

QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, May 14, 2014

A meeting of the Special Education Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, May 14, 2014 at 6:00 pm at Quincy High School. Present were Mr. Noel DiBona, Ms. Barbara Isola, Mr. David McCarthy, and Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Mrs. Catherine Carey, Mrs. Donna Cunningham, Mr. Richard Kelly, Ms. Judy Todd; Quincy Parent Advisory Council to Special Education Board Members Ms. Campbell and Ms. Nabstedt; and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Ms. Todd presented the 2012 Graduate Study conducted by the Special Education department at the request of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Mrs. Carey, along with guidance and special education staff at both high schools, reached out through email, phone calls, and social media to graduates from both high schools who were either Resource Room (81% of graduates) or Substantially Separate Classroom students (19% of graduates). 69% of these former students went on to continue their education at 2- or 4-year colleges or certificate programs; 29% went on to full-time employment or joined the military. 100% of former students with specific learning disabilities are either continuing their education or are employed. Access to online courses has greatly assisted graduates with emotional issues or on the spectrum to continue their education.

Ms. Todd then updated on progress towards the Special Education Program Improvement Plan goals. For the goal of increasing middle school Math scores, all benchmarks have been achieved, and the success of goal will be known in the fall when the MCAS scores are available. Over the course of the school year, Professional Development focused on creating alternative strategies and differentiating instruction. Teams collaborated across grade levels to share resources. The Reteach curriculum map work will continue through the summer. For the Resource Room goal for Grade 3 students, 9 of 11 schools have already reached the word gain goal and most have exceeded the goal by far. The third goal is to create a presentation to be shared with General Education teachers at the opening meeting at each school; this presentation will be finalized over the summer.

Mrs. White asked for an update on the issue of sharing student information with substitute teachers and Ms. Todd said this will be handled through Aspen Special Education module in Fall 2014.

The annual Rights and Regulations Training will be held on June 10 at 7:00 pm at Quincy High School. Mrs. White asked about attendance for this. Ms. Todd said that QPAC has been doing this training for the last few years, but for the Avenues to Success presentation, attendance was low.

Dr. DeCristofaro asked to defer setting the meeting dates for 2014-2015 until the School Committee Organizational Meeting in September. QPAC requested the meeting times revert to 7:00 pm to increase parent attendance. Dr. DeCristofaro suggested 6:30 pm as a compromise.

New QPAC President Ms. Nabstedt presented the QPAC Update; at last week's board meeting, a new slate of officers was elected: Ms. Beck is Vice-President, Ms. Hurd is Treasurer, and Ms. Campbell is Outreach Coordinator. Recording Secretary and Public Relations are open positions. For the 2014-15 school year, QPAC meetings will be held on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm (September 16; October 7; November 4; and December 2, 2014; January 6; February 3; March 3; April 7; and May 5, 2015).

QPAC's Goals for 2014-15 are to continue to improve outreach and to be a resource for Special Education teachers. QPAC would like to be better connected with the PTOs and collaborate on issues across the city and will work collaboratively with Citywide PTO. They have been involved with surfacing concerns for Bernazzani's Grade 3 and are opposed to the Sterling Middle School grades 4-8 configuration proposal.

Mrs. Mahoney said establishing relationships with the PTO Presidents is very important; PTO Board members may have children with Special Education issues. Mrs. White said that the Special Education department has been very helpful in connecting QPAC with individual school PTOs. QPAC's issue has been finding enough parent volunteers to visit all the PTO meetings.

Ms. Campbell said a group of parents is working together to create a survey for parents and teachers about services. Mrs. White suggested that older QPAC surveys might be a helpful starting point.

Ms. Nabstedt said that Ms. Gichuhi offered to maintain the QPAC website for the next school year.

Ms. Campbell said parent concerns are often about service delivery and how choices are made. For example, are there limits to the number of students that specialists provide services for. Ms. Todd said the cap for Resource Room groups is eight students; other specialists, such as Occupational or Physical Therapists, have larger caseloads at multiple schools. Dr. DeCristofaro suggested that during the Special Education Program Improvement Plan review process, information on staffing ratios for teachers and specialists can be shared so parents have this baseline information.

Mrs. White asked Ms. Todd if she had heard about the Joseph Lee School in Dorchester, which has a K-8 program for students on the autism spectrum. Ms. Todd said she was not familiar with the school, but would look into it.

Mr. McCarthy made a motion to adjourn the Special Education Subcommittee meeting at 6:35 pm. Mr. DiBona seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.