

# QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## SPECIAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING ~ Monday, May 23, 2016

A meeting of the Special Education Subcommittee was held on Monday, May 23, 2016 at 6:00 pm at the Coddington Building. Present were Mrs. Emily Lebo and Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent Richard DeCristofaro, Ms. Diane Babcock, Ms. Erin Benner, Mrs. Catherine Carey, Ms. Donna Cunningham, Ms. Julie Graham, Ms. Lauren Guerriero, Mr. Richard Kelly, Ms. Lorraine Kusy, Mrs. Erin Perkins, Mr. Robert Shaw, Ms. Aleksa Subatis, Mr. Lawrence Taglieri, Ms. Judy Todd; Quincy Parent Advisory Council to Special Education Board members Ms. Debby Nabstedt and Ms. Cassandra Beck; and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Ms. Todd introduced the presentation of High School Special Education pathways, noting that Quincy Public Schools' 4-year graduation rate for students with disabilities is 74.5. 2016 graduates have a variety of post-graduation plans, 2- and 4-year college, further career & technical education training, apprenticeships.

To assist with transitioning from middle to high school, the Special Education Department Chairs meet about each Grade 8 student with middle school Student Support staff during the winter, prior to course scheduling. The student's current Special Education Resource Room or Inclusion services are evaluated for scheduling. For Grades 9-10, there are currently options for inclusion in English, Math, and Science. There is also Resource Room support for Math, English, Science Social Studies, and Study Skills. For Grades 11 & 12, Inclusion Math, English, and Strategies classes support students and Resource Room & Study Skills begin the process of student transitioning to college.

Special Pathways include PACE at Quincy High School, a substantially separate program for global language delays in Grades 9 & 10. For Grades 11 & 12, students are integrated with other students in resource rooms or general education classrooms. At North Quincy High School, students with intellectual disabilities attend the Learning Center (through age 22), CARES for Autism Spectrum Disorder (through age 22), and PASS (Positive Academic and Social Success). CARES or PASS students have options for inclusion and/or general education as their education plans allow. The Learning Center and CARES pair introduction to work, vocational training, and daily living activities with integrated class work.

Ms. Beck asked about the differences between the programs at the two high schools. Ms. Kusy said the programming is fluid, based on the needs of the students in the grade at the time. Currently, Quincy High School is not offering Inclusion programming for Math and English for Grades 11 & 12, while North Quincy High School is. Quincy High School has Resource Room, while North Quincy High School does not.

Ms. Beck asked about students who may have issues with MCAS in Grade 10, how are these students supported. Ms. Todd said that individual education plans are written to support what a student needs. The team will recommend the services they think are appropriate. Ms. Kusy said that teachers have had students for almost two school years and will recognize their academic capabilities. Study Skills class provides support that more parallels what students will receive in college. Ms. Kusy said that the Pathway is much different than it was three years ago. Mr. Shaw agreed that there is the same flexibility in courses at North Quincy High School. Math and Science are both areas where there are demonstrated needs and inclusion is offered or not as well.

Mrs. Lebo asked for definitions of the courses. In the Resource Room, the curriculum is taught at a modified pace, often more teacher-led. Study Skills is taught by Special Education teachers, grouped by grades 9-10 and 11-12. At the 9-10 level, it is working with students on their responsibility to each of the courses they are enrolled in. A struggling student might get assistance with specific content.

Mrs. Lebo asked about inclusion and wrap-around. Grades 9-10 classes are co-taught by general and special education teachers. These are team-taught classes, plus there are Assist/Strategies classes with the Special Education teacher an extra two periods a week.

Mrs. Mahoney asked for clarification on the Study Skills for Grades 11-12, if this is not content-specific, will the special education teacher be able to address the specific areas of need.

Mrs. Lebo asked about Resource Room options at North Quincy High School; Mr. Shaw said current students IEPs do not call for this. Mrs. Lebo, Mrs. Mahoney, and QPAC have all heard from Quincy High School parents who are looking for the inclusion model at Grades 11 & 12. Dr. DeCristofaro said the services offered are phenomenal, this is a difficult transition for parents. Mrs. Lebo said that the different definitions of programs may have added to the confusion. Ms. Nabstedt feels strongly that the Assist class option is needed for Grades 11-12.

