



Sharon Special Education Parent Advisory Council

www.ssepac.org

Minutes of Meeting, Thursday, February 10, 2011

- In Attendance:** April Lomba, Marcy Kaplan, Suzanne Heiten, Sue Linehan, Liz Dichiara, Mary Buzzell, Janis Monat, Steve Kaplan, Marcy Beckerman
- First Order:** Introductions.
- There is a need to have more people involved in SSEPAC. The annual elections are coming up and it would be great if there were some new officers.
- Approval of Minutes:** A motion was made and passed to approve the minutes from the December, 2010 meeting.
- Treasurers Report:** The Treasurer's report was presented. There was no change other than a \$13 payment from the Amazon.com affiliates program.
- School Committee Presentation:** The presentation is scheduled for the school committee meeting on March 2nd. The presentation was reviewed, edits were made, and a motion was made and approval of the presentation with changes was unanimously passed.
- School Budget:** The school district handout for the school budget was before the state update on the circuit breaker funding being partially restored. The handout can be found on the school district web site.
- The state cut their funding (circuit breaker) due to the Federal stimulus IDEA and jobs funding monies coming in. There was uncertainty as to whether the state funding would be restored as the Federal stimulus monies has ended. The partial restoration of funding has avoided the large shortfall which was originally predicted.
- There were for the past two years two Federal IDEA fundings – the regular IDEA grant of about \$700, 000 which is not going away and the stimulus IDEA funding which has ended.

Minutes of Meeting, Thursday, February 10, 2011

There is a 2.4% increase in the proposed school budget. There was a 2.4% override approved previously by the town but not taken. As the override was not implemented there no effect on taxes. The proposed budget provides the same level of services due to the 2.4% increase. Had the funding level remained the same there would have been a decrease in services. There is an extra \$100, 000 in Medicare monies and 70% of that goes to special education.

There is a proposal for a full time technical person to implement the technology going into middle school. The ideal candidate would have assistive technology experience and a technical systems background. There are currently twelve school related personnel retiring.

There are no proposals for cuts to any of the special education programs. Some of the changes do include increase a speech and a special education teacher from half to full time. There will be a couple of instructional assistants and clerical nurses added.

PAC finances/legal (status of 501C3, fundraising):

This discussion was postponed until the Treasurer is present at a meeting.

Bullying Task Force: Update (Katie Dykeman)

The group met on February 8th and focused on the following:

Awareness Raising Activities

- Train children to recognize bullying vs. conflict
- Possibly conduct a survey
- Assign Summer reading or video assignments with a reflection paper
- John Halligan mentioned having the whole school involvement
- Take a day each school year and plan a whole school exercise
- Chuck's high school activity – ice cream flavors – involve the whole school in power imbalance
- Star Power (MS) – people are treated differently
- Provide a training night for athletes and clubs with a requirement in order to join athletes must attend. Also have a general meeting where parents must attend.
- Identify videos
- Identify Trainers: Michelle Glynn, Margie Mitlin, Steve Morgenweck, Cheryl Harris
- Possibly have a school staff summer reading such as “Schools Where Everyone Belongs” by Stan Davis.

Minutes of Meeting, Thursday, February 10, 2011

Assessment of the Plan

- Data regarding information on page 14 – how do we know it is happening?
- Is the data being reported?
- Where is the data stored?
- The committee creates the survey and asks to distribute as a district wide collection tool

Actions for the Next Meeting

- Review survey results done by Barbara Munden at SHS
- Read through the PLAN and make notes about what we can identify this year.

Next meetings Scheduled

- at 1 School Street on March 8, 29, April 12, May 16

Recreation: Update (Katie Dykeman)

The Basketball Stars is in its final week. Coach Linnehan and Dykeman did a fabulous job with our athletes and the high school volunteers rocked! There are medals and basketballs for each athlete and Katie is making certificates of appreciation for the volunteers. There will be a cake party after practice on Sunday to celebrate.

