

Andover School Committee

Minutes of May 18, 2017

Members in Attendance: Chair, Susan McCready, Vice-Chair, Shannon Scully, Joel Blumstein, Ted Teichert, and Paul Murphy

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Dr. Sheldon Berman, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Nancy Duclos

I. Open Forum on Special Education

A. Call to Order/Moment of Silence/Salute to the Flag

Susan McCready called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M

The School Committee's Open Forum on Special Education was an opportunity for parents to speak about their concerns and for the School Committee to listen.

Susan McCready explained the SC purview, noted that the session was being televised, and advised attendees that the SC guidelines for public input would apply to the session.

Ted Teichert facilitated the discussion and Paul Murphy took notes. A large group of parents attended the two-hour Open Forum.

Parents talked about the concerns and experiences they encountered while navigating the process of how to help their children before and after being diagnosed with a learning disabilities. The list of hopes, concerns, what's good/working, and what needs work were noted as follows:

Hopes:

1. LEAP Program improvements
2. Post IEP meeting survey for each meeting
3. Use and disseminate best research
4. Improve partnerships with parents
5. In the Excel Program, expect more of the kids, more peer activities
6. Can we develop an ANDOVER Dyslexia Program and include parents in the development of the program?
7. Can we add a check and balances system to make sure kids are not moved along when not ready?
8. Can we find a way for teachers to express their opinions about student progress?
9. Make sure the curriculum is correct.

Other concerns:

1. A feeling that staff should be the experts and not rely on parents for this.
2. Why is the budget setup to have special education and regular education in the same budget?
3. For students ages 18-20, let's have higher expectations and better programming.
4. At the core, let's make sure the welfare of all kids is at the center (value every child, human rights, emotional abuse, physical abuse, children unattended in hallways).

5. Some challenges for students and families pose a “great unknown” for the future; this is hard emotionally.
6. Basement room at AHS
7. Put an end to stigma of LEAPSTERS; be aware of the emotional fragility of students and families.

Good

1. Addressing needs supportively and in a timely way (physical challenge)
2. Resources (\$400K) and leadership much improved in the last year (x3)
3. Successful program for child (x3)
4. Autism success
5. 18-20-year-old daily living skills
6. Home schooling reduces emotional strain
7. Landmark
8. LEAP Program
9. Specialist

Needs Work

1. Improve perception of consistency of services
2. Support parents being advocates for their children
3. LEAP Program isolates students
4. Appropriate service
5. Emotional support for students and families (x6)
6. Self-Esteem training
7. In the parent community: make sure ALL Special Ed programs are “at the table”
8. Communicate with students and parent’s alternatives to college and military-post AHS.
9. We have only ONE chance to get it right for students before they enter the world.
10. Right classes at the right level.
11. 18-20 year olds underserved (transition, jobs and after-school programming all need improvement).
12. Trust has been eroded.
13. Misdiagnosis has long-term effects.
14. Treat the abuse.

The School Committee thanked the parents for attending and for communicating their experiences, frustrations and suggestions.

At 9:00 P.M. the School Committee unanimously voted to adjourn the Special Education Open Forum of May 18, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary