and one (1) student member. According to the Warwick SEAC's by laws, the committee shall be composed of not more than twenty-one (21) individuals.

We continue to have Warwick SEAC members actively representing our organization at the Statewide Special Education Advisory Network meetings and on the Warwick Strategic Planning Committee.

Besides attending scheduled 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 (LRE), 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 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 in our schools, not just the special educators. 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 school personnel involved, as well as the families of the children. There must be a partnership between all parties involved.

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 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 over the years 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. Our children's disabilities do not go away in the summer, therefore it is extremely important to provide them with consistent programming. We would, however, 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 within our district. We are able to support the administration, when appropriate, or voice our concerns in a timely manner. As a reminder, the School Committee is mandated to appoint a member to attend the Warwick SEAC's scheduled meetings. The School Committee's attendance during the 2009-2010 school year was very poor. We are optimistic that the School Committee members will make more of an effort to attend the 2010-2011 Warwick SEAC monthly meetings, supporting the mandate. It is 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, advertisements to showcase trainings and special events and also distribution of brochures and other helpful information take place. A website is maintained for the Warwick SEAC at www.wseac.org. We also display our brochure and flyers for any Warwick SEAC sponsored event or training at various locations throughout the community, in an effort to reach as many families as possible.

Recruitment of new parent members to assure a full quorum and a 51% roster representation of parents of children receiving special education services is the function of this subcommittee, as mandated, for our business to proceed. As indicated on the new IEP forms, school personnel are required to inform parents and guardians about our committee and distribute our brochure at IEP meetings, as part of our outreach efforts. We continue to have parents inquire about our committee and will work on recruiting more individuals during the next school year. We are always looking for more parents,

teachers, and related service providers to become part of our group and share their ideas, knowledge and experiences with us.

In closing, we, the Warwick SEAC would like to thank Dr. Richard D'Agostino and the Assistant Special Education Directors for their ongoing support of the Warwick Public School District's Special Services Department. They all continue to demonstrate a great commitment to quality education for all children and also extend their support at our Warwick SEAC meetings.

Respectfully,

Jessica Schad, Chair WSEAC

cc. Warwick School Committee

Rhode Island Department of Education