

**Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee  
February 13, 2018**

Members Present: Paul Patterson (Chair), Wendy Pizer (Vice-Chair), Nadia Facey (Secretary), Alison Acker, Michelle Best, Leila Carney, Keith Chanon, Cloe Chin, Hannah Dannenfelser, Caitlin Davies, Margy Dunn, Jennifer Johnson, , Kay Luzius, Rebecca Patterson, David Rosenblatt and Tauna Szymanski

Members Absent Alison Dough, Sarah Jane Owens and Nick Walkosak

Staff: Paul Jamelske (Director of Special Education), Kathleen Donovan (Parent Resource Center) Colleen Koval (Compliance Specialist), Kelly Mountain (Parent Resource Center) Tara, Heather Rothenbuescher (Supervisor of Special Education), Reid Goldstein (Vice Chair, School Board) and Monique O’Grady (School Board) Marbea Tammaro (Assistive Technology Specialist OT), Dr. Lauren Bonnet (Assistive Technology Specialist & SLP), Dr. Gina Gomez (Audiologist), Casey Robinson (Principal, H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program) and Dr. Karen Gerry (Principal, Stratford Program)

Guests: Ted Black, John Best, Tina Chiappetta, Bob Davis, Debby Davis, Janna Dressel, Teresa Eichner, Heather Eilers-Bowser, Gracelin Emmanuel, Amanda Fallon, Courtney Fox, Kristin Grillig, Kathleen Hofer, Mini Koumanelis, Amanda LaVardera, Caroline Levy, Marymount Students, Donna Owens, Meredith Purple, Sandra Stoppel and Minerva Trudo

| Agenda Items                                       | Discussion/Decisions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | What to do/who/when |
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| Welcome                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                     |
| Paul Patterson                                     | Welcome and introductions. We have a very full agenda tonight.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                     |
| Public Comments                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                     |
| Cloe Chin                                          | I wanted to let ASEAC know that I am working on a survey to better understand the current level of supports for students with special needs in accelerated classes/IB classes. I will share the results with ASEAC.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                     |
| Kurt Schuler and Janet Sater (read by Nadia Facey) | <p>We are the parents of a student currently in the Stratford program. We are writing to express our support for the design of the Wilson building, where the Stratford program will eventually have its home.</p> <p>We have heard some of our fellow citizens criticize the design of the Wilson building because they think that it is discriminatory toward students with disabilities. In our view they are misinterpreting some of the features of the design and lack a full understanding of the needs of Stratford students.</p> <p>Like the building that currently houses the H-B Woodlawn and Stratford programs, the site of the Wilson building is on a slope. And like the current building, it has been designed to make ground-level entry and exit possible on different levels. Considerations of convenience and safety alike recommend such a design. A number of the Stratford students are in wheelchairs. It is faster and easier for them to enter and leave the building at ground level than to needlessly wait for an elevator. And if there is ever a need for an emergency evacuation, a ground level exit can be a lifesaver for them.</p> <p>Critics of the Wilson building have complained that having the Stratford students mainly use a different entrance from many of the other students will make the Stratford students feel excluded. We believe they are projecting feelings of their own that the Stratford students do not have. Our daughter does not seem to care that she does not use the main entrance. She cares that school is enjoyable and helps her learn. There is also the consideration that some Stratford students are prone to sensory overload or to running away, and being in a crowd entering and leaving the building would aggravate those problems for them. (And by the way, neither in the current building nor in the Wilson building is the Stratford program in the "basement," as one complaint we have heard has asserted. The windows on Wilson Boulevard side of the building look down on the street because, to repeat, the site is on a slope.)</p> <p>Another criticism of the Wilson building is that the grouping together of the Stratford classrooms discourages mixing with H-B Woodlawn students. Our daughter's experience, and ours, is that the compactness of the Stratford classrooms makes for a comfortable, homey feeling that promotes learning. The staff can easily monitor whether all the students who</p> |                     |

