AAPAC General Meeting

June 8, 2020
Last meeting of 2019-20
2019-20 School Year Accomplishments:

Just a reminder of some of the on-going work throughout the 2019-20 School Year. The COVID-19 school closure necessitated a brief pause but we are continuing dialogue and work in the following areas (and more):

- Providing feedback to Dr. Swift on district’s developing Equity Plan
- Discussing with SISS best practices around paraprofessionals
- Focusing on building-level transitions for students, with hopes that district can put into place practices that help students transition easier
- Engaging with PTOC on the topic of special education
- Strengthening our building representative community
- Attending kindergarten round-ups to share AAPAC information with new parents
- Discussion regarding improvements to district’s Disability Awareness Workshops
Since school closure

AAPAC has had routine Zoom calls with SISS. In those calls we have:

- Shared the complaints and needs of parents
- Encouraged greater communication between SISS and parents, resulting in the 5/7 Town Hall on Facebook Live
- Explained the difficulties that lack of collaboration between gen ed and special ed teachers creates for students

We also emailed a statement to the Board of Education. Unfortunately, we were not able to have it presented publicly, but did share it with the whole board.
AAPAC statement to Board of Education

The Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education wants to share with the Board our perspective on services for students with disabilities during the closure of schools this spring. Most importantly, we note a significant division between general education services and special education services. Special education services (the Good Faith Effort Continuity of Learning Plan) was rolled out at least four weeks after the (general education) Continuity of Learning Plan. No special education services were delivered until the GFECLP was in place. Students with IEPs and 504s are general education students also, and were not receiving instruction during this delay. The GFECLP also was confusing for parents and teaching staff, and inconsistencies were reported between schools. Very few parents report receiving learning supports for their children aligned with the general education curriculum.

As we look to the possibility of the need for distance learning in the fall, we remind the Board that even online instruction must be aligned with the principle of the least restrictive environment. What this means, in simple terms, is that a child in first grade who has an IEP should still be able to access the same content - the same topics, the same materials, the same videos - as the rest of the general education first-grade class. Accommodations and modifications should be provided for that same content, so that every first grade student can learn about sea turtles and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, with their classmates. Instead, what we have seen is special education services consisting of lessons that may answer to an individual child's IEP, but do not relate to the general curriculum. This is a form of restriction: separating the child from his/her peers, just as if s/he were in a separate classroom.

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic and school closure has laid bare the many disparities in our community. Going forward, it's our duty to respond to these disparities in the best way we can. AAPAC suggests that the district use this summer’s distance learning opportunity to bring together general and special education teaching staff so that inclusive online learning can be explored and fully developed for the fall, should continued school closure become necessary.
Challenges

Some challenges that have come up during the school closure have been:

- Wide variety of service provision from school to school and teacher to teacher.
- Delay of special education services when compared to general education services.
- Lack of collaboration between general ed teachers and special ed teachers; lack of clarity around paraprofessional role and responsibilities during closure.
- Need for completing IEPs and evaluations, without the ability to truly assess student’s present levels.
- Lack of timely communication with parents and families.
Going forward

SISS Summer School options are robust. There is a catalogue of courses you can choose from. Details: 7/6-7/30; M-Th; 9-10:30 and/or 1:00-2:30. Enroll online; deadline was 6/3 but you can probably still still enroll now.

Fall school plans will allow flexibility for individual comfort. Medically-compromised students will have the ability to participate from home if they need to.

AAPAC Exec Board will continue to be in regular communication with SISS administrators over the summer. We hope to use the Summer School experiences to help guide continued recommendations for fall planning. Please be in touch (via email or Facebook) in regards to your experiences so that we can help!
Housekeeping

Building Reps: If you currently are a rep and would like to stay, we’ll keep you on the list. If you’re not a rep and would like to volunteer, please email us. If you are a rep and are moving schools, also email us...and let us know if you may have any recommendations for a replacement.

Executive Committee: AAPAC bylaws require elections in the last meeting of the year for the next year’s executive committee. We are proposing an option to delay elections until the first meeting of next year, in October.

If you are interested in serving on the executive committee, email us!

aapacexecboard@groups.io
Executive Committee Election

We are sharing a Google form in order to vote on if we should delay election for EC members. The question reads:

Should the election for AAPAC executive members be delayed until the first meeting of the 2020-21 school year (October 5, 2020)? If you vote yes, this means that the current AAPAC executive committee will remain in place until October 2020.

If the vote is no, we will vote for EC members online sometime in June 2020. If the vote is yes, current EC members remain in place and we will vote in October on EC members.