



Special Needs Advisory Council

Nantucket, Massachusetts

Laura Steele, Suzanne Fronzuto – Co-Chairs

SNAC Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2021

(Note: The meeting was held by video conference via ZOOM App)

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:00 PM with 10 people in attendance at the start of the meeting. An opening welcome by co-chair Suzanne Fronzuto was followed by participant introductions. The minutes of the February 17, 2021 meeting were accepted.

Director Update:

- Deb Gately, Director of Special Services

General Updates: Deb announced that tomorrow's scheduled School Committee meeting, which included the annual presentation on special education to the district, has been cancelled. The special ed presentation will take place at the rescheduled meeting on June 1st at 6:00 PM. With past presentations being data-focused, which is important, Deb has changed things up this year, with a theme of 'what's being done to change things' in the special education programs. Much of what Deb will be presenting on the 1st will be shared in tonight's SNAC meeting.

Deb shared that over her last nine months at NPS there has been much fact-finding; listening to families, teachers and administration to better address some of the concerns around special education.

Received from the State last month were specific guidelines regarding dyslexia screening. What is required for Nantucket as a district: Pre-K, and grades 1 and 2, each year will be administering the screener twice per year, to all students, which includes progress monitoring and catching any concerns with students early on. The State has provided NPS with a list of information, including a dyslexia screener that is aligned to MAP. A committee is being formed to review the screeners.

Deb announced that she and Jennifer Rabold are coordinating with the private schools to set up meetings in September. The NPS is obligated to provide the private schools with professional development in addition to services for students in those school. With the school year beginning on a closure, this did not effectively happen. To best address concerns of parents whose students attend private schools NPS will be hosting three screening dates throughout the course of next school year, with a team from the district visiting the private schools to perform the screenings for parent concerns.

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Director Update (continued):

A parent inquired if private school teachers have the ability to consult with Landmark when they come to Nantucket. Deb and Jennifer have reached out to both private schools and have not yet heard back. Deb and Jennifer maintain the grants for the district; a requirement of Federal law is for services to be shared with the private schools. Deb's initial outreach to provide professional development was deferred. Jennifer has reached out on PD for responsive classroom. In order to proceed NPS needs a letter indicating they have met with the private schools. This needs to be done before June 15th.

Deb discussed at February's SNAC meeting that a group of BCBA's from Boston had come to Nantucket to address the district's programs, specifically IDSC and Options. This has resulted in a detailed report including suggestions to best support those programs as well as creating ongoing consultation with the Boston BCBA team. The school will be adopting a 'social thinking' curriculum, administered to students pre-K to 22, which teachers will be trained in at the beginning of the year. What did not come out of the report, but is new, is a second IDSC being added at NIS with another teacher to be hired, based on the number of students transitioning in. This is also in line with meeting State guidelines. Interviews for the teacher position are going very well. A language-based learning disabilities program is also being developed for next year at NIS, for grades 3 – 5. Pre-K – 2 looks at the level of need for specific learning, so the NIS program will provide continuity with the robust LBLD program already in place for grades 6 – 12, as well as keeping with State guidelines, where students are typically identified at age 8.

An exciting development is the addition of a Spanish speaking interpreter/translator designated specifically for the Special Services Department, to attend IEP meetings, translate documents and other responsibilities specific to special education. This could include attending monthly SNAC meetings to assist with Spanish translation, if agreeable to the SNAC board. The interviewing of candidates is taking place now.

A new social-emotional curriculum is being developed for grades 6 – 12. Deb is also in the process of finalizing for the 2021-2022 school year a certificate of mastery program for all teaching assistants. This program will begin with the professional development day for the month August. In the past and during COVID the delivery of PD for the district's TAs was somewhat scattered, and modules are being developed through a contract with Ribas Associates, who will visit the island to provide the series of curriculum for TA staff.

Nantucket had a finding of significant disproportionality by the State in how it qualifies students for special education in certain categories, exceeding the States ratios in the category of communication disabilities for Hispanic students and intellectual disabilities for African American/Black students. Deb explained that it can be very difficult in the world of special education to make the distinction between a student having a learning disability or a language acquisition issue. The school is working with its MTSS teams at the various schools to look at this. The adoption of the Wilson-based Foundations program will also address this, with Foundations training being provided to ELL teachers in K-2 beginning at the end of this summer.

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Director Update (continued):

A parent shared her understanding of how critical systematic phonics instruction is for students and was curious about Foundations for ELL teachers. With K - 2 already teaching Foundations, she inquired if ELL teachers are doing it in addition to what's happening in the classroom, or if it's because ELL services happen during word study.

Deb responded that Foundations is sometimes happening in the inclusion classroom or in reading, but not consistently enough. The goal is for all students to be doing it at the same place/time. That is the model the school is striving for if the schedule can be reconfigured at NES. There is confidence that increased collaboration with ELL staff and classroom teachers will support that goal.

Deb announced with regret that after nearly 19 years at NPS Becky Earle will be leaving on May 26th to take a position on the Cape. Becky has been the longest standing member of the special services department and has been an invaluable asset to parents, teachers and school administration. Becky will be greatly missed. Maria Chirinos and Deb will cover Becky's job responsibilities until her replacement is hired.

In response to a parent question on the plan for both regular and special ed for summer school, Deb responded that a full ESY program will be run from July 6 through August 5 this summer – four days (Mon, Tue, Wed and Thu) – and held in person. More outdoor space will be utilized for classes.

Due to the number of teachers hired for summer school, the groupings can be kept relatively small. Grades pre-K – 5 will be at NES and grades 6 – 12+ will be at CPS. Information has gone out to families whose children have been identified. PD day for July (7/1) is being planned out now, with new curriculum introduced from Teachers College accessible to ESY students. For summer school there is a funding source through the Federal government -- ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) Fund – focusing on enrichment, remediation and acceleration for students K – 12. The program would include an extra (optional) hour of enrichment, such as music, wellness, art, etc., in addition to the three hours of instruction.

Focus on the IEP in the Special Education Process – Part 2: The school is required on a yearly basis to talk about the IEP process and what it means. At the February SNAC meeting, Deb shared Part 1 (IEP portion) of the presentation *Special Education IEP & 504 Process*.

Deb presented Part 2, which discusses the 504, a plan for how the school will support a student who may have access limits to learning in the educational setting due to a disability. The 504 is different from an IEP and includes accommodations based on the student's specific challenges that substantially reduce accessing or navigating the academic instruction or the school. Deb's presentation provided examples of the types of qualifications that should be considered for a 504 (but don't imply automatic 504 eligibility) and discussed the various assessments for evaluating a student for a 504.

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New Business:

Though a June meeting is not scheduled, it was voted to have a June meeting to do officer elections and for any other items. There was a brief discussion about meetings continuing online or returning to in-person and if there is the possibility of combining both formats.

Deb received information from Kathi Hackett of MVCS on a virtual accommodations workshop (one for teachers and one for parents) on May 27th and also an advocate's presentation on May 18th. A parent reached out to Deb about the latter, and Deb referred them to Kathi to obtain a copy of the presentation.

The next meeting of the SNAC is June 16, 2021 at 6:00PM. The meeting will again take place via Zoom app.

At approximately 7:00 PM the meeting adjourned with 11 people in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora Kebbati, Secretary of SNAC

Approved through a vote of SNAC members on _____

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