

## **Wayland SEPAC Meeting Minutes**

October 19, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

Wayland High School

2nd Floor Lecture Hall

264 Old Connecticut Path, Wayland, MA

### **Call to order 7:05 p.m.**

**SEPAC Board Members present:** Katy Andrus (co-chair), Courtney Conery (co-chair), Christina Rodrigo (co-secretary), Stephanie Holender (co-secretary), Gayle Gledhill (treasurer) Katie Riffle (liaison), Lisa Bagely (technology), Michele Galicia (events), Julie Kannel (community resources)

**SEPAC liaisons present:** Orla Daunt (High School), Wendy Boch (Happy Hollow), Robin Padden (Loker), Michele Donahue (Middle School), Camille Payne (Spanish Immersion),

**School administration present:** Dr. Omar Easy, Superintendent, and Dr. B.J. Catalado, Interim SPED Director

**School Committee Members present:** Ellen Grieco

**1. Approve meeting minutes from June 9, 2022 meeting.** K. Andrus asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from June 9, 2022. A motion was made to approve the minutes and the motion was seconded. Minutes unanimously approved by SEPAC Board Members.

**2. Update from Co-Chairs/Intros.** K. Andrus welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the 22/23 school year and introduced herself. C. Conery introduced herself as new co-chair. Each board member and liaison present also introduced themselves; followed by Dr. Easy and Dr. Cataldo.

**3. Dr. Easy Update.** Dr. Easy welcomed everyone to the new school year. He noted he was excited about the new language-based program at Claypit. The program includes an Orton Gillingham trained, associate level, teacher, SLP, TA and a consultant who is a formal Carroll School instructor. Dr. Easy reported ten students from across the district are currently enrolled in a program which spans grades 2-4 currently. A consultant from the Landmark School is working to streamline the program and establish criteria for student inclusion in the program.

The Children's Way (TCW) is now certified by DESE as a preschool, which means there are now 6 schools in the district. All teachers at TWC now have master's degrees. Abigail Dressler is the new director of TCW.

Wayland now is using the Bridges interventionist math program and there is an expanded reading specialist in the schools, and all SPED teachers are now trained in Bridges, to

emphasize math for the district. There is now a FTE reading specialist looking at students behind in reading based on DIBELS scores, who may need additional services.

The middle school is working to have a more robust language-based program in place by next school year. While currently there is a language-based program in place at the middle school, the goal is to work with the Landmark consultant to revamp the program.

**Dr. Easy said he's looking to add behavioral assistants. The administration is working to continue to support the LRT program at WHS.**

Dr Easy is also looking to potentially add special educational team leaders at the schools starting with Claypit. The administration is speaking with the Wayland Teachers association regarding this potential change. The goal is to have a DESE certified special education administration team leader do only the administrative aspects and not carry a caseload. These team leaders would need to be well versed in special education laws, control the process and procedures in one building and oversee IEP meetings. Dr. Cataldo noted that Wayland is one of the few districts in the state that doesn't use this team leader model. They hope to add this role at the middle school and high school next.

Dr. Easy reported planning is underway among school administrators for the Spanish Immersion program's move to the middle school in less than 2 years.

A parent asked for an update on the district curriculum accommodation plan (DCAP). Dr. Easy reported it was worked on by a committee over the summer and is rolling out to staff at each school now. The public will be able to view the DCAP on the district website under the curriculum section. The DCAP is a list of strategies and accommodations available to support all students in the district, not only SPED students.

A parent asked Dr. Easy if he has a timeline for hiring a new Director of SPED? He said he is happy with Dr. Cataldo, and that her contract can be extended. Families expressed concern that any search process for a new Director must start before February to capture highest quality candidates. B.J. Cataldo discussed that it's her goal to be directly involved in assessing classrooms, rectifying current issues, including those at the ILC, that she is in a school every single day and attended more than 30 IEP meetings thus far.

**4. Dr. Cataldo Intro and Update.** A parent asked about access to AAC (augmentative communication devices) devices. The group discussed issues regarding best implementation practices, potential training of staff and standards for AAC devices for nonverbal children. Concerns regarding inconsistency and impediments to implementation were discussed. Some of the concerns are that different students are using different programs or communication devices; and a need for teachers, speech language pathologists and staff to be trained on how to effectively use these devices. Dr. Easy said he'd look into it and get back to the concerned parent.

