

**Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee**  
**April 8, 2009**

Attendance: Eve Bisard, Fran Cripps, Susan Ascoli, Mary Rounds, Derek Thayer, Bob Mattis, Mary Townsend, Dr. D'Agostino, Kristen Batchelor, Susan Fay, Kara Theriault, Bethany Furtado, Cindy Roberts, and Jessica Schad

Meeting was called to order at 7:10pm.

Kara Theriault accepted the last meeting minutes and Susan Fay seconded the motion.

Old Business: Open House at Drumrock – Jessica spoke with Mrs. Keenan who let her know that Drumrock's open house will be in the fall and the WSEAC could do our open house in conjunction with Drumrock's. .

Nominations for the 2009-2010 WSEAC board positions: Eve let the committee know that it was time for nominations for next year's WSEAC board positions of Co-Chair and Secretary. Mary Townsend indicated that she would like to nominate herself for the position of Secretary and Eve Bisard and Jessica Schad both indicated that they would like to serve as co-chairs again next year. Eve let the committee know that we would be taking/making final nominations at May's meeting and then we will vote at June's meeting.

**New Business:** Family and Consumer Science Program – Eve introduced Fran Cripps, Susan Ascoli, and Mary Rounds who are Family and Consumer Science teachers. They wanted to speak to the committee about the value of the Family and Consumer Science program especially to children with IEP's. Mr. Mattis indicated his concern that our kids need more functional programming. The teachers indicated that they work with children with autism and well as children who are non-verbal as well as those who have Down's Syndrome. They also indicated that they teach social skills and adaptation and that sometimes these kids are rejected in other classes – where in these classes – everyone is welcome. Beth Furtado talked about her three sons that went through Family and Consumer Science classes and had a great deal of pride in the work that they completed. The question was posed as to why our kids can't get these skills in the vocational program. The vocational program begins in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and the children have to test into the program. The Family and Consumer Science program is available for grades 9-12 and they can also keep children that qualify up to age 21. Eve also mentioned that in some cases – children don't have families that work on these independent functional skills – so school may be the only place they can learn these skills. Dr. D'Agostino asked the teachers if they could accumulate credits in math in these courses. The teachers indicated that unfortunately you could not. Dr. D'Agostino indicated that this was problematic because it is all about academic rigor and bridging the gap between kids with IEP and those without IEP's. Beth Furtado agreed that the Federal mandates call for more rigorous academics to close this gap and cities are being asked to do more with less.

Eve asked if the committee wanted to write a letter in support of maintaining the Family and Consumer Sciences program. It was agreed that Eve would write the letter to support this program on behalf of the WSEAC.

**Director of Special Education Report:** Dr. D'Agostino told the committee that the ESY program would be 5 weeks and look very similar to last year. Eve asked if children transitioning between elementary to middle school or middle school to high school would go to the incoming class or stay in the last class. Dr. D'Agostino indicated that the children would stay in the last class instead of being moved up to the new program for ESY. ESY will begin the Monday after July 4<sup>th</sup> and continue until August 7.

Dr. D'Agostino then talked about RTI (response to intervention). He indicated that the program has been very well received. It is currently being run in 6 elementary schools – but – the programs look different than each other. The goal is to get feedback from each school about what parts of their program work well in order to develop a common template.

Dr. D'Agostino talked about the two schools which are currently being considered by the consolidation committee – they are Warwick Neck and Greene. They currently have about 200 students each – not many with special needs.

A question was posed to Dr. D'Agostino about charging tuition to the typically developing peers at Drumrock. Dr. D'Agostino indicated that beginning in September 2009, all peer models will be charged \$100.00 per month. This was approved by the School Committee at last night's meeting.

**State Update:** State Special Education Advisory Network, RIPIN, and the Department of Education have sent out the satisfaction surveys to the homes of children with IEP's. If you have not received one – please contact RIPIN so that you can participate.

**School Committee Update:** Beth Furtado was the School Committee representative at the meeting. She indicated that the School Committee purposefully did not get involved with the school consolidation committee. She indicated that the times dictate what needs to be done. She believes that we need to in source our kids versus outsourcing them. She believes that we are doing now what should have been done 15 years ago. We need to spend money on education and buildings and grounds need to go by the wayside.

**Membership** – Eve indicated that she will be sending out notifications to those members who haven't attended in a while to make sure that they are still interested. If they are not or if they do not respond – then they will be removed from the committee which will allow the committee to accept new members.

**Next Meeting Date:** Wednesday May 13, 2009 at 7:00pm.

**Public Comment:** Jessica asked if it was a possibility to use an empty school and bring back the elementary school kids who are in out of district placements. Dr. D'Agostino

and Bob Mattis indicated that there would need to be cooperation with the union for a three year commitment and “combat” pay. Bob Mattis indicated that the teachers and teacher assistants would need to be classified differently – he gave an example of a successful program called Sanders Academy that he developed in Cranston which used this model. Dr. D’Agostino also added that schools need to be encouraged through training to keep kids in their home schools.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kara Theriault