The Way Forward

Listening, learning and the case for change

SPECIAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES

Meeting date: 1/17/2013
Meeting location: Walton Plaza, Room 427
Recorded by: Stacie Levi
1 ATTENDANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gina Smith</td>
<td>Executive sponsor</td>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Hamby</td>
<td>CMS lead</td>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gil Middlebrooks</td>
<td>Community lead</td>
<td>Bell, Davis &amp; Pitt, P.A.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Mitcham</td>
<td>Team member</td>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candace Wilson</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mental Health Assn of Central Carolinas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy Popkin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Autism Society of NC</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doreen Byrd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parent/ECAC</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Banks</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parent/White Knight Engineered Products</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meaghan Loftus</td>
<td></td>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valerie Todd</td>
<td></td>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vanessa Ashford</td>
<td></td>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca Grant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intisar Hamidullah</td>
<td></td>
<td>CMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cathy Johnson</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mental Health Assn of Central Carolinas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poulimi Banerjee</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>No</td>
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2 MEETING LOCATION

Building: Walton Plaza
Conference room: Room 427

3 MEETING START

Meeting scheduled start: 3:00 p.m.
Meeting actual start: 3:05 p.m.
Meeting scribe: Stacie Levi

4 AGENDA

- **Welcome/introductions**
  - Gil Middlebrooks started introducing himself and Laura Hamby. Gina Smith and each team member introduced themselves and spoke about their personal connections to special education in CMS.

- **Overview of superintendent's goals and task forces**
  - Gil Middlebrooks reminded everyone that they had already received a link to Dr. Morrison's report *The Way Forward*. Middlebrooks summarized the process that led to that report. He passed out CMS's information sheet on the 22 task forces and eight district goals. Our task force on special education falls under Goal 1: Accelerate academic achievement for every child and close achievement gaps so every child graduates college- or career-ready.
  - Our meetings will be open to the public. Team members should encourage other people to provide input either directly to team members or through the task force survey on the CMS home page. Dr. Morrison will be scheduling town hall meetings so that the
community can have additional opportunities for input. Team members are invited to those town halls. We will circulate the schedules for those meetings once available.

- A team member asked a question about e-mail communication. Mr. Middlebrooks indicated that team members should assume that their task force-related e-mails will be open to public review.
- Task force meeting minutes will be made available to all team members and to the community.

**Desired outcomes**

- By the end of February, the task force should be prepared to give written guidance for the 2013-14 budget process.
- By June, the task force should finish its work and prepare a report that will inform the superintendent’s 2018 long-range strategic plan.

**Discussion of perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats**

- **Strengths**
  - IEP process
  - Parent input
  - Structure of the EC Department
  - Support for schools
  - Talented educators; staff that truly care about students
  - Solid alignment with colleges and universities in the area
  - Resources for various programs
  - Some students make good progress after graduation
  - Knowledgeable and helpful central office EC staff
  - Complete continuum of services is available
  - Move to Lincoln Heights has benefitted SED population that used to be at Morgan

- **Weaknesses**
  - Access to support is variable throughout the district
  - Difficult to keep up with policy and procedure changes; more time for training and professional development is needed
  - Parents do not understand the IEP process and are skeptical as to how teachers can monitor multiple IEPs at the same time
  - Parents do not understand their rights; parental training is needed
  - Teachers need better training on behavior modifications
  - Schools need to strengthen relationships between IEP teams and intervention teams
  - Over identification of African-American males
  - EC teachers do not have skills to analyze data
  - Not enough school psychologists
  - More training for inclusive practices are needed
  - CMS needs to monitor the size of inclusion classes to keep them from getting too big
  - Early intervention in general education classes needs to be better
  - Schools are too eager to “wait and see.” If a disability exists, interventions do not occur quickly enough.
  - At the secondary level, there are not enough highly qualified EC teachers. Too many students get parked in front of computers.

