



***Parent Advisory Council - Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 14, 2018***

1. Welcome & Introductions

Dr. Volpe welcomed & thanked everyone for coming. He then asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Parent Reps - Antonietta Birdsell – District #25
Jamie Reid – District #34
Mario Diaz – District #45
Beth Rosales – District #45
Whitney Murphy – District #58
Mara Miskin – District #60
Cheri Lang – District #66
Rebekkah Post – District #68
Tracey Ploskonka – District #99
Solange Pilizota – District #202
Julie Smith – STARS (Autism) Program
Elizabeth Coffey – Deaf/Hard of Hearing Program
Nicole Sullivan – Multi Needs Program
Darsha Sloier – Directions Program
David Burton – Southeast School

SASED - Dr. Michael Volpe – Executive Director
Nan Diamond – Director, Programs & Services
Lynne Mennel – Administrative Assistant, Programs & Services

Dr. Volpe took a moment to excitedly introduce Dr. Mindy McGuffin as the new incoming Executive Director, effective July 1, 2019, which coincides with Dr. Volpe’s retirement at the end of this school year. Dr. McGuffin is currently the Executive Director of Leyden Area Special Education Cooperative (LASEC).

2. SASED Updates (Dr. Volpe)

Mission, Vision & Value Statements – SASED, Teaching Learning Believing

SASED is celebrating its 60th year. It is the second oldest & largest cooperative in the state of Illinois. We decided to look at our current Mission statement, which reads: “To provide progressive & visionary leadership through a collaborative partnership with the member school districts, parents & communities to ensure the full continuum of specialized programs & services to meet the needs of all learners.”

A good Mission statement makes a difference. It tells people what you stand for, what your purpose is. It’s engaging. The statement must be clear, guiding, short, outward looking & engaging, which meant we needed to have a clear vision of what SASED must be to help all students learn. Our NEW Mission statement is: “To maximize student outcomes.”

Since our Mission is our “purpose,” then our Vision must reflect the organization we need to be to achieve that purpose. A Vision statement should be one sentence describing the clear & inspirational long-term desired change resulting from an organization or program’s work; your desired end-state. Our NEW Vision statement is: “To be the innovative leader in inspiring, creating & implementing best practices in education for all.”

What is the difference between Values vs. Beliefs? Values refer to a set of ideas that guide us on how to evaluate right from wrong. Beliefs refer to a set of doctrines, statements or experiences we hold as true, without evidence or proof. Value statements are the basis for behavior & motivation. They are abstract, hierarchical & dynamic concepts that describe what we desire or seek to achieve. When we hold a value, we are saying that we aspire to something, or we feel that value is worth something to us. Below are our Value statements:

Teaching –

- Is student centered & solution focused.
- Prepares students to lead enriched & productive lives within their communities.
- Should be data informed, evidence based & high quality.

Learning –

- By engaging in ongoing professional development to equip educators with best practice skills & competences.
- By influencing & implementing federal & state mandates for special & general education.
- By being a resource for new research & initiatives in education.

Believing –

- That all students can learn.
- That independence, dignity & equality are the rights of all.
- That to best serve students, we develop & sustain collaborative relationships with all stakeholders.

Leadership Succession Plan –

SASED conducted a Stakeholder leadership survey, which was based on 255 respondents across staff & families from our member districts & SASED. These Stakeholders identified desired skills, characteristics & experiences. These skills were used to provide guidance to the Joint Board Search Committee to review the current Executive Director job description; create a posting; screen applicants; support final determination of a new Executive Director.

It was determined the top 3 strengths of SASED are:

- Instructional Programming, such as Multi-Needs, STARS, Deaf/Hard of Hearing, etc.
- Services to students & staff, such as OT/PT, Assistive Tech, School Improvement/Instructional Support, Professional Development, etc.
- The SASED staff we hire & retain across our Programs, Services & Administration.

The top 3 horizon issues facing SASED are:

- Finances & Funding.
- Personnel & Staffing.
- Mental Health & Wellness for both students & staff.

The Executive Director skill set summary was:

- Communication & Listening.,
- Interpersonal.
- Managerial.
- It should be noted that Instructional skills &/or a teaching background were also frequently identified.

The Executive Director attributes summary were:

- Integrity & Trust.
- Problem-solver.
- Student-centered.
- Collaborator.
- Team Builder.

The experience summary was noted by importance:

Most Important -

- District Superintendent or Special Education Administrator.
- Cooperative Administrator.
- Cooperative Executive Director.
- Experience with other organizations serving students & adults with disabilities.

Moderately Important -

- Special Education Finance & Budget Development.
- Strategic Planning.

- Curriculum & Instruction.
- Regulatory & Legislative Advocacy

Important -

- Personnel & Negotiations.
- Multicultural environment.
- Technology.
- Facility Construction & Management.

