



Groton Dunstable Special Education Parents Advisory Council

BUSINESS MEETING Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 13, 2009

7:00pm, Groton-Dunstable Regional High School, Library

Officers Present: Melissa Sweeny, President
(sign-in sheet attached) Nancy Bugbee, Vice President
Maryanne Squeglia, Treasurer
Cyndy Premru, Secretary

Members Present: See attached sign-in sheet

Staff Present: See attached sign-in sheet

Meeting Location: Library, Groton-Dunstable Regional High School, Groton, MA

Melissa Sweeny, President, called the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

I. Vote to Accept Minutes from November 19, 2008 Business Meeting

The minutes from the November 19, 2008 Business Meeting were reviewed. Maryanne Squeglia made a motion to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved. The minutes will be posted on the website at <http://www.gdspedpac.org>.

II. SpedPAC Account Update

Melissa Sweeny made a motion to amend the grant budget to increase the lecture fee for Dr. Bostic from \$900 to \$1000. The motion was accepted and the amendment was unanimously approved.

Current Grant Balance

Ms. Squeglia reports that the grant balance is currently: \$ 1,103.00.

Starting balance:	\$2,500.00
Dr. Bostic lecture:	-\$1,000.00
FIEP Parent Training	-\$ 250.00
Joan Celebi lecture	<u>-\$ 147.00</u>

Total Balance: \$1,103.00

Ms. Squeglia reports that all checks have been mailed to the above lecturers.

Account Balance

Ms. Squeglia reports that the account balance is currently: \$ 488.09.

Miscellaneous

Ms. Squeglia reported that the account signing privileges still need to be updated.

III. Newsletter Update

Ms. Sweeny reported that the tentative date scheduled to distribute the Winter Newsletter in student backpacks is Friday, February 13, 2009 – the day before February vacation. Ms. Sweeny reported that Lisa McLaughlin would help coordinate the newsletter and assign the articles to individual people.

Ms. Sweeny reported that we are trying to keep the newsletter limited to 4 pages. The articles in the Winter Newsletter will include, but are not limited to:

- A recap of the Sandy Jones lecture (long story)
- A recap of the Dr. Bostic lecture (long story)
- A short article announcing the opening of the Parent Resource Center. *We should have a date for the Open House by the end of January.
- A quick mention of the Parent Roundtable's and their themes with the individual schools. For example, the theme of "Transitions" will have happened at the Middle School Roundtable and the theme of "Recent Reading Initiatives" will have happened at Florence Roche.
- An updated lecture schedule – including the Basic Rights Workshop, the lecture with Joan Axelrod on Tests and Measurements, and the Parent Roundtables.

Ms. Sweeny reported that we would hold a separate meeting with Ms. McLaughlin to discuss the Winter Newsletter in more detail.

IV. Website Update

Ms. Sweeny reported that the website needs to be updated with all of the handouts that have been distributed so far at the lectures this year. Ms. Sweeny will create .pdf versions of both the Dr. Bostic lecture and the Facilitated IEP presentation and email them to Ms. McLaughlin. She has already emailed Ms. McLaughlin a .pdf version of the Sandy Jones lecture to post.

Ms. Sweeny reported that the dates for the Parent Roundtables should to be added to the calendar.

V. Outreach Activities Update

Status of Parent Questionnaire

Ms. Sweeny reports that the feedback collected from the Parent Questionnaire needs to be compiled and analyzed. In reading through them quickly, Ms. Sweeny reports that all but a handful of parents are satisfied with their child's IEP and that several parents have indicated an interest in getting more involved with SpedPAC.

Ms. Sweeny reported that she has reached out to Out-of-District families by sending them an informational packet about GDSpedPAC. It included the Parent Newsletter, the Parent Questionnaire, and the Yahoo! Group flyer. So far, two Out-of-District questionnaires have been returned.

Ms. Sweeny has emailed Cam Huston, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, regarding making sure that SpedPAC-related ConnectEd calls get sent to Out-of-District families as well. Ms. Sweeny has been making a concerted effort to connect with these families (through PPS mailings) and ConnectED calls would be a great cost-efficient way to inform them of SpedPAC's many events and lectures.

