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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS'
MEETING MINUTES
September 14, 2016, 10:00 AM to 11:30
Natick Town Hall, School Committee Room (3rd Floor)**

Attendance:

Jim Adams, Ashland
Maureen Sabolinski, Franklin
Cathy MacLeod, Holliston
Armand Pires, Medway
Peter Sanchioni, Natick
Anne Wilson, Sudbury

Ed Gotgart, Framingham
Brad Jackson, Holliston
Jeff Marsden, Medfield
Nancy Gustafson, Millis
Daniel Gutekanst, Needham
David Lussier, Wellesley

Also in Attendance:

Marcia Berkowitz
Christine Brumbach
Cathy Ellis
Daisy Boyd-Berks

Bill Hurley
Anne Donovan
Karen Jewett

Not in Attendance:

Bill McAlduff, Dover-Sherborn

Jonathan Evans, South Middlesex Reg. Voc. Tech.

1) Welcome and Introductions

Dan Gutekanst, Chairman of the Board, called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m., welcomed everybody and introduced Framingham Public Schools' Acting Superintendent, Ed Gotgart, and the members of the ACCEPT Leadership Team who were in attendance.

2) Review of Minutes

Dan Gutekanst requested a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the June 22, 2016 special meeting and the May 4, 2016 meetings as presented. Nancy Gustafson put forth a motion to approve the meeting minutes from both meetings and Brad Jackson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

3) Financial Update

• FY 16 Review

Bill Hurley reported that the Collaborative ended FY16 with a surplus of \$288,000, \$190,000 higher than anticipated. The favorable outcome was due to strong results in Special Education Programs, Home-based Services and the Extended School Year program. Higher than anticipated enrollments in both the school year and extended school year accounted for the surplus of \$237,000 and \$130,000 respectively. Revenue for Home-based Services rose to \$135,000 as the demand for services remains strong.

- **Transportation**

Transportation operations remain a challenge; we ended the year with a deficit of \$291,000. The assessment model assumed 478 students, the level as of November 2015, and we averaged 569 students over the year. This required a greater dependence on costly outside vendors which was \$435,000 over budget [70 students vs. budgeted 45]. The start of the current school year has remained challenging as demand continues to exceed our capacity.

- **Facilities Update**

Mr. Hurley was pleased to report that the 4 Tech Circle project is well underway. The lease was signed in August. Holmes has selected a contractor, R.P. Masiello of Boylston, and Greg O'Connor as the architect. The plans have been developed and demolition is scheduled to begin in October. Construction is expected to be completed by May, 2017. The current owner of the building has generously offered any furniture for no cost. Dr. Gutekanst requested information on the timeline for the building and Mr. Hurley responded that once the plans are approved by the Town of Natick construction will begin. He expects a punch list to be completed by the end of May and move in by June 15.

4) **Executive Director's Report**

- **Strategic Plan**

Marcia Berkowitz reported that she has shared the Strategic Plan with the Leadership Team, ACCEPT staff, and member district Special Education Directors. Ms. Berkowitz is pleased with the response from the staff, their renewed energy toward our goals, and excitement about the direction the Collaborative is heading. The revised mission developed during this process continues to focus on leveraging the collective power of member districts with an emphasis on building strength through collaboration.

Ms. Berkowitz shared the Strategic Framework graphic representation that shows that students, families, educators, and communities are the focus of our efforts. The dark blue triangle summarizes the Guiding Principles, which are surrounded by the Mission.

Ms. Berkowitz reported that she has heard from constituents that there was some uncertainty or lack of knowledge about the scope and depth of what ACCEPT does. As a result we are making a conscious effort to articulate our core operations at every opportunity, subtly and overtly. The core operations of Special Education Programs, Specialized Expertise, and Services are the foundation of the ACCEPT Advantage. The new Leadership Flowchart breaks down the core operations including staff contact information.

Ms. Berkowitz discussed the progress of the Strategic Plan and what has been accomplished thus far. She reported that we are still in the process of identifying the right person for the HR position. In the interim, an HR professional has been contracted with to review our employee manual for compliance and an HR survey has been developed that will be disseminated to the staff shortly requesting feedback on our current operations.

Ms. Berkowitz also reported that she conducted a process mapping for the Transportation and Home-based Services, and verified that the current home-grown systems are disjointed and inefficient. She is looking for opportunities to access information

specialists through grant funding or on a volunteer basis to provide direction for a more comprehensive and organized solution.

