



Sharon Special Education Parent Advisory Council

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Minutes of Meeting, Thursday, April 14, 2011

In Attendance: April Lomba, Marcy Kaplan, Rhonda Jansky, Sue Linehan, Katie Currul-Dykeman, Kristen Camilli, Mary Buzzell, Siobhan Murphy, Janis Monat, Steve Kaplan

First Order: Introductions.

Nominations of SSEPAC Officers for 2011/2012 accepted

Nominations were made and seconded for the following officers positions:

Vice-President:	Katie Currul-Dykeman
Treasurer:	Rhonda Jansky
Secretary:	Mary Buzzell

There were no nominations accepted for the position of President.

VOTING ITEMS

Approval of Minutes: The March 2011 minutes were reviewed. A motion was made and passed to approve the minutes.

Dissolution of the SSEPAC 501(c)(3):

Rhonda Jansky passed out a handout listing 501(c)(3) tax exemption requirements. Years ago SSEPAC had very active fund raising efforts. The focus now is more on outreach and support with approximately the same monetary balance that existed two years ago. Transference of monies from bank accounts will be a separate discussion. A motion was made and carried to terminate SSEPAC's 501(c)(3) status at end of this tax year.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION PLAN ITEMS

Speaker Series: It was proposed that Sara Ward be engaged next year as a speaker on the topic of Executive Functioning.

Goals for 2011/2012: A request for input from members on goals should be put out to the list serve.

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Sharon Middle School SPED Review: A question was put forth by a parent who had heard there was a special education review for the Sharon middle school. Marcy Kaplan asked Marcy Beckerman who said that currently there is no review pending. She said it could be a good idea but there was nothing currently planned.

Siobhan Murphy volunteered to be the middle school coordinator for a support group composed of middle school parents and middle school staff. This group would allow the parents to connect and get to know each other as issues of middle school are so different. They can meet with Marcy Beckerman and the special education staff. How approach. The Connections class contains social competencies and continuation of programs that are in the elementary schools.

UPDATES

Treasurers Report: The Treasurer's report was presented. SSEPAC received \$200 from the Sharon Middle School PTO, bringing the balance sheet to \$4,018.

Assistive Technology: There was some confusion with school personnel as to the purpose of this list of assistive technology. SSEPAC would like to use it as a resource list of what applications and what software is available.

Brendan Murphy will obtain an assistive technology listing from Cottage Street School as well as the Middle School. Marcy Kaplan with the help from Cheryl Fisher will compile a list for the High School. Sue Linehan will work on the list from East Elementary and Marcy Kaplan will work on the Heights Elementary School list.

Steve Kaplan says that only the Don Johnston software is district wide, everything else is very individualized. There will be a one day workshop held this summer for regular teachers to attend and receive training on the software.

There was some discussion regarding web sites such as BookShare.org which contains a free version of ReadOutLoud and also contains text and trade books. Federal regulations require that every textbook must also have a digital version available as well.

Recreation: Update (Katie Currul-Dykeman)

There are two fields available at the old Horizons for Youth area. There is new equipment, t-shirts are available and someone has donated a box of baseball gloves. There are currently only about thirteen children enrolled. Regular baseball is also experiencing decreased enrollment amongst younger children.

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Bullying Task Force: Update (Katie Currul-Dykeman)

The task force met two weeks ago. They will meet again next week with the group broken into smaller groups composed of high school, middle school and elementary school then these smaller group will meet together. There has been no direct conversation about special needs kids being bullied.

There was discussion amongst the task force regarding the type of bullying and where takes place. It was suggested that High School students serve as monitors on buses for volunteer community service talk (this was pointed out that it only works on the bus ride home as high school is already in session during the morning bus ride).

Katie also mentioned the task force is discussing books for required reading. It was suggested that the book "The Hundred Dresses" book could be read in the 3rd grade.

There was then some general discussion regarding bullying amongst the SSEPAC attendees. Steve Kaplan again commented that this is not just anti bullying. This needs to start in kindergarten and teach respect. Bullying is a symptom of poor social skills and mental health issues. He also suggested the program such as "Reach out for schools" that has a parent component that parents must complete. He feels it needs to be in the curriculum. Just having a monitor on a bus does not help.

Someone mentioned that this is also a trust issue with kids. They tell an adult and then they get put on spot by teacher. It was also mentioned that summer camps are experiencing these bullying problems.

Experiencing Differences: Update (Sue Linehan)

Sue Linehan met with Tim Farmer, Steve Kaplan and the three elementary school principals. There is a proposal for two new components for the second grade (regarding deaf and blind disabilities). The programs can be built within powerpoint and contain embedded videos.

Newton now sells the Experiencing Differences at \$375 per classroom. Sue will work with East Principal Judy Freedburg to apply for a grant from the Sharon Education foundation. This summer training will be conducted for teachers. Currently one class of each component is being videotaped to be used for teacher training only. Sue will work next year to help with the scheduling (especially the guest speakers). This is considered social competency and helps children to learn understanding not have the schools concentrate on discipline.

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Redistricting Task Force: There was an open meeting at the end of March to present findings and gather input from parents. The task force then made a presentation on April 27th to the school committee at the high school auditorium. The school committee will hold an open forum on May 11th and then vote on either that date or the next school committee meeting in May. The options are open to considering the grandfathering of 5th and possibly 4th grades as well as kindergarten bumping (starting at the school they will be redistricted to).

Response to Intervention (RTI) : Steve Kaplan and John Marcus conducted an RTI workshop. The RTI program is not formalized; it is an informal policy and is different in every school building. There is currently no plan to implement it this September. The comment was made that Tim Farmer has made an observation that there are too many initiatives thrown out over the last three years and there is a need to prioritize them. Baseline all kids will be screened. This year is the first year for screening of reading for kindergarten students.

RTI needs consistent application, to follow kids from year to year so that one can apply immediately information such as the child is visual learner not auditory. Steve Kaplan mentioned that there is no plan for a data warehouse that would contain this information.

General Discussions: There was general discussion regarding:

Honoring Dr. Sid Rosenthal who died in March of 2011. A suggestion was made to donate books on disabilities to the three elementary school libraries. Teachers expressed interest in being involved. The books would have dedications to Sid Rosenthal and could be donated to second, third and fourth grades. Sue Linehan will put this suggestion out to 3rd grade teachers and come back next month with proposals.

Next month's meeting needs to include a discussion on SSEAPC goals and spending.

Parent Support.

A motion was made and passed at 9:03 pm to adjourn the meeting.

Next SSEPAC Meeting: Thursday May 12, 2011 starting at 7:00 pm in the Sharon High School library conference room.

Respectfully Submitted Mary E. Buzzell