

# QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## SPECIAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING ~ Wednesday, October 26, 2016

A meeting of the Special Education Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, October 26, 2016 at 6:00 pm at the Coddington Building. Present were Mr. James DeAmicis, Ms. Barbara Isola, Mrs. Emily Lebo, and Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent Richard DeCristofaro, Ms. Sarah Anderson, Mrs. Catherine Carey, Mrs. Donna Cunningham, Ms. Roberta DiTullio, Ms. Julie Graham, Mr. Richard Kelly, Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mrs. Maura Papile, Mrs. Erin Perkins, Ms. Madeline Roy; Quincy Parent Advisory Council to Special Education Board Members Ms. Beck and Ms. Nabstedt; Citywide Co-President Scott Alessandro; and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Special Education Director Erin Perkins presented the Special Education Program Improvement Plan, reviewing the Special Education mission of providing specially designed instruction and/or related services based on individual student needs, building on individual strengths and abilities, while meeting the diverse academic, emotional, and social needs of all students. Ms. Anderson presented a reflection on last year's Special Education goals: For Grades 7 and 8 students having Math goals in the IEPs the goal was an increase of 1% on average percent correct. The goal was reached for Grade 8 but not for Grade 7. The MAP Assessment was successfully piloted for Grade 3 students across the district and this year will be expanded to Grade 2. The MAP data has been successful in assisting the tailoring of instruction. The final goal was to facilitate the implementation of the Aspen Special Education module and this was successfully completed in December 2015.

Analysis of Spring 2016 MCAS Results for Students with Disabilities. For ELA, the percentage of students passing grew for Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10; for Mathematics, Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. Median student growth percentile was below the desired range of 40 to 60% for ELA students in Grades 5 and 6 and Mathematics for Grade 6, but within the desired range for other grades. For Average Percent Correct, Students with Disabilities saw growth in ELA for Grades 3, 4, and 6; for Math, Grades 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10.

Special Education Goals for 2016-2017 are: (1) All Grades 6-8 students with Math goals in their IEPs will increase their total Math MCAS average percent correct by 1%; (2) The Special Education Team will work collaboratively with the Literacy Team to assist in the analysis of the Integrated Learning Team Meeting process and the creation of a uniform comprehensive protocol as evidenced by the ILT Meeting Guide document. (3) The Special Education Team will work with the IT Department to expand the use of Aspen to include monitoring compliance of IEP services and timelines through the reporting features available as part of the Aspen Special Education module. (4) A tiered, innovative 18- to 22-year old transition program for students with significant cognitive disabilities will be created for North Quincy High School. The program will emphasize community-based instruction and

community work experience with a focus on the development of the following skills. The goal of the program is to exit students into the world as independent and productive members of society.

Special Education program teams include the Occupational Therapy Team (goal to implement and utilize the *Handwriting Without Tears* screener to show improvement with letter formation); Speech Team (goal to collaborate to modify a data collection form to track the students' level of knowledge related to classroom curriculum. This form will be used a pre- and post-data collection to monitor student progress. The Language Development team will develop a curriculum map for writing for grades 1-8 aligning skills and the scope and sequence between elementary and middle school programs using the *Landmark Writing Method* as the foundation. The GOALS team will work with students on the Naviance Career and Exploration program, along with continuing to offer credit recovery to students who have gaps or failed classes within their transcript. The CARES/SNLC team will implement the *Unique Learning Systems* (ULS) within their classroom, utilizing the progress monitoring assessments, classroom curriculum materials, and picture support.

For the collaborative QPAC/Special Education goal, increasing parent engagement throughout the school year will once again be the focus. There will be a minimum of five parent academies offered; a resource fair focused on transition services will be held in May 2017; and there will be family engagement events throughout the school year (sensory night, gingerbread decorating, etc.) One Parent Academy has already been held, a series of three is planned about Learning to Read and another about homework.

Mrs. Mahoney asked for list of Special Education program locations and for the Subcommittee to be kept informed of any potential program location changes. Mrs. Lebo asked about staffing levels at Broad Meadows. Mrs. Perkins will provide a corrected page for the School Improvement Plan. Mrs. Lebo asked about portfolio assessments; looking for data on possible points and total earned. Mrs. Lebo complimented the Transition goal.