Ms. Berkowitz explained to support the growth of the Collaborative and demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of our programs and services we need to refine the measure of success and quality we use to assess our offerings. Ultimately, this will lead to the development of a user-friendly, easily accessible dashboard.

Ms. Berkowitz shared that we have passed many hurdles in the CAP Team process and are now awaiting responses from volunteers who are interested in our project. The Collaborative is seeking CAP's advice on how to deploy our resources, focus our marketing and set priorities to maximize impact. We expect to hear from CAP shortly and have held off printing new marketing materials for this year.

Marcia Berkowitz reported that Strategic Anchor 3 of the Plan is about expanding and strengthening existing programs. She has been working with leaders in each of the core areas to identify what the Collaborative can realistically take on in the short term and to identify what data and other elements will be used to support decision making.

- **ACCEPT/AVC Memorandum of Understanding**

Ms. Berkowitz reported that since 2009 ACCEPT Collaborative and Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC) have partnered informally to meet the needs of the member districts of both collaboratives. Both collaboratives have long offered member rates for assessment programs and professional development to each other's member districts. In recent years, ACCEPT and AVC have both grown and expanded their school programs and other services. Ms. Berkowitz explained that it remains mutually beneficial to both collaboratives to continue to offer reciprocal membership rates for professional development and assessment programs. It behooves both collaboratives to have a Memorandum of Understanding about this practice in place .

5) **ACCEPT Core Operations Update**

- **Special Education Programs**

- **Enrollment Update**

Enrollment as of September 2015 was 113 students. In June 2016, there were 110 students enrolled in our programs. Currently 119 students are enrolled in ACCEPT programs. Additionally, there are a number of students at various stages of the intake process.

- **Programs**

Ms. Jewett thanked Ashland, Medway, Franklin, and Medfield for so seamlessly supporting our programs within their schools. She told the Board we are excited about our newest expansion into the Burke Elementary School that now houses three of our programs.

Ms. Jewett explained that ACCEPT offers a continuum of services from K through 22 years, which include transition programs. The programs continue to be designed based on each districts' needs and the varying profiles of student needs. Ms. Jewett gave an update on the current programs.

- **ACES**, located at Medway's Burke Elementary School, is designed for students grades K-5 with significant, individualized programming needs typically aligning with lower cognitive functioning impairment. We are off to a great start with two

students to begin the year and two more waiting to enter the program. Ms. Jewett said that the staff is overjoyed by the warm welcome we have received from all the Burke staff supporting our inclusion efforts.

- **Academy II** at Medway's Burke Elementary School is off to a slow start, but will be in full swing by November 1st. This program is an outgrowth of the previous Academy program, a "next step" toward being more fully inclusive.
- **Academy/Elementary** at Ashland's Pittaway School, faced some logistical challenges going from four classrooms to three. As a result the class size in each room has increased and we have transitioned to a co-teaching model to accommodate the increase. This model allows us to work to further develop shared academic groupings based on varying skill levels and embed more teaching supports to our students. We are excited about the continued support of our clinician and behavior analyst who work closely to embed social emotional learning time within our program structure and provide supports to our students and staff. Program wide classroom management systems are utilized consistently among all three classrooms using the DOJO system (PBIS type system).
- **Academy/Middle School** at Ashland Middle School continues to be a program to support students experiencing a range of mental health issues, school adjustment difficulties, inappropriate social functioning, and/or poor peer relations through a supportive therapeutic environment. The on-site clinician plays a strong role in embedding social-emotional learning and group counseling into each day. The clinician runs four groups per week in addition to at least one weekly individualized counseling session for each student. A focus on more independence and ownership of student learning and social outcomes is a major shift from the elementary programs. Our program-wide management system embeds a self-monitoring system and teacher check in after each academic/learning period. (Similar Minahan FAIR program outline)

- **Extended School Year Program**

Ms. Jewett thanked the Ashland schools for hosting the summer program again this year and accommodating our students and staff. In keeping with our Olympic theme of "Go ACCEPT Go," students participated in curriculum based around Olympic themes that included activities related to the Games, sports activities, and healthy competitions. The students participated in weekly field trips including a visit to the Hall at Patriots Place, mini golf courses, Purgatory Chasm, and relay races at Assumption College.

Some additional events offered over the summer included a trip to the Tower Hill Botanic Gardens, a movie theatre trip (Secret Life of Pets), and a visit from Animal Adventures. We hosted a well-attended Awards and "Moving up" ceremony for our families and specifically four of our high school students moved to our transition programs. This event ended with a beautiful "passing of the torch" event that in which all the students participated.

