

Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee
November 14, 2007 Meeting Minutes
Revised

Attendance: Eve Bisard, Jessica Schad, Sharon Terzian, Cindy Roberts, Delia McDermott, Thomas Daniels, Annie Johnson, Pam Goes, Lucille Mota-Costa, Dr. D'Agostino, Dorrie Carter, Paul Cannistra, Melanie Cluley, Carla Jaggi, 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. Annie Johnson accepted and Dorrie Carter seconded the motion.

Eve began the meeting by discussing the Transition Workshops. The next is scheduled for November 20th 2007. Pam and Eve then began discussing the concern which came up in October's meeting about how there is a breakdown in the dissemination of information about the Transition Workshops and that the information is not getting home to the parents. Pam stated that last year when the calendar was mailed out, that each workshop averaged 20-25 people per session. This year when the calendar wasn't mailed out, the attendance is significantly less. The question was then posed to Dr. D'Agostino about utilizing the automated phone system to get the message out to the parents. Dr. D'Agostino indicated that he didn't see a problem, but that it would have to be cleared by the Superintendent. Dr. D'Agostino let the committee know that he would get back to us with an answer since there is not a meeting in December. Pam Goes brought up an additional point. She believes that it would be helpful that at the beginning of the year that a mailing be done to explain the Transition Workshop prior to the phone system being used to notify parents of the times and places of each session. Pam

Goes indicated that Susan Rooney promised a mailing last year, but at the last Committee meeting, she indicated that there wasn't money in the budget to make that happen. Pam then indicated that Trudeau would provide the money for the postage – but due to confidentiality issues, that the committee could not have access to the mailing list. Cindy Roberts asked whether the Transition Workshop flyers could be send home with the Quarterly Progress Reports, but Dr. D'Agostino stated that there is already so much paper coming home that it might get lost. Pam Goes clarified for the Committee that the transition age is still 14 although the federal law was changed to 16 – Rhode Island has kept the age at 14. Delia McDermott offered to get the word out at Vets HS about the Transition Workshop over the next few days to boost attendance.

Update on other WSEAC sponsored events for 2007-2008: Jessica Schad distributed the flyer for the Basic Rights in Special Education Workshop that is being presented by RIPIN on January 23, 2008 from 6:30pm – 8:30pm at the Administrative Building. She also distributed a sign up sheet since pre-registration is requested. Jessica also indicated that the follow-up workshop to this one is tentatively scheduled for May – but would be contingent upon the success of the first. Eve Bisard then discussed tabling the discussion about the new student workshop that is scheduled for March until our January meeting.

Jessica Schad stated that she checked with Sheila about the WSEAC budget. It is broken down as follows: \$200 for Advertising, \$160 for Supplies, and \$200 for postage. The question was posed to Dr. D'Agostino about whether or not the budget could be re-allocated based upon the Committee's needs. Dr. D'Agostino said that it would be acceptable to re-allocate. Pam Goes mentioned running an advertisement in the Beacon. Dr. D'Agostino will follow up on the advertisement for the Transition Workshops in the Beacon.

Director of Special Education Report: Dr. D'Agostino began by discussing the new RTI or Response to Intervention mandates. It comes down to eligibility issues – child performance in the classroom and making changes based upon what is witnessed. This translates to spending more time with the student. This is a pre-referral process. According to Dr. D'Agostino, Warwick is 3 years behind in implementing the process due to the contract negotiations. RTI is currently being utilized for learning disabilities only. Dr. D'Agostino is also going to be using this model in the pre-schools due to the 92% referral rate of pre-school children. Pam Goes asked whether it is good to identify these children so that they get the services that they need. Dr. D'Agostino indicated that he believes that it is due to the in-experience of some pre-school teachers that some of these children are referred in the first place. Currently one of the issues is that Warwick does not have a full time diagnostic team. 80% of the age 3/4/5 year olds are supposed to be screened, yet only 16% were screened. This percentage will be improving since Dr. D'Agostino got the liability waivers to be able to go into the private schools. In addition, 20 pre-school teachers have been trained to be able to do the screenings.