Other feedback worth noting:

- to have someone with teaching experience in special education.
- staff support & training in the area of mental health.
- student-centered & staff-centered director, which allow teachers to focus on teaching.
- listens to the assistants.
- provide hands on leadership.
- a strong advocate for our students' needs.
- someone who can be present within the programs, to visit & know what is happening.
- staff should be enabled & freed to do their jobs.
- someone who cares about the students.
- must understand the intensive needs of the students who are typically referred to SASED.
- maintain visibility throughout the SASED Community.
- continue professional & compassionate services to our students & parents while meeting the district needs.
- a collaborative, personable individual.
- have an approach that will maintain SASED's good legacy.
- building collaborative & trusting relations will be key.
- commitment to & belief in the benefits of a coop.
- focus on LRE & inclusion.
- possess strong Leadership qualities.
- be the eyes & ears for the "hot topics" & bring that knowledge back to the District Administrators.
- the person must be able to function from the head & the heart
- someone who has worked in a classroom & understands the demands & struggles that teachers & related services face every day.
- needs to be present & student focused.
- staffs' accomplishments should be acknowledged & valued.
- someone who can work on expanding or creating new programs in order to increase student numbers or make programs more appealing to districts.
- to continually have a pulse on the health & effectiveness of their employees.
- someone who is familiar with the DuPage County area & our member districts.
- should be seen in the classroom & schools.
- experience in another special education cooperative or as a large district special education director.
- broad experiences in curriculum, finance &/or human resources would allow for the executive director to build a new leadership team.
- focus on working with staff to improve outcomes.
- someone who is committed to remain in this position.

What are the next steps:

- ❖ November – the new Executive Director was named; Dr. Mindy McGuffin & the transition has begun.
- ❖ December – Members, structures & dates for the CSBO interview process are determined.
Note: Sam Cannata, Director of Business Operations, will be retiring this year.
- ❖ January – The posting will run for 5 weeks.
- ❖ February – Interviews will be conducted.
- ❖ March – The finalist will be brought to the Board of Control.

Summer 2018 Construction –

Construction went on all summer. Three new classrooms were built in the old Central Office space at Southeast School. The restrooms & lunch area were upgraded, and the Directions high school program was moved from the mobile unit to real classrooms.

The Transition Center was completed & moved to the lower level of the SASSED Administrative Center in time for ESY.

Summer 2019 Construction –

Construction will continue at Southeast School by finishing the flooring; upgrading the parking lot; & replacing the roof.

Enrollment –

Programming budget for the 2018-2019 school year was based on a total enrollment of 424 across all Programs. September's enrollment was 431 & November's enrollment is 434. As you can see, we are on the plus side.

3. Strategic Activities for 2018-2019 (Dr. Volpe & Nan Diamond)

Transition – 18-22 years of age; generally, after high school & is vocational based. The student's Transition plan starts at 14 ½ years of age with your IEP team. We need to have the student advocate for him/her self, & SASSED should be more involved with the District.

What are we currently doing?

- Partner for services for Transition
- Looking at partnership with Districts
- Work on IEP process for Transition
- Current enrollment is mostly Multi Needs

What should we do next?

- More specific options for Transition
- More examples of Transition options
- More prep for Transition meeting
- Communication

Early Intervention – birth to 3 years of age; SASSED put a committee together for Low Incidence students. They met with Child & Family Connections (CFC) to try to partner with them for services for parents, & professional development (PD) for parents &/or families.

What are we currently doing?

- We are doing PD for CFC & parents
- Met with CFC to discuss partnering
- Investigating Low Incidence early intervention

What should we do next?

- Need to get to early intervention (EI)
- Work with medical field for referrals
- SASSED can expand group options for EI
- Standardization of EI evaluations

Autism – need to bridge the continuum of students & have a plan for transitioning from private placement.

What are we currently doing?

- Meeting with the District to build capacity for LRE returns

What should we do next?

- What happens to transition to LRE (supports)
- Build a plan for individuals, but how are they communicated

Non-traditional Service Delivery Models – offer PD on the SASSED website via Infinitec for parents; Skype for students at home; there is a shortage of specialized staff; offer homebound services for a safe environment for the medically fragile student(s).

What are we currently doing?

- Staff shortages are provoking more on-line considerations
- PD focus for on-line work
- Considerations of non-attending student interaction

What should we do next?

- Look at new technology to be more engaging
- Students tutoring as community service (peer buddy for homebound student)
- Project work that progresses (a mobile project)
- One to one student connection for support

4. Parent to Parent Activities (Dr. Volpe & Nan Diamond)

Parent Portal on the SASSED Website –

- A digital newsletter
- In depth information of SASSED's Programs & Services
- A visual of continuum from Early Intervention to Transition

Parent Newsletter –

- Getting SASSED out in the community
- Go digital; not paper

Social Media – all parents were persistent about social media

- Facebook – closed group
- Twitter – closed group
- Start simple

5. Question & Wrap up

Solange Pilizota (D202 parent) excited talked about her certification in Autism Fitness, & the positive impact the program has on her son. Flyers were available for parents to take with them.

Nan Diamond mentioned an upcoming workshop available to parents & staff on Mental Health First Aid, which will be held December 4th or February 5th at the SASSED Administrative Center. Flyers were available for parents to take with them.

Julie Smith (STARS parent) asked about the Directions program. Both Darsha Sloier (Directions parent) & Dr. Volpe offered a brief description of the program.

Are there parent handbooks? Yes & no

Southeast School & Directions have handbooks.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing, STARS & Vision are in progress.

There is a disconnect between the program classroom and the school building. SASSED classrooms don't always participate in the school functions.

SASSED will work/communicate with the school building more closely.

There should be consistency in communication from the teacher & aide.

Next meeting: February 6, 2019

SASSED Administrative Center, 2900 Ogden Avenue, Lisle, IL