

## Maynard SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council)

Meeting Notes

Date: Tuesday, April 23rd, 2019

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Administrative Offices, Conference Room

Board Members in attendance: Jennifer O'Leary, Natasha Rivera, John Skogstrom, Jessica O'Toole, Danielle Pimenta, Karen Heath, Heather Nickle

School Committee in attendance: Bethlyn Houlihan, Maro Hogan

Administration in attendance: Carol Gahan, Charles Gobron, Mike Barth, Chris Kitchell

Also in attendance: Community Members (parents and SC candidate Leslie Knight)

### Subject: SEPAC - Admin Collaboration Meeting

action items highlighted in yellow

1. *Introductions*
2. *Citizens Comments:*

Parent- We had questions about the Language Based classroom so maybe we can ask during the presentation?

3. *Members Comments (none)*
4. *Language Based Program and Services discussion:*

Bethlyn Houlihan/ Maro Hogan- Discussed monthly meetings with SEPAC. Appears to be a strong disconnect about how things have been presented about language based classroom and what is actually happening. Appreciation was expressed for Carol's presentation to SC. Suggested the information presented to SC should be available for parents on all our programs. Community advises the way language based classroom is presented gives the wrong impression about the program: that it is happening, not just that we have the **capacity** for the program.

Natasha Rivera- Addressed question of: Why is the distinction between the presentation recently given and what is actually happening important? Parents need accurate information to make decisions about placement for their child. For some parents it's the first time they are hearing about the language based classroom. School needs to make sure information given to community and parents is accurate.

Bethlyn Houlihan- There was some confusion regarding information given about sub-separate placement and what services given there.

Carol Gahan- Other programs in the district such as co-taught classrooms and Oasis has a total number of students and easy to determine percentage on IEPs. For both these programs we didn't have to create anything from scratch, they each had protocols in place. There isn't that kind of framework for Language based programs - we couldn't find a model it in the public schools. It must be tailored to our

population, which is constantly changing. Autism programs are similar, ever evolving based on student need.

Discussion occurred around Maynard's initial foray into autism programming partnering with NECC (New England Center for Children). No teacher was provided by NECC but ongoing consultation and curriculum was utilized. We used Maynard teachers and staff. Suggested that perhaps partnering with Landmark could be utilized for language based services as Landmark has an outreach program- they provide training and framework. A reputable solution that can come and help us. Carol Gahan committed to exploring the Landmark outreach program.

Jennifer O'Leary- SEPAC and the parents involved are a vastly underutilized resource who are happy to lend expertise. This is an opportunity for collaboration.

Natasha Rivera- We all have the same desire for the students to succeed. We agree that a LB class is a good idea.

Community Parents- Expressed concern that they don't know enough about the program to agree or disagree. Concerns: it's still unclear if the language based program is just one teacher; the diversity of grades in the classroom; and if it's one teacher teaching all classes.

Carol Gahan- Replied YES and NO: currently looking at grades 4-7 for the classroom. DESE has rules about age ranges (48 months). Students with dyslexia have commonalities and differences.

Community Parents- Asked if 4th, 5th, and 6th grader would be taking ELA at the same time or each grade takes subjects together and separate from the other grades. Concerns if all grades taking subjects at same time, it ends up being just packet work rather than a true classroom.

Carol Gahan- It's a challenge in a small school to do grade by grade because there aren't enough students per grade. For students who are struggling to read (decoding, encoding, comprehension) we start them where they are at- it doesn't matter what grade level they are in - you can bring in grade level literature for comprehension or content.

Jessica O'Toole - Concern about no grade level discussions if there is only one student in a grade level.

Several SEPAC board members and Community members asked what curriculum will look like, how it will be delivered and how differentiation will occur; how many students have been offered this program, is language based classroom the best approach to meet students' needs.

Carol Gahan/Chris Kitchell - Advised they are looking at 7 or 8 students for the classroom. The IEP team needs to have already determined that 60% of instruction needs to take place in pull out, i.e. sub-separately from general education. Some parents may not accept the program- right now there are students going to the resource room 60% of the day.

Carol Gahan- Expressed concerns around confidentiality for students currently out of district.

Jessica O'Toole- Expressed concern that parents are being asked to take a huge leap of faith to go in a new program that is currently not operating nor well defined. This requires transparency.

Community Parent 3- Advised her student is at Carroll and would need extremely detailed info before considering bring student back in-district.

Mike Barth- Advised they have finished next year's schedule for grades 5-8 and we will release it in June. (Showed the planned schedule / Teachers will have prep time and common planning time everyday approx 2x45.)

