

Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee
Wednesday, March 11, 2015
School Committee Room 7:00 pm
Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Mary Townsend, Jessica Schad, David Ghigliotty, Sharon Terzian, Cindy Roberts, Gail Aldrich, Tarin Byrne, Michelle Haley, Meghan MacKay, Joseph Gendice, Kathy Fielder, Caitlin Regan, Dr. Jennifer Connolly, Jennifer Ahearn, Eugene Nadeau and Bethany Zawislak.

Jessica called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm and introductions were made. The minutes of the February 11, 2015 meeting were accepted.

Old Business:

Workshop – Attorney Kevin Nerney - March 25, 2015 - workshop/presentation regarding 'Estate Planning' will be held in the small auditorium at Veterans High School. Dr. Connolly will email Special Educators with a request to send home to all students receiving services. Mary will contact Vets Secretary Cathy Bonang to confirm availability of screen/smart board.

radKids Program – Currently at a standstill. Jessica will continue to communicate with Officer Steve regarding progress.

March Fundraiser for Cerebral Palsy Awareness – moving forward. Thank you to Beth Zawislak for a great flyer! ☺ Jessica will email to Dr. D for approval.

Other – The “Doing it for Drew” fundraiser was a great success! The family will continue to search for an affordable wheelchair accessible vehicle for Andrew! Thanks to all for the outpouring of support!

New Business:

Safety Day at Fire Station (May) – This event has been scheduled for Saturday, May 16th from 2:00 – 4:00. Jessica will meet with Officer Steve Lombardi and Assistant Fire Marshall Michael Matteson to continue to finalize plans.

Best Buddies updates – Toll Gate's chapter continues to be extremely successful. Cindy informed us that on March 25th, Jersey Mike's will donate 100% of purchases to Best Buddies.

ESY Programs – There was discussion regarding the recent focus on Social and Emotional learning and Social Skills Groups. Parents offered that in the past, a camp setting was “substituted” to help meet this need. Dr. Connolly spoke about PBIS and school year programs. Jessica spoke about “Lunch Bunch” or “Lunch Buddies” and asked Dr. Connolly what the role of WSEAC might be to support this. Dr. Connolly stated that we need to develop a framework for how we provide services based on recommendations and qualifications of students and programs.

Other – Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT) – There was discussion regarding competitive employment opportunities and how earnings effect SSI benefits. Perhaps Kevin Nerney will speak to the ABLE Act and the amount of earnings that will be allowed. Comments were made regarding the Department of Labor and Training and Network RI.

Mary added that there has been a “Job Coach Training” introductory program offered to Warwick Public Schools teachers and assistants. It was coordinated by Carol Allen, 18 – 21 Program Special Educator. The Center for Excellence is providing the training sessions weekly for 8 weeks.

School Committee Update: Jennifer Ahearn, Chair and Eugene Nadeau, Vice-chair were present this evening. Ms. Ahearn opened her update by expressing the support of the Warwick School Committee whether present at meetings or not. They are available to address any concerns this committee might have. She provided the committee with an update regarding the Facilities and Educational Programming consultant group SMMA. She reported that things are moving quickly and interviews are taking place. There will be opportunities for public input in the near future. Sharon asked about redistricting. Ms. Ahearn responded that redistricting is within the RFP Scope. There also were comments regarding the impending Fire Code work and the cost of these upgrades. She encouraged us to participate in the "Superintendent Survey" currently online on the WPS website. This survey closes on March 16th. She discussed the year end budget projects and the school calendar for next year. Mr. Nadeau echoed Ms. Ahearn's statements as he discussed briefly school closure, the superintendent search, and the budget.

Director of Special Education Report: (These notes are adapted or quoted from the Director of Special Education Report.)

Dr. Connolly reported: For the professional development day, Monday, March 9th, most Special Educators attended the district wide training on Google and Google Apps for Education. Others attended Dr. Sara Monaco's training on the ISS data system available through RIDE, which is a resource for data on information such as attendance and NECAP scores. Some special education staff, along with Dr. Connolly and Chris Cobb attended "Safety without Restraints", a full day conference offered at RIC.

"Secondary special education teams will be participating in the RI Statewide Transition Capacity Building Institute on 3/12 and 3/13. Additionally, several special education teachers attended recent training through the Sherlock Center as part of the Transition Initiative on self-determination. Upcoming training will be provided on employment.

We are currently offering two training opportunities for staff in the district: Job Coach training which is underway and the annual PDD training which will begin shortly.

PARCC & NCSC update: The district is in the final stages of PARCC preparation. PARCC will begin on 3/6/15 and will also be done in May. The NCSC test will be available on 3/30. Special Educators are getting training on the NCSC over the next 2 weeks." Approximately 1% of our students are significantly involved and participating in Alternate Assessment.

Mr. Nadeau asked Dr. Connolly her thoughts on the PARCC test. He had questions regarding the "Opt-out" topic discussed in the media. Dr. Connolly spoke about accountability and maximal access to curriculum for Special Educators and Special Education students.

State Update: Sharon reported that BHDDH funding is just about gone. She also reported CMS (Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services) is restructuring reimbursement rates. The new Director seems to be well liked.

Scheduling of Next Meeting Date: Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 8, 2015 at 7:00 pm at the Administration Building in the School Committee room. (The next School Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 18.)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Townsend