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

Special Education Team Administrators Catherine Carey, Donna Cunningham, and Julie Graham presented on the Special Education Rights and Responsibilities, the goals being so that educators will understand their role regarding special education; to enhance collaboration between family and school personnel; and so that parents and school personnel will participate in special education matters as knowledgeable partners. The Quincy Public Schools Special Education Department operates under the federal Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Massachusetts Special Education Law administered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Students are eligible for Special Education if all three of the following are true: (1) the student has one or more disabilities; (2) the student is not making effective progress in school as a result of their disability or disabilities; and (3) the student requires specialized instruction in order to make effective progress.

There are 12 different types of disabilities defined by state and federal regulations: Autism, developmental delay, intellectual impairment, sensory impairment/hearing; sensory impairment/vision loss; sensory impairment/deafness and blindness; neurological impairment; emotional impairment; communication impairment; physical impairment; health impairment; a specific learning disability; or any combination of the above.

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. The timeline for entry into Special Education is up to 45 school working days, beginning with the parents' consent to evaluate, followed by evaluation and a team meeting to determine eligibility. A proposed IEP is then generated and /or placement recommendation. Services begin upon parental consent.

There are six principles of Special Education: (1) parent and student participation – it is the obligation of the school district to make strong efforts, in multiple ways, to ensure parental and student participation; (2) Free and appropriate public education; (3) Appropriate evaluation and three-year re-evaluation; (4) Individualized Education Program (IEP) which contains written information on the parents' concerns and the students skills, a written explanation of how the disability affects 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; and a listing of the services to be provided to the student. (5) Least Restrictive Environment – to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities have the right to be educated in the general education environment and in the classroom they would have attended if they did not have disabilities. Removal from the general education program occurs only if the nature or severity is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be satisfactorily achieved. (6) Procedural Safeguards include right to written notice; right to consent/refuse; right to "stay put"; problem resolution system; mediation and due process; timelines; confidential records; right to receive any evaluations 2 days in advance of Team meeting, if requested.

Mrs. Lebo asked about what age students become our responsibility; on the day they turn 3 until they turn 22. Ms. Nabstedt asked that all team chairs be reminded that 2-days to review evaluations is a right of parents that is not always consistently honored. Ms. Campbell suggested that it become standard practice that the paperwork be shared two days before the IEP meeting. Mr. DeAmicis asked about electronic communication, but there are concerns about privacy with emailing student information. Mr. DeAmicis asked about parents who don't speak English as a first language, QPS provides translated documents and interpreters as well. Mrs. Mahoney noted that once students are 14, they are able to participate in the IEP meetings.

Mrs. Mahoney asked about students with IEPs transitioning to college, Ms. Anderson said that this is why high school age students need to participate in their IEP meetings, they will advocate for themselves in college. Not only do students have to work with the college office of disabilities, they

need to speak with each professor about their accommodations. Ms. Anderson said that post-secondary students are under 504 plans, no longer under IDEA.

A parent questioned about the least restrictive environment requirement, Mrs. Perkins said the students referred to substantially separate classrooms require a higher level of services than can be provided at their home school. Mrs. Perkins suggested that what the least restrictive environment is defined as is different for every child. Mrs. Lebo asked if we have BCBA paraprofessionals in a classroom. Mrs. Perkins said we have paraprofessionals who implement behavior plans in fully included classes. Mrs. Mahoney asked about inclusion, all middle and high schools have inclusion classes. At the elementary level, there is some resource room push in and sometimes occupational and speech therapists push in as well.

Mrs. Perkins spoke about Administrative Communication, a parent feedback item about consistent implementation of afterschool opportunities for substantially separate students requiring transportation. This will be followed up at a Principal team meeting. Ms. Beck asked if students are eligible for programs at their home school or where they attend, and Mrs. Perkins said that either is possible. For increasing Inclusion opportunities, at the high school level, some adjustments have been made and future meeting topics will include high school Special Education pathways and middle school inclusion.

Mrs. Perkins reviewed that Maria Trozzi is scheduled for a Professional Development training stressing empathy for families and helping Special Education and Guidance staff to understand and respect parent reactions to evaluations and diagnoses. Ms. Trozzi presented a Parent Academy in the fall and will hopefully present again in the spring.

Ms. Nabstedt and Ms. Beck presented a QPAC update, parent engagement goal is a collaboration with Quincy Public Schools Special Education department. QPAC will assist with publicizing collaborative events. For parent concerns, Mrs. Perkins has been proactive about addressing issues as they arise

Mrs. Lebo thanked Ms. Nabstedt and Ms. Beck for their work and for keeping Quincy Public Schools Special Educations programs focused and changing as needed.

Mrs. Lebo made a motion to adjourn at 7:40 pm, seconded by Mr. DeAmicis. On a voice vote, the ayes have it.