Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee on Special Education
April 2016 Monthly Meeting Minutes

Tappan Media Center, 7-9 pm

April 11, 2016
Present: AAPAC Board: Barb Byers, Mary Duerksen, Patricia Memmott
AAPS: Lee Ann Dickinson-Kelley, Elaine Brown, Speakers
Parents

Next meeting: 5/2/2016, 7-9 pm, Tappan Middle School Media Center
Topics: Navigating University of Michigan services/therapies
Pre-meeting: 6:6:50pm, Dr. Brown and her SISS staff will be available for private conversations with parents/guardians.

I. Welcome & Sharing Good News
Mary Duerksen welcomed parents, and placed a call for volunteers to join the AAPAC Board. A Huron High parent thanked their staff, especially Asst. Principal Waleed Samaha, for implementing 504 Plan accommodations to assist their student after a surgery.

II. Section 504 Updates

Lee Ann Dickinson-Kelley (Asst. Superintendent) introduced Terra Webster, our district’s new Access and Opportunity Division Administrator. Terra works with Derrick Padgett on coordinating 504 Plans, including compliance issues. Their role is to help take away barriers to access to instruction for students. Parents with questions about individual students were encouraged to take Terra’s business card and consult with her after the meeting via phone 734-997-3616, or email webster@a2schools.org. Terra then gave a presentation on common questions about 504 Plans. (PPT unavailable for sharing)

- What is Section 504?
  o Covers accommodations in the general education setting
- Who is covered under Section 504?
  o Broad definition of disability, children who are not eligible for an IEP may qualify
- Who is an individual with a disability?
  o Someone with an impairment that limits one or more major life activity
  o Who has a record of, or is regarded as having, such an impairment
- What is an impairment?
  o Needs to "substantially limit" the ability to access learning in the general education setting
- What are major life activities?
  o Include caring for one’s self, walking, performing manual tasks
  o May include individuals with AD/HD, dyslexia, cancer
  o Conditions that are episodic or in remission
  o Some accommodations are just “good teaching” e.g. preferential seating, chunking learning, and can be discussed through an achievement team meeting
- What does substantially limits mean?
  o Student must be measured against their same-age, non-disabled peers in a general education population or classroom setting
- **Who can refer?**
  - Anyone with regular interaction with child e.g. administrator, classroom teacher, specials teacher, parent

- **Who determines a student’s eligibility?**
  - Entire team, of all adults who regularly interact with student. Includes the parent(s). Student can also be included. It is useful for them to hear why the accommodations will be helpful to them.

- **What evaluation tools are used?**
  - Anything and everything: classroom tests, running records, outside resources like doctor’s notes. A single source of info should not be only info considered.

- **Can a child be placed under a 504 without parent knowledge?**
  - No they cannot. Parents need to consent. Plans are reviewed annually, and re-evaluated every 3 years to determine eligibility. Parents can reconvene team at any time in between annual reviews if there are any concerns.

- **What types of accommodations or services will my child receive?**
  - Will be determined individually based on the nature of the disability
  - Accommodations remove barriers to access, to give equal access to the curriculum
  - Accommodations are part of good teaching
  - Place student at equal starting level of non-disabled students

- **Examples of common accommodations**
  - Larger lined paper, preferential seating, getting assignments a day early, extra copies of textbooks, providing a peer tutor

- **What are some differences between special ed and 504?**
  - Funding sources (IEP = special education funds; 504 = general education)
  - Administration (IEP = SISS; 504 = general education/Terra Webster)
  - Eligibility (IEP = 13 disabilities from federal govt; 504 = all disabilities if eligible)

