



## **Special Education Committee Minutes**

February 1, 2018

**Board Chair**—Dana Schwartz

**Administrative Liaison**—Alyssa Marton

**Attendance**—Please see the accompanying committee attendance sheet.

Dana Schwartz called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm.

The minutes of the January 11, 2018 meeting were approved.

### **Old Business**

- None

### **New Business**

- Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts Discussion

Mrs. Marton reached out to Mike Piccone, Cub Scout Master in New Hope. There is a handout about cub scouts. Any troop in New Hope will have modified outcomes for any student. Nothing set by the organization, but any troop master would work with any parent for a child to meaningfully participate. Parent D has his contact information. Separate organizations for boy scouts and cub scouts.

- Overview of District Related Services:
  - Marie Wallace, SLP
  - Rachel Engelhardt, OT
  - Mary Bucci, Behavior Analyst
  - Kelly Gibat, Hearing therapist
  - Jennifer Muller, Vision therapist

Four wonderful people here, three staff members could not make it, Rachel is covering for someone in Central Bucks. Miriam Thomas has a very young child, Vera Wong OT does clinical work and she's in the hospital this evening.

Introduction all the therapists

Marie: From Connecticut originally. Graduated from U of CT in 2005. Worked with as young as newborn hearing screens up to the age of 100 in hospitals. Works in the MS and HS, anything with communication we deal with, articulation, receptive language, social language, ability to

understand other people in the conversation how they interpret and respond to it, esp w autism, we cover all of that.

OT: (Rachel) Goal of OT is to increase independence, adapting activities and environments, collaborating with school personnel, supporting transition during school, devices, promoting positive behaviors and coping strategies and increasing attention.

Parent Q: Does she work in the whole district or all the schools?

A: Rachel works in the MS and HS. Elementary is Vera Wong.

Kelly: Works in all schools in NHS, deaf and hard of hearing students, with and without equipment. Unilateral hearing loss, I support them. Social and emotional, how to deal with hearing loss and their perspective is, up to receptive language, auditory skills and discrimination, self-advocacy is huge, a liaison between the BCIU and NHS, in contact with the teams and school personnel.

Mary: Behavior analyst, recently started, in all the schools in district, teach social skills to ILS students and consult with teachers. Working with teachers and coach them with how to run better classrooms and accommodate our students. Replacement skills for kids, teaching new and more appropriate more functional behaviors.

Q: What are ILS – more significant needs, receive instruction may be in a resource room type of setting.

A: (Jen) Blind and visually impaired teacher, 1 of 15 throughout the county through BCIU. Small group of teachers with unique skill set, teaching students who are blind or impaired, Braille, compensatory skills, daily living skills, main goal is access, to all the curriculum and general education. A student who is completely blind we adapt to Braille, etc. We collaborate with the general education teachers and support staff.

Q: Do you all work in New Hope or other schools in county also?

Questions answered by therapists.

Q: How many children are each of you assisting?

A: Case load varies. Give a general idea for each.

New Hope – Jen – 6 students and travels between districts.

Kelly – 25 and 4 consults, around 50 w teachers

Mary – 12 students in NHS

Marie – 36 students, direct students for direct and consult

Vision loss less common than someone with an articulation need.

With a less common deficit there needs to be more info to teachers.

Q: Do we have therapists here that deal with children with problems with their memory and imprinting, short term memory loss?

A: There is not a specific therapist for that, sometimes OT will work on students with those skills, executive functioning.

Hearing support – we do see some of those skills that need to be addressed.

Q: Do we see students who are not under an IEP but have an issue that could be addressed?

A: Yes that can happen, for example, kids with 504 plan

Q: My son gets some social skills, executive functioning issues, the just works with the school counselor and teachers, how is a decision made if a person goes with a therapist or a counselor.

A: Evaluations help decide the severity of that need, and who is the best to meet those needs, weekly or daily, someone in the building all the time, it varies from what an OT, depends on the severity of that need.

Q: How many students at the LES do you assist?

A: PT across district is small, one day a week, Wednesdays, not a lot of students that need PT in school. The services are school based, not clinical service which is rehabilitative, it is to access our curriculum, we don't see PT unless there is a lot of significant impairment. Speech might be in the 40s small group instruction, an OT is going to be less than that, but don't know the numbers.

Q: Is Miriam here very day?

A: Yes, Lower and Upper

Q: In terms of inclusion, have you found any aha moments that you take for granted but the teachers are surprised about?

A: Jen had a suggestion to put drapery over the lights, it's a different kind of atmosphere and the teachers notice it makes everyone calm.

Usually we go in as a team to look at the students and the different buildings and look at the modifications we can make based on students' needs.

Alyssa: Stairs –example, transitions, Jen will put in a work order to address it.

Example: Tennis balls in the bottom of chairs, (Kelly) helps children with hearing issues.

Q: Are all of your education sessions with teachers based on individual needs or do you offer general education for the teachers more broadly?

A: (Mary) I would consult with individuals if necessary.

Their schedules are student specific.

Two pieces – student direct consult. A bunch of our service providers are doing trainings for teachers. What is age appropriate for speech skills? Miriam, Marie, Mary, presenting on diff strategies in general education classrooms for continuing education. Mary doing a presentation on general classroom training strategies.

