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Milestones Day School Parent Advisory Group Meeting Minutes: May 14th, 2021

Meeting Facilitators:

Kim Rockers - CEO

Heather Miller - Education Operations Manager/HR

Tim Mahoney - Assistant Principal/Curriculum Director

Attendees: Rachel Reynolds (PAG Co-Leader), Trish Elliott (PAG Co-Leader), Kirsten Esposito, Iris Whalen, Keri Holian, Lynda Leary, Jess O'Toole, Maryanne Lee, Sara Clevering, Sherit Levin, Jennifer Jackson, Petra Bignami, Melissa McDade

1. Welcome: Year in Review Slide Show

- Kim Rockers presented a slide show to celebrate the successes of the very unprecedented 2020-2021 school year. Select examples included:
 - Successful reentry protocols that enabled us to safely reopen onsite as early as schools were approved in Massachusetts in the summer of 2020 (hybrid) and progressively in September (full onsite instruction)
 - Continuing school celebrations, traditions, and community activities through modified platforms and environments
 - Ongoing robust therapeutic, academic, and transitions programming through synchronous instruction and faculty's creativity. This included Milestones recommending and advocating various programmatic options to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and within maaps (Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools) task forces that were approved and incorporated.
 - Positive engagement/initiatives for remote students
 - Excellent health and safety metrics after over a year in the pandemic (*ex: only 1 COVID-19 positive case while Milestones has been open on*

campus; additional cases occurred only during a pre-planned precautionary remote pivot when impacted students/staff were not present)

- Exemplary community cooperation among students, faculty and families with COVID-19 protocols
- Very high vaccination statistics (*ex: 95-97% of faculty with full COVID-19 vaccination status; very high staff and student compliance with the flu vaccine*)
- Ongoing strong support and generosity from the Parent Advisory Group and volunteers (*ex: Staff Appreciation breakfasts, snacks to stock the faculty kitchen, safety supply drive at the start of the school year, after school club partnership, submitting positive feedback etc.*)
- Successful Program Reconstruction Expansion approval through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (*ex: 10,000 square foot facility expansion for increased classroom, therapy and instructional kitchen spaces; post high school expansion; addition of faculty positions and full time relief staff; supporting employees' recruitment and retention through salary upgrades for select positions; addition of a therapeutic fitness center; enhanced STEAM programming with approval to develop a Robotics lab/Genius Bar, approval for an assistive technology learning center and lending library; funding for ongoing health/safety/wellness through PPE, safety supplies, and cleaning/disinfection practices*).

2. Parent Requested Presentation and Q&A on the Topic of “Writing at Milestones” (led by Tim Mahoney, Assistant Principal/Curriculum Director)

- Tim Mahoney offered a presentation on promoting strong Writing skills with our students. Tim shared background information about his professional experience, and the agenda focused on: *challenges with writing, defining writing at Milestones, the writing hierarchy and process, a sample writing assignment, and information about how we support our students with writing.*

- Parents also contributed observations regarding related areas where students may benefit from support including: initiation, thought organization, identifying the right amount of information to include in a writing task, anxiety about writing, Dyslexia related difficulties including reading and spelling challenges, and with higher level thinking skills such as inferencing, perspective taking, and comprehension of the writing assignment and requirements.
- A copy of the presentation slides is being shared schoolwide with all families, and a copy of the recording is available by request.

3. Social planning time for PAG's coffee hour event for parents/guardians

- The PAG confirmed a date and time for an outdoor informal social coffee event for interested parents/guardians. Many parents expressed potential interest in attending an informal social opportunity through responses to PAG questions that were included in Milestones' annual customer service survey. Fridays were identified as a convenient meeting day, and survey respondents primarily endorsed that they were flexible to attend either through a socially distanced outdoor event or a virtual meeting. Together PAG participants opted for an outdoor event in the vicinity of Milestones, to allow for an in-person activity that can facilitate connections among parents/guardians in the fresh air.
- **Confirmed Date: Friday, 6/11 at 10:00am.**
- **Tentative Location:** After the meeting, PAG leaders set a tentative location to be: Panera at 1030 Main Street in Waltham (outdoor tables). A final location will be reconfirmed prior to the event based on anticipated attendance to ensure there is sufficient outdoor seating. (Milestones separately shared additional outdoor locations with PAG leaders for future consideration).
- **Please RSVP to: rsvp.events@advancingmilestones.com if you would like to join to assist the PAG with confirming an estimated headcount.**

4. Updates about End of the Year Transitioning Activities

- We reviewed the list of important dates that are summarized in the following pages for activities that will involve students and faculty preparing for the transition to the next school year as well as opportunities for parents/guardians to participate in end of the year recognition celebrations. We previewed that case managers would also circulate spring-related information in their weekly updates after the PAG meeting on 5/14/21 and will circulate summer-related information by mid- June.