Dr. D'Agostino indicated his plan to open another pre-school room at Holiman in a month to two months. He is currently moving furniture around in anticipation of this occurring. He will be taking this to the School Committee for their approval.

State Update: Sharon Terzian updated the Committee on the most recent public hearing with regards to proposed special education regulation changes. The most critical are taking out the 230 day requirement as well as taking speech and language out of IDEA. Sharon did indicate that in her opinion, they are listening and know that some of the language in the proposed regulations is vague. The next two public hearings are November 26th 2007 at 7:00pm at the Davies Career and Technical High School in Lincoln as well on December 3rd 2007 at 7:00pm at South Kingston High School.

Another state issue is the new proposed IEP. A large question that is being address is what does signing the IEP really mean? They are also critiquing the instruction page.

School Committee Update: The major issue currently confronting the School Committee is the organization of the Re-Districting and Consolidation Committee. It is made up of Principals, Administrators, and PTO Presidents. High School feeds most likely would not change. Lucille believes that parents should be involved in the process and attend the open hearings. These open hearing dates will be posted in the Beacon.

Lucille let the Committee know that a part time person for the vocational program has been found for Vets. It is someone from the private sector who is doing a tremendous job and bringing real world experience to the classroom.

There is also a new attendance policy which is much less punitive to health related or IEP based absences.

Lucille also let the Committee know that the teacher contract is not completely settled. Five sub-committees made presentations to the School Committee last night. For example, they are re-vamping the teacher evaluations. The last time that these were updated was in 1991.

Paul then asked in the Committee had heard any feedback from bringing back the out-of-district placements back into the public schools. Kara mentioned that she had heard from a parent whose child was transitioned from Bradley to Winman and that the parent was very pleased with both the teacher as well as the School Psychologist. Lucille did indicate that she was very impressed with the efficacy of Dr. D'Agostino as well as the new Superintendent – that he was soft spoken, yet very detail oriented.

Pam Goes asked about the Alternative High School programs. Dr. D'Agostino indicated that these are an extension of the Therapeutic High Schools which mainly serve children with behavioral challenges. They have been very successful and currently serve 15-16 children. Annie then asked that this

information be relayed to those constituents who do not attend School Committee meetings and may not know about these programs within their own schools. She also indicated a need for Principals to be more politically correct when addressing these types of programs.

There will be a new rotation plan for the next year for the school committee. The next School Committee meeting will be on December 11th 2007 and meets usually on the second Tuesday of the month.

Membership: Dr. D'Agostino to take Susan Fey's application to the next School Committee meeting.

Public Comment: Pam Goes discussed the MHRH meeting coming up on Friday from 8:00am – 12:00pm at the Shriners Imperial Room. The Division is looking for input on several issues, but no decisions have been made as of yet. There has been concern that the Division has not asked for input before this time. There is a moratorium on opening new group homes, but no group homes are slated to be closed. Also, the Division is saying that they are creating new options for people, not cutting off future options, although at this time it is unclear exactly what this means. Eligibility and the definition of who is eligible may be looked at. They are planning on having new contracts in place by 7/1/08, but they have not specifically said that they will be consolidating community resources. They have been clear that some people feel the number of provider agencies is too large, and should be examined. The Division has stated that they will repeat the forum after this Friday's forum and will also be holding "mini-forums". These will be working meetings. Pam knows of two meetings being organized for families to get together and discuss the issues. Once Pam has the specifics, she will follow up with the Committee. There will certainly need to be an advocacy outreach and all of us will probably want to stay informed and up-to-date.

Annie then asked Dr. D'Agostino about having teachers attend. He indicated that he can offer it to them, but it is not mandatory for them to attend.

Next Meeting: January 9, 2008 at 7:00pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kara Theriault
Have a Happy Holiday Season!