

## SPECIAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

A meeting of the Special Education Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, February 1, 2012 at 7:00 pm at Quincy High School. Present were Mr. Paul Bregoli, Ms. Barbara Isola, Mr. David McCarthy, and Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Ms. Judy Todd, Ms. Donna Cunningham, Mr. Richard Kelly, Ms. Erin Perkins, QPAC Board members, interested parents, and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mrs. Mahoney.

The first item on the agenda was the Special Education Disability Guide that Quincy High School developed as one of their TEAMS projects; regular and Special Education teachers collaborated on the development. Dr. DeCristofaro clarified that this was brought forward to share as something that can be reviewed, updated, and shared system-wide if appropriate. Ms. Gichuhi said she was very pleased with the booklet and would suggest a few minor adjustments. Ms. Todd said this is intended as a resource, another tool for enriching the education of teachers. Ms. Perry suggested thinking of the Disability Guide as an encyclopedia for reference and the QHS booklet as a "Cliff Notes" version based on educators' observations. This will be helpful for substitutes as well, who are not going to be exposed to student's IEP files. Mrs. Mahoney suggested that this could be adapted for elementary and middle and NQHS as well. Ms. Perry suggested that concussion/traumatic brain injury should probably be added, given the new consciousness about head injuries. Ms. Gichuhi will follow up with Ms. Todd on changes and additions after sharing with QPAC membership and discussion at the QPAC meeting in March. Ms. Perry thanked Quincy High School teachers Laura Anderson, Steven Bernardo, Julie Krieger, Lorraine Kusy, Richard McAllister, and Lorraine Principi for their work in developing the resource guide.

The next item on the agenda was Collaborative Goals. Ms. Gichuhi, Mrs. Mahoney, and Dr. DeCristofaro met on Friday, January 27, 2012 to review the QPAC collaborative goals for 2011-2012. The first goal is Parent Guide Review (Goal B3): the existing Quincy version and some from other districts are under review currently. Ms. Gichuhi said that the QPAC board has made an outline of desired topics for the Parent Guide with a goal of May for publication. Next steps are to create a timeline and plan working meetings; these can be scheduled after March QPAC and reviewed at March 28 Special Education Subcommittee Meeting.

The next goal relates to the Parent Brochure for Initial Evaluation (Goal A2): Creating a handout for parents of newly-identified students to be distributed as part of initial handout parents get before evaluation. Ms. Gichuhi provided copies of two documents (one-page about evaluation process and two-page version about QPAC). Mr. Bregoli asked about the brochure SPED provides; eight page of legal and technical information. It was suggested that information should be shared at the moment the parent suggests there are areas of concern, not when an evaluation is specifically requested. Ms. Gichuhi said that to some parents, the process is confusing and complicated, so this information helps them understand working with the Special Education team as a collaborative group process. Dr. DeCristofaro, Ms. Perry, Ms. Todd, and Mrs. Mahoney all spoke about how the process has changed

since the RTI model was adopted and that recommendations are made by teams, not by individuals. Ms. Perry wanted to be sure that information is clear that QPAC does not advocate for individual children. Next steps for this item are Ms. Todd reviewing the brochures and creating a plan for sharing the brochures to be presented at the March 28 Special Education Subcommittee meeting.

The next goal related to Substitute Information (Goal B1): It has long been a Subcommittee Goal to improve how accommodations are shared with substitute teachers. Ms. Gichuhi presented an accommodations checklist that teachers could complete for their substitute packets. Dr. DeCristofaro inquired about FERPA concerns. After some discussion about whether the length of substitute assignment would affect the information shared with them and a clarification that Allison Cox from QEA has reviewed this document, it was decided that Ms. Todd will email the checklist to the principals for their feedback, with a goal of implementing this for the 2012-2013 school year. Ms. Todd will update the group on this issue at the March 28 Special Education Subcommittee meeting.

The next collaborative goal relates to Transitions (Adulthood)(Goal B2): QPS is in the process of creating a Transition guide; a grant to create one has been awarded. There was some discussion about the target age to begin transition work (can be anywhere from age 14 to 18); it was suggested that the Department of Developmental Services is a good resource. Mrs. Mahoney asked about next steps, as this is not a simple goal. Ms. Todd said that NQHS had a team working on it and they have draft goals that she can share electronically and then discuss at the March 28 Special Education Subcommittee meeting; DESE has not provided any clarification on this issue. Ms. Perry mentioned that she is joining the Workforce Investment Board Youth Board and a focus is the 14 to 22 year old transition period, so she may be able to share some information at the meeting as well.

The next item on the agenda was Communication/Information Sharing. Dr. DeCristofaro offered to remind principals to include QPAC and Citywide Parents' Council contact information, website addresses, and meeting dates on their monthly calendars and newsletters. Instant Alert for Special Education announcements remains an area of concern and Dr. DeCristofaro will follow up with Bob Cavallo in IT.

QPAC is requesting official recognition by the School Committee on par with Citywide Parents' Council and QEA; going forward, the QPAC representative will be noted in the School Committee Meeting minutes and the QPAC representative will receive a copy of the School Committee agenda and accompanying meeting materials, plus be notified via email of all Subcommittee meetings.

As an item of Additional Business, Ms. Gichuhi mentioned a letter she received recently from the Office of Civil Rights about recent changes to the 504 legislation. Ms. Todd mentioned that she and her staff were attending a conference on this topic on Friday, February 3, so they will have more information to share at the March 28 Special Education Subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Bregoli made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 pm, which was seconded by Mr. McCarthy.