

Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee
Wednesday, June 10, 2015
School Committee Room 7:00 pm
Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Mary Townsend, Jessica Schad, David Ghigliotty, Barbara Ghigliotty, Rachael Ghigliotty, Sharon Terzian, Cindy Roberts, Gail Aldrich, Meghan MacKay, Joseph Gendice, Camely Machado, Steve O'Haire, Norma McAteer, Sue Barbour, Leah Hazelwood, Nicole Bertrand, Caitlin Regan, Sandra Parrillo, Dr. Jennifer Connolly, Kathy Fielder, Eve Bisard, Michael Matteson, Michelle Haley and Kristen Saunders.

Jessica called the meeting to order at 7:11 pm and introductions were made. Jessica welcomed our Transportation guests, Sue Barbour and Norma McAteer from First Student; Steve O'Haire, WPS Transportation Manager and Camely Machado, WPS Manager of Non-Instructional Student Services.

Steve began with an update on the upcoming ESY Programs at Lippitt and Pilgrim making the general statement that the number of students is slightly lower and will require a few less busses. Information from ESY parents has come in with consistency. Jessica asked if the same timeline and process as last year was in place and although there were no exact dates, the process was followed in the same way with a connect-ed reminder. All agreed that despite the weather and construction, it was a good year with few to no issues reported. The lines of communication continue to be open between drivers and aides and teacher assistants. Jen Evans, Behavior Specialist continues to be available to all First Student staff. There was discussion about a "training" that would be held as more of a "roundtable" discussion with an exchange of information that will assist staff and students.

At this time, Dr. Connolly informed the committee that Paul Heatherton, Principal of Oakland Beach School, would be our ESY Principal. ESY Orientation will take place on Thursday, June 25, 2015 from 9 -1. Parent/student visits are scheduled between 10 -11.

The minutes of the April 8, 2015 meeting await the addition of the attendance at that meeting. There were no May minutes to review. Mary will make the addition to the April minutes and provide this committee with May and June minutes at our August meeting.

Old Business:

radKIDS program (May 1 – June 19) – There are two weeks left to the program. (One week was cancelled due to a lack of participants) There was discussion among members especially those with children participating in the program or those present during the program regarding the content and delivery as well as the structure and the seating of the program. Our younger group needed a bit more modification to be successful, including a bit more up and down/physical activity. All in all, the students learned some new skills that should help them in the future. David and Mike discussed the national program and the possibility of providing the program in a different way.

Safety Day at Fire Station (5-16-15) – This event took place on Saturday, May 16th from 2:00 – 4:00. 44 students and their families registered with 39 actually attending. It began at the police station with a martial arts demonstration by two volunteers that graciously stepped up when David had a special family commitment. Snacks/Pizza/drinks donated by a number of committee members were enjoyed by all during the break! The large group then walked over to the fire station for an "egg drop" and the opportunity to get into a fire truck, a perfect photo-op, and then to squirt the fire hose. All of the children received a certificate and a fire hat as well as some other mementos to remember their day! A special thank you to Mike Matteson, Sandra Parillo, Gail Aldrich and any other committee members

that were present and donated their time to assist. A special thank you to our Warwick Police and Firefighters for their time and commitment to our Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee and the children/students of Warwick! ☺

WSEAC minutes – Continued from our last meeting...Cindy spoke about a discussion she had with a representative from RIPIN about increasing community awareness of our committee. She was told of LAC that recognized a member of the school or local community, parent, student, teacher or other support staff member, who made a positive impact on the community. It was recorded in the minutes and the minutes were sent out to the schools. There was discussion about disseminating information about our meetings and events, including connect-end, which seems to be the primary vehicle for districtwide info.

Other – there was discussion regarding “Bullying” and the district’s responsibility to address these situations according to the State Policy and the district’s own policies.

New Business:

Board Nominations for 2015-2016 – Cindy Roberts nominated Jessica, David and Mary to continue to serve as Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. The nominations were seconded. With no other nominations, the committee officers were unanimously approved. Jessica spoke to the future of our LAC and the many commitments each officer makes.

Meeting Time for Next Year – Majority agrees to a 6:30 meeting start.

Other – Programming, Special Education, Teacher’s contract negotiations, and classroom options were discussed as Dr. Connolly spoke to educating all students in a more progressive way. She addressed the issues of weighting and the effects it has on all student programs. Warwick is the only district in RI to continue to use this “antiquated” system to determine class size. While many members of this committee have supported weighting in the past to keep class sizes low and increase direct service to students, there is much to be considered as we move forward to models that will provide more inclusive opportunities with increased special education support. There was some discussion about a letter to the Warwick School Committee to express our thoughts.

School Committee Update: No member present.

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

School closures: WSC mtg 6/9/15 – adopted the plan for the 2 Sr. High/2 middle school model. Expected elementary closures in the future. All children receiving special education services required by their IEPs will remain in place.

Pilot Program: Expanding Co-taught classrooms, creating a continuum of services from preschool through secondary. Additional K program...up from 2 to 3, and will pilot a co-taught first grade.

PARCC: Testing schedule reduced for next year: one testing window of approximately 30 days instead of two. The number of test units has been reduced, as has the amount of testing time and the testing administration has been simplified. These changes will have a positive impact on the amount of time and resources that are required to administer the test.

Dr. Connolly spoke about the goal to provide special education services in neighborhood schools and creating special paths for students who need services unavailable at their home schools,

State Update: The cuts to Katie Beckett and Medicaid are outrageous...\$90 million to Medicaid alone.

Scheduling of Next Meeting Date: Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 12, 2015 at 6:30 pm at the Administration Building in the School Committee room.

Public Comment:

Nicole Bertrand spoke to the committee about Autism Project scholarship \$ for programs such as Starting Point or Aspire earned by her team's participation in the Autism Walk. There was discussion as to how this could be used by staff. Parents' participation in the Parent to Parent program also was suggested and whether or not that was free for parents.

Leah Hazelwood informed the committee about the National Night Out to be held on August 4th in Oakland Beach. She also explained the Explorers Program as a program for middle school students that supports students in career exploration.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Townsend