- **Social-emotional learning and Trauma-sensitive schools**

As a result of the SEL assessment we conducted in June 2016, using Quality Indicators of Emotional Supports Services and Programs (Pennsylvania Department of Education) we are expanding our social-emotional learning and programs for all our students. We continue to collaborate with our clinical psychiatrist, clinical psychologist and school-based educators to enhance and embed more social-emotional learning opportunities throughout student's daily schedules as a stronger antecedent intervention in conjunction with an uptick in social emotional group delivery. The SEL assessment will be repeated this coming June

Ongoing collaboration and refining of skills needed to utilize our “Engaging the Vulnerable Child” (which aligns with Collaborative Problem Solving) continue to be in place in-house and we are actively working on an online series of modules that can train and re-fresh our staffs’ skills. We are excited to embed our SElect curriculum (CASEL) more deeply into the fabric of each school day. This curriculum provides teachers with more explicit instruction in the identified “5 Core Competencies” set forth by DESE/CASEL. The on-site counselors continue to provide 1:1 counseling sessions at least weekly and support our teaching staff with the implementation of our SEL curriculum activities/carryover.

- **Inclusive Practice Ambassador**

2016 ExSELMass: New Site/Initiative Excellence through Social Emotional Learning. The statewide associations representing superintendents, school committees, elementary and secondary principals, and educational collaboratives have identified this issue as a top priority. We have come together as a coalition to raise public awareness and promote reforms designed to address all of our students’ needs, including their mental health and wellness.

Ms. Jewett requested that all Board members continue to support ACCEPT programs and encourage their special education administrators to visit the programs and refer students. ACCEPT remains committed to high quality, student-focused programming.

- **Specialized Expertise**

- **Professional Development**

Chris Brumbach thanked Medway and Needham Public Schools for hosting many professional development courses over the past year and gave an overview of the success of the programs; over 2,200 registrants attended the workshops. This included over 150 participants for the *Physical Restraint* workshop, the largest workshop the Collaborative has ever hosted. Ms. Brumbach introduced the schedule of workshops for the upcoming year stating that she used the feedback gathered from administrators and teachers to put together series that will respond to their requests in developing the schedule for the year. Ms. Brumbach stated that the job-alike meetings will continue again this year and she asked the Board to encourage their staff to attend. The special education courses will return again this year and a new course on teaching sexuality will be offered. Ms. Brumbach noted that we are offering a free parent workshop to PAC members, *Talking to Your Own Kids about Sexuality: A Workshop for Parents and Guardians of Students with Developmental Disabilities*. The workshop will be held at Wellesley High School on April 5th. Ms. Brumbach has expanded the series for school psychologists and adjustment counselors. The workshops available in this series include: *Creating and Sustaining a Trauma Sensitive School; School-Based Strategies for Chronic Absenteeism; Using Mindfulness Practices with School-Aged Youth; Enhancing Collaborative Relationships Between Schools and Other Partners to Improve Student Outcomes; and Managing Secondary Students’ Anxiety: Partnering to Build Resiliency*. Ms. Brumbach also highlighted the in-district hybrid courses that will move to an upgraded, user-friendly, MoodleRooms platform. The programs are an excellent choice for internal professional development for district staff. ACCEPT is building a library of offerings to support district professional development needs. Ms. Brumbach encouraged the Board to take advantage of all the professional development opportunities this year especially the new technology courses *Apply Technology to Support Social Skills Instruct and Executive Functioning* and *Pairing Picture Books and Apps to Contextually Address Language Objectives*.

- **School Consultation and Evaluation Services**

- Anne Donovan reported we using Blackboard to host our online learning courses via the MoodleRooms platform. Some of the advanced features of this platform include differentiated learning experiences for participants based on school districts' needs, embedded tracking systems and online grading to ensure educators are learning the content, and automated documentation of each course offering for districts.
- The online courses offer cost-effective options for districts to expand the reach of professional development opportunities available to staff. We received very positive feedback from our districts last year that participated in online courses, including the *Paraprofessional Training Course*, and *Behavior Technician Training* course that leads to certification as Registered Behavior Technician.
- Ms. Donovan is piloting a new *Mentor Training* program with ACCEPT teachers to improve quality interactions between students and new teachers and reduce new teacher turnover rates. Plans are to offer the *Mentor Training* course online to school districts next year.
- Ms. Donovan reminded the Board ACCEPT provides School Consultation Services to school teams, including coaching and training teachers and bringing specialized expertise to their challenges. Last year the Collaborative provided over 90 service contracts to 27 school districts.
- We also provide evaluation services to districts – either student-specific or program-wide evaluations – to supplement in-house availability and offer a fresh, independent perspective. Some examples of student-specific evaluations include FBA, School-Refusal evaluations, Transition Assessments, Vocational Assessments, Psychological Assessments, and speech and language assessments. Program evaluations include a detailed review of how best practices are embedded in districts (e.g. autism, transition, therapeutic programs). Ms. Donovan and her staff completed program evaluations for 11 school districts over the last two years. The Collaborative is beginning a program evaluation for Randolph Public Schools' Elementary Autism programs.