- **Opportunities**
  - We can partner with Fletcher School and conduct free parent training
  - The size of CMS allows flexibility for trying new things
- We can better integrate with community partners to help older students transition better.
- The private sector in Charlotte has always been supportive of education. We can tap into those resources to help special education.
- We can better coordinate services with charter and private schools.
- We can look into coordinating with the private schools for both teacher and parent training.
- Consider a more holistic approach to serving students, using community initiatives as part of a team approach.
- Use Skype to get more coverage from highly qualified teachers.
- We have excellent teachers who could be used to train others.
- We can train general education teachers in universal design.

**Threats**
- Lack of full funding; constant threat of cuts.
- Perception that special education students should be removed from inclusive settings because they hold back regular education students.
- Discrimination arising out of incidents like the Newtown shootings.
- Teachers cannot be expected to attend professional development opportunities after a full day of teaching.
- Not enough money for substitutes and not enough quality substitutes to allow EC teachers to attend professional development opportunities during the school day.
- Insufficient understanding of mental health issues.
- Difficulty in recruiting and retaining good EC teachers.
- EC students suffer when regular educators or students say inappropriate things to them.

**Remarks from Gina Smith, assistant superintendent**
- Gil Middlebrooks introduced Gina Smith again and indicated that he specifically held her remarks until team members had completed SWOT exercise.
- Gina indicated that she is excited about her new role and the opportunities within CMS for special education. A major goal for the next three to five years is to make sure that more of our students are on the path to graduation, that more of them have better opportunities to participate in general education, and that they show more growth on the Common Core standards and Common Core extensions.
- We want to advance professional development for our teachers to address student needs while also increasing the amount of parent training.
- A second major goal is to use technology more effectively to provide access to students and so that they can gain more independence as they demonstrate what they learn. An example of this is the current iPad pilot project.
- The final major push needs to be a laser-like focus on specially designed instruction and making sure that it is individualized and is meeting student needs. Use of Fusion and Orton-Gillingham are examples.
- The immediate areas for discussion for the 2013-14 budget year ought to be (1) personnel to promote and provide inclusive practices; (2) technology and the personnel to deliver it meaningfully; and (3) focusing on specially designed instruction, which means training, personnel, and a means of tracking results.
- Team members offered suggestions of putting EC staff in zone offices and increased training for teachers. Members also cautioned that any technology suggestions needed to be fully thought out and could not just be buying iPads. Ms. Mitcham talked about her experience as part of the iPad pilot project and the success she is having. Another suggestion was to support EC teachers in getting dual certification in areas like math and language arts.

**Discussion of proposed areas of focus**
- 2013-14 budgetary needs
Professional development for teachers/training for parents
Expand and support use of technology, especially for students with communication and behavioral/emotional needs
Focus on specially designed instruction with programs like Fusion and Orton-Gillingham
Increase number of EC subject area experts located in schools
Expand and give stipends for summer training

Long-term strategic initiatives
- Look at ways to publicize what special education does. Businesses come to Charlotte because of quality of CMS. Make special education part of that story.
- Focus on parent training so that parents are more informed partners in educational process
- Define and commit to best practices and problem solving
- Review SAC program to see how well it works
- Focus on students who used to be in cross-categorical classes. There is concern that those students are not being well served.

Future meetings
- All future meetings will take place from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in Room 427 at Walton Plaza on the following dates:
  - Feb, 7
  - Feb. 21
  - March 7
  - March 21
  - April 11
  - April 25
  - May 9
  - May 23

5  MEETING END
Meeting scheduled end: 5:00 p.m.
Meeting actual end: 4:50 p.m.

6  POST MEETING ACTION ITEMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Assigned To</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare/finalize minutes</td>
<td>Middlebrooks/Hamby</td>
<td>01/22/13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss/Refine thoughts on immediate budget needs by e-mail</td>
<td>All team members</td>
<td>02/07/13</td>
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7  DECISIONS MADE
- No substantive decisions were made other than the process that the task force will follow.

8  NEXT MEETING
Next meeting: Room 427, Walton Plaza, Feb. 7, 2013, 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.