



## Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council Annual Meeting and Election of Officers – Wednesday, June 10, 2009

### MEETING MINUTES

#### I. CALL TO ORDER:

Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

The following Board Members attended the meeting:

Nancy Sherburne, Terry Lindgren, Steve Lowe, Bill Guthlein, Valerie Ryan  
Also in attendance were SpEd PAC members: Pat Bickimer, Cynthia Overman, Sasha Stavsky, Lynne Zawada, Kim Nolan, Andrew Comjean, Shu-Fang Lin; Pupil Services Representative: Matthew Kidder; and School Committee Member: Xuan Kong

#### II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

Nancy gave some background on the SpEd PAC and its focus as a parent run organization that works closely with parents and Pupil Services to ensure successful outcomes for children with special needs. Nancy mentioned the Parent-to-Parent listserv offered by the PAC as a great way for parents to stay informed about PAC activities as well as a great way to connect with other families and share information and support with one another.

#### III. ORGANIZATION/BUSINESS ISSUES:

##### A. Treasurer's Report:

Bill provided a handout of financial activity for the period of July 1, 2008 thru June 11, 2009. Bill reviewed the year's income and expenditures and reported a balance of \$996.78 as of May 31, 2009.

B. Fundraising: Nancy emphasized that while fundraising is not the primary purpose of the PAC, funds are needed to accomplish important services such as bringing educational speakers to the community and providing informational handouts and resource materials to families on an ongoing basis. Nancy also mentioned it might be nice in the future to provide a scholarship for a graduating high-school senior with special needs each year. One fundraising idea previously discussed by PAC members had been: giving presentations to each of the school's PTOs and asking that a portion of PTO funds be allocated to the PAC annually. Nancy emphasized that the PAC does not want to compete with the PTOs for funds as many parents already participate in PTO fundraising and this would be asking parents to do double duty. Other fundraising opportunities discussed included holding bake sales, conducting flower bulb sales in the fall, and/or writing grant proposals.

C. Suggestions for Speakers/Presentation Topics for Next Year:  
A review of suggestions from the SpEd PAC survey was given. The most often suggested topics from the survey were: Social Skills Workshops, Navigating the IEP Process, Teen Related Topics, and Autism Topics. Suggestions were made to bring in Pamela Ely, and Lynn Crowley (both from the Ely Group), Elsa Abele, and Sarah Ward for social skills and executive functioning presentations. A discussion took place of other ideas for topics and speakers. Ideas presented were: The Special Education Process; Sheila Heene author of *Difficult Conversations*; specific teen topics such as sex education, dating, and anxiety; No place for Hate; Ned Hallowell's presentation on focusing on what is positive about your child; and parenting siblings of special needs children.

D. Peer Mentoring:  
Expanding peer mentoring to benefit special education students was discussed. Mentoring for support of social, academic, and organizational skills was discussed. Some ideas were:

- Extend the support into after school hours to help with homework
- Children with special needs could take on the mentoring role in their areas of strength
- Mentors would earn credits
- Bringing in professional coaches/mentors to facilitate executive functioning skills especially after school

Xuan mentioned that the idea of peer mentoring had been raised at the last Pupil Services Round Table. Liza was looking into the idea of implementing a program.

***Action Item: Matt stated that he would follow-up with Liza regarding the status of implementing a peer-mentoring program.***

#### **IV. ELECTION OF PAC OFFICERS:**

Nancy proposed that we move into elections, she mentioned that she had brought a copy of the By-Laws and noted that the By-Laws were also available on the PAC website.

A. Election of Co-Chairs: Terry asked for nominations for SpEd PAC Co-Chairs. Cynthia nominated Nancy Sherburne and Bill Guthlein and Sasha seconded the nomination. Terry asked if there were any other nominees – no others were presented. A vote of PAC members took place. There were 11 votes for the nomination and none against. One member chose to abstain. Terry made a motion that nominations for the other PAC Officers be made and that motion was seconded.

B. Other Board Members: Nancy made the following nominations:  
Co-Secretaries: Valerie Ryan and Lynne Zawada  
Co-Treasurers: Sasha Stavsky and Caroline Jarvis  
Past-PAC Chair: Steve Lowe

Cynthia seconded the nominations. A vote of PAC members took place. There were 11 votes in favor of the nominations and none against. One member chose to abstain.

- C. A discussion took place regarding increasing visibility of the PAC. Reaching out to parents of children who may have a need for special education but are not yet receiving services was emphasized. It was suggested that the role of the school PAC representatives be expanded. The representatives could give a brief presentation at the school open-house events, for example. Nancy expressed the need for PAC members to volunteer at the schools. **Volunteers agreed to represent schools as follows:**

- **Nancy – RJ Grey Junior High School**
- **Steve – Any school where there is a need**
- **Valerie – Conant School**
- **Sasha – Gates School**
- **Kim – McCarthy Towne**
- **Terry – AB Regional High School**

Other ideas for increasing visibility were: PAC coordinating with the resource room leads; and coordinating with community education to provide more extracurricular opportunities – including sports - for special needs children.

*Action Items: Look into getting on the agenda for school open-house events; Nancy to connect Shu-Fang and Caroline Jarvis regarding shared interest in expanding extracurricular opportunities through community education for children with special needs.*

**V. 2008-2009 PAC ENDEAVORS INCLUDED:**

- A. First Back-to-School Special Education Family Picnic: This event took place in early October and was co-hosted by Pupil Services. Nancy mentioned that Danny's Place had been a great venue and that it was an important event to connect families of children with special needs.
- B. PAC members participated in a Superintendent Search Focus Group and provided written input into the process for hiring a new superintendent for the district.
- C. Donation to the Acton Memorial Library in Lynne Deutsch's memory: A donation of books and a check was made. The library staff were very grateful as they did not have many special needs related resources but do have a significant demand for them.
- D. SpEd PAC Survey: The survey was distributed to special education families. Nancy encouraged all present to go to the SpEd PAC website to

read the survey in detail. Bill spoke about the comprehensive analysis of data and report. Bill mentioned two major highlights: 1. Satisfaction of parents by primary disability - parents of autistic spectrum children were much less satisfied than parents of children with specific learning disabilities; 2. Bullying- Bill stated that there is reasonable evidence that bullying may be more prevalent among special education children and overall parents are not satisfied with school programs. The mission of improving the process and the perceptions of parents of the process was emphasized. Terry encouraged everyone to attend the school committee meeting when the survey results are presented.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT:**

Nancy thanked Terry for his work as co-chair. Terry talked about the progress made and the strength of Nancy's leadership over the past couple of years. Terry encouraged all to take ownership of PAC goals. Terry motioned to adjourn the meeting, Steve seconded the motion, and all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.

**VII. NEXT MEETING:**

The next Board meeting will take place in September.

*Meeting Minutes Respectfully Submitted by Valerie Ryan, Secretary.*