

SpEAC Meeting September 23, 2010

Welcome from Julie Sattinger

Administration Reports

Julie welcomed Kathy Goldenberg and Linda Alexandroff from Moorestown BOE. Linda stated the next BOE meeting is October 19 at 7:30. SpEAC was given an update on how the negotiations are proceeding with the teacher's union. A mediation has been scheduled for September 30th. Linda explained that mediation is the next step in the resolution process since negotiations have broken down. Although bound by confidentiality at this point, Linda mentioned generally that benefits and salary are in the balance. Once mediation commences the board is not bound by confidentiality and they can be more public about what exactly the teachers want. The mediator is a state employee and is impartial. Should the parties fail to reach an agreement after the first mediation, there is a second mediation. After that, the parties would go to fact finding. Then there would be super conciliation which can go on indefinitely. BOE can no longer give a best and final offer so this could go on forever. It was then discussed that teachers cannot strike but can have "job actions" i.e. can take off for federal holidays even if not on the school calendar as a day off.

Dr. Toners passing away – Baker staff was amazing in the handling of this issue. A member of SpEAC mentioned that she received a call before her son went to school so she could help him understand what had happened. The school administration and faculty have been very supportive to students touched by this very sad loss.

Kathy Goldenberg attended the Garden State Coalition for Schools: different policies were discussed that impact teacher contracts. Kathy related there was much focus on how to save the public school system and some of the drains on public resources. There is a special needs component to the coalition as well.

Dr. Monacella reported that back to school nights had all gone well. Additionally, transitions appear to be going well.

The discussion then turned to the issue of children with 504 plans. Since 504's are generally done in October a teacher may have no notice at the beginning of a school year that a child may need accommodations to achieve his or her academic goals. There needs to be a better notification system for teachers. This is especially critical when an individual is transitioning to a new school entirely.

Kat D'Ambra spoke about how the high school is handling 504s. In the Contour system there is an icon that a teacher can click to access the 504 for that student. The icon notification system is currently being tested in the high school. After it is tested, it will hopefully be implemented in the school district. The high school is also trying to move back 504 planning to June. Hopefully this will also become a district wide policy. There are many gaps and younger children are falling through. Principals typically are in charge of 504 notification but they need to be more responsive.

It was determined that issue of 504 awareness needs to be a goal of SpEAC this year. Each bldg has a 504 coordinator. It was decided that this should be put on the agenda and that we should have a 504 coordinator come in to discuss this matter.

Another question- having 504 kids be part of transition day? Make an invitation to 504 parents.

The NJ Dept. of Education was supposed to monitor our Special Education department but that was postponed by the state.

Introduction of SpEAC executive board:

Julie Sattinger, chair; Maura Rafferty, co-chair; Scott Duman, treasurer; Evan Heitzman, secretary; Regina Hartshorne program chair for evening meetings. Julie Sattinger and Karen Morante for SpEAC Pathways to Success Conference

SpEAC on the web

We have a new website: www.moorestownspeac.com. Linda mentioned that the township is redoing its website – it is being beta tested now. It should be more user friendly next year. One of BOE's goals is to get the whole tech thing straightened out.

SPAN (Statewide Parent Advocacy Network) started a facebook group for all parent groups in South Jersey. <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=117155714964774&ref=ts>

Café on Main update:

Sue Ambrose reports from Café on Main Street: vendors, supporters very helpful. Businesses on Main Street paid for rental of Community House and have been amazing in their support of SpEAC. The event is sold out!! Sue reported the media is coming, both television and print. SpEAC is really starting to have a presence in the community. There are still crumb cakes for sale. Families that have tickets can volunteer their kids for community service hours. We do need people to sign up to help run the event.

General discussion of SpEAC goals for the year

Discussion focused on examining assisting teachers/principals with inclusion. The Coalition for Inclusive Education offer courses – perhaps we could send some teachers. Scholarships for teachers from SpEAC.

As part of transitions we should have a spring time event to educate parents as to how to advocate and let teachers know you are coming. Bring your stuff and we will help you organize your notes so that you can create a picture of your child to present to the next teacher and school.

Discussion turned to helping children learn how to interact with children with physical and behavioral differences. Should we offer more education to help kids learn how accept? This is the back bone of what inclusion is – possibly start a buddy program? Could we start a best buddies program for HS and MS students? Cindy Moskalow reported that we have a big brother/big sister program at the High

School. There are peer buddies for clubs and help at gym class. Sean Daley at HS took over big bro/big sis program.

Birthday party issues – Should parents of special needs children or parents whose children have life threatening allergies be part of the parent count when the teachers limit how many parents can help out at school birthday parties.

Another issue for the agenda is transportation. Email Maura transportation horror stories: Maura's email: mauraraфф@comcast.net. Then she will present that to transportation. Hopefully then we can have somebody from transportation come address our concerns.

Darlene Altschuler (Special Needs Advisory Committee for Moorestown Rec Dept): reviewed special needs recreation opportunities available through the Township Recreation Department and the YMCA. All programs are listed in the Rec. Booklet that came home with the kids last week.

Speak group in Voorhees – has a performing arts program for special needs kids

The Rec. Department summer play will accommodate special needs kids and encourages their participation.

The next meeting is set for October 14th. It is an evening meeting at Rec Center 3rd floor 7:30.

Meeting adjourned.