

**Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee
October 10, 2007 Meeting Minutes**

Attendance: Eve Bisard, Jessica Schad, Annie Johnson, Sharon Terzian, Susan Rooney, Kara Theriault, Susan Fay, Derek Thayer, Cindy Roberts, Thomas Daniels, Carla Jaggi, and Melanie Cluley

Meeting was called to order at 7:10pm by Eve Bisard. Eve made a motion to accept the last meeting minutes. Annie Johnson accepted and Cindy Roberts seconded the motion.

Eve began the meeting by discussing transition workshops. Susan Rooney indicated that the department chairs have the list of upcoming workshops and are trying their best to get the information out to the parents – but there appears to be a breakdown in the process. Tom Daniels asked if a mailing was possible – but Susan Rooney indicated that there wasn't enough money in the budget to make that happen.

Annie Johnson let the committee know that she had received a phone call from Early Intervention asking for more WSEAC brochures. Eve Bisard then stated that she had received some phone calls from parents about WSEAC membership. It is great that word is getting out!

Jessica Schad updated the committee about the proposed seminar with RIPIN, Basic Rights in Special Education. Due to a RIPIN scheduling conflict, the proposed date of January 23rd is not available. Jessica will continue to work with RIPIN to arrange a mutually convenient date.

Several members of the committee brought up concerns about open house notification. The dates and times are not currently listed on the Warwick Public Schools website. Several schools that were specifically mentioned were Tollgate, Winman, Francis and Hoxie. A positive note was that Dr. Horoschak did attend a number of open houses.

Eve Bisard gave a quick update on the school committee meeting. She indicated that she presented the WSEAC annual report and that the meeting was mostly dedicated to the discussion of energy expenses.

Director of Special Education Report: Susan Rooney was the representative this month. She began by discussing the transportation concerns brought to light at the last meeting. She indicated that Dr. D'Agostino researched the issue and the first thing is that all students in alternative programs, ie those children in ESL programs, children who are administrative transfers, as well as those children with special needs utilize the alternate entrance. The reasoning is that this entrance has a ramp as well as being in close proximity to the elevator and the bathrooms. Susan Rooney stated that if the entrance that the remainder of the students come and go from is used, then the special education busses must wait in line with the other busses. This could potentially extend the bus rides for our children. Eve stated that Dr. D'Agostino had mentioned to her that he was considering sending home a questionnaire to the Winman parents to find out which entrance they would like their children to use. At this point, Annie Johnson indicated that she still had a concern. Her concern was not just about her own child, but that this issue is a teachable moment. She raised the issue that we should be trying to teach our children to cope in a real world environment and not always sheltering them. Annie Johnson then stated that the issue is not just about the door, but about changing culture and creating the next generating and shaping their perceptions about individuals with special needs. Susan Rooney then brought up the point that this alternative entrance is actually the least restrictive environment and that it should be a choice. Susan then addressed the question of what an "Administrative Transfer" was. She stated that it was when the special education assistant directors or director placed a child outside their home school. It could be due to a grandparent who is responsible for getting the child to and from school, or a child with a disciplinary challenge, a child who lives on the line between two schools, as well as other specific cases. Susan Rooney finished this segment of the meeting by stating that Bob Mattis and the other Special Education Assistant Directors are working with Mr. O'Hare about the transportation issue. There was a question about Aldridge specifically that is being addressed.

Susan Rooney then gave a quick overview of the specific responsibilities of each of the Assistant Directors of Special Education. They are as follows: Susan Rooney – responsible for Veterans High School, Gorton Jr. High and the associated Elementary schools which are in this region. Her special responsibilities are for the therapeutic and alternative programs. Mary Leone – responsible for Tollgate High School, Winman Jr. High and the associated elementary schools. Her special responsibility is

child outreach. Bob Mattis – responsible for Pilgram High School, Aldridge Jr. High, and associated elementary schools. His special responsibility is for the classrooms for children with Autism. A question was raised about whose responsibility it would be if there was a specialized classroom within another Assistant Director's district. Susan Rooney indicated that the Assistant Directors always work with one another, and in that instance – most likely the responsibility would be with the Assistant Director with the specialized classroom even though technically, it is not their district.

Thomas Daniels had a question about the rotation of the Special Education Assistant Directors at the WSEAC meetings. Susan Rooney indicated that Mary Leone was scheduled for attendance at next month's meeting.

State Update: Sharon Terzian let the committee know that the new regulations are on line and a public hearing will be held on November 7th at CCRI Warwick in room 4080 from 5pm – 7pm. In addition, Sharon indicated that she will be meeting with the commissioner so if anyone has any specific questions or concerns, they can email them to Sharon.

School Committee update: The school committee was not represented at this meeting.

Membership: Eve will be submitting Susan Fay's application for membership to Dr. D'Agostino to present at an upcoming school committee meeting. Welcome also to Derek Thayer a parent attending our meeting for the first time.

Next meeting is scheduled for November 14, 2007 at 7:00pm.

Public Comment: Eve Bisard stated that she understood that the WSEAC meeting was probably not the correct forum for discussing the need for Automatic Defibrillators in the public schools. She was wondering if Susan Rooney could direct her to the appropriate person to speak with and if it fell under the umbrella of grants which would be Steve Lowery's department. Eve discussed that while she was working during lunch at one of the public schools, a staff member had a heart attack and that there was not a Automatic Defibrillator at the school. Susan Rooney was not sure who handles this but since it is such an important issue, that she recommended that Eve bring it up at a school committee meeting.

Thomas Daniels brought up that with all the discussion about transportation and early dismissal and other inclusion issues that it was important to look at all of our schools. Susan Rooney stated how important it is when parents bring these types of issues to their attention because it may be the only way that they know that there is a problem. Annie Johnson asked how we can add to the community and teach others by changing the attitude of general education. Susan Rooney stated that this is a topic that is discussed in almost every meeting that she attends.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kara Theriault