

**Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee**  
**September 19, 2007 Meeting Minutes**

Attendance: Eve Bisard, Jessica Schad, Lucille Mota-Costa, Kara Theriault, Cindy Roberts, Bob Mattis, Melanie Cluley, Dorrie Carter, Annie Johnson, Sharon Terzian, Thomas Daniels, Delia McDermott, and MacKenzie Medwin.

Meeting was called to order at 7:09pm by Eve Bisard. Eve made a motion to accept the last meeting minutes. Annie Johnson accepted the last meeting minutes and Cindy Roberts seconded the motion.

Eve began the meeting with the School Committee Report. Lucille Mota-Costa was the school committee member in attendance. She first began by saying that she was glad to hear that Dr. Horoshak had attended our last meeting on August 8<sup>th</sup> and that she believed that he was a good choice for the new Superintendent. She then began discussing the approximately \$600,000 budget deficit. She broke the deficit down into two parts. The first was for approximately \$110,000 which was a case that was lost where the employee was given back pay. The second part was approximately \$500,000 which was due to Medicaid reimbursement problems. Lucille explained to the best of her understanding that it was due to regulations which had been changed mid-year as well as issues of compliance and proper paperwork procedures while working with Compuclaim. She indicated that she is still trying to get to the bottom of what happened exactly.

Lucille then discussed that the School Committee is in the process of organizing a committee to look at city wide re-districting and consolidation. She then discussed the issue that occurred at Vets with the Tech teacher shortfall. She indicated that there has been a 3/5 teacher position accepted instead of a full time teacher to teach the course. Lucille discussed that the Jr. High team leadership program is one that she is quite excited about, but due to the 7 period day versus a 6 period day – that this caused an unforeseen shortfall of 3-4 teachers. Lucille ended by discussing the Universal Breakfast program of which she is a strong advocate.

*Old Business:*

Eve stated that the WSEAC annual report is final and ready to be posted on the web-site.

Transition Workshop. Everyone at the meeting received a flyer for the Transition to Adulthood Workshop Series for 2007/2008. The first is scheduled for 10/17/07. Mrs. Rooney will distribute the flyers at the secondary level to Junior and Senior families. The School Committee Room has been booked for this series of workshops.

Jessica discussed possibilities for upcoming RIPIN workshops. She indicated that they were offering Basic Rights in Special Education which is a pre-requisite for ABC's of IEP's and Families and Teachers together. Jessica felt that the Families and Teachers

together was too similar to the Building Partnerships workshop previously held. Sharon felt that the Committee should hold off on the IEP workshop until the new ones are finalized. The Committee felt that January would be an ideal time to hold the Basic Rights in Special Education workshop.

*New Business:*

Eve indicated that a number of parents had expressed a deep concern that at the Jr. High level – specifically Winman – that the children with special needs were being dismissed 20 minutes earlier than their typically developing peers. In addition, at Winman – the children with special needs have to go into and come out of the back door of the school which differs from where the other children come and go. Annie Johnson stated quite eloquently that if we are trying to build a society of inclusion, this is a tremendous stumbling block if typically developing children are seeing children with special needs having to use a separate door. Lucille indicated that she will get in touch with Dr. Horoschak with this issue and get back to the Committee with his response.

*Director of Special Education Report:*

Bob Mattis was the representative from the office of Special Services this meeting. He began by clarifying certain points in the meeting minutes from August 8<sup>th</sup>. He first stated that he felt strongly about the importance of using Student First language when discussing our children with special needs and their classrooms. Bob drew our attention to the use of the words “Autistic Classrooms” in the meeting minutes and that under Student First Language – they would be referred to as “Classrooms for children with Autism”. Truly an excellent point! Bob then clarified the differences between the classrooms for children with Autism. Children that are considered to be level 1 are those with the most tremendous challenges. The initial classrooms for children with Autism were set up to service these children. What they realized, was that there were still children with Autism with significant needs who needed a classroom which was similar to that of a level 1 but not as therapeutic. These students are considered to be level 2. The level 2 classrooms are at Robertson, Lippitt, and Greenwood. Lippitt currently has all Kindergarten students although it can accept K-2 and Greenwood does service K-2.

Eve then asked Bob if the Autism training for the teachers was going to be repeated and if it was mandatory. Bob indicated that it was not mandatory – but that the attendance at both Autism I and Autism II was excellent. He also indicated that there were a good number of regular education teachers in attendance as well.

Annie indicated to Bob that she had received a phone call that her child’s IEP needed to be changed since the literacy professional in the CO-OP program is being pulled out. Annie questioned how it could be a CO-OP program without having two teachers. Bob Mattis indicated that schools are not mandated that do CO-OP or be inclusion – but that inclusion is best practice. He did state that if it was written into the IEP – that was different. He cautioned that when writing the IEP – that it should coincide with the abilities of the new program that the child is transitioning into. Annie did raise a concern that her Special Ed Assistant Director did not attend her child’s IEP meeting last June.

Dottie Carter raised a question for Bob about alternative assessments and when it gets determined. According to the committee – this has to be determined by October for the following year and is re-determined each year.

Jessica Schad then asked Bob if he had heard about a program sponsored by the Autism Project which is presented to children in the schools to learn about and appreciate differences. Bob was very interested and asked Jessica to get more information so that he could discuss it with Mr. Bushell.

***State Update:***

Sharon discussed the new proposed regulations that were handed out at the meeting. She drew the Committee's attention to the proposed regulation that states that class sizes would now be dictated by the school committee. She also highlighted the new proposed IEP's – one for pre-K – 14 and the second one for secondary. A question came up about if you could request the second IEP upon any transition such as elementary to Jr. High as well as Jr. High to High School. Sharon indicated that this was possible. She also discussed parentally placed private school placements where the responsibility for providing services would change from the LEA of residence to the LEA where the student attends private school. Sharon let the committee know that public comment is scheduled for 11/7 and 11/8.

***Membership:***

No new applications were submitted for membership. Eve currently has two applications that she is holding to ensure that those individuals who submitted them are sure that they want to be on the committee.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 20, 2007 at 7:00pm.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kara Theriault