

Carlisle School Committee
Special Education Subcommittee
Joint meeting with SEPAC
Minutes
Tuesday, November 24, 2020
7:00 p.m.
Zoom Remote Access

Present – School Committee via Zoom: Christine Lear, Amanda Comperchio
Present – School Administration via Zoom: Jim O’Shea, Superintendent; Lori Bruce, Director of Student Support Services; Nancy Anderson, Assistant to the Superintendent.
Present – School: Linda Vanaria, Teacher and CTA President.

Per Governor Baker’s order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A sec. 20, members of the public were able to access this meeting via live stream at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89635331507>

Meeting ID: 896 3533 1507

Public comments were welcome as per the agenda.

I. Call to Order

Kate Mazzola, co-chair of Carlisle SEPAC, called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. The SEPAC minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

II. CSC Subcommittee Update on Goals and Focus for 2020-2021

Ms. Bruce gave a final review of the changes that have made in the Special Education department since the WestEd report was issued 1 ½ years ago. Even in the COVID environment, students are still receiving services. Ms. Bruce reported that the Special Education Subcommittee worked on the parent questionnaire at its last meeting and is asking for input from SEPAC before sending it to families. The model of one special educator per grade has been changed to better meet student needs. There are now reading specialists across grades, with increased reading services to students, and two special educators work across grades as well. Carlisle is no longer doing co-taught classes due to the high needs of students; these students are better served if they are serviced out of class for individual instruction. There are better defined systems in place for student placements. There is increased flexibility for push-in services. Paraprofessionals were given extensive training during the school closure last year. Paraprofessionals understand IEPs well, attend IEP and consult meetings, and are being utilized in prescribed ways. There is cohesiveness between the paraprofessionals and the special educators. Progress reports are more data-based. The Child Study Team (CST) uses data as well. There has been Universal Design for Learning (UDL) training for all staff with a beginning focus on reading and a focus currently on math. Ms. Bruce works closely with the principals in addressing the multi-tiered system of support for students, working on Tier I and Tier II supports together. The School psychologists provide social emotional supports to students, having check-ins with students and making phone calls to families. Mr. O’Shea, Ms. Bruce and the principals meet with the School psychologists every week to monitor any issues. Moving forward, Ms.

Bruce reported that there are students that require intensive support and the teams for these students want to be able to service them in Carlisle. New programming may be developed. In summary, there has been an enormous amount of progress in the Special Education department and the staff has worked incredibly hard, and the work will continue in supporting students. Mr. O'Shea added that Ms. Bruce and her team have made tremendous strides in addressing the main themes of the WestEd report. There will be ongoing continuous improvements in Special Education, but the summer school program was enhanced, Carlisle students are receiving services in person, and Ms. Bruce has plans if the School goes remote. Ms. Korik asked what the plan is if the School goes remote. Ms. Bruce said a lot of factors have to be considered in developing the plan for students in a remote setting. She reported that when Ms. Vanaria's second grade class had to go into quarantine, the special educator checked in with students, sent a Zoom link to teach children remotely, and made sure students had the supplies they needed. If the entire school shuts down, the plan will depend on if healthy staff can still come to school. She reported that the State directive was to make sure the highest need students are receiving in person services when possible. If a child is out of the classroom 21% or more of the time, the child is a high need student. Ms. Richardson said that some students will have problems accessing instruction, need break time, and have other issues. Mr. O'Shea said that many factors have to be considered in this discussion. If the School is remote, it has been determined that it is not safe for people to be in school. However, families who have opted for in-person education want to have their child continue in that model. To determine who will qualify for in-person instruction in such a scenario, Carlisle will follow state guidance, which is the most fair and equitable way to operate. The staff will determine how to best deliver remote services. Ms. Bruce said there are so many unknowns about why a school would go remote but the goal is to get students what they need and as much in-person instruction as possible. Ms. Mazzola said parents are worried. Mr. O'Shea said the School is not looking to close long term and he does not want to raise anxiety levels about situations that have not yet occurred. He added that people can rely on Ms. Bruce and her team to do what's best for all of the children. They have everyone's best interest at heart. Ms. Richardson has suggestions for delivering remote services and will share them with Ms. Bruce. Ms. Bruce shared that there is a plan for paraprofessionals to assist the FCR students. Meredith Bielecki said that parents should know the circumstances in which their children might be brought into school during a closure. Ms. Bruce said this information would be provided to families by their case manager. There was another question about the specifics in the WestEd report. Mr. O'Shea summarized that WestEd was contacted to review our Special Education program. After the review, they provided us with a report. It was up to the School to decide what to do with the information. The School took the major themes and went to work. The report helped give direction and strategic objectives. Ms. Bruce asked SEPAC to review the Special Education survey that will be sent to parents and reviewed the questions. She noted that the goal is always to have the child be in the least restrictive environment for learning. Mr. O'Shea said we want our children to be happy and to make progress. It was felt that offering parent training at SEPAC meetings was a productive way to bring in a lot of people and learn something new. Ms. Mazzola said that the Federation offers trainings for parents; she would prefer not to have trainings take up the time at SEPAC meetings. Ms. Comperchio said we can ask parents if they want a training and see where it leads. There was a question about the need for sub separate classrooms. Ms. Bruce explained that if student can't access the curriculum in the classroom, we have to provide the curriculum in a sub separate program. There are a lot of factors to consider in developing a sub separate program,

including the population of students and areas of need. Ms. Mazzola asked what else the Special Education Subcommittee had as goals for this year. Ms. Comperchio said the Committee wants to send the survey out to families and review results to make a plan. Ms. Bruce added that the results of the survey will drive more conversations. The survey will be sent sometime during the 2nd week of December. Ms. Korik said that her child struggles with sitting and doing remote learning. She asked if there would be training to help with delivering instruction to children. Ms. Bruce answered that issues are individualized. The case managers can give instruction to families. Between the case managers, Katie, Jeff, and Bridget, families should get the help they need. She encouraged families to reach out to her if they needed more help. It was felt that families were lost in the spring and want to be prepared should the School go remote. Mr. O'Shea answered that the general education teachers will also provide guidance in this circumstance. He added that the in person model is best for kids but he knows the School has to keep everyone safe. Ms. Mostoufi added that COVID brought many challenges this year, and everyone is busy thinking about the kids and servicing them well. She noted the Town of Arlington just started servicing special needs students on November 10. The next Special Education Subcommittee meeting will be on December 18 at 7:30 a.m.

III. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

IV. Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Anderson
Assistant to the Superintendent