Status of Future School Roundtables

Florence Roche – Cyndy Premru has confirmed a date for the next Parent Roundtable with Ruthann Goguen, Principal. It is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28th and the theme is “Recent Initiatives in the Reading Program.” With this theme, we expect attendance by several parents who have interests and concerns with how their child is learning to read. Ms. Sweeny will compile a list of questions for Ms. Goguen. After the description is drafted for the flyer, we will send it to Ms. Goguen to review by Friday January, 16th. On Tuesday, January 20th, copies will be made and delivered to Florence Roche so they can be sent home in backpacks on Wednesday, January 21st.

Swallow Union – We need to schedule another Parent Roundtable with Pete Myerson, Principal. Ms. Sweeny suggested that we ask Mr. Myerson if he would be amenable to including reading as a next topic. It would help him to raise awareness of the reading programs available at Swallow Union in an informal and positive way.

Middle School – Nancy Bugbee will create and distribute the flyer for the next Roundtable at the Middle School, scheduled for February 4th. The theme is “Transitions.”

High School – Ms. Squeglia reported that she would contact Lisa Hunt, Team Chair, about setting up another Roundtable. Possible topics for the next Roundtable are:

The High School's discipline policy, particularly for students who are on IEP's.

Some questions asked at the Business Meeting were, What if the problem/infracton is attributed to the student's disability? Who makes that decision? What are the major issues at the school? Are students who are in special education getting disciplined more than others? Is there/should there be a disciplinary policy for students who are in special education? It appears that discipline at the High School is inconsistent. What is the reason for that?

Ms. Sweeny mentioned that the following administrators should be invited to attend the Roundtable if the topic were on the discipline policy – Cam Huston, director of Pupil Personnel Services; John Gould, Dean of Students; Lisa Hunt, Team Chair; Dr. Genovese, Superintendent; and Shelley Marcus-Cohen, Principal.

College opportunities for students in special education

Ms. Squeglia suggested that we move this topic to the fall of 2009 when we plan to create more of a “formal program” covering this topic. Next year, we will plan on co-hosting a Parent Roundtable focusing on this topic as well as an informational “College Night” where representatives from different colleges will be on hand to showcase their college or university. We also plan on hosting a lecture that helps guide parents through the college application process.

VI. Lecture Update

Joan Axelrod's lecture on tests/measurements, March 3rd

Ms. Bugbee will reserve either the Middle school Library or "The Pit" with Karen Tuomi. Ms. Sweeny will contact Joan Axelrod to confirm the date and to obtain a fee quote from her.

Federation Workshops

Ms. Bugbee has a call into the Federation for Children with Special Needs to schedule the Basic Right's Workshop. It was noted that the District pays for lectures by the Federation. Ms. Bugbee will contact Ms. Huston to alert her of the upcoming lecture.

Potential speakers for April/May

Ms. Premru will contact Lisa Hamilton-Goscombe at Groton Integrated Therapies to see if she might be interested in giving a lecture on Sensory Integration in April or May. She will inquire about a fee and find out if Ms. Hamilton-Goscombe can include information on Sensory Integration for people of all ages, not just young children.

Miscellaneous

Sandy Jones did not charge us for her lecture this past month. It was complimentary.

Ms. Bugbee will contact Rick Lavoie again to see if he might be available for a spring or fall lecture next year. It was mentioned that we might be able to obtain supplemental funding from the Groton Rotary Club or the Agape Foundation that Ms. Squeglia is a member of.

Ms. Sweeny mentioned a possible lecturer, Mary Jean Hughes, author of *Wolf Who Cried Boy*. She is a parent who has written both about her experiences advocating for services for her child with special needs and of overcoming the many obstacles that accompany having a child with special needs. Ms. Sweeny reported that Ms. Hughes lecture fee is \$200.

