Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee on Special Education
April Monthly Meeting Minutes
Tappan Media Center, 7-9pm

April 13, 2015
Present: AAPAC Exec. Team: Barb Byers, Mary Duerksen, Patricia Memmott, Courtney Runchey
AAPS: Dr. Swift (Super.), Dr. Brown (Exec. Dir., SISS), Le Ann Dickinson-Kelley (Asst. Super), Cassandra Benion, & Tia Butler-Ketchum (ADs, SISS)
Parents

Next meeting: 5/4/2015, 7-9 pm, Tappan Middle School Media Center
Topics: Transitioning to Adulthood: Transition Fair for Parents/Guardians of Children with Special Needs
Pre-meeting: 6:15-6:50pm, Dr. Brown and the ADs from SISS will be available for private conversations with parents/guardians.

I. Welcome and Sign-In

Sharing Good News:
Jacqui Coluccy, from the WISD behavior support team, was praised for developing a customized behavior intervention plan for a student at Thurston. The student has been more engaged in his work since it was implemented. A parent of a Rising Star student at Northside spoke positively of the new peer-peer mentoring program in their two classrooms. Eberwhite teacher Kristi McKenna has been selected as a semi-finalist for Michigan Teacher of the Year. Another parent praised the Eberwhite staff who attended her son's transition IEP for helping create a good plan for his K year. Finally, Jonathan Stern, a Pioneer social worker, was thanked for accompanying a senior student on his tour of WCC.

II. Speakers

Adapted Physical Education: Deak Swearingen, AAPS Adapted PE Consultant, presented excerpts from a presentation he had created for PE teachers about adaptations they can make to ensure students with disabilities can be included in PE. He also shared details of an A2 Unified Day event on May 15th from 10am-1pm, at Pioneer.

This is Deak’s third year in AAPS, and his job includes consulting with PE teachers, as well as teaching adapted PE classes at all schools with self-contained classrooms. He showed parents a video showing middle school and high school classes that demonstrated the value of structured routines. Adapted equipment is also used in his classes, such as basketball hoops that can be lowered, and lighter/modified badminton racquets or bowling balls. Other classes use peer mentors to take data on progress on individual exercise programs on treadmills, or with weights.
Finally, Deak encouraged parents of middle and high school students to attend/make sure their classes will be going to A2 Unified Day on May 15th from 10am-1pm. Gloria O’Neill (AAPS Peer-Peer Coordinator), Deak, Dottie Davis (Huron Athletic Director), and several others are organizing this event for students with disabilities to play sports along aside peers. Track and field events, and bocce ball, will be the focus. They hope to have this become an annual event that also includes elementary schools in the future.

**AAPS Bond Vote on May 5:** AAPS Superintendent Dr. Swift encouraged parents to vote yes. This will be the 2nd item on the ballot, after a statewide proposal. The bond will not increase our tax bills, but will continue a millage that will allow AAPS to replace our aging buses, add secure entrances to our buildings at a faster pace, and update playgrounds to add safer surfaces under equipment. A complete list of items is available at: [http://news.a2schools.org/aaps-millage-request-may-5-2015/](http://news.a2schools.org/aaps-millage-request-may-5-2015/)

**Inclusion Opportunities:** Cassandra Benion, Asst. Director (SISS), shared a PowerPoint presentation on inclusion opportunities.

**Topics Covered:**
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): what the law says
- Inclusion: what it means and does not mean
- Inclusion Opportunities in Ann Arbor: full inclusion with supports; push-in inclusion; co-teaching
- Questions to Ask for Embedded Skills Within the General Curriculum: are there components of the activity that, even if not the main objective of the lesson, match an IEP objective?; can the student complete the activities as written?; can the student meet the lesson objectives with minor modifications?
- Questions to Ask for Functional Curriculum Outside General Education Classroom: are the class activities greatly unrelated to the student’s IEP?; are IEP objectives better met in a different setting?
- Ways to Improve Inclusion Opportunities: Collaboration: Special and general education teachers commit to working together; More training for both special and general education teachers; Special educators are part of the instructional or planning team
- Other Ways to Improve Inclusion Opportunities: include “disability awareness” throughout the district; ensure more inclusion opportunities at the preschool level; more peer-to-peer; personal curriculum when and if appropriate

**Audience comments & questions, and feedback from administration:**
- Parents provided examples of supports their students received in inclusion such as an individual or shared aide when in elementary, and co-taught classes in middle and high school. Also, for a student who is not academically at grade level, inclusion can be important for the social benefits.
- Dr. Brown reminded parents the IEP is not the curriculum, it is just areas that need to be strengthened. The general education curriculum is still our student’s curriculum.
- For disability awareness, the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living has taken over organizing the workshops for 4th graders. Though not all schools will have them this spring, it is hoped to get them offered again in the fall, with updated toolkits as well.
- For peer-to-peer, there are now programs in place at all schools as well, except for one elementary that has a new principal.
- IEP students in 8th grade, unlike general education student, can request a personal curriculum before entering high school, or at any time. This allows a student with a weakness like math or reading to substitute credits and remain on a diploma track. High school principals are getting this info on personal curriculum (as the state rules are regularly updated) so they can help educate teams about options.
• Parental concerns were discussed such as having staff say "they need to ask the general education if it is ok" to include a student there, or being questioned about why their student is not in a self-contained room. They were encouraged to address this with the building principal, and/or the AD of SISS.
• Tia shared an example of how she is encouraging her middle school science teachers to save their differentiated worksheets, assessments, etc. in a database. That way there is less duplication of effort, and they can use these materials even with non IEP students.
• Lack of common planning time between general and special educators was cited as a barrier to inclusion
• Individual PACs at each school were suggested as a way for parents to work with principals to change their schools without needing to bring issues to the larger AAPAC meetings
• Parents requested more info on how to ensure their students get a diploma instead of a "certificate of completion." They were encouraged to not get comfortable in self-contained classrooms, or with modifications to curriculum in resource rooms. Having their students take MSTEP instead MI-Access if possible. At every IEP parents can ask to see where their student is compared to grade level, and if their goals/objectives are aligning with the common core elements. The sooner diploma-vs-certificate is discussed, the more informed parents will be. A discussion during high school may be too late.

III. Reports from AAPAC

These were tabled due to lack of time. Parents who are interested in joining the AAPAC executive team were encouraged to get in touch with us at aapacexecboard@yahoogroups.com as elections will be held at our last meeting, in June. We can use more assistance!