

**Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee
December 12, 2017**

Members Present: Paul Patterson (Chair), Wendy Pizer (Vice-Chair), Nadia Facey (Secretary), Alison Acker, Michelle Best, Keith Channon, Cloe Chin, Kay Luzius, Leila Carney, Margy Johnson, Sarah Jane Owens, Nick Walkosak and Tauna Szymanski

Members Absent: Hannah Dannenfelser, Caitlin Davies, Alison Dough, Jennifer Johnson, Rebecca Patterson and David Rosenblatt

Staff: Reid Goldstein (Vice Chair, School Board) Paul Jamelske (Director of Special Education) Regina Van Horne (Asst. Director Evaluation), Kathleen Donovan (Parent Resource Center) and Kelly Mountain (Parent Resource Center)

Guests: Linda Arnsbarger, Donna Owens, Michael Shea and Fredrik Tovesson

Agenda Items	Discussion/Decisions	What to do/who/when
Welcome		
Paul Patterson	Welcome and introductions	
Reid Goldstein, Vice Chair, School Board	Reid is the current representative to ASEAC from the School Board. This has been an important committee for him and he has enjoyed learning more about issues important to our community. With the recent changes on the board, moving forward into the new year, Monique O'Grady will be the school board representative to ASEAC. Reid said that he would continue his outreach to families of students with special needs and has enjoyed his time working with ASEAC.	
Public Comments		
Lara Sullivan (Read by Wendy Pizer)	<p>My name is Lara Sullivan and I am the parent of two students at Nottingham Elementary school. Both of my children have IEPs for dyslexia. My concerns are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early identification 2. Appropriate group size and composition 3. Fidelity of implementation and tracking progress 4. Support in all subjects (ie FLES— Spanish has completely different phonology so if kids get OG for English it is completely inappropriate to teach them a whole new language and make them “wing it” — a language is a language). <p>I am alarmed about what I increasingly see as a culture of suppression at Nottingham. I do not feel that teachers are properly empowered to identify students with hidden disabilities—including ADHD inattentive subtype and dyslexia.</p> <p>I have the overarching sense that I many parents could be getting the services their children need earlier had known how to push. Most parents don't go into this knowing the terminology “student study” as just one example. I have found the a culture of bullish gate keeping, challenging parents in IEP meetings, as opposed to trying to do what is best for a child.</p> <p>When I brought up the issue of my son not being able to read his iPad and suggested that he needed larger font, I was told by the assistant principal that dyslexia has nothing to do with visual impairment. His response should have been “you have identified a problem we will do our best to address it, thank you.”</p> <p>When in second grade I brought up the issue of my son's small group pull out ballooning to an unmanageable size with an unmanageable and unruly group of students who were completely heterogeneous, the principal told me that a small group could include 12 students. The school's approach is supremely unhelpful and confrontational in an unnecessary way. The size and composition of pull outs continues to be an issue. And Nottingham refuses</p>	

