

SPECIAL EDITION

Nov. 2009

Volume 1, No. 3

| | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Co-chairs Peggy Ueda and Patrick Gabridge | | | |
| Liaisons | | | |
| BEEP - Kimberly Percival | Driscoll -Jillian Kalen, | Lawrence - Patrick Gabridge | Runkle - Jemelle O'Neill |
| Baker - Hillary Pizer | Laney Nielson | Lincoln - Polly Welch | BHS - Lisa Guisbond, |
| Devotion - Pam Katz, | Heath - Pam Palmucci | Pierce - Linda Strother | Karen Szeto |
| Dawn Edell | Out of district – Nancy Parker, Mary Ann McDonough, Liz Walpert | | |
| PTO – Ben Norton | | School Committee – Glenn Cunha | |

News

Patrick Gabridge is new SEPAC co-chair

Ben Norton has stepped down as SEPAC co-chair due to constraints on his time but will continue to serve as liaison to the PTO. Happily, Lawrence liaison Patrick Gabridge has volunteered to fill in as our other co-chair. Thank you and welcome, Pat!

Attention given to addressing Section 504 accommodations

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides that schools accommodate the needs of disabled students to insure they have the same access to education as non-disabled students. As part of Civil Rights law, Section 504 implementation is the responsibility of Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Denise Rochlin.

Dr. Rochlin has identified Section 504 training as a high priority in an effort to improve services as well as address a perceived need for greater transparency for both staff and parents. Steps she has initiated to address improved 504 services include:

- Training sessions with guidance counselors and other staff at each K-8 school on policies and procedures with respect to Section 504 accommodations
- Training at BHS with deans, guidance counselors and psychologists.
- A half-day workshop in Section 504 training at this year's Professional Development Day, featuring expert special education attorney Mary Ellen Sowyrda as guest speaker.
- Clarification of the "chain of command" for 504's: guidance counselors have primary responsibility; they are supervised by the deans, who are supervised by Assistant Headmaster Hal Mason, who is supervised by Headmaster Bob Weintraub. Ultimate responsibility lies with Dr. Rochlin. Dr. Rochlin is developing an organization chart reflecting the recent structural changes in SPED administration. Once completed, the chart will be posted on the School Dept. website as well as available in hard copy and will be very helpful for parents to identify to whom to go with various questions or concerns with respect to any aspect of special education.

Upcoming Events

Brookline High School SPED Open House – Tues., Nov. 10, MLK Room

Parents' reception 6:30-7 p.m. – Informal gathering for parents; light refreshments
SPED panel 7-8:30 p.m. – Special Ed administrators and BHS staff will give an overview of sped-related programming and answer questions. If you wish you may email questions in advance to our SEPAC BHS liaison at lisa.guisbond@verizon.net. Parents of eighth-graders may also find this event informative as they look ahead to high school and are welcome to attend.

Karate for children with special needs – Wed., Nov. 11, 10:30 a.m.-12 noon, Center for Marital Arts, 77 Spring St., Roxbury

The Friendship Circle, a Jewish organization that provides social opportunities for children with special needs, invites children and their siblings to a specialized class in karate. Children learn about respect, responsibility, and self-discipline through fun and interactive means. For more information or to RSVP call 617-378-5765 or email info@friendshipcircleboston.org.

Meet the Administrators – Wed., December 9, 6-7:30 p.m, Town Hall Room 103

Hear directly from the new administrative leaders of special education in Brookline, ask questions and offer comment. Get a preview of the newly developed policies and procedures manual for special ed. Learn about “Landmark at Lawrence”.

SEPAC-SPED Monthly Meetings

Starting in November we will be meeting on the third Friday of the month 8-9:30 a.m. in Town Hall. Meetings are open to all. If you have an issue you wish to address, please come, or you may submit it to BrooklineSEPAC@gmail.com. We like to submit an agenda in advance to the administrators. The next two meetings are Nov. 20 and Dec.18.

Knowing Your Legal Rights & Responsibilities – Wed., Jan. 27, 6:30-8:00 p.m., MLK Room at BHS

Dan Ahearn of Landmark School Outreach gives his bright and engaging presentation on basic legal rights in special education. Light refreshments; bring your own cup!

Guest column

Introducing Dr. Denise Rochlin, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, and Lisa Lamont Harris, Director of Special Education

Dr. Rochlin comes to Brookline from Medway, where she served as Assistant Superintendent for Student Services. She was previously Director of Special Education in Lexington and in Freetown-Lakeville. She holds an Ed.D. in Special Education from Boston University, an M.S. in Learning Disabilities and Emotional Disorders from Lesley College, and a B.S. in Mental Retardation and Elementary Education from Boston University.

Lisa Lamont Harris is well-known in Brookline as a special education teacher at the Baker School both in the Learning Center and the Baker system-wide program. Before coming to Baker she taught in the South Windsor and Hartford, CT, public schools and served as an educational consultant for the teaching of math and as an inclusion facilitator. She received her M.A. in Education from the University of Connecticut, where she also earned a B.S. in Special Education/Behavioral Sciences.

