

**Devising Seminar Task Force Meeting Minutes
GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

DATE: 02-19-2020

PLACE: Havemeyer Building, 290 Greenwich Avenue, Greenwich, CT
Staff Development Room

ATTENDANCE:

GPS Administration:

Toni Jones, Supt.

Ann Carabillo, Deputy Supt.

Mary Forde, Chief PPS Officer

GPS Staff

Suzanne Coyne, AP WMS

Gillian Thompson, Spec Ed Teacher, GHS

Cindy Boucard, Spec Ed Teacher, NL

Vikki Cappiali, Regular Education Kindergarten, NSS

Jessica McEvily, Psychologist

GPS Parents

Patricia Estafano

Jennifer Kutai

Audra O'Donovan

Anna Ksiazak

Community Partners:

Cricket Dymont, PTAC President

Luis Velazquez, Abilis

1. Meeting Opening

Call to Order – 6:10 pm

2. Review of November meeting norms.

Communicate clearly and listen carefully

Respect others and their views

Ask and welcome questions for clarification

Listen and consider the ideas and opinions of others

Focus on processes not people

Mute Cell Phones

Honor time limits and stay on task

Practice and request civility

Respect individuals in the room

Honor agreements moving forward

3. Preview of Agenda.

Outcome expectations: Shared understanding on priorities to address solutions.

Agenda

Welcome introductions

Questions and Answers on Report- Review the Draft Report

Define Priorities

Review Agreements

Debrief

Group showed agreement on the process.

4. Moving into Stage 3 of the Process

Stage 2 was the interview process

Stage 3

Reviewing the Report

99 interviews were conducted: 62 parents, 37 staff members (service providers, general and special education teachers, and administrators)

The group will address the perceptions which were evident in the report of areas which have not gone well.

Stage 4 will include generating creative solutions.

The group discussed how the report may make some staff and administrators feel not appreciated. The group needs to be aware of those feelings.

5. The Report

Concerns:

Communication concerns

RTI, Evaluation meetings, PPT meetings, IEP Implementation

The group moved around the room and placed dots on those areas which are deemed to be most significant.

Discussion of Priorities

Response to Intervention

Is response to intervention a priority? The group agreed it needs to be addressed, but the group is not going to be the group necessarily responsible to discuss a solution. The district is addressing the challenges right now, so the group is putting it in the "parking lot" for GPS to resolve.

Evaluations

The next area discussed was around “evaluations” and the group discussed the two highest noted priorities were: some schools are being successful, and we need to learn from those schools, and the challenges with IEE’s and trust between/among staff and parents.

A parent pointed out that there are more staff in the room, and the areas with the most dots could look differently if the room had more parents participating in the process.

The group discussed IEE’s, and why parents may seek outside evaluations. A parent shared that outside evaluators diagnose, and that’s why parents often get frustrated. The school team explained that a medical doctor can diagnose, but a school team must collect the multitude of information available and the team utilizes the disability category to see if they qualify for services.

Overall, the IEE seems to fall into the category of *lack of communication*. Parents may not understand the process and how it works.

PPT Meetings

The group moved on to the next chart which is the PPT Meeting. The consultant noted that there were many dots by the statements about time challenges. Parents feel rushed through the process, and staff feel overwhelmed not having enough time.

A parent noted that parents should have the draft IEP available before the meeting, and often that does not happen in their experience. It was also noted that there is a great deal to digest in the IEP, and from an emotional standpoint it can be difficult for the parent or guardian.

The consultant noted that the district is looking for a culture change. The time issues and processes are key to that cultural shift. A parent shared that the parent may not be given time, especially as it relates to showing up at the PPT meeting and not having received the document before the meeting. The parents often do not feel like they are part of the team as a partner.

The group discussed the pre-meetings and the importance of many conversations before the meeting. The parents shared that they feel there are times when teachers will not speak up at meetings.

An overarching focus may be that administrators must make sure that staff are doing what is required, like sending the draft IEP home.

IEP Implementation

Some of the challenges noted include large caseloads, not enough staff, students are tracked in one spot and do not have a wide range of options

Parent shared information that their child’s IEP was not strong, and they feel that IEP implementation is a huge factor. Another parent shared that it does not seem like teachers have specific training to implement the IEP. The parent felt that what is needed is often not provided, as the services are driven by which teacher has space in his/her schedule and not based on teacher skill set (like a specific reading training).

Next Steps

What does the group want to focus on at the next meeting?

IEP Implementation

Staffing

Lack of staff Training (behavior specialist, reading...)
Role and expectations for General Education Teachers
Role and expectations for the specialist teacher(s) as well
Lack of parent knowledge and training about special education

Time

Getting IEP ahead of time
Overall general time challenges

Response to Intervention

District will make this a priority

Evaluation

The group will see how far they get in March since evaluation comes through the PPT meeting and Response to Intervention.

Closing

This is a multi-year endeavor. The goal is to gain consensus on the focus.

Debrief

How did the process work:

What went well?

Small group discussions were positive.
Open communication was positive.
Demonstrated trust with one another.
A great deal of respect
Appreciated Luis and Anna's contributions in participating.
Everybody at the table has passion about this topic to make it happen
Parents feeling heard that staff responded to what happened to some of them in terms of process
The diversity of the group was positive

What could have gone better?

The report could have been sent sooner, but some people just finished up interviews yesterday and the consultants did not want the report to go out before the interviews were concluded.

7. Adjournment

Meeting ended at 8:30 pm

Next Meeting March 25, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Toni Jones, Superintendent