The T-ball for children ages 6-22 will begin on Sunday, April 3rd and run through May 22nd. If Horizon's Field is unavailable due to re-sodding the High School field may be a possible alternative location. Katie and her husband will coach the 6-12 year old team again. Currently there aren't any volunteers to coach the 12-22 year old team.

Experiencing Differences: Update (Sue Linehan)

January was a very difficult month due to all the snow. Classes are still being scheduled. One class will have to be after the February vacation, the assemblies are to be held in March. Classes for the next segment will start in April. Scheduling is much easier as Sue can directly access the teachers regarding scheduling.

There was discussion regarding possible improvements to the Experiencing Differences program. There is a meeting planned for March 1st with Tim Farmer to discuss these possible improvements.

Minutes of Meeting, Thursday, February 10, 2011

Some possible improvements would involve the use smartboards and possibly creating films on learning disabilities to show in the classroom. Steve K. is mentoring young man out of college who creates films about learning disabilities who may be interested.

Marcy suggested inviting school board members to see the program in action and how much the children really get out of this program. Liz suggested filming the program and showing it during the schools' open house in the fall. There was discussion regarding media releases and Steve K mentioned that most parents do a release about filming and photos. We would want to be sure to offer an opt out opportunity.

Marcy suggested having specific books in each classroom if it was decided that this program were to be integrated more into curriculum. With specific book titles we could look into applying for a grant with the Sharon Education foundation. Steve K. mentioned that he receives book catalogs and could put a list of books together.

Newton, the town that created the Experiencing Differences program has created an update to the curriculum. Additional segments created are about autism and mental illness and Sue L. mentioned that the mental illness segment is targeted for middle school students

Possible funding ideas included: Steve K. will look into the possibility of getting a stipend for filming, someone can investigate applying for a grant from the Sharon Education Foundation and the Commission on Disability may also be a possible grant source. The Sharon Rotary Club had previously expressed an interest in funding grants for library books.

Steve K. mentioned that the retired high school librarian used to buy books for SSEPAC out of his library budget. If SSEPAC did receive a grant we could look into posting in the book an "in honor of" dedication.

Speaker series: Update (Suzanne Heiten) The Transitions seminar is next Thursday February 17th. There has been some interest expressed about the workshop and the handouts will be posted to our website as well as available at the seminar.

Family Field Day: Shari Syat is stepping down as chair of Family Field Day. She worked on coordinating this event with Pop Warner. An email will be sent out via the list serve, looking for a coordinator by a specific date. Marcy will then let Pop Warner know if someone has volunteered to take on the job. If Pop Warner wants to do it that would be great.

Minutes of Meeting, Thursday, February 10, 2011

Scholarships:

Discussion revolved around the two annual scholarships that SSEPAC awards. There should be a list of qualifications available from Maureen Olsten from last year. There was a question about possibly helping to fund school tuition for a kindergarten student. There was discussion as to whether these high school scholarships were just for a special education student. The Award is open to all students and is funded by SSEPAC. There was agreement that it could be awarded to someone who volunteers in the Friendship club or the Stars recreation program, etc..

Discussion then centered on SSEPAC not having any current fund raising and this was not the best use of the money donated by the PTO's. This money could be better used by scheduling a speaker where the topic may appeal to a large number of parents (example: executive functioning can apply to any student not just special education).

A motion was made and passed to not award the scholarship this year.

Redistricting:

There is a forum in March for parent input and then the committee will make their presentation to the school committee.

General Discussions: There was general discussion regarding:

Assistive Technology.

The question was raised as to whether there exists a list or a way to generate a list of Assistive Technology. There are currently two iPads for the NECC program pilot. Steve K. did not think there is much assistive technology other than the Don Johntson software package as software such as Alpha Smarts etc. are aging out. There was also a question about on line learning for high school students. On-line classes would be for subjects that are not currently offered at the Sharon high school.

It was decided to send out a list serv email asking SSEPAC members what assistive technology their children have used or are using.

Parent Support.

Next SSEPAC Meeting: Friday March 11th starting at 9:15 am in the Sharon High School library conference room.

Respectfully Submitted

Mary E. Buzzell