Several parents asked Dr. Easy and Dr. Cataldo to address the issue of missed service minutes in the Individualized Learning Center (ILC) classroom at Claypit. Concerns about staffing for the ILC classroom were discussed.

In August, the ILC lost a veteran teacher who went on to take an administrative position. Dr. Easy said the new ILC staff did not have the experience of the previous staff, but that the program was staffed at the start of the school year.

Dr. Cataldo shared that the ILC is currently staffed by a new hire and a returning teacher and all but one TA position has been filled. Each of the students in the ILC need a 1:1 aide/TA. However, Dr. Cataldo said the district did not have all the TAs needed for the ILC program at the start of the school year and, unfortunately, that resulted in service hours being missed, in some cases more than 50 hours of missed services.

According to Dr. Cataldo, all ILC students began receiving all minutes of service beginning on October 4, 2022. Dr. Cataldo checks in daily with the ILC teachers to ensure minutes of service are being received. Dr. Cataldo said the issue of hours of service missed must be dealt with each family individually as it cannot be an unilateral decision.

Parents expressed frustration that their children have missed so many hours of instruction, and said they felt the district was not honest with them in email correspondence before the start of the school year started assuring parents the ILC was fully staffed. Parents expressed concern that they would have never known the ILC was understaffed or that services were not being received had one of the students not reported to their parent. Parents expressed anger and distrust of the district for failing to proactively disclose issues at the ILC to parents, as nearly all ILC students are non-verbal/ limited verbal. Parents are concerned issues would have continued if first grade student did not speak out.

Dr. Easy and Dr. Cataldo noted that there is a shortage of TAs across the state. Dr. Easy is looking at ways to boost pay for TA positions. School Committee Member, Ellen Grieco, offered to help Dr. Easy find ways to boost pay to help fill vacant TA positions. Dr. Easy noted he's also working to hire more behavioral assistants (BAs) in the district as these staffers are more highly trained. Dr. Easy stated he takes responsibility for the understaffing and did/would hold the teachers accountable.

Dr. Cataldo told parents she did not think what happened at ILC was okay and that she was working to correct the issue.

Dr. Cataldo shared her concerns that across the district there has been a delay in delivery of service at the start of the school year, with some students not receiving their SPED services until 2-3 weeks after the first day of school and that it can take even longer at the middle and high schools. Dr. Cataldo said she is working to improve this process so that students are receiving services within a week of the start of school, which would be in line with other districts across the state.

Dr. Cataldo reported that she is meeting with who serves as a team leader in the schools every other week to discuss timelines for IEPs, legal issues, how to execute meetings, etc., in an effort to standardize the IEP process across the district.

Parent reported that the bathroom used by ILC and by children in wheelchairs is regularly covered in feces, food and that there is a large pipe sticking out of the floor with a traffic cone on top. Parent asks how the bathroom can be updated ASAP, as the condition of the bathroom is not appropriate for use in the current state. Dr. Easy said he would investigate the issue right away.

Parents expressed concern there is no school nurse at TCW. Parents also brought up elopement issues and a need for fencing and safety concerns at TCW and the other schools. Dr. Easy reported he would look into this; and suggested that perhaps when adding a new elementary school fencing could be added.

Dr. Easy and Dr. Cataldo left the meeting.

**5. Check-in with Committees:** Due to the meeting running late, K. Andrus asked if any committees had important updates to report.

School Committee Member, Ellen Grieco, encouraged SEPAC to bring issues to the School Committee, noting that a group of parents of children with language-based disabilities addressed the school committee, and it ultimately led to formation of the language-based program launched at Claypit this year. She also shared that data about bullying from the SEPAC's survey presentation has made her want to reexamine the district's bullying policy to provide greater support to victims of bullying. She also reported that special education students have additional rights regarding bullying issues due to increased vulnerability.

Several parents asked that the SEPAC provide greater guidance on the special education/IEP process, and restart parent support groups for parents with children with autism, language-based learning disabilities, ADHD, etc.

- **Liaisons** – C. Conery suggested adding a Spanish Immersion (SI) liaison due to the unique challenges faced by students in the program needing special education services. The group agreed to add a SI liaison. Camille Payne volunteered to be the new SI liaison.
- **Events** – passed over.
- **Community Resources** – passed over.
- **Technology** – passed over.

**6. Treasurer Update:** Passed over.

**7. Questions and Concerns:** none.

**8. Unanticipated Items:** none.

**9. Adjourn:** 9:40 p.m.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 7, 2022**