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|                                                   | <p>should be there are present, and be easily alert to the presence of strangers. Therapeutic, medical, and safety services can better serve students if the students are all close together. For example, some older students who are large and strong have trouble controlling themselves at times. Having all the classrooms together enables the staff to mobilize quickly and defuse such situations with a minimum of disruption.</p> <p>The Wilson building has areas where Stratford and H-B Woodlawn students can participate in shared activities. Our daughter just recently has shown an interest in possibly participating in some physical education and music classes with H-B Woodlawn students. If her interest persists, we look forward to her being able to satisfy it in the Wilson building. The building has been carefully thought out with principles of “universal design” to make all of it accessible to all types of people.</p> <p>Our daughter and other students at the Stratford program are there because they benefit substantially from special methods of teaching and care that a regular classroom cannot provide effectively. We are thankful that Arlington Public Schools understands the need for such a program, and we are satisfied that the design of the Wilson building will be appropriate for our daughter and for other Stratford students.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |
| <p>Vaishali Sikotra<br/>(Read by Wendy Pizer)</p> | <p>My name is Vaishali Sikotra and I’m a mother of two children in the Nottingham Elementary neighborhood. My older (daughter) has since moved onto Williamsburg but, my younger (son) 7 years old is a 2nd grader still at Nottingham. He received Speech Therapy at Nottingham long before he enter school as a student. We had an IEP meetings sometime in the year that was face to face. Following year he was not qualified to return b/c we had decided to keep him at his old Montessori in Falls Church instead of coming to Nottingham as kindergartener. He entered Nottingham as a 1st grade and I had requested to the school that he be assessed for Speech Therapy. After few weeks/months I received a phone call from the school on my whereabouts for an IEP meeting that was about to start in 5 minutes. I told them I wasn’t made aware of the meeting and that I could not make it. I was given two options at that time, one is to opt out on going to the meeting all together however, the meeting would go on w/out me or I can join in through a conference call. Despite being at work I reluctantly took the conference call since I was left with no sensible option.</p> <p>By profession I work with patients all day 5 days a week. I like to be in the presence of my patients and their family so I can properly observe and assess. They most likely appreciate my presence their as well so they can discuss their problems to me. So, it’s fair for me to say that the conference call was not my ideal way of doing this meeting. I didn’t even understand half of the discussion. Things were said too fast and I was left to say “ok” for the most part. There was no discussion and that was the end of my son’s speech therapy, which is to say no Speech Therapy. I later found out that it was illegal for the school to not send me a notice regarding the meeting and to not give me an option of another date if the current date and time did not work for me, after all this was about MY son.</p> <p>Another issue I would like to bring up is the lack of interest for parent’s concerns. Ever since my son has been at Nottingham I have been reaching out to whoever is willing to listen regarding my concerns for my son’s lack of reading comprehension. I’ve had discussions during Parent/Teacher conference, meeting up with reading specialist at the school, and of course his 1st and 2nd grade teachers at the beginning of school or whenever chance arises. I was always told, he’s doing fine. One may think I’m paranoid but, I have seen my daughter go through the grades and I did not have this gut feeling as I’m having one for my son. Sure, he could be fine but, what if he is not. I am not willing to just take their word and wait until he enters high school and then find out that we missed a fundamental thing in elementary. My son has taken the PALS test but, I am sure that there are plenty of test out there that the school can provide for my son for a proper and accurate assessment for the specific concerns I have. Due to lack of actions from the school I have been forced to pay out of pocket and send my son to Kumon though I’m not even sure if that is the right thing for him. Not everyone who has reading or comprehension issues are right candidate for Kumon but, right now I don’t have another choice. The private test that I was forced into looking cost \$3,500.</p> |  |

