



# Groton Dunstable Special Education Parents Advisory Council

## BUSINESS MEETING Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

1:15pm, Project Room, GD Middle School North, Library

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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: Project Room, GD Middle School North Library, Groton, MA

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Melissa Sweeny, President, called the meeting to order at 1:20pm.

### I. Vote to Accept Minutes from September 30, 2008 Business Meeting

The minutes from the September 30, 2008 Business Meeting were reviewed. Nancy Bugbee 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

#### Payment of \$250.00 to Spectrum K12 for Facilitated IEP Parent Training on 11/13/08

GDSpedPAC is splitting the cost with the District for the *SpectrumK12 Facilitated IEP Parent Training* that was held on November 13, 2008. Melissa Sweeny will follow up with Cam Huston, the Director of Pupil Personnel Services, to see how the District would like to handle splitting the cost. One option would be for the school district to pay the full \$500 for the training and we would reimburse them \$250.00. Maryanne Squeglia states that she has no preference. She reported that ideally, SpedPAC would pay the lecturer directly as we typically submit an invoice for the exact amount to the Groton Trust Fund (who generously funds our lectures). Ms. Squeglia suggested that Spectrum K12 might be able to write the invoice showing the split in costs. If not, then we will write a letter to the Groton Trust Fund explaining that we are splitting the cost with the District and include a copy of the invoice for \$ 500.00.

#### Other Business

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

Ms. Squeglia reports that she completed the tax filings with the IRS and that everything is now up-to-date.

Ms. Squeglia reported that the names listed on the bank account still need to be changed to reflect the changes in officers and their positions. She will contact the bank to find out what the process is for removing and adding names to an account.

Ms. Squeglia reported that some of the known upcoming expenses are the following:

- Dr. Bostic's fee is between \$ 800.00 - \$ 900.00. His lecture is scheduled for December 9, 2008.
- Sandy Jones's lecture on Reading – she may offer to lecture at no cost.
- Joan Axelrod's lecture on testing and measurements – Ms. Squeglia isn't sure what Ms. Axelrod will charge for lecturing. If Ms. Axelrod isn't available to speak in the spring like we hope, we discussed asking the new school psychologist, Roberta Giordano, if she would be interested.

Ms. Squeglia reported that the wrong year was written in for expiration of Directors term in office. She will resubmit the form with the correct information.

Ms. Squeglia reported that she received a check in the amount of \$ 147.00 from The Groton Trust Fund to pay Joan Celebi for her lecture in October. Ms. Squeglia forwarded the check to Joan Celebi with a note of thanks.

Ms. Squeglia asked that everyone bring fundraising ideas to the next Business Meeting scheduled for January 13, 2009. Ms. Squeglia reported that she has started to look into fundraising opportunities with the High School – possibly tapping into the Community Service requirement that high school students need to fulfill. Her idea is that if fundraising for SpedPAC could be considered a community service, then SpedPAC would kick back money to the high school if the students are able to fundraise a predetermined amount. More about this will be discussed at the January meeting.

### **III. Newsletter Update**

Lisa McLaughlin reported that the fall newsletter, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, was delivered to the schools on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, November 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. The newsletters should be sent home in student's backpacks by the end of this week, November 21, 2008. The newsletter looks fantastic!

To help reach out to parents and staff we were able to get staff members from various schools to write articles for the newsletter. Lynne Jarvis, Team Chair at the Middle School, wrote an article called, "New Special Education Initiatives at the Middle School;" Gail DesBois, Resource Room Teacher at Swallow Union, wrote an article called, "Reading Programs at Swallow Union;" and Steve Silverman, principle at GD Middle School, wrote an article called, "GDMS Explores Turning Points Model."

We discussed a target date for the publication of the next newsletter – possibly the week after February vacation. Possible topics include Dr. Bostic's lecture on medication; Sandy Jones's lecture on reading; the opening of SpedPAC's Parent Resource Center; and the Federation for Children With Special Needs lecture on Basic Rights (possibly being scheduled for February).

#### **IV. Website Update**

Ms. McLaughlin reported that she has updated the front page of the website with the upcoming lecture by Dr. Bostic and has also updated the calendar to reflect upcoming meetings and lectures. Ms. McLaughlin will add links to the Business Meeting Minutes, the Fall Newsletter, and the SpedPAC Questionnaire on the website as soon as she receives .pdf versions of them.

#### **V. Outreach Activities Update**

##### **Status of Parent Questionnaire**

As a group, we discussed how the information gathered from the questionnaire would give us valuable insight into the demographics of the District's population. We would like to gather information on the various topics that people are interested in learning more about.

The questionnaire is being sent home to parents in November via their child's Progress Report and report cards (only students on IEP's). We will also continue to ask people to fill them out while at lectures and meetings.

A parent member suggested that we distribute the questionnaire to all 70+ students at Boutwell rather than just the students who are on IEP's. It is feasible that there are parents who have valid concerns about their child but aren't receiving support at this time.

##### **Status of Future School Roundtables**

Swallow Union- the parent roundtable held in the fall went very well. Pete Myerson, the principal, has agreed to hold another one in the spring. The date is yet to be determined.

Middle School – Ms. Sweeny has scheduled two more roundtables with Steve Silverman, the principal. She will email the officers the possible dates and then follow-up with Mr. Silverman.

Florence Roche – Cyndy Premru is in the process of contacting Ruthann Goguen, the principal, to schedule the next roundtable. When the date is confirmed with Ms. Goguen, Ms. Premru will email the officers.

