

SEPAC Meeting Minutes

January 19, 2022

❖ ATTENDEES:

- Special Services Administrators: Jean O'Connell (Director), Stephanie Orr (Supervisor- SE gr. 9-12), Lisa Vitale-Stanzione (Supervisor- SE gr. K-8) - BT District Administrators: Nick Markarian (Superintendent), - Board of Education: Robin Mckee, Jennifer White, Tim Salmon, Karen Gray - PEC: Somya Bhatnagar, Lauren Small (Co-Presidents) - SEPAC: Meg Findlay(PreK), Kim Fusca (MPS), Jennifer Kuhta & Liz Paolillo (CHS), Colleen Carter & Erica Bell (OSS), Monica Petraglia (LCS), Janice Corrado & Gretchen Debiasi (WAMS), Lisa McNey & Stacey Irvine (Ridge)

KEY: ★ Special Services Responses

Districtwide

- Have dates and locations for ESY 2022 been determined yet?
 - ★ ESY will take place July 5-August 4. The first week will run from Tuesday through Friday, remaining weeks will be Mondays through Thursdays. ESY for Ridge will be 8-2 and elementary schools will be 9-1, WAMS ESY 9-1.
- What is the status regarding progress reports? Some families are still not receiving progress reports despite this issue being raised at last year's meeting. How can we fix this?
 - ★ Progress reports are delivered 3x a year and at a student's IEP meeting. Progress reports can be found on Genesis. If your child is in CBAP, the progress report is sent home via email or snail mail. Should a progress report not be listed on Genesis (and the student's IEP meeting has not replaced that report), contact Betsy Snell.
- Can you share what the staffing status is at present at various schools for Special Education staff?
 - ★ Now that we have moved past the peak of Covid, staffing levels are better.
 - For self-contained programs, how are staff-to-student ratios being maintained when large numbers of staff are out?
 - ★ Staff can be rotated to maintain appropriate numbers and there have been times when staff and students are out so ratios are in line.
 - Has the new district behaviorist started?
 - ★ The district behaviorist started and is currently working with students at OSS. All behaviorist positions are filled, however a behaviorist has requested to extend her maternity leave. Behaviorists are district-wide.
 - Have the openings for two CBAP teachers been filled?
 - ★ These positions have been filled.
 - Has the shared ICS support teacher for CHS and LCS been hired?
 - ★ The district is still searching for the ICS teacher for the split role. They do have a

long-term sub currently in place, who covered Grade 4 ICS at LCS all last year. The certified special ed teacher posting is currently up on the district website as well as two other job search websites.

The district is also searching for an LDTC at CHS, which is a difficult position to fill. Case Managers are currently filling in the gap for evaluations.

- Are there any special considerations being given to plan in-person learning for special ed students who can not attend to virtual instruction, in the event of another shutdown due to COVID?

★ The district does have a plan in place should in-person learning need to be closed down due to the pandemic. District understands the importance of special ed students being in school. Administration understands that some special education learners cannot learn virtually. Special consideration will be given to decisions affecting special education students.

- NJDOH is recommending the use of clear masks. The guidance states the following:
Clear masks: Clear masks that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face may be considered in certain circumstances if they do not cause breathing difficulties or overheating for the wearer. Clear masks are not face shields. CDC does not recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for masks because of a lack of evidence of their effectiveness for source control. Teachers and staff who may consider using clear masks include:
 - Those who interact with students or staff who are deaf or hard of hearing.
 - Teachers of young students learning to read,
 - Teachers of students in English as a Second Language classes.
 - Teachers of students with disabilities.

Have we required and provided clear masks for all teachers and staff in the elementary schools, since your new guidance states the school will be providing? And for other schools and students who may also be affected?

★ The district has been testing clear masks throughout the pandemic. Certain clear masks have not had the correct seal to be safe or have fogged up with use. After consulting with the head of nursing, Special Services has ordered clear masks for SLPs. If these masks work well then they will be distributed to additional staff as appropriate.

NJDOH Guidance:

https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/RecommendationsForLocalHealthDepts_K12Schools.pdf

Preschool & Elementary Schools

- Have the guidelines around nap/rest times in full-day preschool classrooms been defined and communicated to the parents?
★ In full-day preschool classrooms, students have rest or quiet time.
As of Feb 1, a new preschool classroom has been added.
★ Allyson Read will send out guidelines to parents explaining that masks must be removed when students are lying down. In addition, new mats have been ordered should parents elect to have their child nap.
- How is continuity of communication with parents of students in self-contained classrooms maintained when teachers are out for extended periods, specifically as it relates to following the protocols laid out in the IEP (e.g., daily/weekly reports, assignment of homework, etc.)
★ Teachers and aides are doing their best to follow IEP plans in detail. Now that the health guidance has been reduced to five days there should be fewer extended teacher absences. For specific questions regarding reports or homework parents should email the teacher/aide directly rather than the case manager.