Mrs. Lebo asked how many students are in a Study Skills section. Ms. Kusy said there will be two Grade 9-10 groups of 6-8 students; in Grades 11-12, there are seven sections of 6-8 students. Ms. Kusy said some Study Skills students might be in all regular education classes only. Ms. Kusy said there is a curriculum of skills, students are graded on organization, use of assistive technology, developing communication skills.

Mrs. Lebo asked when there was last an inclusion class for Grades 11-12 at Quincy High School. Ms. Kusy said there has not been one in her experience. Mrs. Mahoney would like to discuss options for Grades 11-12 with Superintendent DeCristofaro.

Ms. Benner, Ms. Subatis, Ms. Babcock, Ms. Gurreiero introduced the Landmark Writing being used in Language Development classes for Grades 1-8. The goal in adopting this program was to create specific templates, graphic organizers, consistent language and scope and sequence to align writing

instruction vertically and across schools. The Language Development vertical team is pleased to have had the opportunity to collaborate across grade levels. The preliminary discussions informed the scope and sequence of skills for each grade level and during each term. Core curriculum objectives have been developed around the writing process and how to work towards a good end product.

Guiding principles for writing instruction include: oral expression as a foundation for written expression; developing the progression from written word to sentence to paragraph. Explicit teaching of sentence structures from simple to complex. Students use a limited number of organizers, write for expression first, then integrate mechanics separately.

In teaching the concept of word, the parts of speech and how they work together and then working towards more complex expression of ideas. These are the building blocks for writing sentences and making them more complex with expanders “where” and “when” phrases. All teachers are implementing a common multi-step writing process, specific active proofreading checklists, where they indicate in their work. Based on student needs, the writing process can be modified.

At the middle school level, a common 6-step writing process has been developed. As the process is repeated throughout the middle school years, this will help the students become more aware of how to develop a composition and how to organize their ideas effectively. Brainstorming, graphic organizers, 2-column notes as a writing template, rough draft, proofread/conference/edit, and publishing as a final product.

Mrs. Lebo complimented the presenters, thanked Ms. Todd for giving them the opportunity with the Landmark Writing consultant, clearly shows the development of teacher leaders.

Mrs. O’Brien asked whether visualizing/verbalizing is used as a technique. Mrs. Babcock said most genres utilize pictures as prompts. Ms. Guerriero agreed, photos are critical to development of ideas. Mrs. Babcock said that Landmark has provided some pre-writing and final product rubrics, which assisted greatly in development of writing process.

Mrs. O’Brien said the cross-curricular approach to topics would assist all students with the writing process. Mrs. O’Brien said that her reading surfaced “thinking maps” as opposed to graphic organizers. Ms. Beck thanked the teachers for their presentation

Mrs. Mahoney said it was great to see the progression of writing up through the grade levels, once students get over the hurdle, they can become fluid. Mrs. Carey said the common language throughout the grades is key to the success.

Mrs. Mahoney suggested this would be a great topic for a Parent Academy.

Dr. DeCristofaro said that the integration of general and special education through strategies is so important, more to come. Dr. DeCristofaro said these teachers cherish and nurture and set

expectations for their students, who they are is important in the success of their students and thanked Ms. Todd credit for great hires.

Dr. DeCristofaro thanked Ms. Todd for all she has done for Special Education

Ms. Beck presented the QPAC update. Since the last meeting, there was a field trip to Wahlburgers, enjoyed by the Broad Meadows students. The last QPAC meeting of the year on Wednesday, May 25. Ms. Beck will be looking to other parents for assistance with QPAC leadership next year and is looking forward to working with dyslexia parents, looking for alternate meeting times, speakers to fit topics that parents are interested in. One idea would be to have a supervised sensory night or child activity while a speaker is there for parents.

Special Education Subcommittee Meeting dates for 2016-2017 will be scheduled at the Organizational meeting in September 2016.

Mrs. Lebo made a motion to adjourn at 7:30 pm, seconded by Mrs. Mahoney. On a voice vote, the ayes have it.