

QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

A meeting of the Special Education Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, March 25, 2015 at 6:00 pm at the Coddington Building. Present were Mr. Noel DiBona, Mrs. Kathryn Hubley, Mr. Dave McCarthy, and Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Mrs. Catherine Carey, Mrs. Donna Cunningham, Mrs. Mary Fredrickson, Mr. Richard Kelly, Deputy Superintendent Mulvey, Mrs. Maura Papile; Ms. Judy Todd; Quincy Parent Advisory Council to Special Education Board Members Ms. Beck, Ms. Gichuhi, Ms. Hurlid, Ms. Nabstedt; Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Mrs. Mahoney called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Ms. Todd reviewed the recent Coordinated Program Review, which consisted of a records review, interviews of administrators and staff, and parent surveys. Four areas were identified for corrective action out of several hundred criteria and sub-criteria. Three were documentation-related: addressing bullying in IEPs, creating a checklist for IEP completion, and detailing the process for a student's removal from the classroom. The final item was a concern about elementary school space for certain Special Education services.

Mr. McCarthy asked for clarification on the elementary space issue. Ms. Todd said that the Beechwood Knoll Sawyer Center was an example of subdivided space, there were concerns about the possible issue of student confidentiality and distraction but these have been addressed.

Ms. Todd reviewed Special Educational paraprofessionals: they are required to have a two-year degree or pass the Para-Pro test. Training is assignment-specific and done by the classroom teacher and/or a member of the Special Education department staff. Mrs. Cunningham said the Special Education Team Administrators and PT/OT staff provide specific training to assist with particular students. Ms. Gichuhi asked if a parent had a concern about an area where a paraprofessional needed extra training; Ms. Todd suggested reviewing the issue with the school principal.

Ms. Todd reviewed that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education released new regulations for physical restraint for implementation by January 2016. Mr. Kelly reviewed that Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) is the training tool utilized in QPS; trainers such as Mr. Kelly are certified by a 4-day, 32-hour course, with re-certification milestones every two years. This program is used throughout the US, Canada, and Europe by schools and law enforcement. QPS Staff are trained in an 8-hour course at school sites. Mr. Kelly said the focus is on de-escalation and non-violent physical intervention used as a last resort when a student is in danger to themselves or another community member. Techniques include reducing the tension of the agitated person, offering alternatives, controlling staff anxiety, and recognizing the stages of escalation and the appropriate interventions.

Restraints do not happen often; there are many interventions before that level is reached. A restraint that reaches twenty minutes must be reported to the state; QPS has never reached this level. An annual report of restraints will be submitted to DESE, regardless of length.

Ms. Beck asked if under the new regulations a hold can be broken after twenty minutes and then re-established. Mrs. Carey said this would be a 2nd restraint. Mrs. Cunningham said when a hold reaches that length, outside assistance would be called. Ms. Gichuhi asked about how the training will be adjusted to meet the hourly requirement. Ms. Todd said it is a suggestion, not a requirement and Mr. Kelly said that 8 hours is sufficient for this training. Mr. Kelly said refreshers are offered because restraint is an infrequent event at most schools. Ms. Todd said a total of 10 children have been restrained this year, Kindergarten and Grade 1. Three have already been moved to more suitable classroom placements.

The next item on the agenda was reimbursement for Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy services for students on MassHealth. Ms. Beck said reimbursement affects MassHealth benefits when an in-school service and an out of school service are given on the same day; both will not both be paid. Ms. Beck suggested that there may be a waiver that MassHealth can issue so that parents don't wind up with medical bills. Mrs. Mahoney suggested that Deputy Superintendent Mulvey and Mr. Mullaney investigate and report back on at the May meeting.

The next QPAC meeting is a Strategic Planning session on April 7 at 7:00 pm at Quincy High School. Specific activities and long range goals will be brainstormed. On April 16 at 6:30 pm, QPAC will be hosting Accessing Community Supports & Services, rather than the Resource Fair.

Ms. Beck said that the *Beyond the Bell* program is a concern for some QPAC parents. Dr. DeCristofaro said that he appreciates the parent concerns and during the planning process, the needs of all students will be taken into account. Using the extracurricular programs as a model, we are looking at creating activities for parents and children, utilizing community partners. Community and classroom connections will be established through brainstorming by school staffs on extension activities that they want to do with students and families. Scheduling will vary between afternoon, evening, and weekend activities.

Ms. Beck said QPAC would like to be in a position to discuss this with parents in a positive manner. For Special Education parents, the concern is that the activities will not be appropriate for all students. Many Special Education students receive after school services and there are concerns about scheduling. Dr. DeCristofaro said the variety of scheduling times will allow for participation. Ms. Todd and the Principals and teachers will have input into the development.

Ms. Beck asked about transportation and Ms. Todd said that will be accommodated. Mrs. Mahoney said that there will be an update on April 8 at the School Committee meeting.

The DESE Parent Involvement Survey should be published later this week; QPS will collaborate with QPAC to publicize the survey through the QPS website and social media platforms.

Dr. DeCristofaro reviewed the parent-child programming that QPAC has recently held and offered support for future events. He also offered the opportunity for QPAC to participate within the school day in classrooms. Ms. Gichuhi expressed concern that being in the classroom might interfere with classroom instruction time. Dr. DeCristofaro said this is early discussion and principals, teachers, and parents would be involved in planning and implementing. Dr. DeCristofaro said that Snug Harbor and Wollaston have a monthly Kindergarten parent-child day that is a different kind of structured learning time. Mrs. Mahoney said this is an exciting idea and would like to hear more. Ms. Beck is researching field trip opportunities; agrees that these are important ideas and more work to be done.

Mr. DiBona made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 pm. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.