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|                     | <p>I have always respected the teachers that my children have had in each and every grade level. They have always listened and given me advise on how to help my son at home and I have appreciated it greatly. Despite everything that I've done with their guidance I don't believe it has helped. I would like the school to step in and provide him with proper assessment so that the educators and myself could help him thrive. I'm the one who see him struggle every night when we read together. It's frustrating. I respect the teacher's knowledge and expertise but, a parent's concern should be weighed heavily.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |  |
| <p>Leila Carney</p> | <p>I have three children at Nottingham. Two have IEPs for dyslexia and ADHD, and the third, my kindergartner has an IEP for developmental delay initially through Childfind. I have experienced some ups and downs throughout the special ed processes at Nottingham that I have been through with my kids.</p> <p>My greatest disappointment was with the identification process. My oldest son was in the spring of third grade when I had him privately tested. I had asked his first grade, second grade, and third grade teachers if he was having abnormal difficulties with reading. They all reassured me that he was within the range of normal and that in time he would have a reading breakthrough. In third grade, I requested a student study, because he was having a terrible year. He was miserable, and had gone from a child that loved school to a child that was ashamed of himself and viewed himself as a bad pupil. He knew that he could not do what was being asked of him, and could not do what his classmates could do, but he did not know why. His third grade teacher responded to this conundrum by putting increasing pressure on him, shaming him in front of his class, increasing his workload, and making it clear to him and us that she did not believe he was trying. The principal moved him to another class, responding with empathy and efficiency, which was a big help.</p> <p>However, my son is, nearly two years later, still in therapy to ameliorate this damaging experience. If his learning disability had been identified sooner, I believe he would not have had this experience.</p> <p>I wish that a faculty member had brought concerns to us. He did not meet the benchmark on parts of the PALS screener in first, second, and third grades. I brought concerns to them, and was rebuffed. I was not told that I could ask for a student study. I was not asked if we had a family history of dyslexia (we do, but I didn't know at the time that it is hereditary). There are many lines of inquiry that could have been made by Nottingham, who was better situated than I to know what steps to take to learn about his needs and meet them.</p> <p>After requesting a student study, I requested that the school test him, but they refused. I expressed my disappointment, and proceeded to test him privately. Upon bringing them our psychologist's testing and determination that he has dyslexia and ADHD, Nottingham insisted on doing further testing, which I authorized, but believed unnecessary.</p> <p>Finally, in the fall of 4th grade, he was found eligible for an IEP. This is where our story improves. The difference in his experience with an IEP was night and day. He slowly returned to feeling comfortable at school and felt enabled to learn and show what he learned. This was due to both accommodations and services, and also to a change in how teachers related to him because they understood his challenges and efforts.</p> <p>Recognizing then similarities in my middle son's student profile, I requested a student study for him. The school moved wonderfully forward with testing and finding him eligible for an IEP. He too immediately experienced a sea change. He went from having unexplained tummy aches daily to feeling supported and understood. I was chagrined to realize that his first grade teacher had tried to alert me to his learning challenges—we even had a student study. But it did not proceed to testing. The administrators and I agreed he was too young. He had not met the benchmarks for parts of the PALS screener, but I do not recall anyone suggesting that this was a reason for concern or that he might have difficulties with reading.</p> <p>My biggest concern since obtaining IEPs is that I have so much trouble understanding how the IEPs are implemented day to day, and what my kids do with their day. When I ask faculty</p> |  |

