

**Boston School Committee
Inclusion Task Force
April 10, 2014
6:00 – 8:00 PM
Jeremiah E. Burke High School
60 Washington St., Dorchester**

Present:

Raul Garcia, Jerry Mogul, Eileen Nash, Natalie Ake, Jean-Dominique Hervé Anoh, Lindsa McIntyre, Marty Mitchell, Regina Robinson, Carolyn Kain, Janet Palmer-Owens, Maria de Lourdes Serpa, Dianne Lescinskas, Michael Loconto, Edward Powell, Bill Henderson (Co-Chair), Karen Zerby Buzzelle (Facilitator).

Absent:

Zach Rossetti, Patricia Lampron, Elaine Ng, Richard Robison.

Also Present:

Thomas Hehir, Nicole Mullen, Lisamarie Barbosa, Nate Kinder, Roxanne Hoke-Chandler, Don Kennedy, Rachael Ziulkousk, Laura Wirth, Todd Groves, Nicole Hanley, Dana Girswold, Andrea Black, Marjie Crosby, A. Elysee.

Welcome & Introductions

- Michael Loconto from the Boston School Committee introduced himself and explained his participation on the Task Force. He is not a co-chair, but will serve as a liaison to the School Committee. He is working to fill the vacant membership spots on the Task Force and hopes there will be some new members next month.

Approval of Inclusion Task Force Meeting Minutes: 3/13/14

- Jerry asked to correct the word “inspirational” to “aspirational” on the March minutes.
- Michael motioned to accept minutes with the correction, and all approved.

Updates

Members who attend the school visit at the Manning made very positive comments about what they saw. People noted that the children with special needs were “undetectable” and that all students seemed to be happy and learning, together. Bill noted that many say it is too difficult to include students with Emotional Impairments and the Manning shows that it can be done successfully. Carolyn noted that it would be important to establish a pathway for the Manning. Bill pointed out that the Task Force cannot make specific recommendations for pathway options, but can and should consider the policy recommendation that all students in inclusive schools should have options to other inclusive schools as they age-out of their existing inclusive school.

Review Committee Notes

- Jerry noted that the categories from the notes should match the original document. Bill assured the group that we will synthesize all topics under consistent headings. Karen noted that Zach added some points to the Ensuring Quality Committee notes for discussion when the committee meets in May and that nothing is finalized.
- Karen passed around a sign-up sheet for the next site visits.

Presentation by Thomas Hehir

- The Task Force welcomed Thomas Hehir, Professor Practice in Learning Differences and Director of Special Studies Program at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University.
- Dr. Hehir identified four guiding principles around students with disabilities.

(1) Disability resides both within the child and the environment. The way in which schools respond to differences that arise out of disabilities has enormous influence on how well children do. Some practices exacerbate disability while others minimize the negative impact of disability.

(2) Generally, but not always, segregation and removing children from their existing school exacerbates the negative impact of disability.

(3) Many children with disabilities need special education services to help minimize the negative impact of disability.

(4) There is considerable evidence that some children get placed in special

education that may not have a disability but have not received effective instruction.

Question: What aspects of environment do you mean?

Answer: For instance, a student with Dyslexia may have a comprehension problem because they have a fluency issue. This student needs access to text, or less required reading, instead of more time in a resource room. Using speech technologies is one way to do this.

Comment: The flip side to this scenario is when a student is only given materials to listen to and is not taught to read. Dr. Hehir agreed that educators must balance access and teaching without segregation.

Question: Could you address resourcing and staffing?

Answer: Every classroom should be an inclusion classroom. He supports the idea that there are inclusive schools, not just inclusive classrooms and school districts should look at how to staff buildings. There needs to be policies in place geared to build the capacity of schools to serve all students.

- Dr. Hehir also emphasized that parents of students with disabilities should have the same school choices as anyone else, that there is a need for a few more specialized schools and students should not be placed by disability categories.
- *Please see "Thomas Hehir BPS Policy Piece" on BPS website. Drop down "School Committee" then choose "Inclusion Task Force".*

Presentation on Weighted Student Formula

- This is the fourth year BPS has used the Weighted Student Formula that funds the needs of students, not staffing or programs. Schools receive funding based on the special needs categories of students.
- *Please see "BPS Weight Student Forumal" document on BPS website. Drop down "School Committee" then choose "Inclusion Task Force".*

Presentation on English Language Learner with Disabilities

- Maria de Lourdes Serpa gave a brief presentation and will be going into greater detail at the May meeting. Key issues she identified are Policy, Research, Linguistic Factors and Culture.

- Bill asked Maria to also address dropout rates and student performance.

Announcements

- Federation for Children's annual Fundraiser "Gala 2014 – Celebrating Every Child" is on May 2nd. Contact Dianne Lescinskas for more information (dlescinskas@comcast.net).
- Eileen announced that she presented at the ELL Task Force and that members requested that she give the presentation at the Inclusion Task Force.
- Regina announced that the Superintendent Search Committee has gathered lots of community input and members will begin to develop a job description.

Next Meeting:

- **May 8th, 6:00 – 8:00 PM, Campbell Resource Center, 1216 Dorchester Ave., Dorchester.**