

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES
NOVEMBER 12, 2009

5:30-7:00

Members Present:

Sheldia Sparks
Sandra Spurgeon-Tinker
Janice Horohov
Stella Smith
Cathy Evans
David Taylor
Gayle Blackburn
Rick Christman
Athena Noal
Denise Beatty
Judy Russell
Amy Koegel

Others Present:

Diann Shuffett, Special Education Administrator
Michelle Gaines, teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Mary Jouet, parent

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 5:36

II. Introductions –Welcome by Mr. Silberman

Ms. Tinker asked about what we can do to transition new teachers into positions involving those teachers who have taught and are retiring? Maybe a mentor to help the new teachers? Mr. Silberman agreed that support for new teachers, those mostly just coming out of college, is important. Recruiting for new teachers more so than recruiting those teachers with experience. We lose lots of wisdom with retiring teachers. Supporting new teachers coming into the program is important. Important for our work plan.

Ms. Dykes indicated we do have resource specialists who provide support, though sometimes spread too thin.

Mr. Silberman stated that with new Principals we have mentors who come in. We can look into mentors for new teachers.

Ms. Sparks suggested maybe a focus group to put together regarding volunteers.

Mr. Silberman asked the committee if they feel this is a viable tool? How is it moving? How are things working?

Ms. Tinker asked TCES staff how the information is presented from the Parent Resource Center?

Mr. Silberman asked if we could do bulk mailing to the parents? Ms. Smith said we do send out information to the parents.

Ms. Noal suggested sending out hard copies and then ask parents if they would rather receive an electronic copy. Mr. Silberman would like to see the information sent home via mail to the parents. The information provided by the Parent Resource Center is really good stuff.

Ms. Koegel indicated that she does receive the information from her school – James Lane Allen.

Ms. Noal suggested that at ARC meetings we mention to parents they are invited to attend the Special Education Advisory Council Meetings. Maybe a checklist on the form to make sure they remember to mention the Council.

Mr. Silberman thanked the committee for all they are doing. He is excited to see Achievement Gaps closing.

III. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Smith made a motion to approve the agenda and was seconded by Cathy Evans.

IV. Approval of Consent Items

- a. Review minutes—approve or amend

Ms. Sparks asked if all schools will receive the Early Literacy Skill Reading Program?

Ms. Tinker made a motion to approve the agenda and was seconded by Ms. Sparks.

V. Old Business (25 minutes)

- a. Update from Ad-hoc committees:

Education:

Ms. Sparks gave the update. Emphasis on Closing the Achievement Gap. Discussion regarding sending a survey out to the teachers. Interventions and Research Based Strategies information was shared.

Communication:

Ms. Smith will be the Communication Chair. Ms. Smith shared information regarding information on the FCPS website and information that will be in the upcoming edition of Stu's News. Links will be added to the website to guide folks in finding information.

Parent Conference October 24th in Frankfort. Diann Shuffett was a presenter. The conference was great. Another conference will be held in the Spring.

A Lunch shop will be held November 17th with Carol Cecil as the presenter.

An updated list of the lunch shops was provided. The December presenter will be Bobbie Burcham, school psychologist.

It was reported that *Family Magazine*, will be featuring an article about Parent Resource Center in the January issue.

Vocational/Post Secondary:

Mr. Christman indicated the committee has been discussing options available from OVR. Ms. Horohov indicated they have discussed Vocational Schools and opportunities for students who may not be going to college.

Placement/Service:

Ms. Russell discussed thoughts from the committee regarding what the mission will be. The committee is still working on the process.

b. Stimulus questions—update on budget

Ms. Dykes indicated 4 million goes to salaries. The funds go toward Travel, Supplies, Books, Software, Audio Visual Tests, etc. \$433,678. The fund balance is 2.7 million.

RFP Proposals were collected this week. A handout was provided regarding the RFP information. Each school was eligible for up to \$10,000.00.

Ms. Smith asked if we had a good response? Did everyone apply? Ms. Dykes indicated that if the school did not apply, they received a call from their school director.

Ms. Sparks stated the RFP from Garden Springs was completed including technology equipment and software.

Ms. Michelle Gaines, facilitator from James Lane Allen, indicated they have requested Smartboards, tablet computers, and Lexia Software.

Ms. Dykes indicated another grant was available from the Achievement Department and another grant was available earlier from the Technology Department.

Ms. Dykes asked about staff input for the grant. Ms. Gaines and Ms. Sparks stated that input was obtained from other staff members.

Ms. Russell asked about the shipping involved with the \$450.00 available for each teacher? Ms. Dykes stated that the \$50.00 covers shipping charges. If a teacher knows there will be no shipping, they can spend up to \$500.00.

Ms. Russell also asked about back to school supply lists parents receive. Do special education teachers receive some of these supplies? Ms. Dykes indicated that it depends on each school regarding supplies provided. Ms. Gaines stated that regular education teachers are very good with providing supplies to special education teachers.

