

PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BERRIEN REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY

Proposed Minutes of November 20, 2018

PRESENT: Mary Duschek (Berrien Springs), Ellen Adams (Brandywine), Nicole Birmingham-Moersch (Bridgman), & Charles DeGraaf & Tia Shaw (Countryside), Charity Hackett (Eau Claire), Corie Siik & Jackie VanHorn (Lakeshore), Martina Ciccarelli & Donna Messinger (New Buffalo), Kevin Carter & Sarah True (Niles), Meghan Wooldridge (St. Joseph), Wendy Stainbrook & Leah Dibble (Watervliet), Autumn Poole (Berrien RESA)

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Sarah Douglass (Bridgman), Britney Martin (Buchanan)

ABSENT: Kandice Agee (Berrien Springs), Mattie Book (Buchanan), Melissa Blair (Coloma), Mindi Mach (St. Joseph), Holly Pomranka (Brandywine), Joyce Anderson & Michelle Stone (River)

- I. Call to order at 6:30 p.m. – Jackie Van Horn, President
 - A. Welcomed PAC members, guests and guest speaker, Sandi Koskee from the Michigan Alliance for Families.
 - B. Jackie explained her role as a Parent Regional Mentor for Michigan Alliance for Families:
 1. Empower parents;
 2. Mentor parents one on one or can contact other mentors across the state for assistance (there are 21 statewide);
 3. Bring trainings to the area;
 4. Offer support leading up to and following IEP meetings; however, cannot attend meetings.

- II. Presentation: Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy
Sandi Koskee, Michigan Alliance for Families

Sandi is a statewide trainer who helps families understand all things related to Special Education services. She and all other Michigan Alliance for Families staff are parents of Special Education students.

 - A. Sandi began by discussing what advocacy is: speaking up for yourself or others to make things better. She then shared six skills to be an effective advocate:
 1. Understand your child’s disability: knowing which services are appropriate for your child, having high expectations, and finding the right assistive technology and accommodations. Keep the focus on child’s needs.
 2. Know the key players: who is the director or decision maker, are staff people employed by public, non-profit, or private employees, and how to find out a person’s name. Not all staff are trained the same.
 3. Become well organized: keeping records, putting everything in writing, keeping a phone log, and having a meeting notebook (spiral).

4. Know how to resolve disagreements: informal processes – talk to people first; formal processes – mediation, complaints, and due process.
 5. Use clear and effective communication: Keeping your eyes on the “prize” – the correct support and service for your child, listening and asking questions (what does the behavior look like?), focus on needs of the child, and problem solving together to find solutions.
 6. Know how to resolve disagreements: informal processes – talk to people first; formal processes – mediation, complaints, and due process.
- B. Sandi referred to the hand out given that outlines the various webinars available to everyone for free through the Michigan Alliance for Families website, pointing out those webinars that are specifically related to rights. She also gave two other online resources for families concerning rights: wrightslaw.com and parentcenterhub.org

III. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

mc/cq