

Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee
April 23, 2008

Attendance: Eve Bisard, Sharon Terzian, Jessica Schad, Dorrie Carter, Tom Daniels, Jen DiTusa, Kara Theriault, Carla Jaggi, Cindy Roberts, Melanie Cluley, Katlyn LaCroix, Susan Fay, Delia McDermott, and Derek Thayer

Meeting was called to order at 7:10pm by Eve Bisard. Eve made a motion to accept the last meeting minutes. Sharon Terzian accepted and Melanie Cluley seconded the motion.

Old Business: Eve began the meeting by letting the members know that the next Transition Planning Workshop will be held on Tuesday May 6th 2008 from 6:30pm – 8:00pm at The Meeting Place of the PAL office at 95 Rolf Street in Cranston. The next item of old business is that the workshop, All You Need to Know for New Students is scheduled for Wednesday May 7th from 6:30pm – 8:00pm at the Admin Building. Quite a few professionals have already confirmed and Jen DiTusa offered to attend as a Special Education teacher as well.

New Business: It's that time of year again for the Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee nominations for the positions of co-chair and secretary for the 2008-2009 school year! If anyone is interested, please let the committee know. Elections will be held at the May 14th WSEAC meeting.

A concern was raised that certain members of the committee are not receiving emails. Sharon let the committee know that she will check on any emails which have bounced – but did let everyone know that they need to respond to the invitation to join the WSEAC yahoo group.

Director of Special Education Report – Dr. D'Agostino couldn't make it due to a budget meeting.

State Update: Sharon Terzian notified the committee about two upcoming workshops – the first was Collaborative Instruction for Middle and High School Classrooms which is going to be held on May 20th 2008 at the RI Convention Center and the second is the New IEP process and products – the dates and locations can be found on the RITAP website. Sharon also told the committee about the new report card program which is going to be presented by Denise Ahearn who is a Special Education Assistant Director from Pawtucket where they have been utilizing the new report card for about a year now. Denise will be doing a presentation of the new report card at our next WSEAC meeting on May 14th at 7:00pm.

School Committee Update: No members of the school committee were in attendance at the meeting.

Membership – No new memberships were presented at the meeting.

Next Meeting Date: Wednesday May 14th at 7pm.

Public Comment: Delia McDermott asked about meetings where key representatives are not present – does a person have the right to cancel the meeting? Also, should the IEP be already written when you come into the meeting? Several members of the committee addressed the questions – if key people are missing from the meeting, then you should feel comfortable canceling especially if those individuals are critical to making decisions or any changes. As far as having the IEP already written when you come into the meeting – it is acceptable as long as it is only a draft and changes can be made based upon the input of the team members. Delia also talked about the importance of addressing transition early.

Sharon talked about a third option that has not been exercised in the state of Rhode Island for the NECAP test. It is meant for those children who don't qualify for alternative assessments and for whom the NECAP test itself is an inappropriate measure of their progress. Sharon also talked about the Inclusion Academy which is held at the Alton Jones Campus in May and October to assist teams bring a positive inclusion experience into the classroom. There is further information on the Sherlock Center website.

Tom Daniels let the committee know that with Rhodes closing – the children without special needs are going to a different school than those students with special needs since there isn't enough room at the feeder school for the kids with special needs. He feels that this is wrong because the children with special needs are not going to be able to go to the feeder school and are being treated as a different class than their peers without special needs. His feeling is that as a committee, we have more authority than as individuals to address this issue. Eve responded that it is not the WSEAC's position to take a position on the issue of school closings. It is our role to assist families by providing support and information they seek during this process. It is not the role of the WSEAC, as a whole, to determine what is/was/will be considered an appropriate placement, program, or school, for any particular, individual child, whether it be their home school, a school across town, a self-contained placement or an inclusion placement. That is what the IEP team is for. But the WSEAC will respond to the school committee decision that has been made, and any future decisions that may be made, by continuing to support our mission of providing support and assistance to any parent who has a concern regarding their child and the special education services that they receive. It is up to each parent and the rest of their child's IEP team, for each individual child affected by the school closures, to determine what is an appropriate transition plan to the next placement, where that placement may be, etc.

Delia talked about her experience with McKenzie and how nice it was to finally go to a school where they were wanted versus just because it was their home school.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kara Theriault