

QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 27, 2013

A meeting of the Special Education Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, March 27, 2013 at 7:00 pm at Quincy High School. Present were Mr. Paul Bregoli, Ms. Barbara Isola, Mr. David McCarthy, and Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Ms. Kerri Connolly, Mrs. Donna Cunningham, Mrs. Erin Perkins, Ms. Judy Todd; Quincy Parent Advisory Council to Special Education (QPAC) Board members Ms. Jill Gichuhi and Ms. Linda Perry; interested parents; and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Mrs. Mahoney. Dr. Christopher Denning from the University of Massachusetts/Boston presented on the Young Athletes (YA) Initiative being piloted at the Della Chiesa Early Childhood Center (ECC). The program uses games and motor play activities to support gross motor skill and social skill development. It was designed for implementation by teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and volunteers in preschool environments, playgroups, or at home. In a study conducted in 52 classrooms in Rhode Island and North Carolina, 234 children were randomly assigned to classrooms and children in the YA program made significant gains in gross motor skills over a two month period. The parent feedback was very positive about the skill development and assisting them in learning new ways to play and engage with their children.

The curriculum is evolving and Dr. Denning is working with the ECC to determine what additional support is needed (for example, more illustrations or ways to adapt activities). Dr. Denning is working with the ECC establishing baselines for students. Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Adaptive Physical Education are all involved in implementing this program. The parents present were very enthusiastic about the program and the potential for enhancing social skills. Ms. Gichuhi asked about a connection with the BOKS program at Squantum and suggested that parent orientation include children for lesson modeling. Dr. DeCristofaro suggested video documentation of the baseline testing and subsequent results. Mrs. Mahoney suggested that a parent information session could be videotaped and streamed on the website and broadcast on Channel 22. The confidence the children gain from these physical achievements will carry through to classroom achievement. Mrs. Mahoney thanked Dr. Denning for his initiative in bringing the program to Quincy.

Ms. Isola would like to see a presentation for School Committee and suggested exploring bringing this program to Kindergarten classrooms. She would also like to see how this could connect to the BOKS program. Mr. Bregoli asked whether this program will end in the spring, but Dr. Denning is available to offer support through next fall. The goal is for teachers to be independent in how they use the program within their own classrooms; Mrs. Connolly said that

some teachers are already using the lessons as part of center time. She thanked Dr. Denning for all of his support in integrating the program at the ECC.

Ms. Todd gave an update on the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports initiative. Defined behavioral expectations will be taught and monitored; instruction is targeted for tiers of behavior. Leadership teams have been identified at Parker, Lincoln Hancock, and Clifford Marshall. Internal coaches have been identified and the information system has been installed at the three elementary schools and all five middle schools. Training was impacted by snow days; the goal is to complete training by the end of the school year and implement next fall. Ms. Gichuhi is enthusiastic about the potential for positive school culture change.

Mrs. Perkins presented an overview of Professional Development. For Mathematics, there have been several workshops including: Foundations of Mathematics, Developing Number Sense, and Understanding Rational Numbers. For English Language Arts, teachers attended Keys to Literacy/Comprehension and Landmark Writing. Other types of professional development offered focused on Study Skills/Executive Functioning, Superflex (a Social Skills program), and Formative Assessment. The SPED department is very proud of the depth of the Professional Development offered to their staff in recent years. The teachers are consistently asking for more, especially for areas related to specific, explicit instruction for their students.

Mr. McCarthy asked about the Executive Function concept and is this becoming more prevalent. Ms. Todd noted that this is appearing more and more on independent evaluations. Mrs. Mahoney asked for clarification about the Professional Development budget and whether there items that were not funded this year that could be included in next year's budget.

Conflict Resolution Ms. Gichuhi asked about conflict/dispute resolution; Ms. Todd explained that mediation is not used to resolve out of district placement requests but the team will reconvene and work together towards a solution.

QPAC Update Ms. Gichuhi reviewed the Resource Fair that was held on Monday, March 25. April 11 is the next general meeting; elections are May 9. A MassPAC networking night will be held on April 10. Goals for 2012-2013 are moving towards completion; the new website has been launched, a needs assessment is underway, including a parent survey. Information from the survey will be used for goal development for 2013-2014.

Mr. Bregoli made a motion to adjourn the Special Education Subcommittee meeting at 8:30 pm. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it. The next Special Education Subcommittee meeting is May 15, 2013.