

SEPAC Collaboration Meeting 2.23.2021

Present: Jess O'Toole, Natasha Rivera, Jessica Clark, Karen Heath, Jennifer O'Leary, John Skogstrom, Jeff Ferranti, Brian Haas, Chuck Caragianes, Jennifer Gaudet

Community members: Lisa MacPhee, Carol Corcoran, Kara Varden

Mike Barth joins at 8:00 p.m.

Jess O'Toole reads preliminary information

1. Meeting Called to Order via Roll Call

II. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes (5 min- VR)

- Natasha wants to amend with expanded names.
- Approve January and October minutes

III. Administrators' Update (20 min- D/ P)

- Jeff Ferranti: DESE comes through every three years. Self-assessment piece is done. DESE is now at the point of: preliminary findings look good; now sending out a parent survey, sometime in March. They will want a member of SEPAC to interview. Findings will be in the areas of special ed and civil rights. (They also do a School Stability Review.)
- Jeff Ferranti: every 2-3 weeks, Dr. Johnston has a special ed leadership meeting—opportunity for consulting with other directors.
- Jeff Ferranti: DESE would like to know about trainings. . . . Family Success Partnerships can make info available to families.
- Natasha Rivera: info about the DESE review is also circulating in the community. Parents have the opportunity to contact them with questions/comments. Can that press release be shared from the district?
- Jeff Ferranti: can be shared.
- Jen O'Leary: in the past we've done it as an email blast to families.
- Natasha Rivera: sending it out from the district would be part of good communication, building trust.
- Jeff Ferranti: possibly distribute in newsletters from the schools, along with a heads up about the survey
- Natasha Rivera: which tier
- Jeff Ferranti: we are in the tier with about 85% of other schools—not the more intensive review.
- Jess Clark: asks for clarification—this happens every six years? What was identified in the initial review—where do we stand on the issues from three years ago?
- Jeff Ferranti: will do a comparison from three years ago.

- Jen Gaudet: the Coordinated Program Review, we were given a few areas to focus on. For example: language; some demographic groups to include in non-discrimination statement; etc. We successfully completed the CPR, in full compliance at the end of the period.
- Jess O'Toole: are there any things specific to the pandemic in the review?
- Jeff Ferranti: one requested update about how we're providing services now.

IV. Parent Virtual Coffee Hour: Scheduling and Agenda (15 min- IO/ D)

- Jess O'Toole: can we confirm the schedule, think about plans
- Jeff Ferranti: we agreed on something like 10/10:30 a.m.; or maybe try that plus an evening.
- Jess O'Toole: was the intention for something informational, or relationship-building?
- Jeff Ferranti: the hope is informational, and that leads to relationship. Maybe parents want to talk and share. Maybe questions in general about particular programs.
- Jess O'Toole: maybe have a few open-ended questions that could frame the discussion.
- Jeff Ferranti: possible date—Friday, March 5 at 10:00.
- Natasha Rivera notes that is the date following the community Zoom on March 3—could lead to some special ed questions
- Natasha Rivera: Possibly ice cream social when the weather allows

V. Basic Rights Trainings: Scheduling (10 min- IO/ D)

- Jess O'Toole: we collaborate with Lincoln, Concord, Acton to take turns hosting. Now that it's three parts, we really have to collaborate. Evaluation and Eligibility—Concord held on Feb. 3. The Transition Planning one—scheduled for March 30, hosted by Lincoln. Understanding the IEP—Maynard could host; when would be good timing? Possibly April?
- Jeff Ferranti: possibly aim for earlier, since IEP meetings can tend to pile up during the end of the year.
- Jess O'Toole: Possibly April 6, with back-up date of April 13?
- Natasha Rivera: what is needed after the meeting?
- Jeff Ferranti: DESE wants to know that it has happened.
- Jen O'Leary: can make the agenda and presentation available; list of attendees.
- Jess O'Toole will fill out form requesting meeting dates

VI. Dyslexia Subcommittee and Screening Updates (15 min- D/ P)

- Jeff Ferranti: would like to have meeting with SEPAC about updates, some of the research. Identification is the first piece; instructional piece is next. Literacy committee at Green Meadow, along with Mike Barth. Different folks are doing presentations to the

staff. Would want to take what we're doing already. . . Literacy group on the one hand; your experiences as parents.

