

program also attracts students from elsewhere.

The District Accountability Advisory Committee meets

at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Locations vary. The Dec. 10 meeting will be at the district's Learning Center, 146 Jefferson St., Monument.

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D-38 Special Education Advisory Committee, Nov. 13

Ideas for including all children

By Harriet Halbig

The Special Education Advisory Committee viewed a video of a presentation by author and public speaker Jonathan Mooney at its Nov. 13 meeting. Mooney is a noted advocate of inclusion in education. He himself is dyslexic and was unable to read until age 12, yet is a published author and a known advocate of accepting all children in school environments.

Mooney's philosophy is based on three principles. The first is that schools are obligated to be inclusive of all kids. He said that the No Child Left Behind legislation narrowed the definition of acceptability in the classroom setting. Children were required to be attentive and sit still throughout the school day. Those who were unable to sit still were removed from the classroom, often to a hallway or the principal's office.

The stereotype developed that an intelligent student is one who reads well. Mooney said that this is not the teachers' fault, but an unfortunate policy generalization. He stressed that everyone should be valued for his or her own talents, whatever they may be. He said that many scientists and technology experts had difficult school years, and yet contribute a great deal to society.

The second principle is that, when we meet people, we should assume some competency on their part. Look for what is right about them. In today's education system, only shortcomings are tracked, not achievements, he said.

The third principle is to conceptualize the struggle for inclusion through the lens of civil rights. Each individual has the right to be different and the right to be accepted. When viewed as a civil right, it follows that the solution to the problem of lack of inclusion may be found through legislation.

Mooney advocates against the importance of standardized testing in education. He said that the concept of higher education is evolving in such a way as to enable a broader spectrum of students to achieve their goals as more free online college programs become available to all. Formal classes will no longer be necessary to enable an individual to reach his or her goals.

Director of Exceptional Student Services Mary Anne Fleury said that there is a lot of pressure from the state on teachers regarding emphasis on academics. This pressure will only increase as the new system of evaluating teachers partially on the basis of their students' test scores is

implemented in the next few years.

Special Education Parent Liaison Michelle Nay said that Mooney's lectures are available on Facebook and other sites and suggested that those present might wish to view them.

Classes for parents

Stephanie Johnson of the Language, Culture and Equity Department spoke briefly about plans to offer classes to parents. Her department, formerly known as English Language Learners, works with students and parents for whom English is not a first language. In some cases, English is not spoken in the students' homes.

Parents of this population have requested instruction on such things as the Infinite Campus website and how to successfully raise children who were adopted from orphanages and have difficulty assimilating into the American culture. Johnston said that she will bring a survey to the next meeting to ask about other subjects she may address.

The Special Education Advisory Committee meets at 6:30 on the second Wednesday of each month in the district Learning Center, 146 Jefferson St. in Monument. The next meeting will be on Dec. 11.

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