(Side topic: Recess discussion)

Jessica O'Toole- Asked if this schedule is how it will work in the language based classroom.

Carol Gahan- Replied yes. There are opportunities for groupings because the grade levels are going to their grade level specials and lunch.

SEPAC Members- Expressed concerns about how the groupings by skill will work with the multiple grade levels and small number of students. It doesn't seem like the logistics or student experience have been considered in enough detail.

Bethlyn Houlihan- Suggested it may be helpful to have the language based classroom teacher attend a collaboration meeting. There was no reply to this suggestion.

Carol Gahan- Advised she would like pre-testing in June to figure out where students are to determine how to group and schedule them.

Heather Nickle- Expressed concern about scope and sequence for the program as OG and Wilson are related, but different, so the pre-testing will be tied to which program is chosen.

Carol Gahan- Advised that final discussion has yet to take place.

Leslie Knight- Expressed concern around how we are marrying small groups by skills and grade level curriculum and how students get grade level experience.

Carol Gahan/Chris Kitchell - Replied they want it be what students need, not stuffing a square peg in a round hole. They can be flexible with the schedule and have students go to gen ed classes without messing with the schedule.

Danielle- Expressed concern for students in this program that need support in every class.

SEPAC members- Suggested we are back at the question of what other are the other options for services for students with dyslexia who require specialized instruction. Our smallness works against us for having a sub-separate program. Is this best solution? Is it sustainable?

SEPAC members asked how do we best utilize this great teacher and how she is utilized now?

Chris Kitchell- Replied that when the classroom fell through, they started using the teacher for pull out services and it has been really successful. They identified students that were a good fit for the teacher and she provided pull out services this year.

Karen Heath- Paraphrased Chris Kitchell's comment that the language based classroom teacher may be serving both students who may have been in the program and students who are not, thus reaching more students overall. This was confirmed to be accurate.

Natasha Rivera- There is an immediate need at Fowler and now there is a growing need at GM.

SEPAC members suggested reviewing and looking at data for progress of those students being served--this would be very helpful in determining efficacy of pull out services. Danielle Pimenta asked to **add data review to the next meeting agenda.**

Carol Gahan- Answered question of what are the other services we have for reading disabilities. She recognized the need for services for students with reading disabilities, but not necessarily just dyslexia. Michelle Masella (4th grade special educator in co-taught classroom with Orton-Gillingham (OG) training). Looking at using some of her time to do some of OG services. Roseanne Lambert (5th grade special educator) is retiring. Looking for someone with OG or Wilson for her replacement. At the HS we have two Level 1 Wilson certified teachers. At GM we have two Level 1 Wilson certified teachers from co-teaching class and possibly also provide pull out services.

Danielle Pimenta- Asked if we have a co-taught class in which the special ed teacher has OG training are we planning to put students with LB needs in that classroom. Expressed that would be a good fit.

Carol Gahan- Replied she doesn't have enough info to answer that yet.

Natasha Rivera- Asked about about creating a co-taught cohort. Advised we don't want a repeat of Spanish Immersion (SI) social issues. That has been a concern expressed by parents about the co-taught classes.

Community Parent 1- Just for clarity's sake you don't know yet what the cohort will look like at GM?

Carol Gahan- Correct.

Community Parent 1- Asked if IEP teams determine if students will go in co-teaching classroom

Jessica O'Toole- No, because it is still a gen ed classroom- it's not an IEP placement decision.

##### *5. Special Ed Training for employees & Subcommittee development*

Charles Gobron- Advised he is working on making sure that all classroom teachers have a good understanding of special ed laws and regulations. All the teachers have common planning time. Suggested forming a subcommittee regarding training. We need to make sure that all our gen ed teachers have skills to meet all students' needs. What can we do for professional development to broaden those skills? How are we assessing how they are doing? Looking for suggestions on PD areas. Proposing that we develop subcommittees. One for training & PD, one for catching struggling readers, etc.

Carol Gahan- Advised she would like to form a "focus group" for addressing language based learning concerns at Green Meadow that would include parents and teachers, as well as addressing concerns about how long students remain in Title 1. In theory - because there are budget realities- she would like

to identify them in kindergarten and give them daily OG or Wilson services because early intervention is the key.

Natasha Rivera- We need to look at monitoring in Title 1 and referring for special ed evals.

**SEPAC members: will discuss suggestions for subcommittees.**

Charles- Let's come up with a list of subcommittees and then put it out for volunteers.

Carol Gahan- Envisioning teachers on some of the committees.

*Meeting adjourned*