

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
September 14, 2017
Center for Learning and Growth 4 Tech Circle, Natick

In Attendance:

James Adams, Ashland
Robert Tremblay, Framingham
Brad Jackson, Holliston
Jeff Marsden, Medfield
Nancy Gustafson, Millis
Dan Gutekanst, Needham
Anne Wilson, Sudbury

Andrew Keough, Dover-Sherborn
Sara Ahern, Franklin
Cathy MacLeod, Hopkinton
Armand Pires, Medway
Peter Sanchioni, Natick
Jon Evans, South Middlesex Regional
David Lussier, Wellesley

Also in Attendance:

Marcia Berkowitz, ACCEPT
Bill Hurley, ACCEPT
Anne Donovan, ACCEPT

Cathy Ellis, ACCEPT
Karen Jewett, ACCEPT
Chris Brumbach, ACCEPT

1) Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Gutekanst called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Marcia Berkowitz welcomed Board members. She showed a promotional video, produced by Staples, highlighting the mock Staples store. This video can be found on the Staples website and You Tube. A link to this video will also be added to the ACCEPT website. Dr. Gutekanst thanked Marcia Berkowitz and Bill Hurley for their extraordinary work over the past year bringing the construction of the Center for Learning and Growth to completion and commended them for a smooth start-up of the summer program and school year. Dr. Gutekanst commented that it was truly a labor of love.

2) Review of Minutes

Dan Gutekanst requested a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from June 7, 2017. Jeff Marsden put forth the motion to approve the meeting minutes from June 7, 2017 as presented and Peter Sanchioni seconded the motion. All were in favor and the minutes were accepted.

3) Financial Update

Cathy Ellis reported that ACCEPT ended the fiscal year 2016-2017 with a loss of \$108,000. The projection in June was for a \$99,000 surplus. The difference is due to a larger than anticipated loss in Transportation which ended the year with \$798,000 loss.

She noted the Collaborative's business and programs are on solid ground. With the exception of Transportation, all the ACCEPT business areas ended FY17 with a surplus. Special Education Programs and Extended School Year Programs had a positive surplus of \$390K and \$97K, respectively, as a result of higher than anticipated enrollment. Home-based Services remain strong with a surplus of \$103K. Professional Development and School Consultation services are well utilized by districts and ended the year with a \$3K surplus. Medicaid Services ended the year with a surplus of \$70K. Ms. Ellis reported that the pricing structure of the Transportation Assessment Model was not in line with the costs due to extraordinary outside vendor costs. As a result member school districts have benefitted from artificially low pricing for Transportation for FY17.

Ms. Ellis reported that the start of our current year is strong. The Extended School Year Programs were held at 4 Tech Circle and at Medway Public Schools with a slightly higher than budgeted number of students. Summer transportation broke even. The School Year Programs are off to a good start with enrollment higher than budgeted.

4) Executive Director's Report – Marcia Berkowitz

Ms. Berkowitz reported the move to the new Center for Learning and Growth has been exciting, rewarding, and challenging. The plan to use the summer to get settled and work out the kinks worked to our advantage. The break between the ESY program and the beginning of school allowed time to work through punch list items that were not apparent without students in the building.

Drivers, office staff, and professional staff were reminded during the initial training that one of ACCEPT's hallmarks is our caring, respectful approach to our students, their families, and the districts. Emphasis was placed on ACCEPT being a place of safety, tolerance, and acceptance. ACCEPT's theme for the year is civility and norm-setting began during the kick-off meetings.

Transportation has been the biggest challenge this year. Following an extensive vetting process, Van Pool was selected as the vendor we would work with because their philosophy and approach was the most similar to ours, their extensive driver training, and their willingness to adopt our standards and practices where necessary.

As anticipated, there were a myriad of details that needed to be resolved during the contract negotiations. These were almost exclusively related to the most efficient routing, cost, and customer service. Van Pool is currently transporting 120 students but before that could happen Dalexis Valdez, Transportation Manager, reviewed the specific, detailed, needs of each student with Van Pool, including communicating all of the relevant

information available to us, to ensure the services would meet ACCEPT standards.

At the same time, new routing software system for the students we transport in our vans is being implemented. During the installation, preparation, and training it became evident that the system required some tweaking to accommodate the requirements of specialized transportation. These changes prevented a soft roll out in the summer which would have allowed staff to become familiar with the system and adept with operations. As a result, the “learn as you go” approach has resulted in some customer service challenges which are being addressed. The situation is compounded by the typical start of the year challenges: drivers becoming familiar with their routes, parents ensuring students are ready on time, traffic and congestion, road construction, schools working out their own drop off and pick up routines.

Ms. Berkowitz shared that Van Pool remarked that the range of services ACCEPT provides are well beyond the scope of the industry standard. Ms. Berkowitz will be meeting with Special Education Directors and Business Managers to highlight our challenges and problem solve the issues.

As a reminder, the three strategic anchors developed during the Collaborative’s strategic planning process and that guide our operations focus on Building Infrastructure to Support Growth, Communicating the ACCEPT Advantage, and Expanding Programs, Specialized Expertise, and Service.

Our new onboarding processes facilitated hiring and orientation this year. Feedback from many of the staff has been positive about these changes and we hope these changes result in improved retention.

The Collaborative continues to work on communicating the ACCEPT Advantage and marketing our programs. ACCEPT was fortunate to receive a nearly \$20,000 grant from the Sudbury Foundation and has contracted with The Collaborative for Education Services in western Massachusetts to work with ACCEPT on our collateral. The first materials produced with the grant funds were distributed.