We welcome you and your children to a new school year as we begin in new positions within Brookline Public Schools. As Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Director of Special Education we are invigorated by the changes in special education organization. At each of the SEPAC breakfasts we have spoken about the reorganization of special education within the elementary schools. Previously, three Special Education Supervisors were responsible for all eight elementary schools. At the end of the last school year those positions were consolidated and a new position of Director of Special Education was created. In addition, special education Team Facilitator positions were established at each elementary school. Brookline High School currently has a Special Education Administrator and Brookline Early Education Program has a principal fulfilling positions of leadership roles in overseeing the special education process.

The reorganization had been designed to provide students with disabilities, their parents, and school staff members with building based supports. The role of the Team Facilitator is to oversee all aspects of the special education process within each building. Duties include coordination and chairing of all special education team meetings. BEEP staff and high school staff functioning as team facilitators have also been identified. The aim is to clarify the special education process.

Our initial efforts are focused on training all staff members involved in the special education process. Assisting building based staff in facilitating team meetings is an emphasis as is involvement of parents and clarity of procedures. In addition, we are learning about programs and services within Brookline and visiting schools, classrooms and programs. We are examining the spectrum of special education services within Brookline and how these services and programs are connected to services and programs within general education.

During the course of the school year we will continue to share information regarding our efforts within Brookline Public Schools.

Denise Rochlin and Lisa Lamont Harris

In the Community

AANE Workshop: "Welcome to the Teen Years: Making Life Work for Your Teen with AS" – Tuesday, Nov. 10, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., Watertown AANE Office

From the Asperger's Association of New England website (www.aane.org): "This workshop will focus on ways parents can help their teens manage school, home and the community in a way that prepares them for "the real world." Teens with AS need to not only handle themselves in appropriate ways, but need to have the self-understanding and self-advocacy skills to handle themselves as independently as possible. We will discuss practical strategies for teaching our teens to be safe participants in the community, self-advocates at school or the workplace, and be responsible members of the family."

To register, go to http://aane.org/upcoming_events/Welcome_to_Teen_Years.html

Federation for Children with Special Needs Transition Conference –

Fri-Sat, Nov. 6-7, 8:30-4:30, Girls, Inc., 125 Providence St., Worcester, MA

Fri-Sat Feb 5-6, 2010, Federation's Boston office, 1135 Tremont St. Suite 420, Boston

Please see the October issue of *Special Edition* or visit www.fcsn.org for more information.

Legal Corner

Resource for Special Education Law

Looking for a good source to keep up with the changing law of Special Education? Check out <http://www.wrightslaw.com/>. Wrightslaw provides basic information about special and general education law and timely updates of legal developments. You may also find helpful manuals for purchase and sign up for a free electronic newsletter, *The Special Ed Advocate*.

What about RTI?

In reauthorizing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) Congress revised how children with specific learning disabilities are identified, moving away from defining a disability in terms of the discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability. One response to identifying students with learning disabilities is Response to Intervention (RTI), a systematic, graduated program that provides both intervention and ongoing evaluation for struggling students, with non-responders referred for evaluation for individual education programs. Wrightslaw has prepared an extensive synoptic bibliography of information about RTI titled

What You Need to Know about IDEA 2004 Response to Intervention(RTI):

New Ways to Identify Specific Learning Disabilities,

which can be found at <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/rti.index.htm>.

Want to learn more about your right to a free and appropriate public education that matches the needs of your child?

Come to *Knowing Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities* on Wed., Jan. 27, 2010 (see Upcoming Events, above).

Studies

We invite our readers to share information about studies that may be of interest to others. Please write to brooklinesepac@gmail.com.

Networking

Friendship Circle

Friendship Circle is a Jewish organization that provides programming for children with special needs. FC partners with teenagers and college students for weekly visits with children as well as special monthly events. In addition, the organization provides a special bi-monthly program for teenagers and young adults at Harvard University. For more information visit www.friendshipcircleboston.org, email info@friendshipcircleboston.org, or call 617.378.5765

Coalition of Brookline Autism Parents (COBAP)

COBAP is a group of Brookline parents who meet bi-monthly to discuss issues related to helping their children diagnosed with PDD-NOS, Asperger's or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Membership is open to any person who is the parent or guardian of a child who lives in Brookline and has an autism spectrum disorder, or who lives elsewhere but attends school in Brookline and has an autism spectrum disorder.

To join COBAP or for more information, please contact Beth Kaufman at bkpubservices@yahoo.com or Pam Palmucci at ppalmucci@rcn.com. We welcome Brookline ASD parents join our Yahoo group by visiting www.yahogroups.com, enter "COBAP" in the box that says "Find a Group".

Brookline QUEST (Quality Unique Enrichment for Special Needs Teens)

Brookline QUEST supports traditional and innovative recreational, leisure and cultural activities for Brookline teens with special needs. Visit their website at www.brooklinequest.org to learn about their extensive schedule of activities.

ADD/ADHD Support Group

Periodic meetings of parents and guardians of children with a suspected or confirmed ADD/ADHD diagnosis. For more information contact Valerie at 857-272-2164 or valerie_ball_98@yahoo.com

please scroll down for contact information for Brookline SEPAC

Brookline SEPAC

visit us at brooklinesepac.org

contact us at brooklinesepac@gmail.com

join our e-distribution at <http://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/psb/templates/lyris.aspx>