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|                              | <p>members, I am not able to get a clear understanding and I am often told to ask my kids. That does not work with my kids. They either tell me nothing or are startlingly incorrect. I suspect that their learning disabilities hamper their ability to observe, remember, and report what they are doing. This makes it all the more critical that the school be transparent about it. I very much want to support the amazing teachers who are giving my kids their time and talent, but I feel hampered by this lack of understanding.</p> <p>I also simply want to note that we hired a private OG tutor who has worked with the kids 2-4 times a week since their diagnosis at great expense.</p> <p>Additionally, we requested Learning Ally almost 2 years ago for both my older sons. We received it for the eldest on June 8, 2017, so he had it for about two weeks last year. We finally received it for both kids on Friday, January 26, 2018. I made many calls and emails to various county staff and Aim Va. I am grateful to receive it, but it made for a long, frustrating time in which my kids did not have a useful service paid for by the state.</p> <p>Lost time is my greatest concern. Addressing reading especially, but also ADHD, early and appropriately is of such importance to outcomes. More than that, however, it's important to the emotional and psychological well-being of our kids. Kids who have undiagnosed learning disabilities have anxiety, shame, depression, low self-esteem, and are averse to school. I know this first hand, times two. I am desperately hopeful that my third son will have the supports he needs when he needs them. I have many reasons to think he will at Nottingham.</p> <p>It has been difficult to lay these concerns out for me, because my family has had so much wonderful support at Nottingham. Ms. Pelosky cares deeply about all the kids, and about following the law. Mr. Koutsouftikis also cares deeply about all the kids, and has gone above and beyond for mine. I am sharing my concerns in the spirit of candor and a hope that we all gain a greater awareness of what struggling kids may need. My kids are getting much of what they need now, but I worry about those whose needs have not yet been recognized. Nottingham has so much to offer, and I believe the administrators and faculty can be more proactive in reaching kids with learning disabilities.</p> |  |
| <p>Heather Eilers-Bowser</p> | <p>My son, Jacob Bowser, has attended Nottingham Elementary School for five years. He has Down syndrome and from day one, the culture of Nottingham has been one of exclusion, indifference, and rigidity in matters concerning his school experience. While every special needs parent has to weigh the efforts of educational staff against the innate challenges that their child presents, I do not believe my son has been engaged, let alone challenged academically during his time at Nottingham.</p> <p>Almost every request we have made through the years has been negated mainly by the assistant principal, Mr. Koutsouftikis, regardless of the significance of the request or the ease to accommodate it. After an IEP meeting, there was a comment that the assistant principal was a football player in college and a staff member joked that he is now a blocker in IEP meetings in our presence. We laughed at the time but it was a true statement. It is clear at IEP meetings, the staff are intimidated into supporting the positions of Mr. Koutsouftikis, no matter how nonsensical. All of the school positions are presented with a unified front and we have never witnessed any sort of dissension at the meetings—although staff have often found alternative ways to let us know what is really happening at school.</p> <p>Before Jacob started kindergarten, we asked that Nottingham reach out to the teachers at Jamestown where he attended pre-school to get a better understanding of how specifically to handle different issues cited in our initial IEP discussions. While I believe there may have been visitations to the pre-school beforehand, there was a definite refusal to initiate any contact to have a better understanding of Jacob's strengths or how to handle specific behaviors in the classroom so all the progress Jacob's teachers made at Jamestown was completely lost. The words of his pre-school teacher that she had "no doubt that Jacob would be mainstreamed" were never taken into account. Nottingham's plan of exclusion was set in stone before they had even met him.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  |

Early on, a Behavioral Intervention Plan was added to the IEP but never acted upon. When I reminded the assistant principal of it, he said he didn't remember it being included in the IEP and was surprised to see that the BIP was, in fact, called for by the IEP document. It has been ignored and deleted since that time.

On the advice of a social worker, we were told to ask the school to come up with a safety plan due to Jacob's elopement issue. We were incredulous, when last summer, the Assistant Principal said elopement was not an issue at school and quickly dismissed the whole idea. We asked if he was saying there hadn't been any incidents where Jacob ran away at school and he said "no" in a cavalier way and asked the teachers and aids around the table to confirm it at which time they all agreed unanimously. As of last week, when the principal, Ms. Pelosky reached out to mitigate the concerns of the parents who signed the letter on Nottingham to Superintendent Murphy, she informed me that Jacob's elopement has improved at school and he is running away much less frequently this year. This is one example of the double-speak and outright dishonesty we have confronted at Nottingham.

Somehow, Nottingham was able to conduct a psychological evaluation on Jacob despite my strong feelings that he never submit to IQ testing. I don't recall how this could have happened but am certain we were railroaded or even duped into signing whatever form they used granting permission. I have always been told that an IQ test will only work against children with Down syndrome in school and it is not an accurate reflection of their ability to learn. It is a mystery to me what was said at the time to lead my husband or me to approve the testing.

