



MINUTES OF WESTON SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Business Meeting

February 26, 2020

11 Town House Rd, Weston MA 02493

Attendees:

Kathy Davidoff, Maija Cirulis-Gooch, Anne Zernike, Jennifer Truslow, Rachael Sawyer, John Henry, Dana Christensen, Lisa Lappi; Alison Muzila, Victoria Gifford, Emma Waltham, Christy O'Brien, Annunziata Varela

1. Call to order & introduction

A meeting of the Weston Special Education Parent Advisory Council was called to order at 9:05 by Co-chair Kathy Davidoff

2. Child Find Mandate

- a. Jen Truslow reported that they are currently updating policy & guidelines – Goal to have by opening of school year 2020. Last written policy is 2011.
- b. Current process (reported by Jen Truslow): send out letters to parents, schools, preschools, pediatricians, etc. in Sept/Oct & post in newspaper about developmental screenings & who to contact. This process is updated since the 2011 policy and follows current regulations/state guidelines. Ad will be placed in the Weston Town Crier next week to inform the community.
- c. Kathy requested copy of draft guidelines, Jen Truslow said they could share the letter that is sent out and the distribution list.
- d. There is a money set aside for both homeschooled Weston-residents and Weston Residents attending private schools to support special needs & disability support.
- e. Alison Muzila asked about the role of teachers in Child Find. Jen Truslow explained the process of how teachers elevate concerns to the Instructional Support Teams. Suggested to bring in Kimo Carter to explain how children are identified within the general ed classroom setting and targeted for assessment.

- i. Alison Muzila requested further clarification if teachers are allowed to suggest testing/or needs based on concerns. Jen Truslow said that she wants parents & teachers to have open communication around areas where children are struggling. She said she discouraged specific diagnoses/disability made by teachers. There are mechanisms within the schools for teachers to elevate concerns to principals/correct individuals.

3. ESY Updates

- a. Kathy Davidoff requested an update on where the district is at developing policy
- b. Jen Truslow said there is no policy because there can't be a policy.
 - i. 2011 handbook is outdated --- no forms anymore because the schools have team chairs
 - ii. All special ed teachers & staff are taking data on ongoing basis to see if they are meeting their IEP goals and then have conversations about students that may be having signs of regression after breaks.
 - iii. Student Services meets monthly to plan for ESY
 - iv. Jen highlighted that ESY must be discussed at each annual/re-eval IEP meeting. Discussion around the table how this isn't always happening at IEP meetings.
- c. Clarification was made that the District is developing GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES, Policy is developed by the School Committee. Jen Truslow confirmed that the district is refining the Guidelines & Policy with the plan to have the new guidelines released by Fall 2020
- d. There was discussion about the timing of finalizing ESY offerings. Jen Truslow explained the frustrations/challenges of determining the staffing;/planning of ESY as the decisions are based on data, which may not be known until April break and ESY must be offered to all students who need it.
- e. Alison Muzila questioned the downtown offering

4. N Letter Rule

- a. Lisa Lappi explained the impact of N Letter Rule and how it impacts children with special/medical needs. Highlighted the contradiction that medical issues are impacted, but behavior (suspensions) are not.
- b. Jen Truslow said that we needed to get different people involved. John Henry communicated that it is a school level issue and should be something for the new principal.
- c. John Henry suggested that the application should be flexible and applied.

- d. Lisa Lappi pointed out that it is a civil rights violation and other school districts have been sued over this.
- e. ACTION ITEM: Follow up at Parent Advisory council at the High School and contact the new principal. Kathy will represent this concern and raise it at the next meeting.
- f. Jen Truslow reported that new principal will be holding meetings over the summer with concerned parents and encouraged discussions with Paul Perri.

5. Weston Food Allergy Committee

- a. Victoria Gifford & Dana Christensen reported that there has been no movement that they are aware of on the updated policy. District representatives (Kimo Carter, Amy Kelly & Laurie) said they would not be ready for February given the need for Midge, lawyers & doctors to look at it.
- b. ACTION ITEMS:
 - i. Request meeting with District representatives (Victoria, Dana & Kim)
 - ii. Victoria to ensure Laurie is sending out a note regarding upcoming presenter & will do further publicity with Weston Town Crier, Flyers, Westword PTO notice, & social media (May 26)
- c. Goal is to have policy in place by the summer so that teachers can be informed by next school year.
- d. ACTION ITEM: Victoria Gifford reported that the current policy is not being followed (allergens allowed the classroom) and has been discussed with Laurie. Victoria will follow up with Laurie.
- e. Kathy Davidoff suggested that representatives bring concerns to the School Council meetings at each school where the policies are made.
- f. WEEFC approved grant request on allergy presentation (Kyle Dine) for May 26 , grades K -5
- g. Rachel suggested promoting Kyle Dine presentation at Library during Food Allergy Awareness week. (Victoria to email Emma Kwon & Weston Public Library)
- h. Kathy Davidoff questioned how to raise awareness at middle & high school.
 - i. John Henry & Victoria Gifford suggested getting allergy awareness added to school health curriculum.
 - ii. Kathy Davidoff suggested there may be an opportunity for a student to take a leadership role in spreading awareness. Alison Muzila questioned how much pressure that puts on a student.
 - iii. General discussion on the need to build awareness in middle school.
- i. Peer Buddy System: this is a goal of the Food Allergy Committee. Maybe this will bring out someone who would be a good student to lead this effort.
 - i. Lisa Lappi suggested reaching out to Sara Lappi/HS student ambassadors

- ii. Discussion that Paul Perri had a similar program out in Franklin and may be able to introduce it here.
- j. Dana Christensen reported that the Allergy Committee is now a direct Liaison with the PTO
- k. ACTION ITEM: Have information on SEPAC website so that information on safe foods & how to make rooms/facilities safe
- l. Program at Newton Wellesley Hospital tonight for How to Deal with Food Allergies at Schools by MGH Allergist. Will discuss bullying as well. It will be livestreamed as well.

