

BOARD OF EDUCATION, NEW FAIRFIELD, CT
Special Education Ad Hoc Subcommittee Meeting

Name of Subcommittee: Special Education Ad Hoc Meeting type: Regular
Date of Meeting: 2/1/24 Minutes submitted by: Samantha Mannion
Members present: Sue Huwer, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone
Members absent:
Other attendees: Ken Craw, Maria Kennedy, Alex Lambert
Place of meeting: New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Motion: To nominate Kim LaTourette for chair

Made by: Samantha Mannion

Seconded by: Sue Huwer

Recording of vote: All in favor

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 2, 2023

Motion: To approve the minutes of November 2, 2023, as presented

Made by: Kim LaTourette

Seconded by: Ed Sbordone

Recording of vote: All in favor

III. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. PMT Training - PMT Training was scheduled in three main sessions - August, November, and February. There are currently 95 staff members in district who are PMT trained, with another 15-19 additional staff scheduled for training on 2/20. The training originally scheduled for 12/18 was canceled due to inclement weather. Maria Kennedy gave an overview of what PMT training is, and Alex Lambert discussed why it's important that everyone who works with children with special needs should have this training.

B. Adaptive Physical Education - A model for Adaptive PE classes has been created by Casey Aiezza, Physical Education teacher at Meeting House. This course is designed for children who struggle to participate in regular PE classes, and functions to pre-teach PE concepts, to improve student participation in regular PE classes. It will not replace student participation in regular PE classes but will act as a complementary course for those students who need it. It is being taught at the elementary school level, and FTE scheduling has been adjusted to cover these classes. The goal for the future is to extend this course to the Middle School and High School, and to include participation in this course on IEPs for students who could benefit from taking it.

C. Unified Sports - CIAC has provided us with a three-year grant of \$4,000. This grant will reduce by \$1,000 each year. The purpose of this grant is to bring Unified Sports to the district. The district will start this initiative with basketball, which will begin right after the regular basketball season ends this winter. In the spring, the district is planning on offering unified track and field to students.

D. Extended School Year (ESY) - ESY is scheduled to run this year from July 8th to August 1st. These dates also include the STRIDES Program. Hiring is currently open to internal staff, and the posting will close on February 9th. Maria is hopeful that we have enough staff interested in working over the summer to provide coverage to meet the district's needs.

IV. ACTION ITEMS - none

V. OTHER

1) Procedural Safeguards Language Mandated at PPTs

Maria informed the committee that effective immediately, the district is required by the state to make the following statement at the start of all PPTs: "The procedural safeguards explain student and parent rights under IDEA and identify dispute-resolution options, including the right to voluntarily engage in mediation." This is a state mandate and non-discretionary, but both subcommittee members and PPS staff voiced concern over the potential impacts of this mandate. Kim and Samantha both stated that it seems to set an adversarial tone at the beginning of the PPT and might make parents feel wary and defensive before the meeting even begins. PPS staff agreed, and also stated that language is already in the printed procedural safeguards, so it is essentially redundant to the process.

2) Maria will be holding a virtual focus group on 2/27. The PPS Office will be selecting twelve families, at-random, to participate in these focus groups. She will also be scheduling an in-person focus group in the near future. The purpose of these focus groups is that PPS wants to connect with the families that they serve and solicit feedback.

3) Discussion ensued about the need for social/extracurricular opportunities for children with special needs and their families. Maria stated that her office would like to host a resource fair in the near future. There was also discussion about possibly reviving Unified Theatre and Unified Arts if funding and staffing can be worked out.

4) STRIDES Update: The district is seeking a larger space for the STRIDES Program. We are scheduled to do a location visit with another district on 2/14. We are in discussions with this other district to possibly partner with them in the future. Maria will keep us updated on the progress of this initiative.

Motion to adjourn: Made by: Kim LaTourette

Recording of vote: All in favor

Seconded by: Samantha Mannion

Meeting adjourned at: 6:44 p.m.