Nottingham has failed to give us sufficient notice of significant safety incidents. I should mention that while Jacob can say practically anything, he has difficulty expressing himself and the school has been able to exploit this vulnerability. For instance, an aid had to perform the Heimlich maneuver on our son three times in the school cafeteria due to a choking incident. We were never notified of it—she only happened to mention it to me many days later. Also, last year, a substitute put Jacob in a headlock causing him great distress causing two of his classmates to tell their parents they were concerned that Jacob could not breathe and he was crying and his face was red prompting the parents to then call the school. Through all of this, there was no notification to us from the school. When we brought it to their attention after a parent kindly called me personally, the assistant principal waved it off stating Jacob would not have that same substitute again. It has not escaped my notice that those classmates who were concerned for his safety are no longer in Jacob's class.

I strongly suspect there is very limited academic work during Jacob's school day. We do not receive meaningful communication on academic work. I will say his special education teacher has recently started sending home some booklets he is writing so that is positive.

Nevertheless, Jacob is only exposed to the special education teacher for about one hour a day and for the rest of time, he is ostensibly taught mainly by his aids. It has been confirmed recently that he spends much of his day one-on-one with paraprofessionals who have little or no special education training and no inclination to teach him anything. Two of his aids stated directly to me that the special education teacher for his second grade year never interacted with him. The school has indicated that the aids are under the direction of the special ed teacher but even that was not the case for that particular year. I can't imagine that "under the direction of a special education teacher" would be an acceptable practice for Arlington Public Schools.

Jacob has not been given homework despite my repeated requests at IEP meetings and at teacher conferences. There was a worksheet sent home in first grade that I now know was well above his grade level at the time and perhaps was meant to frustrate us. We asked at that time that the homework be enlarged and were told that was not possible and after that request no additional homework was given. Ms. Pelosky has said that Nottingham gives little or no homework in the early grades, which I acknowledge but I would think an exception could be made at the request of parents in this case where Jacob needs further support and repetition to achieve academic progress.

In Kindergarten, Jacob was in the “most restrictive environment possible” according to the speech therapist Ms. Davis, during a placement meeting where the school was pressuring us to move Jacob to a different school. Before Jacob went to Nottingham, I had a conversation with a special education teacher who worked at Nottingham. When I expressed our interest in sending him there, she told me that Nottingham was not set up to accommodate “actual special needs kids.” She encouraged me to look elsewhere and warned that the school would attempt to place him at another school anyway. Indeed, the school has tried to place Jacob elsewhere instead of trying to serve his needs in the present.

Access to an appropriate public education has been denied Jacob as have our numerous requests to help him to succeed academically. I can't think of one thing that has been added to an IEP at our request, there are countless small appeals we have made at the meetings through the years such as: special grips for pencils; proper seating; setting rote memorization to song; a request that he learn to draw a stick figure early on; the ability for us to receive tests beforehand to work with him at home, (which was summarily dismissed because they said at the time, they didn't intend to test him); or the request to have the OT help him learn to tie his shoes, which he is very intent on doing. The excuses or responses include, “that is not APS policy,” “we don't do that” or “this is not a countywide program.” Some other examples of the culture of noncooperation include:

- My request to make a five-minute presentation to first grade students about Jacob and Down syndrome to give classmates a better understanding of him as a person and what to expect from him was denied.
- Observation time has been repeatedly denied or made effectively impossible.
- I asked that shorter-term benchmark goals be added to the IEP so we could see some steps toward the goals, but was denied.
- Our request to provide the school with an ABA therapist at our own expense was denied. Mr. Koutsouftikis at first said it was not APS policy. I then told the IEP team that I knew of kids in the APS system that had private ABA therapists at the school but he then said they would be concerned with liability issues so we dropped it.
- Our request that Jacob be provided seating in his kindergarten pull out classroom was denied. He was forced to sit cross-legged on a carpet for hours during that year. This occurred the entire year despite my notice to the school that children with Down syndrome need extra lumbar support due to low-tone and if he was not in a comfortable position, it would be impossible to teach him anything. I recall his special education teacher that year commenting that she was not going to push a chair down the hallway for him to sit in.
- We have offered to provide the school with special education materials specific to DS or have notified school officials of DS training programs through the years for teachers or special education teachers who all seemed to actually scoff and have refused them.
- We have asked for updates or communication from his speech or occupational therapy sessions to no avail. At the end of one year, the speech therapist sent home a number of reward sheets (stickers, marks on papers indicating he completed a task) but without indication of what they were working on, it didn't provide us the feedback we were looking for.

