

QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

A meeting of the Special Education Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, October 21, 2015 at 6:00 pm at the Coddington Building. Present were Mr. Noel DiBona and Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent Richard DeCristofaro, Mrs. Catherine Carey, Mrs. Donna Cunningham, Mrs. Mary Fredrickson, Mr. Richard Kelly, Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mrs. Maura Papile, Ms. Madeline Roy, Ms. Judy Todd; Quincy Parent Advisory Council to Special Education Board Members Ms. Beck, Ms. Campbell, Ms. Hurld, Ms. Nabstedt; and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Mrs. Mahoney called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm. For the 2015-2016 Program Improvement Plan, Ms. Todd reviewed that the mission of the Special Education Department is to provide specially designed instruction and/or related services. The program builds on individual strengths and abilities, meeting the diverse academic, emotional, and social needs of all students. Professional development for this year will include Landmark Writing for Language Development classes; Looney Productions will provide Professional Development and Consulting for the Math Reteach Team; and the Elementary Resource Room teachers will be trained on using the MAP Assessment for Grade 3.

2014-2015 Goal reflection: (1) 1% increase in average percent correct on the Mathematics MCAS for Grades 7 and 8 for students with disabilities: Grade 7 increased 1% and Grade 8 increased 3%. All grades show increases in average percent correct and Grade 8 students showed 15 point gain in student growth. Moving forward, the *iReady* program will be implemented for students with disabilities. (2) For Grade 3 Resource Room students, schools across the city met the goal, with seven schools exceeding the goal of increasing word reading to 30 words. Ms. Isola asked to see the scores with the schools identified. Mrs. Mahoney agreed, it is hard to analyze without specifics about the number of students. Ms. Todd will follow up with a revised chart. For the ELA Reading Anchor standard, Grades 5, 8, and 10 made gains. (3) The Special Education Department goal was the focused on the Coordinated Program Review: monitoring all IEPs to ensure they contain language about bullying with goals as appropriate and developing a checklist for students identified with autism to be used in IEPs.

For 2015-2016, the Special Education department goals will be a continuation of the Mathematics goal of 1% increase in average percent correct (Middle School Teachers); assisting in the implementation, proctoring, and analysis of the Grade 3 pilot of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) (Elementary Resource Room Teachers); and facilitating the implementation of the Aspen Special Education module. Other team goals include: The *Occupational Therapy Team* will develop and implement new treatment activities for visual tracking based on the results of their DDMs. (2) The *Speech and Language Team* will work individually and collectively as a team to modify a data

collection form to track the number and type of prompts needed for students to execute multi-step directions related to therapy activities. This form will be utilized as a pre- and post-test to monitor student progress. (3) The *Language Development Team* will implement the Landmark Writing method throughout all areas of curriculum. (4) The *GOALS Team* will participate in professional development related to online learning opportunities, especially the Accellus program. Students will be taught how to make healthy choices regarding nutrition as well as the impact of substance abuse on teen development. (5) The *CARES Team* will design and implement consistent data collection forms by June 2016.

Ms. Todd also shared the Special Education Program Opportunities and Initiatives with Community Partners: South Shore YMCA: CARES program swimming; Sports Skills for middle school CARES students; Personal training for GOALS and PASS; Pre-Kindergarten Young Athletes and CHAMPPS for UMass Boston; and horseback riding and ice skating for the STARS program. Ms. Isola asked for and received confirmation that these activities are integrated during the school day. Ms. Hurd asked if these programs are for in-district Special Education students and they are currently not available for out-of-district students.

Demographics: At elementary schools, all but Montclair are showing increases in needs for services for elementary school students. Middle schools are not showing much change, but Quincy High School has had a large increase in Special Education population. Autism trends show increases, especially at the elementary levels.

Mrs. Mahoney asked what caused the increase at Quincy High School. One factor may be the enrollment shift between NQHS and QHS in 2010 and 2011. Ms. Todd said that additional staff member was hired for Quincy High School and some may be new students to Quincy Public Schools at the high school level.

Mrs. Mahoney asked for more information about *IReady*. Ms. Todd said this is a progress-monitoring tool that ties in with the Math Reteach team's work and features strategies for reteaching, sample lessons, and an at-home component. Ms. Roy said it was piloted last year at Broad Meadows and has been implemented for mainstreamed Special Education Math students at all middle schools.