Jen: some teachers do have aha moments, so there is a carry through.

Q: Do we make sure the teacher understands the diagnosis in their classrooms?

A: Any disability we have on record, we make sure the teachers know that. If a teacher has a 504 plan it's the case manager IEP special education teacher, they are responsible for sharing those documents with the current teachers and offering the teacher to go through the document with them.

Q: Do the teachers take them up on it?

A: They receive the info and we say, please review and let me know if you have any question. Teachers will sit down and have regular PLC meetings where they talk about student data. Regular basis conversations, but part of a team meeting, I'm going to hear those things about the students.

Q: Early in the year we scheduled a meeting with the team and we started out by saying he has this and this, and they were like, oh, we didn't know that, and I was like, kind of surprised, and I thought that everyone should know.

A: They should. The system recently changed. We had e-school, which is student management, and IEP was separate. We switched and now the system talked to each other, same company. So when I pull up my roster, next to every child name there is a symbol or indicator, and that opens up, and it will say, "Alyssa Marton has an IEP" I don't have to go find it, it's accessible to every teacher.

Q: Does that include the specials teachers?

A: Yes, they will know. At the beginning of the school year we showed everyone how to access it, this is how you do it, with screen shots.

Q: What about bus drivers?

A: They are not our employees, but we can help you discuss that with them.

Q: A good recommendation is to share student info with the transportation company.

Q: Regarding social skills classes, what are the kids with the special needs going to learn from each other? Lower grades you can pull in regular students, what about when they get older?

A: (Marie) I have a mix at times, a social skills going on, doing well socially, I try to model that myself, but sometimes it happens in class. I will have someone who is a little bit at a higher level and they can help the class. Certain ones just need the guidance, they're going to need an adult person to guide/teach them. It varies depending and I try to do the best I can.

Q: (Comment) One of my sons is great when he's in the group, he knows how to respond, and the therapist says he does great, the issue we have, is as soon as he's outside therapy and in the classroom, he's a different kid, he's quiet and doesn't interact a lot, the therapist has watched him in that setting a lot to see how he is, it's like night and day, when he's with friends and kids he's not comfortable .

Q: (Comment) A real point with our kids, when they're around other kids who aren't sensitive to them, and don't understand them, do you ever feel that as a general population, the culture that's being set for the student body, that needs to be addressed at all?

A: (Alyssa) A good conversation to have, our gen education population trained in sensitivity and acceptance – our guidance counselors do that, it then became a conversation about the families, some students bring that in from home, it's not always the kids we need to target but the adults in our community. I do see places in the district where places are very accepting. I saw an example in the MS and another boy was trying to get her to engage and participate. I've never seen or heard a person cruel to another child b/c of a disability. What we need to eventually do is look for our kids to apply skills in unfamiliar settings. That's the tricky part. That's what takes all of us as a team to work together. Let's try and create these situations, purposeful sabotage, may be uncomfortable but have to work through it, not just working through it in therapy but in regular settings.

Q: (Comment) Some kids don't have obvious disabilities. That's the issue for me, in those cases it's a harder temperature to gauge.

Q: (Comment) I do see kids being kinder when it's a disability you can see and is obvious.

Q: (Comment) Same as in life.

A: (Kelly) Taken part in LES guidance counselor, we've done presentations for the kids, putting that in perspective with students who are younger, they all travel together so that is nice, empowering our students to stand up for ourselves, have that language and response is necessary and appropriate.

A : It's nice how they travel together, but I was speaking with a student with mild autism, I used to be annoying, I know people thought that way, you could reinvent yourself later, but here, it is

more challenging. MS is hard, HS hard, lots of social things going on. There is no right answer. I'm always trying to educate and talk and help them feel less stress.

Q: OT, in my experience a lot of the sessions focused on cooking, food, which is good, kids can relate, but as my child gets older, the handwriting went out the window, let's not focus on that, are there other things besides cooking?

A: (Alyssa) That was one of the reasons why we changed OT, cooking group, OT needs to be way broader, a functional life skill, but it does not need to be the primary focus of OT. Accessing the entire school environment, keyboarding, sensory integration, etc. depends on student need. Broader focus.

Q: Will we always have childcare at meetings like these?

A: Mrs. Miller has always offered to do that. As much as we can. All ages. She's a long term substitute here and supports all our students.

#### **Public Comment**

- None

Dana Schwartz adjourned the meeting at 6:46.

Respectfully submitted,

Alyssa Marton  
*Director of Student Services*



Committee Meeting Sign-In and Attendance

Name (Please Print)	Committee (C) or Public (P)
Gahee Moore	C P
Alyssa Marton	(C) P
Renee Kenton	C (P)
Kelly Gibat	C (P)
Nancy Lawson	(C) <del>(P)</del>
Marie Wallace	C (P)
MaryBUCCI	C (P)
MARIE KOHLER	C (P)
Deborah Peckman	(C) P
Alyssa Kewm	C (P)
William Klein	C (P)
Jen Muller	C (P)
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**Please note:** This sign-in sheet will be included in the meeting minutes and posted to the District's website.