It is obvious that Jacob's aid who has been with him since first grade does all his artwork herself and has from the beginning. I have talked about it at IEP meetings and teacher conferences but she continues to do most everything for him in an inpatient manner (as my husband and I have personally witnessed) without any consideration for allowing him to experience art or educate him in any way. I am reluctant to complain about his aids because they have been effectively forced in a situation for which they often unprepared. APS aids may have no training in special education and make less than \$12.00/hour, creating a scenario of frustration on both ends. My son's needs are not met by less qualified or untrained school staff.

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|                                                       | <p>We were told that the speech therapist had a background in prompt therapy but for whatever reason, she felt she could not use it with our son. Whatever progress on speech that has been made, we attribute to a private speech therapist we had seen for several years but due to changes in health insurance had to drop last year. Unlike the school therapist, she used prompt therapy effectively and since we have not seen her, we have noticed considerable regression in his intelligibility.</p> <p>The occupational therapist that was hired after Jacob’s first year offered little to no input at IEP meetings and we know of no real progress made in fine motor skills. There is a new OT for this year but we have had limited interaction with her and no feedback whatsoever on what she does with him.</p> <p>I have a strong suspicion Jacob’s aids rely on the I-pad to get through the day. I have asked for an estimate of how much they use the I-pad or the data from the I-pad of its usage. I have been told that it is only used as a reward. However, we have witnessed him using it on many occasions when we happen to be at the school. We are relatively certain he was introduced to nursery rhyme sites such as “Little Baby Bum” at school. Last week, Ms. Pelosky said it will be difficult or impossible to retrieve the data which I consider disingenuous as we all know browser history is easy to find and there should not be any other considerations preventing his parents from seeing the applications, or sites, he visits throughout his school day. I am also concerned that he perseverates on the I-pad and am considering denying access to the I-pad altogether. This is an unfortunate result because I believe the I-pad could be a beneficial educational tool if used correctly with proper oversight.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the poor results and the perfunctory effort of most of the Nottingham staff, we have been highly pleased with others throughout the years. Certainly, last year was the highlight of his time at Nottingham because he was included in a co-taught classroom. However, this year Jacob is back to the old Nottingham routine of being pulled out most of the day and naturally, he is constantly expressing that he does not like school.</p> <p>In the end, we, as parents deserve and accept much of the blame as well. We have been complicit in failing our son who knew his letters and the sounds of his letters before he started school at three (despite the disbelief of Nottingham school officials) and he has been able to read since first grade (which I attribute to “The Learning Program” designed to teach children with DS). He loves to learn and reads music very well. We have not insisted, much less demanded that the school attempt to keep up with a modified grade-level curriculum and now it has become clear Nottingham school officials never intended to do so. This process has forced me to take a hard look at my son's education and realize that it has been regrettably lacking in every aspect. We have not held school officials accountable to the protections we all know are afforded us by law. We have not asked the difficult questions, researched what accommodations should be made for him, pursued independent evaluations, nor did we hire an attorney all of which, I feel looking back now, were warranted.</p> |  |
| <p>Sharon and Jeff Smith (Read by Paul Patterson)</p> | <p>Our son is now in fourth grade in Nottingham and was provided with an IEP after testing in first grade. There are many good things, great educators and people at the school that we want to first acknowledge before providing any type of assessment of deficiencies. As parents whose training is not in special education or even in education at all, it is unnerving to have your son or daughter identified as having a learning difference. Given our lack of education and the strong reputation of APS, we relied on what we were told by Nottingham’s staff and held some confidence that our son was getting all of the help he needed. Despite that, and at considerable expense, we had him go to vision therapy sessions and enrolled him in Kumon to help bolster his progress.</p> <p>Over time we have come to question the services he was receiving and weren’t sure any of them were geared specifically at helping him overcome his specific learning differences. An analogy might be that he is given aspirin to alleviate the pain but his need for knee surgery is never addressed. Two developments in the past year made us further question how he is really doing and what help he has received. First, despite B’s with some A’s, he failed to pass</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |

