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

Tappan Media Center, 7-9pm

October 6, 2014
Present: Exec Team: Mary Duerksen, Patricia Memmott, Andreea Dersidan, Barb Byers
AAPS: Dr. Swift (Superintendent), Lee Ann Dickinson-Kelley (Asst. Superintendent), Dr. Brown (Executive Director, SISS), Sean Waymaster (AD for SISS)
Parents

Next meeting: 11/3/2014, 7-9 pm, Slauson Middle School Media Center*** (New location just for this meeting)
Topics: Special Olympics ; 504 Plans (tentative)
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:
Co-chair Barb Byers kicked off the meeting with introductions to the AAPAC mission, its board members for 2014-15, and the building representatives. Several parents stepped forward to offer good updates from their schools. Among those praised were Huron High’s new principal Jen Hein, Slauson’s new teacher Jessica Waynick, and multiple staff at Pioneer, including Jason Skiba, Tracey Lowder, Andrew Bayer, Jonathan Stern, and Marg Pollock.

II. Speakers

“Coverage Counts”: Washtenaw Health Plan staff member Ruth Kraut presented on an initiative to support kids and parents who are lacking health coverage. Anyone who calls 734-544-3030 (M-F, 9-4) will be connected to experts who can help them navigate options for low income families, as well as the marketplace which is open for enrollment 11/15 – 2/15. Ruth encouraged our AAPAC building reps to learn more about this program in case families at their school ask them for referrals. Visit http://www.healthcarecounts.org/ for more info.

Board of Education Candidate: On November 4, elections will be held for four open seats on the AAPS Board of Education. Candidate Donna Lasinski gave a short overview of her background in supporting various initiatives in the district, including advocacy work on the special education millage.
III. SISS Welcome and Updates

Dr. Elaine Brown welcomed everyone and shared several handouts:


Assistant Directors are now each responsible for 1 high school, as well as most of the elementary/middle schools that feed into it. This provides continuity as students transition between schools.

With Patricia Rushing’s retirement in June, her District Support team duties have shifted to BCBA Vicky James. Her Peer-Peer Coordinator work is in the process of being transferred to a part-time, independent contractor. Dr. Brown and parents also provided an overview of what peer-peer programs look like. It can vary from gym classes that pair disabled students with peers, to “undercover peers” who sit near their mentees in high school academic classes, to lunchtime social groups, and more. Parents were encouraged to contact their teams if they thought their students would benefit from peer-peer supports.

Flowchart for Contacting Staff & Administrators:
http://a2schools.org/aaps/ins.siss/flowchart_for_contacting_staff___administrators

Stressing the importance of contacting the teacher who works with a student on a daily basis first, Dr. Brown shared a flowchart of responsibility so that parents/guardians know who to contact next if a concern is not being addressed. For any contact, a response should be received within 24 hours per district policy, even if the response is that the staff member needs a few more days to work on an issue. As part of the problem-solving process, parents should document who they contacted and when with their concerns.

Self-Contained Classrooms by Building (an updated list that now also includes an ASD room at Pittsfield) : http://a2schools.org/aaps/ins.siss/self-contained_classrooms_by_building

Sean Waymaster also provided handouts for local events that would interest our families:

Sensory Friendly Days (Oct 22-24, Michigan Science Center): http://www.misci.org/events/autism-week/

Preparing for Tomorrow Transitions Conference for High School Juniors and Seniors and their Families (Nov 11, 8:30-1pm, WCC): http://annarboracademy.org/preparing/index.html

Building Bridges: Life After High School (Nov 20, 6-8pm, Huron HS): a college fair specifically for students with learning disabilities

IV. Reports from AAPAC

AAPAC Membership Survey Results: This summer, AAPAC emailed a membership survey to all IEP/504 families. Of the 100 responses, 60% have never attended an AAPAC meeting. It
appears our group may be under-serving some populations such as specific learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD, and dysgraphia, so we hope to provide more presenters on these topics. AAPAC will also work to distribute agendas and meeting minutes more widely for those parents who are unable to come to in-person meetings, including via our newly revised website. The addition of a pre-meeting seems to have been a positive change in reducing the number of individual negative complaints during the general meeting. Parents would like time during meetings to share common concerns such as high school vs elementary, or self-contained vs. inclusion needs. Also they would like to hear more about transition, how to handle your child’s first IEP, and how to talk with a child about their diagnosis. Other complaints were more specific to interactions with school staff such as lack of communication, not knowing how to get a 504, and who to contact for help.

**AAPS Administration – AAPAC Officer Meetings Report:** The executive team met with Sean Waymaster, Cassandra Benion, and Tia Butler-Ketchum on September 3rd. We were also briefed by Ruth Kraut to learn more about her Coverage Counts program. The team shared our survey results. We discussed finding support for the Disability Awareness Workshops (AAPS is working with WISD to look for help coordinating/funding/staffing.) Tia drafted a form for case managers to send home to parents that would include a list of names of all the teachers/therapists on a student’s team, the flowchart for concerns, and a link to the AAPAC website. This was in response to feedback from parents who are confused each school year, especially after staff retire/new staff are hired, about who is working with their students. Sean shared info about the changeover to a new IEP software (TIENET) that rolled out in August, and is taking some time for teachers to adjust to using. Assistive Technology was also discussed as an area that still has parents very frustrated.

**Multiple Vacant AAPAC Officer positions:** With one of our board members soon to go on maternity leave, the team will be down to three members. Help is especially needed with writing and reading board reports, and newsletters, which could be done without attending the meetings with administration. Those interested can contact our new email that goes to the entire board: aapacexecboard@yahoogroups.com

**WISD PAC Report:** AAPS has 2 representatives on the WISD PAC, one filled currently by Barb, and another recently vacated by Scott White. Contact aapacexecboard@yahoogroups.com if interested in being a rep. Meetings are the only responsibility – the 3rd Tuesday of each month, at 6:30 at the WISD on Wagner Rd. Speaker schedule: 10/21 Social Media (Jen Gossett, WACA), 11/18 TIENET, 1/20/15 Personal Curriculum (Sharon LaPointe), 2/?? Transition, 3/17 Michigan Rehab Services, 4/21 CSTS (Community mental health), 5/19 Potluck/Planning meeting

**Upcoming Community Forums:** Parents were encouraged to attend the forums related to the November 4th elections. Whitmore Lake Annexation forums are 10/21 and 10/23, more info at: http://www.a2schools.org/aaps/home&mode=single&recordID=558828&nextMode=list

AAPS BOE Candidate forum during the 10/20 PTOC kickoff meeting, more info at: http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/ptoc/home/pto_council_home

**Meeting business concluded around 8:45, parents stayed to discuss individual issues with officers/each other.**