	<p>to abide by the recommendations of Dr. Sandman-Hurley whose report on dyslexia education in Arlington is widely available.</p> <p>I have had ups and downs with the administration and by and large I think my kids are in the best situation in a public school that I could hope for—largely based on horror stories of other places. However the best situation I could hope for still includes me funding \$8,000 per child per year to actually teach them things that other students learn as a regular course in school. I wish I did not feel this was necessary; however, it absolutely is."</p> <p>I am saddened by the number of parents paying out of pocket for private testing because the school insists that it cannot diagnose when in fact the school testing should be sufficient to get most dyslexics the interventions they need. Then there are the numerous parents trying to squeeze in hours of private therapy to make up for the gaps that school leaves behind. My son has had three year of IEP based assistance at school and two and a half years of private remediation and remains below grade level despite COGAT scores in the 80-90 percentile and a high IQ. More needs to be done to help kids in need.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	
<p>Wendy Pizer</p>	<p>I'm coming forward as a parent of a student with a disability with concerns about our experience at Nottingham. We requested a reasonable accommodation that would allow our son to access instrumental music lessons. The school denied our request. I wish the school had said, great, we're so glad he wants to take drums, let's figure out a way to accommodate him so he can have this opportunity. Instead, the school firmly told us that this is the way we do things. If it doesn't work for him, then he doesn't have to take drums. We have elevated this, and I'm still hopeful that it will be fixed.</p> <p>I'm concerned that the school - and in this case the decision maker, the Vice Principal, John Koutsouftikis, does not appear to understand a school's obligations to provide equitable access and reasonable accommodations for SWD under the ADA.</p> <p>I'm even more concerned that this latest difficulty is part of an ongoing pattern that we have experienced year after year at Nottingham. Every year - in a different form - the school throws up obstacles. Last year, for example, we requested a meeting with our son's case carrier to ask questions about his progress. The case carrier told us apologetically that the Vice Principal directed her not to meet with us.</p> <p>Every year, the school tells us in IEP meetings that our concerns about our son do not count. I learned during the VDOE training to ASEAC last year that this is wrong. Two years ago, we experienced predetermination and the school provided false data during our IEP process. We had to elevate all of these problems, and hire a lawyer, in order to get them fixed, but then different problems just reappear again. I think it goes without saying that it's very difficult to get our son's needs met, and to form a positive home-school relationship in this climate.</p> <p>I'm very concerned about this ongoing pattern, both for us and for others. This is the third public comment from a Nottingham family this year. I am also a SEPTA/PRC liaison to Nottingham. Several more families have approached me with similar experiences. However, they are not comfortable coming forward, fearing retaliation against their children by the school.</p> <p>I commend the other two Nottingham parents who came forward with public comments. I hope that APS will respond positively by fixing the broken culture at Nottingham. I also hope that APS will put out public written</p>	

	<p>guidance so that parents know how to come forward to report a problem at their school. This should include a non-retaliation statement so that parents feel safe doing so.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	
Nick Walkosak	<p>Wants to share a positive experience he had recently. His child attends HB-Woodlawn. A teacher from HB requested a meeting to discuss things that have been going on in one class and the teacher wanted to ensure they were on same page and wanted to mend the relationship and get the child back in classroom. Nick thought this was fantastic because school came to them first, but that has only happened 2 times in 6 years. Nick was struck that this was not the norm and that teachers need to come to parents more often.</p>	
Donna Owens	<p>Along with Cloe Chin, Donna moderates the Arlington Reading listserve and wanted to let the committee know that The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has dyslexia specialist. Recently, on the list serve there has been a lot of discussion about whether schools can diagnose a student with dyslexia. She says that diagnosis is a medical term and schools can “identify” a student with dyslexia. Also, as we know early intervention is key - If you are identifying a student with dyslexia in 4th grade it takes four times the amount of remediation it would take if that student was identified in K or 1st grade.</p>	
Anonymous (Read by Nadia Facey)	<p>Public comment with permission by anonymous e-mail sent to ASEAC e-mail. The parent of a student at W&L reported an incident between student and a staff member. The school reached out to the parent to let them know what they thought had happened. The student has ASD, ADHD and has difficulty with transitions. The parent wanted school to keep the student’s IEP in mind when they do investigations. Also, when a student and staff member have different versions of the same story it doesn’t mean the student is lying - it means the student needs more communication support and the student generally tells the truth. Finally, parent requests that there needs to be a greater degree of training for individuals who come in contact with children with special needs, especially those with executive processing issues.</p>	
Update on Past Public Comments		
Paul Jamelske, Director of Special Education	<p><u>RE: Jessica and Fredrik Tovesson and other families from Nottingham Elementary (11/14/17)</u></p> <p>Paul J: We want all families to feel welcome. There are policies within APS for scheduling observations because there is a need to have something in place in terms of confidentiality and avoiding disruptions needs to be considered. Generally, a parent might want to have an impromptu conversation that can be okay, but for a more formal conversation an appointment should be made in advance. A link to classroom observation guidelines and forms can be found on the Resources page of the Parent Resource Center webpages in the Special Education section of the APS website: https://www.apsva.us/special-education/parent-resource-center/resources-3/.</p> <p>No parent should fear retribution and feel like they need to shy away from visiting. APS would like to request a visit to last around an hour, because a half day or full day may be disruptive.</p> <p>Question: Who addresses the issue families are having with the AP at Nottingham?</p> <p>Paul J: I have opened a dialogue with the Principal, Ms. Pelosky; I cannot disclose all the details, but the Principal is the head of the school.</p>	