VII. Administration Update

SpedPAC's participation in the Focus Groups for strategic planning

Ms. Sweeny emailed Jon Sjoberg to let him know that SpedPAC would like to be represented in the Curriculum and Instruction focus group, which is part of the new Strategic Planning process. Dr. Genovese had already given Mr. Sjoberg the names of three of our officers, Ms. Sweeny, Ms. Premru, and Ms. Squeglia. Ms. Sweeny will also follow up with Chris Jones, Asst. Principle of the High School on how we can get SpedPAC involved.

Status of Open Issues

Ms. Sweeny raised the concern that there is an overrun in the Special Education portion of the District's budget for this year.

Ms. Sweeny discussed the importance of asking parents of children in the new programs to write letters to the District, singing the praises of both the new programs and their teachers.

Reading Programs in the District: Ms. Bugbee, Ms. Sweeny, and Ms. Premru are meeting with Ms. Goguen, Florence Roche principal, on January 26th to follow up on their discussion regarding the reading programs at Florence Roche. SpedPAC will also follow-up with Steve Silverman, Middle School principal, and Mr. Myerson, Swallow Union principal, regarding the reading programs and support services at their schools.

Next Date to meet with the Administration

Ms. Sweeny suggested that we schedule our meeting with the Administration in early February, just prior to February vacation.

Ms. Sweeny recommended that one of the topics of discussion be the District's budget for 2009/2010 – trying to advocate for some of the areas that we don't want to see cuts – such as High School ASD Program, Reading Programs, and Summer Programs.

Ms. Sweeny suggested that SpedPAC attend the next School Committee meeting to update them on the new Parent Resource Center.

VIII. 'Parent Resource Center' at Prescott

It was unanimously decided that we would move the discussion of this item to January 14, 2009.

IX. Butler Fund – Books for High School

Ms. Squeglia has volunteered to coordinate the Butler Fund Grant this year. Ms. Bugbee stated that she would help coordinate as well because she has a list of potential books to request funding for.

Ms. Squeglia will contact Shelley Marcus Cohen, High School principal; John Gould, High School Dean of Students; Lisa Hunt, High School Team Chair; and Mark Hennelly, High School Guidance Counselor for book suggestions that they might have.

X. Education Resource Library

It was decided that we should follow up with each of the schools regarding where their Education Resource Library is located. Ms. Bugbee reported that the collections for each of the Middle School buildings (North and South) are located in the Special Education section of their individual school libraries. It was decided that Ms. Premru would follow up with Florence Roche, Ms. Sweeny would follow up with Swallow Union, and that Ms. Squeglia would follow up with the High School.

Ms. Sweeny mentioned that it is very important for the Team Chair at each of the schools to know where their school's Education Resource Library is located.

Ms. Sweeny asked if SpedPAC should look into requesting new grant funds for new books through GDEF (Groton Dunstable Education Foundation). It was unanimously decided to move this item to next year and do a mini-grant in the fall of 2009.

Ms. Sweeny stated that she would be helping to write the grant through the Groton Trust Fund for next year's lecture series. Together we should brainstorm ideas for speakers and workshops to host next year.

XI. SpedPAC Officer Responsibilities

Ms. Sweeny distributed an informal action item checklist of all the things that SpedPAC does as an organization. She stated that as a group, we need to review the handout further and that we should create separate checklists, or "how-to's," for the individual action items.

XII. Bylaws

Amendment/Creation of Policy RE: Fundraising

Ms. Sweeny stated that she would help pull ideas together to create a fundraising policy for SpedPAC. She suggested that we also ask the School Committee for help in drafting a policy.

Ms. Squeglia reported that High School students would not be able to include fundraising for SpedPAC as part of their Community Service requirement.

Ms. Sweeny suggested that we research items that we could sell as part of a fundraising campaign - something that could be sold at school Open Houses, Curriculum Nights, Grotonfest, etc. One idea that she mentioned was locker organizers. Ms. Sweeny recommended that we contact Elizabeth Selders, owner of Chaos to Calm, for more suggestions.

Ms. Squeglia suggested that we might make a lot of money selling homemade French fries at Grotonfest.

The business meeting concluded at 8:15pm.