5. Discussion of potential presentation topics for next year.

- All parents/guardians were invited to contribute recommendations for next year's parent trainings through our annual customer service survey. Survey results yielded the following topics as parents' chief priority topics for future trainings: (1) *Transition Programming/Preparing for Life After Milestones/Continuing Education and Preparation for Careers and Jobs after Milestones;* (2) *Anxiety and other diagnoses that impact learning and homelife;* (3) *Teen Relationships/Sex/Cyber Safety;* (4) *Understanding CBT, IEP's, Behavior (ABA) and families' involvement in these topics.*
- Participating parents were invited to contribute additional suggestions beyond the list above, and "*Emotional Regulation*" was requested to be added.
- The dates for next year's PAG meetings and the list of confirmed training topics will be set by the fall of 2021. (*Note: the PAG holds 4 meetings each year typically in November, January, March and May*).

5. Other Parent Raised Topic:

- Parents who had recently attended Milestones' community speaker series presentation led by Jessica Minahan found the topic to be highly beneficial. Participants were interested in obtaining a copy of the recording; however, this speaker does not permit her workshops to be recorded.

- Update: The speaker did not provide a copy of slides to share with parents, but we are permitted to share a link with school resources: <https://bit.ly/MINAHANJ>

Important Upcoming Dates:

- **Calendar Reminders:**

- ❖ May 14th: Students will be told their groupings for next year
- ❖ May 17th: Staff will begin visiting classes of their new students (this is an ongoing activity)
- ❖ May 27th: Virtual Open House for Parents of 5th and 8th graders
 - Elementary: 1:00-1:30pm
 - 8th Grade: 1:45-2:15pm
- ❖ May 28th: Half day – 12:00pm dismissal
- ❖ May 31th: Memorial Day – No school
- ❖ June 11th: End of 4th quarter
- ❖ Week of June 14th: Students will have an opportunity to visit their new homerooms
- ❖ June 17th: Virtual Moving Up Day & Outdoor Graduation Ceremonies
 - Elementary Moving Up: 9:00-9:30am
 - Middle School Moving Up: 10:00-10:45am
 - High School Moving Up (9th-11th): 11:00-11:45am
 - Outdoor Graduation (12th only): 1:00-2:00pm
- ❖ June 18th: Last day of school - 12:00pm dismissal
- ❖ July 6th: Summer programming begins

Community Resources in late May-June:

Research Opportunity at Boston University for High School Students and Parents

WHEN: Ongoing

Boston University researchers are recruiting high school students on the autism spectrum and their parents to participate in a study on how schools support students for life after high school. Participants can complete an online survey and receive a

\$25 Amazon gift card. Milestones has had a positive experience collaborating with this research team on other projects.

* For more information, contact: buroad@bu.edu or 617-353-2060 or visit: <http://sites.bu.edu/roadahead/participate/>

Martin Richard Challenger Baseball Program

Calendar

WHEN:

May 23, 2021 – June 30, 2021

Dorchester, MA, May 23rd thru June 30th, 2021. The Little League Challenger Division is a Little League experience for all youth with mental and/ or physical disabilities, ages 6-14 years old, who live in or around the city of Boston. The Challenger Division of Little League is a program for developmentally and physically challenged youth, helping them to enjoy the full benefits of Little League participation in an athletic environment structured to their abilities.

The goals of the program are:

- To allow all players to experience the game of baseball
- To increase social and general communication skills and awareness with other players, coaches, and throughout the greater community
- To create a safe and fun environment for all participants.

2021 COVID-19 Information: The first 3 weeks will be spring training, and will be 100% outside with stations (hitting, throwing competitions, running the bases, etc.). The goal is to spread the news, allow for warmer weather, get players and Buddies back to the field, and allow time to assess before playing games, which are more “hands on”. * The last 3 or 4 weeks the team will have typical live games.

* The league feels this approach a safer, gives more time for the weather to turn, more time for vaccination roll-out for older buddies, and just a better structure for them to assess things as they move forward.

* The team will enforce all appropriate COVID-19 safety protocols throughout the program (mandatory masks, appropriate distancing, hand cleansing stations, etc.).

* They will send an update on the protocols and a schedule as they get closer to the first session.

* It is essential for all parents to register players on the league web site. Unregistered players will not be allowed to participate, and will not receive important updates on the program.

To register or for more information visit <http://assn.la/Reg/?r=2:210971> or contact projectbind@yahoo.com or eferrara@bgcdorchester.org

Adult Family Care Program for Families with Special Needs

Calendar

WHEN:

June 16, 2021

Webinar, June 16th, 2021, with the Autism Alliance of Natick, MA. If you have a loved one age 16 or older who has MassHealth, you may be eligible to receive funds and support through the Adult Family Care Program.

* Hear speaker Beth Gutierrez LICSW, Program Director for the Advocates AFC Program, discuss eligibility requirements and what this program could provide for your family.

* For more information visit

www.autismalliance.org/events/adult-family-care-virtual-workshop-0 or contact 1 (508)

652-9900 E AutismAlliance@Advocates.org