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|  | <p>the SOL in math last year. The vice principal, in his first contact regarding our son’s education with us of memory, called and offered to have him cram for the test and retake it. Meanwhile, his writing skills weren’t much better than a kindergartener. Then, at his three-year IEP review, he was shown not to be on grade in a number of subjects.</p> <p>Since earlier this year, we have been more aggressive in attempting to understand who, why and what with regards to services our son is receiving. While hours of help were what we understood we were getting, the help we have found was mostly in group settings in which we’re not really sure how much attention he actually received given the group dynamics and we’re not sure staff was adequately trained.</p> <p>We do want to commend many of the teachers and specifically his current special education teacher (Sarah Garratt) and his general education teacher (Tricia Zipfel). Their dedication is beyond reproach. Our problem lies in the lack of trained resources available to our children (and teachers). In a county and area with such wealth the planet has never known, why doesn’t it have more resources to identify more properly children like our son’s issues and have personnel trained to assist them? Does it really make sense for him to have been grouped with others with dyslexia and other very disparate issues? As a community, are we fully committed to really helping our children with the resources they need?</p> <p>I can’t imagine where our son would have been if we hadn’t had tutors in the summer, the Kumon after-school program, vision therapy and countless hours working with him ourselves. This leads us to ask, what is happening in our schools to children of underprivileged families? There seem to be many good priorities for our community, but shouldn’t enabling our children with learning differences to succeed be one of them?</p> <p>Additionally, the system as it functions today does not seek a true partnership with parents to educate our children. Parents such as ourselves have difficulties understanding what can be done to enhance the work done at school and even what the support really is that our children are receiving. For our son, Orton-Gillingham is being used to assist him with his reading. Why not provide us with appropriate exercises we can use with him over breaks or for homework? And the belief in not assigning homework further ties our hands behind our backs as it deprives us of a chance to give our son actual one-on- one help.</p> <p>Arlington is a truly special community where our students can achieve great things. We ask that we not leave the vulnerable behind. We want to summarize by asking the schools to consider new and additional resources at Nottingham and better training for those who assist our children. A true culture of partnership with parents needs to be developed for our children to be successful. The staff needs to be trained to understand how to effectively deal with learning differences and needs to be provided with sufficient time to help parents understand their children’s issues and work together.</p> |  |
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**Update on Past Public Comments**