	<p><u>RE: Cloe Chin (9/12/17): What is the APS policy/process for students who fail the SOLs, PALS, SRI's and Math Inventories? Can the Office of Special education take ownership of A) notifying every parent whose child has failed the SOL and B) A plan to help the student with interventions?</u></p> <p>Paul J: I spoke with the Office of Planning and Evaluation, as the Office of Special Education isn't the source for the answer to this question. This is an issue that impacts all students; failing SOLs and inventories happens with students who don't have an IEP or 504 plan.</p> <p>Typically, school staff members should know each day what students did or did not pass SOLs (400 is passing) as most students take the SOL online. There is a process for expedited retakes (which is a one-time opportunity) if the score is above a certain threshold. It has been 375, but VDOE put out new guidance in September 2017 that the expedited retake threshold is now 350. Often, there is a procedure in place for an expedited re-take in elementary and middle school. In High School there are procedures in place for expedited retakes and each school manages their own retakes. Typically schools provide some remediation and help review for a student and they are able to schedule a retake. The retake needs to take place during the testing window of approximately mid May – June 10th.</p> <p>Donna O: Is parent permission necessary for a retake? Yes. It is.</p> <p>When students and parents are notified varies widely. There is a lot of flexibility between schools and there is no uniformity within schools. However, High School students typically know that day. Central office won't</p>	
<p>Paul Jamelske, Director of Special Education</p>	<p><u>RE: Cloe Chin (9/12/17): Will APS be exploring more Math interventions especially a more multi-sensory option?</u></p> <p>Paul J: I have spoken with Kelly Krug and there is a similar program for multi-sensory for math instruction. Kelly is exploring bringing some of the multi-sensory math instruction to Arlington. There is at least one workshop being planned for later this school year. We have several teachers using Do the Math, however APS is not at the point of scaling this up right now. APS currently has 400+ teachers trained in OG instruction.</p>	
<p>Paul Jamelske, Director of Special Education</p>	<p><u>RE: Cloe Chin (9/12/17): Can we change the process for the start of year to hit the ground running with the previous year's information?</u></p> <p>Paul J: Kelly Krug and her team are rolling out new features in Synergy. They are currently up and running at some schools and should be district-wide by the end of January 2018. Teachers and schools now have the opportunity track progress, and all data will be in one place in Synergy. With each ATSS intervention cycle there are quick check boxes and pull down menus for staff to indicate if there is a strategy being used and progress being made. There is also space in Synergy for baseline data to be included, as well as space for next steps. This information will be in Synergy in each student's file to help facilitate transitions between teachers and staff and school to school.</p>	
<p>Services for Students with Special Needs Program Evaluation</p>		
<p>Regina Van Horne, Asst. Director Evaluation</p>	<p>Regina was invited to speak to the committee to discuss the upcoming Program Evaluation for Services for Students with Special Needs. See attached presentation for complete information from Regina.</p> <p>The last evaluation was done in 2013; the report can be found on the ASEAC website here: https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/APS-Sped-Final-Report-1.18-1.pdf</p>	<p>Regina would like additional feedback from the disability community about the program evaluations questions that will go in the RFP.</p>