- Jen Gaudet: iStation is a tool we're looking at for screening; also DIBELS 8 (?), plus others. Not only one assessment—but making sure that all domains covered. Literacy review is functioning is looking at a K-5 resource review: the most complaints had been about literacy program resource. We have Foundations—strategies for phonics acquisition. Now how do we pull in other domains of literacy. Other programs we're looking at—all meet standards. Also looking at the Curate project that reviews programs. We have landed on: we want a comprehensive program using comprehensive language for K-5. Whether that's one program that does everything or a combination of programs for different approaches: still deciding. Also an isolated review about students with dyslexia.
- Jen Gaudet: the intention is that we select programs that we pilot with students, using several resources. Through feedback from teachers, students, parents, can make decisions.
- Jess Clark: are we leaving behind leveling assessments, zeroing in on skills assessments?
- Jen Gaudet: we need to work on that assessment battery. Look at a variety to provide us with data. For example, iStation—disaggregates the data. Still connects to level but gets more fine-grained. Because of the pandemic we will have lots of students with skill gaps to fill.
- Jess O'Toole: when you're talking about a resource review, what does that mean?
- Jen Gaudet: the tools we're using.
- Natasha Rivera: at some point wants to hear more about the monitoring part.
- Jen Gaudet: this will be step two of literacy review group. After we select tools, we turn to assessments—what are they giving us?
- Natasha Rivera: for parents, we want to be sure they will understand what those data points are. Some resource for what parents should be looking for.
- Jen Gaudet: creating an assessment glossary. Green Meadow is also doing a report card review. How can we share information so it's useful for parents. Concern about not just whether a student is below grade level, but whether they are there and not improving.
- Jess Clark: if the child isn't making progress—what should that process look like?
- Jen Gaudet: a grade team looking at all students, figuring out how to support them—part of the data culture we are creating. Then we implement intervention. From there—then it goes the BBST team—this is what we've tried, what we've seen, ideas about next steps there. From a parents' perspective—our communication with families need to be proactive. Maybe instead of report card in the beginning of the year, a more intensive conference?
- Natasha Rivera: some concern about relying on parents to highlight when there is a concern. How can we think about how to have the district reach out to the parent.
- Jen Gaudet: confirms that school would be reaching out to parent.
- Jess O'Toole: are we including Title 1, special ed, etc. in this resource review?

- Jen Gaudet confirms yes

VII. Remote and Hybrid Learning Update (15 min- D/ P)

- Jess O'Toole: we've received the emails about lengthening the school day, eventually full return. Questions about staffing, etc.
- Jeff Ferranti: on staffing—posting for ABA specialists and paras. When we promoted a few paras, that cut down on those numbers too. Also posting for special ed teacher for Green Meadow, hoping for literacy experience. A constant search for appropriate staffing levels.
- Jess O'Toole: with bringing in more kids, how are we handling staffing to cover IEP needs?
- Jeff Ferranti: everyone has worked with good intention to bring in as many kids. We may have shifted staff without fully realizing impact on kids with IEPs. Does want to support the principles of bringing in kids—but some consequences to recognize. If parents are noting a concern about services, support—encourage them to speak with teacher, team chair, principal; Jeff is also happy to attend meetings to problem-solve.
- Jen Gaudet: planning to bring students in—some things outside of our control. We were planning to have high school interns to staff remote rooms, which was supposed to start at beginning of February, but now state has delayed.
- Jess O'Toole: we have to be planning
- Jen O'Leary: can't offer students a classroom without a qualified teacher; have to make school available to all kids, including those on IEPs.
- Jeff Ferranti: if you are aware of parents who are aware of something that's been taken away from the child, please send them.
- Jen O'Leary: it's the district's responsibility to tell parents when services are delayed
- Jeff Ferranti: no plan to suggest that high school students were going to take the place of paras to meet services or provide instruction
- Jess Clark: providing services to the students you're inviting in—what
- Jen Gaudet: how students are being brought in. Students prioritized to be in the classrooms; if that was not possible, students who couldn't learn at home given the remote staffing room.
- Brian Haas: recognizing that two days was not enough. Moving to four days—prioritizing students with disabilities who weren't being successful, plus others (ELL, etc.). Also other kids—if there wasn't room in their classroom, they could be in remote learning center. Some support, but not same level as classroom. But we have been struggling getting teachers. (True for most districts.) Originally looking for paras; now also looking for teachers.
- Natasha Rivera: perspective rooted in the worry that in the past, some special ed decisions have not always made with everyone who should be involved (team chair, parent, etc.). So how can we fix that. Scheduling and staffing changes need to involve all of those people.

