November Report – Special Education Committee

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We have been actively maintaining our committee Facebook page, providing resources to parents and answering special education related questions.

We have been recruiting more special education representatives and adding them to our spreadsheet and inviting them to our e-list. We currently have 50 schools with Special Ed Reps.

We cleaned up our committee listserv and have added committee members and special education representatives. We plan to encourage more active discussion in the group including reps sharing with each other on how to be more effective in their role and sharing resources.

We have been answering email inquires from parents via email and providing support and resources – part of our “Know Your Rights” initiative.

We have had a lot of comments on Benchmark Advance curriculum especially from parents of dyslexic students who feel that the Orton-Gillingham instruction does not pair well will Benchmark. We have been collaborating with other committees on approaching MCPS about the dislike of the Benchmark curriculum. Everyone seems unhappy with it for different reasons. We raised the question about how students can combine OG with Benchmark with Gwen Mason and Phil Lynch and plan to discuss it at our next quarterly meeting in December.

We did an MPIA request to find out the trainings special educators and general education teachers have received in the past two years. We plan to use this information to work with the MCPS special education department to develop certain training (specifically on understanding and applying IDEA, COMAR and MCPS policy regarding students with IEPs and general education teachers understanding of high incidence disabilities and how to work with them effectively) and ask to require more trainings. We may take it further if we cannot gain traction for increased training.

Meeting with Dr. Jaclyn Halpern of SOAR psychotherapy (and special education representative at Beall ES) to discuss neurodiversity training. She and Laura Morlok of Playful Therapy Connections plan to hold a workshop on neurodiversity with our special education representatives at our quarterly meeting on Jan. 6 at 8:00. The purpose is to try a bottom-up approach to helping the neurodiversity movement within MCPS. We’d ultimately like to see a more strength-based approach and philosophy opposed to the current deficit model to be reflected in schools including having Neurodiversity Clubs in MS and HS.

Attended a Science of Reading webinar to understand more about this topic to know best curricula for struggling readers (suggested by the head of the Decoding Dyslexia of Montgomery County chapter).

11/10/21 - Attended AEI feedback council meeting and advocated for 2e learners.

Requested that Dr. Gwen Mason speak to special education representatives and Diana Wyles, new supervisor of RACU, speak to the MCPS community. (Dr. Mason offered these meetings at our first quarterly meeting.)

We asked Gwen Mason and Phil Lynch about MCPS special education programming for parents. We have not seen many parent academies for parents of special education students being offered this or last year.

We requested Sarah Jackson, 2e instructional specialist, to speak for our third quarterly speaker event in March. She plans to speak on 2e in MCPS. We will provide questions for her to answer in addition to her presentation on GTLD programs in MCPS.

10/28/21 - Stephanie presented at the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) meeting. She developed a slide show on MCCPTA and the Special Education Committee. Recruited for special education representatives. Posted the link to the presentation and slides in our committee Facebook group.

We have created a SEC YouTube channel and are uploading our presentations from last year and this year for parents to view.

10/20/21 – Special Education Committee and Special Education Representatives meeting. Provided many resources to the representatives and Dave Stevenson presented on how he and his special education co-chairs at Diamond ES have been providing support to parents. We shared about the committee including our committee priorities and provided information on how to be an effective special ed representative.