Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee on Special Education
December Monthly Meeting Minutes

Tappan Media Center, 7-9pm

December 1, 2014
Present: AAPAC Exec. Team: Barb Byers, Mary Duerksen, Patricia Memmott, Courtney Runchey
AAPS: Dr. Swift (Superintendent), Dr. Brown (Exec. Dir., SISS), Cassandra Benion, Sean Waymaster, & Tia Butler-Ketchum (ADs, SISS)
Parents

Next meeting: 1/5/2014, 7-9 pm, Tappan Middle School Media Center
Speakers: Jeff Flynn (Assistive Technology Consultant) & Vicky James (Board Certified Behavior Analyst)
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: After introductions to the AAPAC board, parents shared updates from their schools. A grandparent of a Carpenter Elementary second grader reported on a successful peer-to-peer workshop done in the classroom by their social worker, Cat Hogans. A Pioneer High parent praised their staff for how well her two children’s transitions into that school have gone.

II. Speaker

AAPS Superintendent: Dr. Swift thanked the SISS staff for coming early to each AAPAC meeting, so that parents and guardians can have face-to-face meetings about any questions or concerns they had IEP/504 services.

District Updates: Topics covered included priorities from the 2013-14 Listen & Learn tour (improvement of student achievement and more), current outcomes (including an enrollment increase), and key takeaways from the 2014 audit (with a projected increase in the district fund balance without cutting services to students.)

SISS Goals:
- To ensure frequent, accurate, and consistent communication
- To improve responsiveness and proactive problem-solving
- Implement internal processes to ensure a high-performing team

SISS Projects for 2014-15:
- To continue the Disability Awareness Workshops
- To systemize Peer Mentoring in all AAPS schools
To continue to ensure that Assistive Technology is provided as detailed in IEPs, with full intention to enhance assistive supports; and to increase after-school AT professional development opportunities.

What is Going Well (questions and comments from parents):
- School of Choice: Did not bring a disproportionate increase in special education students (about 11 percent were IEP students, with a district average of 10 percent.)
- Culture of Listening: Multiple parents appreciated Dr. Swift’s willingness to come out in the evenings to listen to parents.
- Welcoming Peers: A Slauson parent has seen multiple peers enthusiastically greet her student, a new student there in their CI classroom.
- Fewer Split Classes: Dr. Swift indicated this was intentional planning for this year to reduce “splits of necessity” at the elementary level.

What Needs our Attention (questions and comments from parents):
- Achievement Team/504 Process: Needs demystifying, parent had an unsuccessful experience with two children.
- Teacher Assistants: Heaviest need for adult support for our students is first few weeks, this year the parent found their school to be understaffed, creating a safety hazard.
- Process for Staff to Resign before August: A parent suggested the district create a termination agreement so that staff who need summer benefits but want to leave AAPS in fall give notice sooner, rather than later.
- Technology Support: Parent frustrated by slow provision of student’s AT from AT plan.
- Transition to TIEnet: Many students received handwritten IEP progress reports. Lack of parent input into features of new system.
- School Culture: Pittsfeld’s teaching staff demographics not reflective of student population. Parent feels student is having identity issues, and staff seem not equipped well to educate in a diverse setting. Dr. Swift indicated a report would be shared soon that confirms this is an issue district-wide at the teaching level.
- Extended School Year: Parent pulled student from ESY, felt teacher wasn’t knowledgeable of student’s disability, nor was there good transition support.
- Fall Planning: Lack of summer staffing seems to contribute to difficulties in getting staff hired and technology in place for students in fall.
- Selective Scheduling: Two parents from Clague, and one from Community, found their process to be chaotic, stressful, and not ideal for easing school anxiety on first day.

III. Reports from AAPAC

**AAPS Administration – AAPAC Officer Meetings Report:** The executive team met with Dr. Brown, Tia Butler-Ketchum and Cassandra Benion on November 19th. Dr. Brown shared that she had color copies of AAPAC brochures placed in the office of every AAPS school. AAPAC shared our concerns about the continuation of the DAW workshops, issues with Assistive Technology support, and the plan for peer-peer programming in every school.

AAPAC also has a seat at the Board of Education, and requested complete fencing of elementary playgrounds, to better ensure the safety of students with/without disabilities.

**WISD PAC Report:** Barb shared that Kathy Grijalva has taken the empty spot for an Ann Arbor representative to the WISD PAC. She also invited all parents to the 1/20/15 meeting which is on
the topic of Personal Curriculum, with Sharon LaPointe as the speaker. Meetings are the 3rd Tuesday at 6:30 pm at the WISD on Wagner Rd.

Meeting business concluded around 8:20, parents stayed to discuss individual issues with officers/each other. Handouts from the meeting, including Dr. Swift’s slides, will be uploaded to the AAPAC website at: http://instruction.aaps.k12.mi.us/aapac/