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

Tappan Cafeteria/Media Center, 7-9pm

March 2, 2015
Present: AAPAC Exec. Team: Barb Byers, Mary Duerksen, Patricia Memmott, Courtney Runchey
AAPS: Dr. Brown (Exec. Dir., SISS), Le Ann Dickinson-Kelley (Asst. Super), Sean Waymaster, & Tia Butler-Ketchum (ADs, SISS)
Parents

Next meeting: 4/13/2015, 7-9 pm, Tappan Middle School Media Center
Topics: Adapted Physical Education (Speaker: Deak Swearingen) and TBA (Speaker: Cassandra Benion, SISS AD)
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: A parent praised a recent sensory-friendly performance of “The Cat in the Hat” at the Croswell Opera House in Adrian. She was very impressed by how accessible it made live theater for her K student. Barb Byers shared that the students in Pioneer’s “Special Connections” peer club had organized a “Disability Awareness Day” for students with tables set up in the gym for students to visit and learn about a wide variety of disabilities. Mary Duerksen’s son at Skyline greatly enjoyed a bowling outing/birthday celebration with the students in Kathi Koblarz’s “Peer Connections” class.

II. Speakers

Fowler Center for Outdoor Learning, Mayville, MI: Farrah Wojcik provided an overview of the Fowler Center, its general camp programs, and the Life TREX program for ages 14-27.

The camp is located on a lake about 2 hours north of Ann Arbor. They offer summer, fall, winter, and spring camps for ages 6 and up. Summer camps are typically 1-2 week sessions on various themes. Their activities include accessible high ropes, treehouses, zip lines, equestrian, as well as more traditional arts & crafts, gardening, and barn animals. Their newest program (Life TREX) is for teens and young adults on the autism spectrum with a focus on independence skills such as job interviewing, organizing camp activities, and being evaluated on their work. There are spots open and scholarships available for all camps. More info is available at http://thefowlercenter.org/

Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living (AACIL): Youth services coordinator Anna Dusbiber and IL Guide Specialist & Occupational Therapist Dorothy Denner shared info on their program, services, and upcoming workshops.

AACIL, which is staffed mostly by individuals with disabilities, provides services for the disabled of all ages. They are currently requesting AAPAC input into their transition workshops for Youth
ages 14-26 and their parents. The first workshop (3/31, 5-7 pm) will focus on social and volunteer opportunities. The second workshop (4/13, 5-7 pm) will be on college and trade school options. The May workshop (TBD) will be especially for AAPS parents, and hosted at Tappan Middle School. Parents offered suggestions for topics including how to determine the interests of a student with low language abilities, the different levels of guardianship, and a planning checklist so that parents know when to tackle various aspects of transition (e.g. at IEP when student is 14, applying for SSI at 18, etc.) Cheryl Brown, AAPS Transition Coordinator, will be assisting with the development of the workshop as well.

Interested parents can RSVP for these free workshops and/or share more ideas for topics with Anna at anna@aacil.org. To learn more about AACIL activities such as cooking classes, Art Friday, adapted yoga, Diversability theater, peer mentoring, and many more visit their website: http://www.annarborcil.org/

REEDs and METs: Tia Butler-Ketchum, Asst. Director (SISS), shared a PowerPoint presentation on REEDs (Review of Existing Evaluation Data) and METs (Multidisciplinary Evaluation Teams.)

The slides from the presentation are available on the SISS website at: http://a2schools.org/ins.siss/files/aapac_met_reed_presentation_pdf.pdf

Clarifications provided during the presentation included:
- Initial REEDs are preceded by the Achievement Team process
- Schools do not diagnose, they look for eligibility in one of 13 disability categories
- Eligibility can be fluid. Some students may start in Early Childhood Developmental Delay, and later move to another.
- Data on eligibility may not be needed every 3 years (e.g. lifelong disability.)
- Comprehensive assessments require parent permission. E.g. Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT), and Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP.)
- METs may decide that a student has a disability but does need services/supports.

Parent questions/feedback:
- Parents find acronyms confusing
- To help parents who may not be sure what type of data is needed, a guide to typical areas of concern would assist in gathering parent input for a REED.
- Adaptive skills are sometimes overlooked by teams
- Parents would like drafts of documents further in advance of REED/MET/IEP meetings.

(Tia said many times very little is filled in because the team can’t make predeterminations and need to discuss the data and any goals, supports and services together. She encouraged parents to consider IEPs as “open” for 7 days – while they are implemented immediately, parents can add more info during that time. IEP amendments can also be used to add goals, change an accommodation, etc. later on. Finally, she assured parents that there are no dumb questions in team meetings.)

III. Reports from AAPAC

AAPS Administration – AAPAC Officer Meetings Report: The executive team met in January with Dr. Brown, Rec&Ed Director Jenna Bacolor, and the SISS ADs, and again in February with Dr. Swift, Le Ann Dickinson Kelley, Dawn Linden, Dr. Brown, and the SISS ADs. Jenna Bacolor responded to a AAPAC request for a special needs summer camp with a cost estimate of $570/camper for a full day/1 week camp using SISS teachers and TAs at a 1:5 camper ratio, with costs likely higher as she had not included funding for scholarships. Other cities have Rec&Ed
millages that offset such costs, or have active fundraising efforts, that make these camps affordable for families.

Other topics discussed included bringing along AAPS/WISD stakeholders in getting a Project Search program started for WISD. This program supports disabled students ages 18+ in local internships, with the goal being competitive employment at the end of the one year program. SISS also shared that the Assistive Technology Fair date has been set for May 19th. AAPAC got updates on the activities of Peer-Peer coordinator Gloria O’Neill, and continued to request more analysis of how to train our noon hour staff in supporting our students, particularly those who may try to leave playgrounds alone. Adapted PE coordinator Deak Swearingen was asked to speak at our April meeting. Cassandra Benion, SISS AD, will also speak, and parents who have topic ideas for her are welcome to share them with the AAPAC board.

**WISD PAC Report:** Barb invited all parents to come to the WISD PAC meetings, which are the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm at the WISD on Wagner Rd. March’s speaker is from Michigan Rehab Services, and April’s is from CSTS.

*Meeting business concluded around 8:40, parents stayed to discuss individual issues with officers/each other.*