

Special Education PTO

South Orange - Maplewood
Minutes – December 22, 2015

Intro & welcome

- Meeting moderated initially by Sonya Selig, followed up by PTO Exec Committee members
- We met in the 3rd Floor conference room of the district admin building

Updates

- Parenting Center Toy Drive
- A review of the Math Kiva will be shared with community when info has been distilled.
- Education Summit – ongoing
 - Information on the Strategic Planning process can be found at: http://www.somsd.k12.nj.us/site/strategic_planning
 - "Let's Talk" designated link for ES specific comments
- Restorative Practices workshop (hosted by the Parenting Center on Dec 15)
 - Ann Leeb gave an overview: a research-based approach to community building and discipline which emphasizes building supportive school communities, increasing communication skills, and helping students understand the repercussions of their actions and take responsibility for their behavior. This workshop was designed to help parents, teachers and other adults in authority build relationships and connections with students which will positively impact school performance and home interactions.
- Marshall School PTA and their school Special Ed Liaisons are seeking ways to increase parent engagement, especially in relation to special education
 - Liaisons are developing community-sourced resources info to post online.
- Special Ed PTO Facebook group has nearly 200 members!
 - Excellent tool to reach community, as only a fraction attend meetings
- Resource: Asperger Experts, <http://www.aspergerexperts.com/>, provides help, guidance, support & strategies for people with Asperger's, parents, therapists & teachers. Created by people with Asperger's.

Discussion

- Conversation centered around the Dec 21 BOE meeting, update provided by Ann Leeb, who attended the meeting.
 - District investment in technology
 - Student enrollment
 - Access & equity in higher level course instruction
 - Fluctuations in legal expenses
 - Costs in special education, including transportation costs
 - Presentation by Director of Special Services, Ella Rideau
 - Referrals for CST (Child Study Team) evaluations have increased significantly

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- Out of District Placements have increased
- Instruction in executive functioning for students is under consideration
- Out of district students may be connected to their local home school
- Transitional students aging out of the district
- Hiring of additional special education teachers is under consideration
- Number of para-professionals hired has increased significantly
- A detailed summary of the Dec 21 meeting, including the PowerPoint special education presentation, can be found on the Village Green site: <http://villagegreennj.com/schools-kids/som-board-ed-weighs-budget-impact-special-ed-high-enrollment-equity-access/>

Closing

- Reminder, January 26 meeting with Ella Rideau
- Enjoy winter break!

Handouts/Flyers

- 2015-16 Service Provider Assignments/2015-16 Child Study Team Assignments – Department of Special Services
- The Parenting Center Groups/The Parenting Center & Elementary School PTAs 2015-2016 Speaker Series – The Parenting Center