



**Acton-Boxborough Special Education
Parent Advisory Council Board Meeting
Wednesday, October 12, 2011**

MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order - Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:39 pm. The following Board members attended the meeting: Bill Guthlein, Nancy Sherburne, Caroline Jarvis, Cynthia Overman, and Valerie Ryan. Two other PAC members were in attendance, as were Pupil Services liaisons, Julie Towell and Matt Kidder and School Committee member Paul Murphy.

- II. Approval of September Minutes - Nancy mentioned that there is a need for an additional measure of compliance with the most recent Open Meeting Law changes. Val explained that the minutes would be distributed to the board prior to the next meeting as has been done previously. In order to more strictly comply with Open Meeting Law any comments submitted prior to the next board meeting will be distributed to the executive board in preparation for formal review at the next board meeting.
The group discussed several changes to the September minutes submitted by Nancy via e-mail to the executive board on October 7, 2011. The e-mail detailed the proposed changes as shown below:
 1. I think Bullet III.B.4.a. should be clarified to read, "The Department of Education has stated that providing a summer camp experience for special education students is not a legal mandate." I don't think DESE has stated that an integrated summer program is not a mandate. The info Liza shared with Bill and myself was that a summer camp experience was above and beyond the call of duty.
 2. Also in paragraph III.B.4. the minutes should be changed to reflect that Caroline said she would email Julie a copy of the Shrewsbury summer program immediately following the PAC meeting. I think the minutes should only reflect what was said in the meeting not actions that may have been taken following the meeting.
 2. In paragraph III.A. the "Friends" organization is actually titled Friends of AB SpEd PAC, Ltd not Friends of the PAC. I think it would be better to reference it as "Friends" or "Friends of AB SpEd PAC" instead of FOP. Also in that paragraph the Friends meeting should be changed to a Business meeting not a Board meeting (see Sept. meeting agenda).
 3. In paragraph VI. I believe the three main PAC priorities I identified in the last meeting were 1) the Survey Analysis, 2) the MCAS Analysis and 3) the redesign of the AB SpEd PAC website (which is a very specific outreach task). Identified as secondary areas of interest, time allowing, were building a list of local

resources to include on the website and offering more opportunities for families to connect socially (which Heidi has kindly offered to help us with). My concern was that the website redesign is a huge undertaking and I didn't want to see us bite off more than we could chew for deliverables this year. The broader goal of social outreach encompasses a lot of things I don't think we'll have time to fully accomplish this year.

Discussion regarding the PAC priorities took place. A parent present suggested that a general goal of developing a parent outreach program was relevant. It was agreed that a fourth priority titled "Increase parent outreach" could be added. It was also agreed that goal four described in the September minutes (Building a list of resources vetted by the local special education community) could fall under the goal of redesigning the website. No additional changes were proposed. A motion was made to approve the minutes with the above changes, the motion was seconded and all were in favor.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

- A. Review and Approve Revised By-Laws – Nancy referred to the document titled *By-Laws: Acton and Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council As amended October 7, 2011*. The document had been e-mailed to the executive board on October 7, 2011 and was available at the meeting. Nancy mentioned that the revised by-laws reflect changes in a) officer organization and b) grants, donations and fundraising as a result of the establishment of the Friends of the AB SpEd PAC organization and 501(c)(3) status. Nancy asked if there were any comments on the revisions. No comments were made. A vote was taken to approve the revised by-laws. All were in favor and the revised by-laws were unanimously approved.

- B. AP SpEd PAC Survey Discussion – Bill referred to the document titled *Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parents Advisory Council 2011 Parents Survey Summary of Findings October 2011*. The document had been submitted to the executive board on October 7, 2011 and was available at the meeting. A review and discussion of the Executive Summary portion of the document took place. Bill proposed three PAC initiatives as follows:
 - 1. Pursue development of a special education progress reporting system that conveys how well the student is performing relative to IEP goals and to the standards for performance of a typical child.
 - 2. Pursue making before and afterschool and summer extracurricular programming more available (with appropriate supports) for the special needs population.

