



**Board/Committee Name:** Winchester Special Education Parent Advisory Council (WIN-PAC)

**Date:** Wed., March 17, 2021

**Time:** 10:00 am

**Place:** Zoom

**In Attendance:**

Chair, Stacey Irizarry  
Secretary, Tricia McDowell  
Friends of the PAC Chair, Michelle Bergstrom  
Superintendent Judy Evans  
Special Education Director Pam Girouard  
School Committee Vice Chair and WINPAC Liaison, Karen Bolognese  
Members of the Public

**Agenda**

1. Friends of the PAC's Report

**Minutes:** WINPAC continues to have a modest balance of funds. We discussed reimbursing the Chair for costs associated with the website hosting over the past year and working to add a signatory to the account.

2. Update on WINPAC letter to the district

A) Professional Development (PD) on identifying suspected disabilities for Gen Ed elementary teachers

**Minutes:**

Ms. Girouard shared that a recent professional development day featured programming on recognizing learning disabilities in a classroom. The policy she is intending to implement is to offer similar programming at the next professional development opportunity. In order to facilitate the best experience for teachers, the number of attendees of the PD was capped. Ms. Girouard shared that past PD's where attendance was uncapped were less successful in attendee engagement, audience interaction, and dialogue than smaller-sized offerings. Topics covered during the PD were: inclusion and disability in the classroom, how autism spectrum disorder (ASD) presents in the classroom, how other specific learning disabilities present in the classroom.

With respect to the district's capability to identify children with special needs, Ms. Girouard offered that she continues her effort to have high quality, up-to-date assessments and assessment batteries available to evaluators. After the first round of federal COVID dollars were released to the district in Fall, 2020, the district invested in the Pearson Digital Assessment Library for Schools. A portion of the rollover federal money will be used for iPads/tablets for the evaluators, which will help with assessments, scoring, and evaluation reports.

B) Reading Support/Intervention

- i) Scheduling
- ii) Increase PD for reading interventions

**Minutes:** Dr. Evans reported a district effort to have all reading specialists over the next three-year period be trained in at least one other reading intervention program. With the acknowledgment that there may be multiple intervention strategies/programs that are effective, appropriate, robust and high quality, the effort will involve training in a variety of intervention strategies/programs with the goal of increasing capacity at each elementary school across multiple

intervention strategies/programs. Dr. Evans reported that budget resources have been set aside to fund this effort.

WINPAC acknowledged concerns regarding retention of staff having undergone training. Incentivizing retention was discussed.

Dr. Evans advised that training current staff may cause significant disruptions given the intensity and time-consuming nature of various training programs. WINPAC acknowledged the potential for disruption and reiterated our support for the program and our willingness to continue to consult with the district and families on how to best support our children and families through any potential disruptions.

#### C) Summer Literacy Bootcamp planning

**Minutes:** Dr. Evans advised that additional financial support is available summer intervention programs. Staffing has not been finalized, and in accordance with WINPAC's recommendation, it was indicated that efforts would be made to hire staff trained in curriculum and programs appropriate for children with dyslexia. Further information can be provided by Dr. Elineema and Ms. Malone. Dr. Evans further noted that, in addition to extended year programs, the district is planning on additional supports for children into the 2021-2022 school year for any identified learning loss.

#### D) Literacy Screening Assessment

- i) Selection of an assessment
- ii) Progress monitoring planning

**Minutes:** With respect to selecting a literacy screening assessment, there will be a further literacy update to the school committee on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

### 3. Update from the Special Ed Administrator

#### A) Update on planning for full week return to school

**Minutes:** WINPAC articulated guiding principles of minimizing trauma and anxiety from transition in considering planning for return to school. Ms. Girouard and Dr. Evans affirmed that these guiding principles were being adhered to in development of return to school plans, while prioritizing these considerations for children receiving significant services. Actual planning continues to be in development and may not be complete until close to actual return. The complexity of return to school includes rebuilding caseloads, rebuilding schedules and reconsidering service delivery. Ms. Girouard strenuously assured WINPAC that FAPE has not been waived and that all services would be rendered continuing into return to school. In addition to planning to minimize trauma, Jason Levene and his staff are developing plans to anticipate and meet student needs.

WINPAC expressed a concern regarding community volunteers regularly supervising lunch and recess from the standpoint of sensitivity to and capability of appropriately addressing children's behavior or non-behavior, as well as privacy considerations. It was clarified that all community volunteers will be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement with the Town and would also be receiving training and access to resources to address these concerns. Laurie Kirby is preparing the training. WINPAC may follow up with Ms. Kirby to discuss any further concerns addressable by training.

4. Update from the School Committee

5. PAC elections

A) Nominations of members for the Board (open to Public participation)

**Minutes:** WINPAC will follow-up by email with parents and guardians regarding elections.

6. Discussion of further 2021 initiatives

A) Consideration of Executive function support in middle school

**Minutes:** Dr. Evans recommended that WINPAC reach out the Middle School and High School principals to discuss how executive function is supported currently and to brainstorm ideas for expanding/augmenting support, especially for students transitioning from 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Michelle Bergstrom suggested that Amber Haines, who teaches an executive function class at the high school, should be included in the conversation. WINPAC to follow-up.

B) WINPAC increase outreach

7. Approval of Minutes

8. Update on events and event planning for 2021

A) Planning for seminars: Basic Rights and How to Read/Interpret IEP?

B) Event Idea: How can parents best support their child at home with a dyslexia diagnosis

C) Event Idea: How can parents best support their child at home with an autism diagnosis

**Minutes:** Meeting adjourned prior to addressing these issues due to time constraints of participants.