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District Accountability & Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Subcommittee

APPROVED MINUTES

Arlington School Committee
District Accountability & Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 20, 2010 @ 10 a.m.

Attendance

Subcommittee Members: Jeff Thielman, Kirsi Allison-Ampe, M.D. (Joseph Curran - excused)
District Leadership: Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D., Wallis Raemer, Ed.D.
SE PAC Representatives: Trish Orlovsky, LeeAnna Pallett, Michael Levi

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. The attendees introduced themselves

1. Jeff Thielman gave an overview of the District Accountability Subcommittee and the goals for today's meeting. He made the following points:

- o The subcommittee has been operating since 2005 and has been responsible for reviewing draft goals and goal reports from the Superintendent prior to presentation to the full School Committee.
- o The report on goals was being submitted to the subcommittee for review prior to submission to the full School Committee. School Committee members may take the report into account when evaluating the Superintendent and when voting to approve or offer amendments to the proposed 2010-11 district goals when they are presented in October.
- o He indicated that a box in the School Committee office contained memos, emails, and reports documenting progress made on some of the goals during the past year.
- o Mr. Thielman said the subcommittee also has the responsibility of reviewing academic policy because it also functions as the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Subcommittee. Dr. Allison-Ampe commented that there were really two separate subcommittees – District Accountability and Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction – with the same membership. The policy handbook had not been updated to combine both subcommittees. Mr. Thielman agreed with Dr. Allison-Ampe.

2. Public Participation

a. Trish Orlovsky spoke regarding Goal 1 (c) ("Continue efforts to develop and enhance programs and services to improve inclusion support and ensure appropriate instruction in the least restrictive environment"). She forwarded to the subcommittee a statement from SE PAC with the group's concerns. The statement is attached as "Exhibit A" to these minutes. Her main points were:

- o There is a gap in how the inclusion goal is implemented in the district.
- o Some Special Education laws were not adhered to regarding the disclosure of the status of students in videos and yearbooks. She said that staff/volunteers may have acted with good intentions but simply did not know or forgot the law. Ms. Orlovsky said that this speaks to a lack of sensitivity to the needs of children who are part of a substantially separate classroom.
- o It is not clear what mechanism is used to monitor an inclusion program's effectiveness. She stated that she has not seen a checklist for pre- post- program implementation.
- o The social component of inclusion is lacking throughout the district.
- o Many classroom teachers lack appropriate training in how to modify curriculum to improve inclusion support for Special Education students.
- o The district needs a clearer vision of what inclusion looks like and needs more parental input to develop this vision.
- o The district needs to define best practices in inclusion, determine how best communicate this information to staff, and communicate better what is happening with each child vis-à-vis inclusion.

b. Michael Levi, SE PAC Board Member made the following points:

- o There is a good-sized group of parents with a great deal of knowledge and experience with special education issues that is ready to be of service to the district.

- o He agreed with Ms. Orlovsky that there needs to be a shared definition of best practices in inclusion that is understood by parents and teaching staff.

- o SEPAC discussions with the Director of Special Education Services in 2009-10 were good at times and frustrating at other times. As a forum for an exchange of ideas, the meetings were positive. Mr. Levi said, however, that SEPAC members were displeased with the communication from the school district about the elimination of some programs at the elementary level, including the language-based classroom at the Hardy, which has been operating for many years, and the elimination of a Supported Learning Center (SLC-C) at the Peirce School.

c. Dr. Bodie responded by saying that she would take steps to ensure that staff received better training in Special Education laws so that the incidents Ms. Orlovsky mentioned do not reoccur. She added that the district wants SEPAC's input into the FY '11 goals, and when drafting the FY '11 goals she and the school district's leadership will discuss the need for a clear vision for inclusion as well as a need to define and disseminate best practices for inclusion.

3. Mr. Thielman led the group through a discussion of Goal 1 ("Ensure that all identified subgroups achieve their full academic and social potential.")

- o One goal in this section was completed, one is awaiting MCAS results, and one (inclusion) is a continuous process of improvement, according to Dr. Bodie.

- o In response to a question from Dr. Allison-Ampe, Dr. Bodie said that "identified subgroups" are determined by MCAS scores.

- o Ms. Orlovsky asked for evidence of progress on Goal 1c (inclusion). Dr. Raemer noted that professional Social Workers are now associated with the program, which has helped to improve support.

- o Mr. Levi said that he would be able to share the results of a recent SEPAC survey with the Superintendent and School Committee. The survey results could help shed light on the progress made on the inclusionary goal.

4. Mr. Thielman led the group through a discussion of Goal 2 ("All students will attain high levels of academic achievement through the implementation of data-drive, standards-based education")

- o The district reports that seven of the nine (7 of 9) objectives of this goal were completed.

- o For Goal 2h, Dr. Bodie agreed to provide more data on the 10.7% of students in grades 1-3 that were not reading at grade level (e.g., % of students who were close, fairly far away, etc.)

- o In an answer to a question from Trish Orlovsky, Dr. Raemer said that the measure of competence in the reading goal (2h) is based on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), which measures oral competence.

5. Mr. Thielman led the group through a discussion of Goal 3 ("Ensure that all Arlington students are well-prepared for academic, social, emotional, and vocational success in the 21st century")

- o The district reports that eight of the nine (8 of 9) objectives of this goal were completed.

- o Dr. Bodie will provide the number of students who signed up for on-line courses.

- o There was discussion around Goal 3f ("provide mental/emotional health and substance abuse services using both school personnel and partnerships with non-profit, private practice, and third party billing providers in the community.") Ms. Orlovsky commented that in her experience students in substantially separate classrooms do not participate in open circle. LeeAnna Pallett suggested offering yoga to students at the elementary level. She said that large PE classes do not provide what students many students need. Dr. Bodie said she was interested in learning more about how yoga and other programs could be offered at the elementary level.

