

Santa Monica Malibu PTA Council Special Education Committee Meeting

July 7 2008

Minutes

Attending: Rebecca Kennerly, Felix Schmittiel, Nina Fresco, Marie Robinson, Deborah Shepherd, Linda Metzger, Corinne Levy, Lee Jones, Adam Baldwin, Ruth Valadez, Harry Kiely, Ken Haker, Laura Rosenbaum, Maria Leon Vasquez, Christine Hobart, Sally Chou, Amy Brunell

Reviewed the purpose of the group from the last meeting, including:

- Have smaller meetings over the summer
- Do research for programs
- Plan Fall Forum
- Need to communicate workshops and on-going work to parents on a regular basis
- Working collaboratively; district, committee, parents
- Building a repository of literature
- Adopt a programmatic point of view
- Set priorities for talking about each child as an individual
- Collaborating with teachers, support additional professional development support
- Honor that collaboration starts before the IEP process
- PTA liaison to this group. Suggestion: units need to have representation.
- Someone to look at what is on the website.

How are the needs of “gifted” students addressed by the committee? What is the forum for helping gifted students grow and develop, reincorporating their gifts into the school environment, with their peers? How to find resources for parents? Chatroom for parents to post needs and chat about the differences their child has, share findings. Have a teacher or principal, someone to go to get more advanced resources. A GATE/differentiation coordinator? What parents want is IN the classroom, keeping the children motivated. Sally reported there is even more training this year for middle school teachers on working with differentiation. School libraries are good resource for challenging materials. More front-loading.

Adam suggested: Develop a protocol for communication with the classroom teacher to explain the situation and ask for resources. Help to parents to navigate the system. Harry suggested several tools that could help parents work more closely and effectively with teachers. Marie: teacher website resource: different ways they can differentiate or extend learning for GATE child, special needs child. Sally indicated that information is on the SMMUSD website under Education Services – sample lessons, etc. Parents can go there, too.

Service providers – speech teacher, OT, etc. – should provide more communication about what’s going on. A regular update, mini-assessment to see if student is on track. Process should happen through progress reports, Ruth said. During year do informal assessments with formal assessment at year-end.

Parents with special needs children probably need more communication. It would be nice for School Board to have standards about the frequency of communication, etc. Have comfortable open forums to communicate, keep it on site, not have to go to the district. The parent is also a resource for teachers as parents know their children and what’s worked for them. How do parents communicate appropriately to providers. Suggested: must be in the IEP. Specialists do not send updates even though it’s in the IEP. Concern that the process, the law is not always followed school site by school site.

Sally told the group that teachers do want to hear from parents. Will reiterate with teachers about honoring the communications process. Having some kind of checklist for the process.

Discussion took place about the Special Education Design Team, which is still being assembled. Members will be trained by consultants from Claris Group, who will also facilitate Design Team meetings. Progress report at next board meeting July 24.

Committee needs to decide whether staff should be at committee meetings.

Mission statement was developed at meeting:

The mission of the Santa Monica Malibu PTA Council Special Needs Committee is to foster collaboration between parents, teachers, the schools, and the community to support the positive impact of children with special needs and their families in support of our mission to advocate for the health, education and welfare of all children.

- To support the parents of children with special needs and their teachers by providing accurate and timely information, support and communication that parents and teachers can understand so that all can help their children maximize their potential.
- To work collaboratively with the school district to assist staff in most effectively helping children with special needs and to create an environment of trust, respect and inclusion
- To provide information and to reach out to all parents, educators and community members about children with special needs in a way that can be effectively understood so they can understand and support all children.
- To help all children understand and appreciate challenges faced by children with special needs.
- To work legislatively to secure and retain adequate laws (and funding for them) for children with special needs.

Tagline: Fostering collaboration between parents, teachers, the schools and the community to support children with special needs.