- Karen Heath: are there IEP kids in those remote learning centers? What would the plan be for accommodations for those students?
- Brian Haas: there could be some IEP kids in those rooms.
- Chuck Caragianes: at the high school, learning centers staffed by special ed teachers or paras. In consultation with team chairs and Jeff. When we went to four days a week, shutting down the learning centers. Communicating those decisions to those parents.
- Mike Barth: the evolution of the remote learning center—over a month ago. Bringing in students about whom we had concern, not only IEPs/504s. At that level, we didn't have the same level of guidance; we had very strict rules about kids not crossing cohorts—but the teachers were desperate to get kids in the building. Fowler did not use paras—staffed by building subs, sometimes principals. Students are still really remote students—need a quiet place, etc. When we got the green light to allow students attend all four days, that remote learning center emptied out, and those students went to regular classrooms. Remote learning center then became for a different tier—kids whose parents need to get back to work, along with kids with challenges. But most challenged students are in classrooms. There may be a few kids with IEPs in the remote learning centers; the special ed liaisons love that, because they could come down there and access a remote student and offer them support and services. Throughout the day, etachers could come down, touch base, etc.
- Jen O'Leary: expresses great appreciation for all the information everyone is offering. Communication with parents seems to be where this fell apart. Something as basic as a para being on the service delivery gride—when more kids came to the school, then the child loses that para—this is something that parents need to know. Can also be an issue of communication between principals and special ed department.
- Jeff Ferranti: there's a benefit in figuring out how to navigate past the bump in the road, figure it out together. No intention of repeating history that wasn't positive.
- Jess Clark: a few takeaways from this: 1) differentiate how something is rolled out across all three schools; elementary needs different support. 2) when it comes to communication to parents with students on IEPs, it needs to come from someone who can answer questions. 3) notification about pulling paras, and here is the plan—keep making those strides towards transparency.
- Brian Haas: original email from Brian—understands a different level of clarity is needed. Thinking back to how we rolled this out—this conversation is helping revisit that.

VIII. Parent Survey (15 min- D/ P): tabled

IX. Remote Student Assessments (iStation) (15 min- D/ P): tabled

- Karen Heath: for an assessment that is going to happen at home, how will accommodations work?

- Mike Barth: working on parent guide to iStation—that section needs to be more robust.

X. Citizens' Comments (10 min- IO)

- None received

XI. Members' Comments (10 min- IO)

- Natasha Rivera: raises concern about communication for ELL families.
- Jess O'Toole: thanks everyone for patience and support, and for filling in on SEPAC work during challenging family time. Also thanking admin for taking feedback about snow day policy into consideration.
- March 13: high school, college night for students with disabilities—terrific to see this.
- Jen O'Leary notes student assignment about effects of COVID, asks about whether this is happening across the district.
- Jen Gaudet: survey to families; Chuck Caragianes: survey to students.

XII. Adjournment via Roll Call