Mrs. Mahoney asked about Mathematics Professional Development. Ms. Todd said that the Math Reteach team meets 5-6 times per year and will focus this year on Geometry and Equations, teaching these concepts using manipulatives. Mrs. Mahoney asked if the consultants will be in the classroom and they will do both pull out professional development with the teachers and hands on in the classroom. Ms. Todd said the inclusion model has really developed a strong partnership between the special and regular education teachers.

Mrs. Mahoney made a motion to approve the Special Education Program Improvement Plan, seconded by Mr. DiBona. On a voice vote, the ayes have it.

Ms. Todd introduced the Rights and Responsibilities presentation, an annual mandate under Special Education law. The goal of the presentation is to provide information so that educators will understand their role regarding Special Education; collaboration between family and school personnel will be enhanced; and parents and school personnel will participate in special education matters as knowledgeable partners.

Students are eligible for Special Education when all three of the following are true: the student has one or more disability, the student is not making effective progress in school as a result of the disability; and the student requires specialized instruction in order to make effective progress. Special education is specially-designed instruction to meet the unique needs of an eligible student and/or related services necessary to access and make progress in the general curriculum.

There is a 45-day timeline: parents consent to evaluation, then there are 30 school working days to evaluate. The team meeting to determine eligibility should occur no later than 15 school working days after the evaluation. If a student is eligible, development of IEP and determination of placement occur at that Team meeting. Services commence upon parental consent.

There are six principles of Special Education: (1) Parent and Student Participation; (2) Free and Appropriate Public Education; (3) Appropriate Evaluation; (4) Individualized Education Program; (5) Least Restrictive Environment; and (6) Procedural Safeguards. A student IEP is a legal document and is meant to be a written explanation of how the disability effects the student's ability to learn and to demonstrate his or her learning; an identification of specific, measurable goals which can be reached in a year's time.

Ms. Beck presented on behalf of the Quincy Parent Advisory Council to Special Education (QPAC). QPAC's goals for this year are to build membership; using Facebook as a means to communicate with over 300 followers. Events for this year will include the Gingerbread House event on December 4, in partnership with Quincy High School Culinary and Fratelli's and BJs Warehouse. Ms. Beck would like to schedule the Enchanted Village program with the CARES program and will work with Ms. Todd to secure the date. Quincy Public Schools will provide bus transportation. Ms. Beck would like to expand the Lego Workshops to more classes this year (two last year). A Sensory night will be scheduled in the spring. Ms. Beck is working on a grant application for Eastern Bank to support this and other programs.

Ms. Beck would like to add an event with Wahlburgers, either a cookout here in Quincy or a kids in the kitchen event at their restaurant. Ms. Beck said that in thinking about how to make parents and children part of the Special Education program and process, she would like to have an art contest to design a QPAC logo. The winning logo could then be printed on white t-shirts which could then be tie-dyed at a spring event. The final event would be an art show for Special Education students

across Quincy Public Schools, including out of district students. These events all have a positive focus and would allow for showcasing of student talents. Ms. Beck wants to assist parents and families with communication and working together as a team. Building positive relationships with both parents and children supports the Special Education process.

Ms. Hurd asked about the QPAC website. Ms. Beck said that the website was taken down last year and that the Facebook page is serving as a means of contact right now. Ms. Campbell said that having even a homepage would assist parents in finding basic information about Special Education. Ms. Hurd said developing a new page could be a Community Service opportunity for high school students. Dr. DeCristofaro said the IT department can assist with this.

Dr. DeCristoraro thanked Ms. Beck for her efforts in family and classroom connections and commended her for the time spent preparing for these encounters. QPAC is an important liaison in explaining the Special Education process to parents.

Ms. Beck asked for assistance in reaching out to school sites/PTOs to continue to monitor Special Education issues; the Citywide Parents Council mentioned Special Education equity as a focus. Mrs. Mahoney said this is an opportunity for collaboration between the two parent groups; Ms. Campbell is the liaison between the parent groups. Mrs. Mahoney thanked Ms. Beck for the progress in collaborating between School Committee and QPAC. At the same time, there are always new parents frustrated with the process, QPAC is the resource. Ms. Campbell said that Citywide has the same issues with parent participation, some schools are well-represented, others are not represented at all. Many times parent frustrations are about messaging, issues are easily solved, more often perceived inequities are disconnects or missed messages. Mrs. Mahoney said developing the new QPAC website is an opportunity to bridge the message.

The next Special Education Subcommittee is January 20, 2016.

Mrs. Mahoney made a motion to adjourn at 7:15 pm, seconded by Mr. DiBona. On a voice vote, the ayes have it.