6. 20/21 Proposed Budget & School Committee Meetings and impacts

- a. Kathy Davidoff had asked John Henry to update the meeting minutes to reflect the discussion about Special Needs and how it played a larger role
- b. Proposed PE cuts: Lisa Lappi reported discussion of installing a Sensory Hallway at Field School to help make up for the loss of 30 minutes a week of PE.
 - i. ACTION ITEM: Follow up with Dan Green about getting a WEEFC grant to fund the sensory hallway (Maija Gooch & Lisa Lappi)
- c. Victoria Gifford expressed concerns about cut of PE staff and how he supports kids with special needs. His (PE teacher) presence is very valuable and expressed this to John Henry.
 - i. John Henry reported that even with the cuts the PE teachers will only be teaching class 50% of the time
- d. Question: could PE time be replaced with Recess? John Henry reported that the issue is the time needed for instructional time given short school day.
- e. Alison Muzila questioned if cutting foreign language would be preferable to cutting PE. There was discussion about the pros and cons of this.
- f. Lisa Lappi highlighted the Brain Gym program and if that would be possible (before school)
 - i. ACTION ITEM: Discuss with Dan Green
 - ii. Issue in the past was getting sufficient parent involvement
- g. Discussion on importance of Out of District Coordinator
 - i. Not just 25 kids paid for by Weston, but 40 private pay Special Needs students that Weston is responsible
 - ii. How will team chairs be able to handle this workload – negative impact on in-school IEP students
 - iii. Other districts use Assistant Director of Student Services serve as the Out of District coordinators

- iv. Believe that this will become a union issue
- v. John Henry reported that
 - 1. the district administration looked at current workloads and thinks it is possible
 - 2. it is a policy issue that the School Committee makes, but may have to bargain with the unions on the impact on contract
 - 3. School Committee is committed to serving our students and will ensure that their needs are met (from money perspective)
 - 4. Administration feels that this cut can be made.
- h. Kathy Davidoff stressed importance of not cutting special needs funding when
 - i. Not meeting MA laws around special needs provisions and policies haven't been updated since 2011
 - ii. DESE report cards do not show we are closing the gap on the attainment for students with disabilities
- i. Victoria Gifford highlighted the importance of the BCBA and risk of losing her if we cut her hours. She is very valuable and looks at the whole child. As Jen Truslow and Anne reported earlier that there are so many new requests for evaluations.
 - i. Maija Gooch & Lisa Lappi added concerns about importance of BCBA and difficulty around obtaining BCBA services privately.
- j. Christy O'Brien raised issue of private school students not being allowed to participate in Extra-curricular activities. Discussed that this is an area where information is lacking.
 - i. John Henry suggested that reaching to principals & Jen Truslow, Chris Memoli, Anthony Parker, Midge Connolly
 - ii. Discussion around Music department -seems to be problematic in accommodating kids with special needs

7. Neurodiversity Week (March 13th)

- a. Annunziata Varela brought up idea of celebrating this in our schools
- b. ACTION ITEM:
 - i. Reach out to Dan Green and suggest posters/books to be highlighted (Annunziata)
 - ii. Post every day on our websites/social media (Kathy & Lisa)
 - iii. Plan for next year

iv. Request Amy Kelly send out a notice to staff about Neurodiversity (Annunziata & Alison)

v. Add to PTO newsletter (Dana)

8. SEPAC Survey

- a. Got a mini-model from Vicky Rakov to test. Working on getting out kinks. Need to have another conversation to fix the issues
- b. Will not meet an end of February deadline, still work in progress
- c. ACTION ITEM: Lisa Lappi to follow up Vicky to ensure still meeting our goals

9. April Autism Planning -- April 15th

- a. Movie: Autism goes to College? Or improv group: Asperger's R Us
- b. Alison to reach out to Library to host

10. Minutes January 29, 2020 meeting shared: Motion to approve made by Victoria Gifford, seconded by Lisa Lappi - members of the SEPAC unanimously voted to approve the minutes of January 29, 2020.

11. Adjournment: Motion for Meeting Adjourned made by Kathy Davidoff, seconded by Lisa Lappi, members of the SEPAC unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:10am.

Minutes taken by Maija Cirulis-Gooch

Documents:

WHS Student Handbook page 13 Absence/N Rule Attendance policy-

<https://www.westonschools.org/high/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2019/10/Handbook-19-20-1.pdf>

Article: Sankey Law Wins Hearing that will Impact Attendance Policies for Students with Disabilities <https://www.sankeylaw.com/author/admin/page/2/>

Weston Public Schools P & P Manual :Child Find pg 41

<https://secureservercdn.net/50.62.88.87/9hc.101.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/wpsspedmanual2011.pdf>

Wrightslaw The Child Find Mandate: What Does It Mean to You?

<https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/child.find.mandate.htm>

Weston School Committee Minutes January, 29, 2020

https://www.weston.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/_01292020-5257