High School – Ms. Squeglia reported that the first roundtable at the high school went very well. At the beginning of the meeting, SpedPAC and Lisa Hunt, Team Chair, gave a brief presentation on how to build and maintain successful parent-student-school partnerships. Ms. Squeglia raised the question of how to get more parents to attend all Parent Roundtables in the future. Everyone present agreed that allocating the first 15 minutes of the meeting to a specific discussion or theme (such as transitions, reading programs, looking at colleges, etc.) might attract more parents.

##### **School Calendars and Contacts**

Before we begin scheduling lectures and meetings for the New Year, Ms. Sweeny asked that all school liaisons contact their school for a copy of their school calendar. This is to insure that we don't run into any conflicts when we schedule our future lectures, meetings, and roundtables. Before a new meeting is scheduled, Ms. Sweeny will contact each school liaison and ask them to check their school calendar with the school's front office before confirming that the meeting date/time is free.

## **VI. Lecture Update**

### **Dr. Jeffrey Bostic, Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>**

Sarah Campbell is still waiting to hear back from Dr. Bostic that he is confirmed for the lecture scheduled on December 9<sup>th</sup>. As soon as she hears back from him, she will confirm with Ms. Sweeny.

- i. Ms. Sweeny would like to send the press release out by Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, December 1<sup>st</sup> at the latest.
- ii. The flyer needs to be designed, copied, and distributed to schools by Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Sweeny will design the flyer and look to others for help copying it and distributing it to the schools.
- iii. The flyer will need to be posted at the local libraries, pediatrician's offices, school bulletin boards, teacher rooms, and other locations within the community.

### **Dr. Sandy Jones's lecture on reading initiatives in the District**

Ms. Sweeny proposed that Dr. Jones's lecture be held on January 8, 2009. She inquired whether people thought it would be a problem holding the lecture the first week that students are back in school after the holiday break. Other possible dates are January 20<sup>th</sup> or January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Ms. Sweeny discussed options for where to hold the lecture. It was decided to look into the campus that houses both Florence Roche and the Middle School, with the Middle School North's Library as being the first choice.

### **Joan Axelrod's lecture on tests/measurement.**

Ms. Sweeny proposed scheduling Ms. Axelrod's lecture for an evening in either February or March of 2009.

### **Federation Workshops**

Ms. Sweeny proposed scheduling the Basic Rights Workshop with the Federation of Children With Special Needs for either February or March of 2009. She will pursue scheduling this as soon as Ms. Axelrod's lecture is confirmed.

### **College Night Speaker**

We didn't get to this agenda item at this time. We will discuss it at the next Business Meeting scheduled for January 13, 2009.

### **Potential for big speaker**

Ms. Sweeny brought up the prospect of finding a speaker like Richard Lavoie, author of "It's So Much Work To Be Your Friend." Ms. Bugbee will contact him to see if he is available and what his cost would be.

## **VII. Prescott Space**

The administrative offices for the District are currently in the process of moving into the Prescott space and will continue into next week.

## **VIII. Parent Resource Center**

### **Purpose/Use**

SpedPAC will be able to move into a full classroom down in the basement of Prescott starting the first week of December. Ms. Sweeny described the Parent Resource Center as primarily housing a Parent Resource Library with the hopes of eventually becoming a lending library. It will be used as a place to centralize all of our organizations resources (such as MASS PAC resources, questionnaires, etc.) as well as any personal resources that people are willing to share (books, articles, etc). We plan to advertise drop-in times when either a SpedPAC officer or volunteer will be on hand to answer questions and aid people in using the resource library.

A goal is to make it a child-friendly environment so parents with small children can feel more at ease while meeting there and accessing the resources.

### **Publicity/Open House**

Sometime in January after the holiday break, we plan on holding an open house.

Ms. Sweeny plans on writing an article on the Parent Resource Center for the January editions of the school newsletters. Ms. Sweeny said that we should make sure that we are published in the Boutwell Butterfly, the Early Childhood Center's newsletter, as well.

Information about the Parent Resource Center will be posted at each of the schools on their school bulletin boards, on the SpedPAC website, and at various locations throughout the community.

## **IX. SpedPAC Officer Responsibilities**

We didn't get to this agenda item at this time. We will discuss it at the next Business Meeting scheduled for January 13, 2009.

## **X. Administration**

### **Next Date for meeting with Administration**

Ms. Bugbee will contact both Cam Huston and Dr. Genovese to schedule a meeting in December.

### **Focus Groups for Strategic Planning – SpedPAC participation**

Ms. Sweeny stated that we will bring up the prospect SpedPAC officers participating in a focus group for strategic planning in the District at our next meeting with the Administration.

## **XI. Butler Fund – books for High School**

We didn't get to this agenda item at this time. We will discuss it at the next Business Meeting scheduled for January 13, 2009.

### **Other issues discussed**

One parent brought up the challenges that many families face when they look to their pediatrician for advice when their child is struggling or developing atypically. As a group we discussed reaching out to pediatricians and educating them on how to guide parents through the process of special education and testing. The Parent Resource Center will be a great venue for this. Ms. Sweeny has started to create a list of doctor's offices in the area.

The question of trust came up – as in building trust with school staff (teachers, para’s, therapists, guidance, administrators, Team Chairs) to ensure that they know and understand our children as much as we do. Often, parents feel that the concerns that they have for their child (whether academically, developmentally, socially, emotionally, etc.) aren’t taken into consideration or addressed enough at school.

A parent also brought up concerns regarding where to go for reliable testing - as many families have their child evaluated independently as opposed to having the school District do the testing. One reason for this being that many families have been unsatisfied with the results from their child’s preschool screenings, particularly when the parent was the one who made the referral for the screening. Another reason being that parents have a difficult time trusting that the school district has their child’s best interests at heart.

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**The business meeting concluded at 2:40pm.**