VI. New Business

a. Sign Language classes information

Ms. Gaines shared information regarding Sign Language Classes offered to faculty, staff, parents, and the community members. We are now in our 3rd year of providing sign language classes. Registration/Information regarding classes can be obtained by contacting Michelle Gaines. Michelle.gaines@fayette.kyschools.us or by calling 381-3456.

“Baby Sign Classes” will be offered this Spring. This is a new class offered in addition to the other classes being offered.

Ms. Sparks suggested contacting Angie Stidham, Director of First Steps regarding parents/staff who may be interested in attending the sign language classes.

b. State Autism Grant

Ms. Diann Shuffett, Special Education Administrator, reviewed the State Autism Grant. Ms. Shuffett stated that FCPS is part of the grant. Tanya Sturgill is our Resource Specialist for Autism, but could not be here tonight. This is a training grant. We are looking at using the grant at the four model sites in our district. We feel we can expand on the grant. This Summer, we will be sending a core group of “trainer of trainers to the model sites. Parents will also be participating in the grant. Parent feedback, providing parent support, increasing capacity, and including both regular and special education teachers in the grant. Ms. Shuffett stated the core team is very excited regarding the grant.

There have been questions regarding an Autism Center in our district. Ms. Shuffett indicated a needs assessment has been distributed to parents of students with autism (grades 6-11) and to teachers. The surveys were mailed to parents.

Ms. Tinker asked how the model sites are chosen? What steps are taken to ensure participation opportunities? Ms. Shuffett stated we looked at the parameters of the grant and the pilot school would be a district school available based on parent interest.

Ms. Koegel asked if the program would include elementary schools? Ms. Shuffett hopes to see it expand. We are not where we need to be but we are improving.

c. Lawsuit update

Ms. Dykes shared information regarding the newspaper article (the article is a handout in the packets).

The issue was a complaint investigation regarding 12 students. The district felt there was some information in the appeal decision that did

not correlate with our approved policies and procedures. Truancy issues and determination regarding whether or not the student has a disability was the main issue.

Another investigation looked at over thirty students. We have also appealed the results of this complaint.

We are under one corrective action that indicates we over-identifying students and another corrective action that says we are not identifying students.

Ms. Shuffett indicated we have about 1,200 referrals a year for special education services.

Ms. Tinker noted that if she is expected to have her child at school why aren't the others? This is more than a teacher/school issue, it starts with the parents.

Ms. Smith stated she was previously involved as attendance clerk and agreed that truancy issues and parent involvement are important.

Ms. Dykes has been invited by the Director of Pupil Personnel to observe and/or participate in a committee with Judge Wise. The purpose is to assist the Judges in learning more about the Special Education process.

Ms. Smith stated there are programs available regarding interventions at the school level.

VII. Open Chair (15 minutes)

a. Public comments—

Ms. Mary Jouet shared that her son attends Ashland Elementary. She indicated that Ms. Smith has been great regarding resources available at school. She thanked everyone for being invited to the meeting tonight. Sharing information regarding resources available to parents is important.

b. Individual comments from council--

Ms. Noal was in Dallas, Texas last week. She attended a job fair type event sponsored by a school district. Do we offer anything like this? Ms. Dykes indicated we offer a job fair in the Spring of each year.

Ms. Noal stated they have a PTA type program in Dallas for Special Education. Ms. Noal felt this was a neat idea that we might want to explore in our district.

Ms. Tinker suggested that possibly during open house meetings at the schools, especially for new parents, that support groups be organized. This connection may be very valuable to new parents in our district.

Ms. Smith is working toward being more invisible in the schools. Visiting facilitators, meeting folks, saying high, etc.

Ms. James shared information how she would receive 30 pages of paperwork and how much paperwork you receive during the meetings.

Ms. Koegel stated the importance of breaking down resources for those parents who may not understand Special Education. We might consider contact information available on the website, perhaps a 24 hour resource line?

Ms. Tinker stated ARC Meetings are intimidating. Meeting with parents regarding the process would be helpful.

Ms. James stated she would like to see brochures regarding information about acronyms. Ms. Smith has packets of information she has been sharing with facilitators.

Ms. James shared experiences regarding ARC meetings. Improving the parent experience at ARC meetings is important. Providing information, answering questions, etc.

Ms. Russell stated the PTA may be helpful in providing parents information.

Ms. Koegel stated that she has heard parents are pleased with the process of the meetings.

Ms. Sparks suggested that parents should contact the facilitators regarding questions or concerns regarding ARC meetings or their child's program.

Ms. Dykes informed the council that Ms. Stults is expecting a child in February. Discussion regarding whether she should remain on the council. The committee agreed that Ms. Stults should remain on the committee. She is an Early Start employee and an excellent resource.

VIII. Adjournment of meeting

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Koegel and seconded by Ms. James. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 PM.