Ms. Donovan encouraged the Board to take advantage of the onsite, customized, professional development workshops on cutting edge topics to train staff to apply new skills sets across the district.

- **Services**

- **Medicaid**

Feedback from districts currently using ACCEPT's Medicaid Claiming Services is consistently favorable. ACCEPT remains the vendor of choice for many districts as we truly represent value, especially when viewed through the lens of quality and customer service; the ACCEPT Advantage is clear. In 2016, ACCEPT returned more than \$3,368,000 to districts.

- **VHS**

We have approximately 350 students registered for VHS courses this semester and are anticipating a similar number for next semester. Ms. Berkowitz stated that ACCEPT is also using VHS in the Franklin High School program and can vouch for the

academic rigor of the courses and the flexibility of VHS in working with us to customize the learning experience to meet the needs of the students.

6) **Presentation: LGBTQ**

Ms. Berkowitz introduced ACCEPT's clinician, Daisy Boyd-Berks, noting that her patience, flexibility, and caring approach make her truly an asset to the Collaborative. Ms. Boyd-Berks will be offering a series of workshops in February 2017 to which the member districts have been invited to register teams of two.

Ms. Boyd-Berks gave an overview of the three part workshop series designed to educate, empower, and support educators, administrators, and clinicians. The seminars will focus on helping educators create a supportive and culturally sensitive environment for all students. Seminar one is LGBTQ 101, Seminar #2 will discuss transgender identity, and Seminar #3 will discuss the changing face of the family. The seminar will give a basic understanding of LGBTQ identities and provide tools that participants can use to create classrooms and schools that are culturally sensitive and inclusive, and explore family dynamics and how educators can support both students and parent/guardians who identify as LGBTQ.

Ms. Boyd-Berks explained why it is important to create inclusive environments for LGBTQ students:

- LGBT youth are twice as likely as their peers to say that they have been physically assaulted, kicked, or shoved at school
- Studies show that 25%-50% of homeless youth are LGBT and on the street because of their gender or sexuality
- Studies have shown that creating a supportive environment for LGBTQ students improves educational outcomes for all students.

A second series maybe offered, based on demand.

7) **Approvals**

- **FY17 Staff Appointments and Re-Appointments**

Dr. Gutekanst requested a motion to approve the Staff Appointments and Reappointments as presented. Dr. Marsden put forth a motion to approve the list of staff appointments as presented and Dr. Jackson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous with no discussion.

- **Chief Procurement Officer (CPO)**

The DESE requires all collaboratives appoint a CPO per M.G.L. c.30B section 6. Dr. Gutekanst requested a motion to appoint Cathleen Ellis, Collaborative Accountant, as Chief Procurement Officer. Dr. Marsden put forth a motion to appoint Cathleen Ellis as the Chief Procurement Officer of the Collaborative and Dr. Wilson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. No discussion followed.

- **ACCEPT/AVC Memorandum of Understanding**

Dr. Gutekanst requested a vote to continue the practice of ACCEPT and AVC extending membership rates to each other's member districts for professional development and assessment programs. Dr. Jackson put forth the motion to continue extending reciprocal membership rates to Assabet Valley Collaborative and their member districts for professional development and assessment programs. Dr. Anne Wilson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous with no discussion following.

8) Planning

Future Agenda Item – continued discussion of SEL

9) Adjournment

Dr. Marsden put forth the motion to adjourn and Dr. Jackson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Future Meeting Dates (all meetings begin at 10:00 AM):

October 26, 2016 – Courtyard by Marriott, 342 Speen Street, Natick

December 14, 2016 – Natick Town Hall, 13 East Central Street, Natick

January 25, 2017 – Courtyard by Marriott, 342 Speen Street, Natick

March 15, 2017 - Natick Town Hall, 13 East Central Street, Natick

May 3, 2017 - Courtyard by Marriott, 342 Speen Street, Natick

June 7, 2017 (contingency date in case of weather-related cancellation)