

Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee
May 14, 2008

Attendance: Eve Bisard, Jessica Schad, Susan Fay, Melanie Cluley, Jen DiTusa, Kristen Batchelor, Susan Rooney, Dr. D'Agostino, Lucille Mota-Costa, Cindy Roberts, Denise Ahern, Sharon Terzian, Dorrie Carter, Kara Theriault, and Derek Thayer.

Meeting was called to order at 7:10pm by Eve Bisard. Eve made a motion to accept the last meeting minutes. Jessica Schad seconded the motion.

The meeting began with a presentation on the new report card by Denise Ahern, Pawtucket Assistant Director of Special Education. She had positive feedback about it's effectiveness since it is data driven and very specific about grade level expectations. A question was posed to Dr. D'Agostino about when the new report card would begin to be used in Warwick. He indicated that it would be effective in September of 2008 and that the Director of Curriculum would be rolling it out to teachers and principals soon as well as holding parent informational sessions to explain the new report card format.

Old Business: Eve began the meeting by talking about the WSEAC sponsored event, All You Need to Know for New Students. The professionals who attended had great feedback about the event although there was low parent (non-WSEAC members) turnout. Eve asked the committee to think of ways to increase parent turnout for the next year. It was suggested that more parents may attend if it was held at the new Early Childhood Center at Drumrock next year.

Eve then brought to the committee's attention that according to our bylaws, the WSEAC can only have 21 members at a time, and currently we have 18. Eve thought that having copies of our brochure made up without the membership form attached may help reduce the number of individuals who sign up to be members, yet do not attend on a regular basis. Melanie Cluley offered to print some brochures without the membership form attached.

New Business: 2008-2009 WSEAC Officer nominations/voting. Due to no other nominations for Officers other than Eve, Jessica, and Kara, the committee members voted unanimously that Eve Bisard and Jessica Schad would remain as Co-chairs and Kara Theriault would remain as Secretary.

Director of Special Education Report – Dr. D'Agostino reported that the Early Childhood Center at Drumrock was approved. It will house VOWS, Child Outreach, screening, pre-school and integrated kindergarten. Dr. D'Agostino had also mentioned that they are piloting a full day kindergarten program with children who are identified as being at risk, yet do not currently have an IEP. It will consist of 20 students, 12 typically developing students and 8 students identified as being at risk.

Eve asked Dr. D'Agostino about the possibility of doing an IEP satisfaction survey due to some common questions which have arisen during the last few meetings. Eve asked the committee to begin thinking about questions which could be put into the survey. Dr. D'Agostino stated that he would look into the issues with confidentiality. The committee would look to roll it out next year.

Eve asked Dr. D'Agostino on an update regarding having someone present an Estate Planning Seminar for parents of children with special needs. He indicated that Sheila is playing phone tag with the person who would be presenting, but Dr. D'Agostino will get back to us when he has more information.

State Update: Sharon gave an update about what the parent signature means on an IEP. Apparently, the IEP goes into effect 10 days after the IEP meeting regardless of whether or not the parent or guardian has signed the IEP unless the parent files for mediation. Sharon also brought to the committee's attention that the IEP no longer states that the parent needs to file for mediation or else the IEP goes into place within 10 days. Susan Rooney did indicate that it is still specified in the Parent Safeguards though. Sharon also let the committee know that Barry Grossi and Lynn Ryan will be doing training on the new IEP on May 28th at Vets Auditorium – the Secondary IEP is being presented from 1:30pm to 3:00pm and the Elementary IEP is being presented from 3:00pm – 4:00pm.

School Committee Update: Lucille Mota-Costa talked about how brutal the school committee meetings have been. She also indicated how important it was to be economically and ethically responsible after prior years of bad fiscal management. She indicated that even after the consolidation of the three elementary schools, that 10 schools are still running at less than 58% capacity. Unfortunately, the budget crisis from the state level is trickling down to the local level and that Medicaid is still being cut. Even after the closing of the schools, there is still a 4.7 million shortfall which at this point is 94% accurate. According to Lucille, 80% of this has to come from staffing. The breakdown is as follows: 26 WISE employees, 9 admin positions, no more science assistants, 1 electrician and 23 teachers of which 3 are retiring.

Lucille stated that she believes that the new Superintendent is very competent. She also stated that although people may not agree, that the current structure is not top-heavy and that hopefully we have hit the bottom of these tough fiscal times. Lucille did mention that the district needs to do a better job with technology. Dorrie concurred and gave an example of how difficult it was to get the correct technology for her child and that schools needed to do a better job communicating about what technology they have so that it is utilized effectively and efficiently. Jessica then posed a question to Lucille about whether there was concern about the cleanliness of the schools now that they were laying off a number of the custodians. Lucille indicated that this shouldn't be a problem since schools were not going to be open during the weekends and if someone wanted to have an event, they would have to pay for custodial services themselves. The committee talked about how important it is to pay a complement to the custodians for the job that they are doing and how a kind word goes a long way!

Membership – No new memberships were presented at the meeting.

Next Meeting Date: Wednesday June 11, 2008 at 7:00pm.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kara Theriault