3. Develop a plan for effective communication with the group of parents who indicate concern about negative consequences if they disagree with the Administration.

A discussion took place regarding initiative 3. Suggestions made included: further breakdown of data and follow-up with parents as it relates to the topic.

Bill asked if there were any additional ideas regarding initiatives the PAC should focus on as a result of the survey results. There was agreement that the areas Bill proposed were viable and that they would be prioritized in the same order as proposed. It was suggested that the response to the survey question regarding feeling safe at school as it relates to bullying should also be addressed. In addition, a suggestion was made to integrate responses to the question “Did my child meet IEP Goals and if not was it Addressed?” into the progress reporting initiative.

Bill stated that the target date to present the results and report to the school committee is the November regional meeting.

- C. Review District Smart Goals – Nancy passed out copies of the document *APS & AB School District Goals: District-wide K-12 S.M.A.R.T. Goals 2011-2012; mid-year update 2/13 final update 6/12*. The document was reviewed with particular focus on the Pupil Services goal ‘Program Development and Fiscal Responsibility Strategies and Measurable Outcomes’. Nancy mentioned that a parent had called with concerns regarding the measurable outcomes that are stated without qualification regarding the quality and quantity of services. In particular, Measurable Outcome 5. was mentioned as concerning by the parent. This outcome is written as follows: “Reduced rate and frequency of referral to special education.” Matt noted the goal to provide the least restrictive environment when appropriate. Nancy mentioned that the PAC’s feedback would be that the measurable outcomes be put in context so that the implication that the district is cutting services is not made. It was also agreed that receiving draft copies (i.e. pre-vote) of the S.M.A.R.T Goals is important.
- D. Website Design Update – Nancy mentioned that she and Karl are looking at various templates using public access software designed for blogging but adaptable to website format. A parent present suggested that one of her husband’s Boston University students might be able to help should it become necessary.
- E. Movie and Pizza Night Update – Caroline and Heidi updated the group on their work in organizing a social event for parents. The event will feature the movie *Rio* and will be held in the youth room of the Acton Congregational Church. Options for most viable dates and times were discussed. It is hoped that the event will take place in November.

F. Speaker Update – Nancy mentioned that she had attempted to contact the Federation for Children with Special Needs and Family Ties in order to schedule presentations. A parent present with connections to the Federation volunteered to follow up with that organization. Caroline suggested that Beverly Montgomery from Lex Communicate may be willing to present on the topic of pragmatic speech and that she will follow up on that possibility.

G. Handbook Update – Nancy is waiting for feedback from Dr. Mills and the Pupil Services staff. Matt provided the following feedback:

1. A point of agreement among Pupil Services reviewers was that the document is long.
2. Due to the length of the document a test run might be useful to see if it needs streamlining for ease of use.
3. In the ‘Parts of an Education Plan’ section it might be useful to refer to the format used in the Federation for Children with Special Needs’ handbook.
4. Provide more links to other resources, the Department of Education, for example.
5. There are some more minor edits to be reviewed such as the misnaming of a program, for example.

Nancy mentioned that she is interested in distributing the handbook as quickly as possible. Nancy and Matt agreed to meet to review the more minor edits. Review by PAC board members was also suggested.

H. Friends of AB SpEd PAC Update - Cynthia updated the group on the light bulb fundraiser. Cynthia mentioned the need to reach special education families. Special education families will be targeted vs. all parents to avoid conflicting interests with schools already running or planning to run this fundraiser. A discussion took place regarding options for distribution. Julie suggested that we coordinate with Liza’s next e-mail distribution in order to avoid sending too much to parents from Pupil Services. It was also suggested that Nancy could send fundraiser information via her e-mail list. Other suggestions included making the information available at the Movie and Pizza night and utilizing the PAC’s website. Cynthia offered to take orders for the light bulbs by phone and e-mail.

IV. Adjournment - A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, that motion was seconded and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 PM.

Next Meeting – AB SpEd PAC Board Meeting Wednesday, November 9, 2011 at 7:30 pm in the R.J. Grey Junior High Library.

Respectfully submitted by Valerie Ryan, Secretary.