	<p>APS policy dictates program evaluations and frequently evaluates programs but typically this evaluation is done internally, APS seeks an outside vendor when the scope of knowledge is necessary.</p> <p>APS is also pursuing an evaluation for the English for Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training (ESOL/HILT) program along a similar timeline as the evaluation for Services for Students with Special Needs Program Evaluation.</p> <p><u>Scope of Program Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education • 504 • Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS, or ATSS) • Intervention Assistance Teams (IAT) <p><u>Timeline</u></p> <p><i>Fall 2017:</i> Discussions and preparation of Request for Proposal (RFP) <i>January/February 2018:</i> Publish RFP <i>End of 2017/28 School year:</i> Select vendor <i>2018-19:</i> Contractor works with APS to collect data and reports findings and recommendations</p> <p><u>Goals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spur continuous improvement of outcomes • Ensure the effective use of resources • Facilitate effective decision-making • Hold staff, students, schools, departments, programs, and the school system accountable for their contributions to the achievement of these aims <p><u>Input from Community</u></p> <p>Held meeting on December 4, 2017 with about the evaluation questions and the RFP Process that included school staff, central office staff and county wide program staff and two ASEAC reps (who solicited information from ASEAC members prior to meeting). The participants of this meeting then cast a wider net for input from the groups they represented.</p> <p>Once PFT is published APS will develop “shortlist interviews” and members of the community will be able to provide input into selection of contractor.</p> <p>Nadia F: We want to ensure all members know that during the discussion on 12/4/17 we included everything recommended by ASEAC members. Also there will be a lot of important things happening once the vendor is selected in terms of data collection and surveys.</p> <p>Paul P: It’s important that ASEAC has a voice at the table at all times during the evaluation process it is part of our role as a state mandated advisory committee.</p> <p>ASEAC requested an extension for community about the program evaluations questions that will go in the RFP until January 11th. However, given the timeline Regina needs all community input January 2nd.</p> <p><u>Discussion</u></p> <p>Members wanted to ensure SEPTA is being included – they are.</p> <p>Members shared a lot of concerns about including ATSS in the evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATSS was a recommendation that came out of the 2013 program evaluation. 	<p>Paul P will put together a shared Google document and send to all ASEAC members.</p> <p>Responses needed by 1/2/18</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATSS covers 27,000 students, there are maybe 4,500 students with disabilities. • Is ATSS really a part of services to students with disabilities? Is this that in the scope of the evaluation. • Need to make sure any one area – including ATSS - doesn't overshadow any one other area as it would be hard to isolate ATSS. • ATSS is in year 4 of 5 year rollout, is it premature to do evaluation of it now? <p>Tauna S: Do we need to address legal compliance. Look at the scope of work that went into the last RFP there was a lot of good information.</p> <p>Linda A: Was representative from ASEAC in 2013 program evaluation. She had a lot of helpful advice including ensure that vendors know this isn't a typical compliance evaluation. Also, last time the evaluation process of observing classrooms did not do a good job of determining whether students were actually getting services - classroom observers were retired teachers but they didn't have the students' IEPs so didn't know what they were looking at. Finally, Social-emotional didn't get covered well enough in 2013.</p> <p>Donna O: We all have one goal for kids to be successful, wants to ensure the program evaluation gets at how APS can do this better.</p> <p>Keith C: Will there be a steering committee? Yes, and ASEAC is going to be included in meetings, but will not be a voting member who determines the vendor.</p>	
Open Discussion Period		
ASEAC Committee Updates	Budget committee update asked if Kay needs any help. Info should come put by Feb. 28 th	
ASEAC Coverage at other meetings	ASEAC members are needed to attend other meetings within Arlington and report back on issues and topics of importance and relevance to the committee. We are looking for members to take turns attending School Board meetings, SEPTA meetings and ACI meetings.	<u>School Board:</u> 12/14/17 1/4/17 Nick <u>ACI:</u> 1/3/18 Paul P <u>SEPTA:</u> 1/11/18 Michelle & Margy
Advisory Council on Instruction (ACI) Update	All ACI Advisory committees have now presented their reports, the last 4 were given at the previous meeting. ACI will now develop its recommendations to the School Board. The rubric still not compete, but should be provided to ACI committee members in January.	
Arlington Special Education PTA (SEPTA) Update	<p>SEPTA hosted the superintended chat last night. Dr. Murphy articulated his vision of inclusion it was very specific – he wants to see all kids at home schools.</p> <p>Paul P: He gets a lot of anecdotal info but he wants to meet things head on. Our public comments are growing and growing so we need to provide superintended and School Board more concrete information.</p> <p>Michelle B: We need to ensure people know they can make public comments at ASEAC meetings. Also, we need to share experiences that many middle and high school co-taught classrooms are turning into a huge classroom of students with 504 and IEPs and very few typically developing peers.</p>	
Meeting Adjourned	Meeting Adjourned at 9:10 p.m.	

NEXT MEETING: January, 9th from 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. at Syphax Education Center - Room 101
Topic: Seclusion and Restraint in Virginia