

7/22/14 (Minutes)

Special Education Parent Advisory Meeting

Presenter: Christina Battiato, Director of Special Education

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS:

Introduction of staff /parents present and Board of Education members listed

PARENT ADVISORY PACKET:

Packet provided and available at sign-in table

Director of Special Education discussed reason for organizing parent advisory group in relation to Special Education Law

CST mailing address provided

DISCUSSION OF PROGRAMS AVAILABLE:

Introduction of Superintendent

Director of Special Education went over district-wide programs by building, explaining the continuum of program options and special education teachers.

Director of Special Education explained difference between Learning and/or Language Disabilities (LLD) setting compared to In-class Resource (ICR) setting least restrictive environment (LRE) and based on specific needs of students.

Parent had a question regarding available teacher positions **District response:** the district is currently in the process of interviewing candidates and have every intention to fill positions before the start of the new school year.

Maryann Molis no longer BD teacher at PTMS, transitioning into LDT/C position w/CST in September.

Part-time teaching positions available at SHS posted for Science and Social Studies

Parent had a question about the MD program at Norma **District response:** The MD program is based on the needs of students, not specific to grade level.

Parent had a question about the LLD class at Elmer **District response:** LLD class removed because the needs of the students at that level did not warrant a continuation of that particular program for the 2014-15 school year.

Parent had a question about a behaviorist position in-district **District response:** A behaviorist is available through contracted services at this time. Our District also has a certified BCaBA and an individual working on her BCBA certification to be complete this school year. The District will look into utilizing staff, as well.

Parent had a question about the autism program in-district and placement consideration of students diagnosed with high functioning autism **District response:** Students are not automatically placed in the autism program or BD program, placement in an available program is based on the needs of the individual student, therefore every option available is considered regardless of classification/diagnoses. Parent shared personal experience and her satisfaction with process taken to educate her child based on level/needs.

Parent had a question about why the district does not have a behaviorist on staff **District response:** The need for this position in-district is not warranted at this time, as we are currently able to meet students needs with contracted services. Parents expressed that having a full time behaviorist on staff in-district will be beneficial. **District response:** There are teachers in-district who either have or will have certifications in behavior analysis and the district will look to utilize these professionals better, moving forward. Ms. Turner (teacher) is also trained in the Wilson reading program and has provided support/training for students and staff. The district is very fortunate to have lots of great talent.

Parent had a question about gifted/talented program in-district and its relation to Special Education **District response:** There are programs available within the district but responsibility in this area currently falls under the building principals to implement and maintain. CST does not classify students who are gifted/talented, even though technically it falls under the realm of special education.

CHAIN OF APPEAL:

Director of Special Education encouraged parents to follow the chain of appeal in the event that they have to address concerns. If contact needs to be made with a case manager or director of special education at CST, contact Carol Stull (CST secretary) and she will be glad to connect you to the appropriate person.

Teacher input in regards to PTMS and SHS teacher communication- email is better at this level because teachers have a moving schedule and do not stay in one class all day. If a parent wants to reach out to a teacher by phone, it's best to call the main office and leave a message with the secretary who will then put messages in teachers' mailbox.

Parent feedback: parent would like to see improvement in communication with teachers and case managers.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Director of Special Education explained listed resources of community websites and numbers for families This information will be maintained and more added at each meeting. Parents also shared resource (CGS-Family Support Organization brochure) they have found helpful and when they find additional resources are welcome to email Director of Special Education to be included.

OPEN FORUM:

Parent feedback: Parent would like schools to consider increasing time for parent/teacher conferences for progress/report cards because it is difficult to discuss concerns, etc. with such limited time.

Parent feedback: Parent would like to see case managers present at back to school night, with the understanding that this is not what typically happens across districts.

Parent feedback: Parent's experience at Elmer school is that staff has accommodated parents if they need to meet at anytime to discuss concerns.

Parent feedback: Parent has children who have attended both PTMS and SHS and communication between parent and school staff has been successful/ongoing to discuss concerns.

Teacher input: PTMS has "team time" where parents can be involved, in addition to parent/teacher conferences.

Multiple parents had questions about the summer programs and help for the summer reading project. **District response:** Summer school teacher discussed class and expectations. Parents with specific concerns were encouraged to make an appointment to meeting directly. Librarian at PTMS is available during summer months to provide assistance to students, families looking for tutors can reach out to building principals for teachers who may be interested or guidance to link up with students who are apart of the honor society. Parents shared that specific accommodations can also be included in students IEP, if needed. Director of Special Education will look into making improvements with summer reading project for students with special needs.

Parent feedback: There are museums and other facilities that offer support/fun activities to students with special needs that are outside of Salem County to look into during summer months as well.

Director of Special Education explained that future meetings will be held in different buildings at least bi-monthly and at different times throughout the school year; topics may be geared toward issues relevant to grade level housed in that building. Some ideas for future meetings: Related services at home- providers attend to discuss home activities for families and a meeting regarding transitions to middle school, high school and into

adult life. Topic for next meeting will likely be about understanding IEPs and gathering suggestions from parents. A copy of a blank/sample IEP will be provided and parents were encouraged to bring their child's IEP to review, but specific information will not be discussed. Parents were encouraged to email Director of Special Education regarding topics or ideas they may have. **Parent feedback:** parent would like to have future meetings set up in advance like board meetings are scheduled.

Director of Special Education thanked parent who suggested idea of conference call as an option for participation. Copies of packets will be sent home to parents who participated by conference call and will always be available at future meetings as well as at CST office.

Copy of CGS/FSO brochure was copied for distribution, will also be available at future meetings.

Anything else for the good of the group? Director of Special Education expressed that the first meeting was successful and thanked everyone for coming.