- **Open Q&A from Parents**
  - Q: Do 504’s have as much legal “teeth” as IEPs? A: Yes, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) monitors AAPS very closely to ensure they are complying.
  - Q: Who is the “case manager”? A: At elementary: principal. In middle & high: principal, or assistant principal. They implemented a database this year that is flagging 504s that are due for renewal. This helps Terra and buildings be alert to scheduling those meetings. They may keep this database vs. moving the 504 records into the TIENet system for IEP management.
  - Q: Where is the 504 website? A: Under Departments > Instructional Services > http://a2schools.org/504. Content includes the Section 504 Policy Manual. Documents are very technical due to OCR rules – Terra can explain them in layperson terms if parents contact her.
  - Q: How long does process take? A: It is a 30 day window, process typically doesn’t take that long. 30 days includes creating Assistive Technology (AT) plan if needed.
  - Q: Does this include “trials” of AT? A: District collects data on AT after implementing per Title II of the ADA, is no longer using “trials” term.
  - Q: Can a 504 be implemented while waiting for a special ed evaluation to complete? A: yes
  - Q: Does the funding for IEPs for 504s mean one process is faster? A: No, especially now that they have worked on ensuring 504 is consistent school to school, the implementation is much improved over past practice.
  - Q: Do building administrators receive training? There were several cycles this year of training building administrators and counselors. Parents who have concerns about the implementation at their building can request Terra to attend 504 meetings to help troubleshoot.
III. Peer-to-Peer Mentoring, A2 Unified Day 2016, and Adaptive PE

Gloria O’Neill (Peer-to-Peer Coordinator) and Deak Swearingen (Adaptive Physical Education Teacher) presented information including:

- **What is Peer Mentoring?**
  - Opportunities for students with disabilities to engage in mutually beneficial social interactions with their typically developing peers
  - Includes systematic training that helps mentors understand different communication styles, how to react to and manage difficult behaviors, and how to build relationships
  - Should be across settings and include a variety of peers
  - Modeled on the START project which was focused on students with autism, and expanded it to all students with communication and social needs
  - District has a manual and brochure for schools to use to develop Peer-to-Peer

- **Current Status**
  - Deak teaches several adapted physical education (PE) classes that include peer mentors. He has close to 1:1 ratio so peers build relationships. Weight lifting, soccer, swimming, and lacrosse are popular activities.
  - Most schools have some type of peer mentoring program, Gloria estimates 1000 students benefited last year
  - At secondary level examples include elective classes such as "Peer Connections", independent studies, clubs, as well as adapted PE.
  - Middle school programs typically occur during advisory
  - Elementary programs may include reverse mainstreaming, or lunch/recess.
  - After school, some schools offer Project Unify sports activities for students.
  - Gloria is hoping to send a survey to parents to gather info on peer mentoring.

- **A2 Unified Day 2016**
  - Huron High will be hosting the 2nd annual Unified Day for Secondary students Thu. May 19, 10am-1pm, and the 1st annual for Elementary Fri. May 20.
  - Self-contained students and peer mentors are bussed to location
  - Emphasis is on doing your best, non-competitive sports
  - Secondary activities will include bocce ball, track & field, and softball throws
  - Elementary will do bowling and modified track & field.
  - Parent volunteers are needed - come help for 30 minutes, then spectate
  - Permission letters will be going home to mentors and mentees from teachers.

- **Open Q&A from Parents**
  - What is in place systematically for our elementary IEP students who are in general education classrooms, but have social and communication needs? A: Dr. Brown said to talk with their building principal. Parent replied had tried, there is willingness but no trained staff to implement. In her school a non-trained parent is running the program. This concerns her. Dr. Brown recommended parent raise concern with Cheryl Brown, the SISS admin at her building.
  - What should a parent do whose IEP team says that Peer-to-Peer is not recommended by the district and Gloria, until 3rd grade, while her 1st grade IEP student in general education is isolated at lunch/recess? A: Dr. Brown said this is not a district policy. AAPAC recommended writing it into IEP goals/supports.
  - Parent asked if they could get a copy of the Peer-to-Peer manual? A: Gloria noted that manual is not online, but every building should have a paper copy.
  - Deak noted that when he and Gloria offer professional development for Peer-to-Peer they are poorly attended, as these are optional sessions.
  - Dr. Brown asked Gloria to pass around a sign-up list for parents who are concerned about Peer-to-peer to meet and form a committee with Gloria.