

QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING ~ Wednesday, March 22, 2017

A meeting of the Special Education Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, March 22, 2017 at 6:00 pm at the Coddington Building. Present were Mr. James DeAmicis, Ms. Barbara Isola, and Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent Richard DeCristofaro, Ms. Sarah Anderson, Mrs. Catherine Carey, Mrs. Donna Cunningham, Ms. Julie Graham, Mr. Richard Kelly, Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mrs. Maura Papile, Mrs. Erin Perkins; Quincy Parent Advisory Council to Special Education Board Members Ms. Beck and Ms. Nabstedt; and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Mrs. Mahoney called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Coordinator of Special Education Sarah Anderson presented the Unique Learning System curriculum which is being implemented this year for students in the CARES and Learning Center classes from Pre-Kindergarten through Transition. An award-winning program for students with special needs to access the general curriculum, it provides differentiated standards-based materials to meet instructional needs in ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The program is organized in thematic units of study and provides multiple ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge and document achievement for students submitting the alternative portfolio MCAS.

Correlated to the Common Core Standards, the program is age-appropriate while still being accessible. For example, a high school student reading on an elementary level will have topics of interest to explore. The components can be integrated with assistive technology and differentiated materials allow for rigorous instruction at the appropriate level for all students. Each student has an academic profile and defined support levels (Level 1 students read text, produce simple writing, perform basic math processes and demonstrate comprehension of modified learning information independently; Level 2 students may require symbol support and other direct instruction for learning and comprehension; Level 3 students require extensive and pervasive support. Increasing participation is the main objective.)

There are 1,000 leveled reader titles included in the program, a comprehensive math program, and full lesson plans. Links to worksheets and leveled readers are embedded in lesson plans, as are pacing guides, learning goals, and academic vocabulary. Since the program is web-based, student information is stored from year to year, allowing teachers to see long-term progress. Separate assessments are embedded in the program. Administrative tools allow for an overview at the district level and assist in developing IEP goals for the next school year. The News to You feature makes current events accessible to students with leveled newspaper features on world news, national news, sports, and entertainment, as well as extension activities. Another program feature is called SymbolStix, containing 30,000 images which can be used to assist in communicating. Ms. Isola asked

about subscription costs. Ms. Anderson said it is based on the number of teachers and licenses can be shared, we currently have fifteen licenses. Mrs. Perkins will follow up on the annual cost.

Mrs. Mahoney asked if there is teacher feedback; Ms. Anderson said it has been very positive as relates to the portfolio development. Mrs. Perkins said in the Pre-Kindergarten and Elementary CARES classes, some work is being done to integrate this with the Discrete Trial Training students.

Ms. Anderson then presented an update on the LEAP program (Learn-Explore-Achieve-Plan); this post-secondary program is for students age 18-22 who continue at North Quincy High School after participating in four years of high school. LEAP provides real-world experiences for young adults with cognitive impairments, the goal is to make successful transitions outside of the school building and into the community. The program emphasizes working on self-determination, self-advocacy, and financial literacy skills. Twelve outside job sites plus the school store (Bright Horizons daycare teacher assistants, YMCA assistants, WIC office assistants, Marina Bay Skilled Nursing assistants/companions, QPS custodial at Atlantic and Parker, QPS Food Services at NQHS, Point, and Sterling). Younger students begin at the school store and then rotate through the outside job sites supported by a job coach. Next year, the Raider café will partner with the Business and Marketing programs to expand into other areas of running a business.

Partnerships for independent students are at Work Inc. and Cerebral Palsy of Massachusetts, these are paid internship opportunity. UMass Boston partnership in the Go, Kids program. Later this spring, student interns will be placed in the Mayor's Office and at Quincy Public Schools offices at the Coddington Building.

Agency support for transition is being finalized with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (obtaining and maintaining employment through an IPE – individual plan for employment). The MRC is becoming involved with students at a younger age and QPS is tracking the referrals to assist with follow through. Cerebral Palsy of Massachusetts has a Youth Employment Counselor who does hands-on lessons with students to assist with preparing for the world of work. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is another agency where the goal is to get involvement earlier on, they provide respite care, day programs. For Social Security Disability, students must apply on their own at age 18, this is a complicated process, but it provides access to medical insurance.

Students are working on prototype logo designs for the LEAP program with the NQHS Graphic Design department, t-shirts will be ordered when the final design available. A breakfast to celebrate the business partners and students being planned for the end of the school year. Ms. Anderson collaborated with the team to develop an application process for this year's high school graduates, with student and parent questionnaires, teacher recommendations, and an interview process.

Ms. Isola said this is so impressive, a tremendous amount has been accomplished this year. Mrs. Mahoney asked about navigating the outside agencies, Ms. Anderson said that we help families as

much as possible, but Social Security is the most complicated and critical for families. Mrs. Mahoney said we need to be aware of the possibilities of budget cuts due to changes at the federal level.

Mr. DeAmicis said it was great to see the videos of the students and their excitement and engagement. Mr. DeAmicis asked about creating resumes; Ms. Anderson said that students are creating these with assistance, it is important to have this tool like any other job applicant. Mr. DeAmicis asked if everyone in the program is in an internship and Ms. Anderson said all students are at an outside agency or working in the Raider café. Ms. Anderson offered to School Committee the opportunity to tour of job sites. LEAP students will attend the May Special Education Subcommittee meeting to be recognized.

Ms. Beck presented the QPAC Update. Unfortunately, the March 9 Sensory Night attendance was impacted by bad weather. 125 agencies have been invited to the Agency Fair that will be held on May 6 at Quincy High School. A flyer is ready to go out to families to publicize the event and Ms. Beck is compiling an Agency Fair Directory Booklet with information and resources.

Through her research, Ms. Beck has found that MassHealth requires documentation and will classify students with lifetime issues as qualifying for health coverage during their lifetime, not expiring at age 18. Ms. Beck would like to bring the LEAP program students to Wahlburgers this year. The March QPAC meeting was cancelled as it fell on the last snow day, March 14. The April meeting will be April 11; all parent concerns raised to date have been resolved.

The next Special Education Subcommittee meeting is Wednesday, May 24 at 6:00 pm.

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