- o Dr. Bodie said that the work on Goal 3h ("work with university and business partners to develop opportunities in math, science, technology, and global education") was a multi-year goal. The initiative was started in 2009-10.

6. Mr. Thielman led the group through a discussion of Goal 4 ("Ensure a working environment with the tools and systems that enable staff to focus on student success.")

- o The district reports that eight of fifteen (8 of 15) objectives of this goal were completed.

- o Dr. Bodie said that the objectives of this goal that were not completed in 2009-10 will become FY '11 goals.

7. The subcommittee and other participants discussed the next steps with the FY '10 goal report. There was agreement that the goal report, with the requested modifications, be presented to the full School Committee on August 3rd. Dr. Bodie agreed to talk to School Committee Chairman Joe Curro about putting the report on the agenda for the August 3rd meeting. Mr. Thielman said it was better to place this as a separate item on the agenda rather than as simply a report during roundtable so the public would know that the School Committee was receiving and reviewing a report of the progress on goals last year. Dr. Bodie agreed and said she would communicate this to Mr. Curro. Mr. Thielman said 15 minutes for a discussion on FY '10 goals was sufficient.

8. The subcommittee and guests discussed the drafting of the FY '11 goals:

- o Dr. Bodie said that the draft goals would be discussed at a School Committee retreat on August 2nd. She was expecting to receive input from the School Committee at that time.

o Dr. Bodie said the administrative cabinet has had one lengthy discussion about the goals for FY '11 and will have more discussions this summer. She said the cabinet was thinking about which goals to highlight in the FY '11 document. Dr. Bodie said that the district is working on many things that are not on the list of articulated goals.

o Mr. Thielman noted that Policy BDFA-E-2 requires the submission of a "consolidated system-wide plan of goals and performance objectives" to the School Committee by October 1st each year. The subcommittee will meet with Dr. Bodie and Dr. Raemer as often as necessary to give input on the goals prior to submission to the full School Committee.

o Dr. Allison-Ampe said that the goals needed to be measurable and asked that the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent take this into account as goals were drafted.

o Michael Levi said that SEPAC would assist the goal setting process by a) sharing survey results, b) articulating its own vision for inclusion, and c) drafting a set of goals for special education programming in the district. He said he would work the SEPAC members to create a document by the end of July and submit the document to the Superintendent.

9. New Business

o Mr. Thielman said Mr. Curro asked the subcommittee to look into studying an International Baccalaureate program for the high school. Dr. Bodie said she would consult with Mr. Skidmore and report back to the subcommittee in August as to whether doing research on such a program made sense in the coming year.

o Dr. Raemer said that she would report back at the August meeting on a process for reviewing major curriculum areas. This is pursuant to Policy IGA ("Curriculum Development") which states: "each major curriculum area will be reviewed at least every five years and modified where needed. The appropriate director, department head, lead teacher, and/or Principal is responsible for reviewing the curriculum under the direction of the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. He/she is also responsible for reporting on the process to the School Committee."

o Dr. Raemer said she would work with Dr. Bodie to determine which curriculum updates should be presented to the school committee this year. Policy IGA mandates that "regular curriculum up-dates will be made to the School Committee by directors, lead teachers, department chairs, when appropriate, but at least every three years."

10. The committee agreed to meet next on Tuesday, August 31st at 8:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

EXHIBIT A - Document presented to the subcommittee on July 20, 2010 by Trish Orlovsky of SEPAC

Arlington Public Schools

Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction Subcommittee District Accountability Subcommittee Meeting Date July 20, 2010 -- Public Participation

The Arlington SEPAC was pleased to see that the 2009-2010 District Goals included in Goal #1 that the District is committed to: "Ensure that all identified subgroups achieve their full academic and social potential." and that support inclusion was specifically identified as an activity to be pursued to accomplish that goal as follows:

1 (c) "Continue efforts to develop and enhance programs and services to improve inclusion support and ensure appropriate instruction in the least restrictive environment."

While the administration may be reporting achievements under this goal, the SEPAC remains concerned about progress in this area—in both social and academic domains—, specifically as follows:

Recent incidents demonstrating lack of understanding of inclusion (disclosure of special needs students status in video and yearbooks and otherwise, lack of planning and supports to include students with certain disabilities, lack of commitment to specific supports in IEPs to enable parents to be confident about inclusion being successful and accommodations being provided)

Specific issues with the SLC-C programs (curriculum planning, district-assessments, physical space, inclusion in RTI supports)

Lack of teaching prep time for regular/special educator to create modifications and lesson plans for students with special needs.

In keeping with the mandate laid out in MA Commonwealth Regulations (see below), SEPAC is requesting to work—in a respectful, collaborative, and inclusive process—with appropriate Subcommittee and School district representatives, to include the following activities on the 2010-2011 District Goals and to assist the administration in accomplishing these goals:

1. Parent advisory participation. *Each school district shall create a district-wide parent advisory council offering membership to all parents of eligible students and other interested parties. The parent advisory council duties shall include but not be limited to: Advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities Meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and*

evaluation of the school district's special education programs.....

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr28.htm>

Develop a vision and goal for inclusion to disseminate district-wide

Identify best practices to be utilized by all staff, especially for students in substantially separate programs—academic and social.

Develop a substantive action plan/process for assessing the effectiveness of inclusion in substantially separate programs—academic and social.

Develop and distribute policy for nondisclosure of students with special needs.

Review of the sufficiency of curriculum and instruction for students receiving modified curriculum in substantially separate and inclusive programs.