William Annin Middle School

- Where will WAMS students be attending ESY this summer?
★ ESY will take place at WAMS this summer.

Ridge High School

- Can you provide an update on planning for social events/movie nights etc. Might these be possible for Spring?
★ Planning is on hold and can resume when covid infection numbers decrease. These events like movie nights and Friday night socials could take place this Spring or Fall.
- For students in non-self-contained programs, is it possible to notify parents if their child will be spending more than one period in the auditorium for that day? Some students are unable to tolerate spending significant amounts of unstructured time in the auditorium.
★ This has been resolved as now when non self-contained teachers are out, they alert Stephanie Orr who makes sure students aren't spending time in the PAC. Staff will either be moved to cover the class or a structured study hall can be implemented.
- Is there a way for students to be excused for the day if multiple teachers will be out?
★ As stated above, this won't be an issue as Special Services will make sure there are teachers put in place for the student's day.

Postgraduate Program

- Some parents have communicated concerns regarding the job sampling program.
 - Can you provide an update regarding conversations with the transition coordinators?
- ★ Jean had a 2nd meeting with parents on January 25. Updates will follow.
 - Has the district appointed a replacement for Mrs. Winters? What is the expectation on making the change effective?
- ★ Joe Flynn will replace Mrs. Winters.
 - How will changes/improvements to the program be communicated to parents?
- ★ Parents will begin receiving monthly progress reports in February.
 - Can the date for the Transition Fair be shared? Is it still the plan to hold it virtually?

★ The district is looking at using a Lunch & Learn to hold a transition fair. The district is open to having it in person but it has been very hard to get people from the State to commit to attending an in person transition fair. The district is looking to provide a May transition fair - hopefully in person.

- Can the district provide a workshop focused on the Job Sampling Program at RHS: Vocational/RR, CBAP in the near future?

★ Jean is working with the transition coordinators to plan a Lunch & Learn on Job Sampling in March.

Out of District Schools

- Are HS students in OOD self-contained programs held to the same attendance requirements as Ridge students?
 - ★ Attendance requirements are the same.

Miscellaneous

- Parent Information Workshops/Lunch & Learn or others
 - Recent workshops conducted by Special Services have been very well received by the parents. Is it possible for these sessions to be recorded and made available either on the district website or the PEC website?
- ★ If the Zoom is recorded then parents attending would be recorded. Special services will look into pre-recording presentations so they can be posted online without attendees present.
 - The following are some topics that parents have expressed interest in for future workshops:
 - Accommodations versus modifications: What is the difference?

- A comprehensive overview of the Special Education programs and their Services: CBAP, BD, RR, ICR, ICS, Vocational, etc.
- The Multi-Tiered System of Support: The process from General Education to Intervention to Special Education
- Transition into Adolescence

★ Special services will take into consideration these suggested workshops. Special services will look into pre-recording these so that parents may access if they are not able to attend at lunchtime as indicated above.

Special Services - Upcoming dates to remember:
Additional information will be sent out prior to the meeting.

PreK-5 CBAP Parent Meetings

January 26, 2022

April 27, 2022

CBAP Academic Planning Meeting (for Rising CBAP 9th grade parents)

January 26, 2022

Transition Meetings

February - 25th

March - 30th

Lunch & Learn Dates:

March 23 - The Transition Process

May 3 - Reading Comprehension Strategies

May 11 - Summer Activities

8th to 9th Grade Special Ed Academic Planning Q&A Follow Up

January 26th 1:00-2:00 (all parents were emailed a reminder)

5th to 6th Grade (Including CBAP) Special Ed Academic Planning

February 18th 1:00-2:00

5th to 6th Grade WAMS Academic Planning Night

May 19th 7:00 (part of the WAMS Parent Intro Night)

WAMS Bridges Program Overview (Formally known as the Behavioral Disabilities Program)

March 2nd 1:00-2:00

WAMS LLD Program Overview

April 4th 1:00-2:00

K-5 LLD Program Overview

April 7th 1:00-2:00