**5) ACCEPT Core Operations
Special Education Programs**

- Karen Jewett reported that the first session of the ESY program in the new Center for Learning and Growth facility was hugely successful and included numerous community trips. A highlight was a concluding talent show that packed the room with 100 people attending.

- Ms. Jewett reported that enrollment is steadily increasing. The new Program Guide has been rewritten and are streamlined to feature the two strands, academic and life skills or therapeutic.
- The PBIS initiative is being led by a new staff member who is a certified PBIS trainer. We are using a co-teaching model, with a behaviorist and special education teacher in each classroom. This has resulted in marked improvement in student performance.
- Ms. Jewett thanked Medway Public Schools for being a great partner hosting the ESY program as well as the school year classrooms for kindergarten to 12th grade including many opportunities for inclusion.

Specialized Expertise

Ms. Brumbach shared professional development workshops for the current year.

- **SEI Full Endorsement Course**
ACCEPT has been approved to offer the SEI Full Endorsement Course this year. Laurie Sullivan will teach the SEI endorsement course for all teachers who are looking to acquire their SEI endorsement. The cost for ACCEPT member teachers will be \$395 and there are 35 seats available.
- **Paraprofessional Training Modules** will include 8 modules this year. Seven districts have registered for the course; they include Sudbury, Millis, Natick, Holliston, as well as a charter school and a regional school district in central Massachusetts.
- **Professional Development calendar for 2017-18**
The Professional Development calendar reflects the expansion of mental health workshops and courses as well as more programs that are hybrid in nature (in-person and on-line).
- Chris Brumbach is excited to be bringing workshops that are responsive to the feedback she received last year that will include multiple sessions, hybrid courses, and interesting topics including mental health. ACCEPT will sponsor a four part series on “Dialectical Behavior Training” in collaboration with The Bridge of Central Massachusetts. Ms. Brumbach highlighted other workshops on the fall schedule which include Christopher Bellonci presenting “Meeting the School-based Mental Health Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Youth;” Dr. Anne Bodmer Lutz presenting “Anxiety and School Avoidance in Youth: Solution Focused Interventions that Produce Results;” “Nuts and Bolts for Team Chairs: Strategies for Successful Team Meetings” with Linda Waters again; and attorney Michael Joyce and Anne Donovan teaming up to offer “Legal Issues – Practical Resources: ESY, Home-Based and 1:1 Paraprofessionals.”

School Consultation and Evaluation Services

Anne Donovan reported that consultation services are off to a strong start this year with a great team that has a wide range of expertise to offer that includes over 10

years of experience in their field as well as teaching at local colleges and universities.

- Current contracts for 2017-18 have been signed with over 10 school districts to provide a range of consultation services
- Expertise in the areas of:
 - Emotional/behavioral disabilities
 - Autism and developmental disabilities
 - Transition programs
 - Related services
- Our consultants have conducted 14 program evaluations for districts in the last two years (e.g. Auburn, Berlin-Boylston, Cambridge Charter, Hudson, Marlborough, Medway, Mendon-Upton, Randolph, Watertown, and Westborough).
- Ms. Donovan is excited to offer the new Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) consultation and evaluation services this year as a more cost-effective option for districts; the member district rate of \$90/hour represents a savings of over 50% compared to other agencies offering AAC services (e.g. Easter Seals). ACCEPT's AAC Specialist has 20 years' experience working with public school districts and consulting to teams to integrate a range of low- to high-tech supports in the classroom.
- Ms. Donovan noted a significant increase in the number of districts requesting series-based on-site workshops for their staff
 - This year, there are already contracts with five public school districts to offer a "Functional Behavior Assessment: From Conceptualization to Practice" workshop series
 - Developed and implemented a new PD workshop series, "How Do We Step Back: Fading Staff Support While Increasing Independence" to help districts reduce over-reliance on 1:1 paraprofessionals
 - The "Behavior Technician Training Program," leading towards the Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) credential, also continues to be a popular training and can be provided on-site for districts; this is a more cost-effective model for districts that want to train 10 or more staff.
 - Also new this year, ACCEPT will offer training for districts in DESE's Leading Educational Access Project (LEAP). The emphasis with LEAP is to reduce the number of students in poverty referred for special education. ACCEPT's LEAP Trainer is available to work with district administrators to customize this training for each district's specific needs.

Services

Medicaid

Marcia Berkowitz reported that ACCEPT's Medicaid Services returned over \$3.9 million to the towns served last year, bringing the all-time total to \$58 million in returns to districts. During FY2017, Sudbury Public Schools joined the program and they are gathering the data for their first Administrative Claim reimbursement.

VHS

The VHS program has a solid start to the school year with 555 students enrolled in courses in the fall with expectations for more students enrolling in the spring session. Twelve school districts are taking advantage of the VHS consortium.

6) Approvals

FY18 Staff Appointments and Re-Appointments

Dr. Gutekanst requested a motion to approve the list of staff appointments and reappointments. Dr. Marsden put forth a motion to approve the list of staff appointments as presented and Dr. Jackson seconded the motion. All were in favor.

7) Adjournment

Dr. Gutekanst requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

A tour of the Center and Ribbon Cutting Celebration followed.

Future Meeting Dates (all meetings begin at 10:00 AM at the ACCEPT Center for Learning and Growth):

October 12, 2017

December 14, 2017

January 11, 2018

March 15, 2018

May 10, 2018

June 14, 2018 (contingency date in case of weather-related cancellation)