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| <p>Paul Jamelske</p> | <p>Nottingham Update: APS recently provided LEA representative training for the Principal, Assistant Principal and the special education Coordinator. This training also helps APS identify areas that we need further professional development – such as drafting IEPs for teaching staff. Dr. Koval also had two training updates with Special Education staff members at Nottingham, and there are plans for additional trainings after Spring Break. One aspect of Administrator and school staff training includes the referral process to address concerns with a child’s academic and functional performance. The ATSS process is always available for Tier 1, 2 and 3 Interventions, as well as the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) process. These processes document one or more areas of concern and offer interventions to be measured and reviewed. If a family or a staff member believes there is the possibility of a disability, and would like to refer a child for a Student Study, they may do so at any time.</p> <p>Question: Will you involve NES parents?</p> <p>Answer: Yes, parents are an important part of the process. My recommendation is that parents should always feel like they have an open door to communicate with their Teachers and Administrative leaders at NES and every school. Dept. of Teaching &amp; Learning staff,</p> |  |
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|                                                                                                                                                                                              | including Special Education, Student Services, and English Language Arts, participated in the March 6 Nottingham PTA meeting to share information on interventions, referrals, and options to provide support for students. Two-way communication between families and school staff is welcomed and parents are invited to be partners in the process of identifying and addressing concerns.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
| Update on Past Public Comments – not presented at meeting                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  |
| Paul Jamelske                                                                                                                                                                                | <p><u>Response to January Public Comment on removal of a student from a classroom:</u> Our current Policy and Policy Implementation Procedure (PIP) 25-1.3 were last updated in 2016 and 2014, respectively. The Policy and PIP are consistent with state and federal regulations and guidelines. APS has a Policy/PIP review schedule to consider updates at least every 5 years. We expect the 25-1.3 may be considered for review in 2019, if not earlier. The public comment expressed concern for students with and without disabilities who may be removed from class in a manner that is not consistent with established Policy/PIP. The Office of Special Education will review our Local Education Agency (LEA) Representative training to ensure that student discipline and possible removal from class are prominently featured in the training. We shall also express the public comment concern with the Assistant Superintendents for the Dept of Teaching &amp; Learning and Administrative Services.</p> <p><u>Response to January Public Comment regarding the Arlington Tech Program and Special Education and Section 504 Plan services and accommodations:</u> An evening discussion was held at the Career Center on February 6 including parents, Career Center Administrators, and Office of Special Education staff. A collaborative dialog was established, and ongoing collaboration is planned. Heather Rothenbuescher, Special Education Supervisor, is designated to consult with the Arlington Tech parent group and Career Center leadership.</p> |  |
| Assistive Technology and Augmentative Communication                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  |
| <p>Marbea Tammaro,<br/>Assistive<br/>Technology<br/>Specialist OT</p> <p>Dr. Lauren Bonnet,<br/>Assistive<br/>Technology<br/>Specialist &amp; SLP</p> <p>Dr. Gina Gomez,<br/>Audiologist</p> | <p>The APS assistive technology and augmentative communication team was invited to speak at ASEAC and discussed legal mandates and responsibilities to ASP students. They also showcased technology currently being utilized by ASP. See attached presentation for more details. The speakers were given questions from ASEAC prior to the presentation and also took comment cards with questions. They will provide answers to questions via written feedback at a future ASEAC meeting.</p> <p>There was a very brief discussion time.</p> <p>Q: How do teachers know about all of the resources that are available?<br/>Answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and write available county wide – we are working to train people and build capacity.</li> <li>• We meet student needs and describe features in IEPs rather than using brand names.</li> <li>• We have been working with OES and make sure all free things are available for all grade levels.</li> <li>• Learning Ally is a wonderful resource for some students, one must have a print disability or reading disability to qualify for this resource.</li> </ul> <p>Resources available on the Arlington Public School website here:<br/><a href="https://www.apsva.us/student-services/arlington-tiered-system-of-support-atss/resources-read-write-literacy-software/">https://www.apsva.us/student-services/arlington-tiered-system-of-support-atss/resources-read-write-literacy-software/</a></p>                                                                                     |  |
| Wilson Building Discussion                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  |
| <p>Casey Robinson,<br/>Principal, H-B<br/>Woodlawn<br/>Secondary Program<br/>and</p> <p>Dr. Karen Gerry,<br/>Principal, Stratford<br/>Program</p>                                            | <p>We invited Casey Robinson, Principal of the H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program and Dr. Karen Gerry, Principal of the Stratford Program to discuss the new building being constructed on the Wilson site.</p> <p>Over last few weeks we are looking for ways to address community concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconfiguring current classroom locations in order to provide more integration</li> <li>• Concerns around bathrooms facilities</li> <li>• Bell schedule alignment between Stratford and HB Woodlawn</li> <li>• Emergency egress plans</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |

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|                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared transportation for students with special needs</li> <li>• Increased Stratford friends program</li> </ul> <p>Current APS plan for the Stratford Program is to move to Reed during construction. We have been told students in Stratford friends program and others can be bussed to Reed to continue these programs during the school day.</p> <p>Please see the attached presentation for more details.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |
| <b>APS Strategic Plan Discussion</b>                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
| Meredith Purple and Ted Black, Strategic Plan Steering Committee Co-Chairs | <p>We invited Meredith Purple and Ted Black the Strategic Plan Steering Committee Co-Chairs to discuss the ongoing strategic planning process. Every six years APS develops a new strategic plan to meet the evolving needs of students, create new opportunities and chart a course for all students, staff and the school division overall.</p> <p>Implementation steps matter, this is a long journey, the end results are still very much in progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 2<sup>nd</sup> whole entire plan – month comment revised</li> <li>• May 17 – New Draft – Dr. Murphy will present.</li> <li>• June 7<sup>th</sup> School Board Action</li> </ul> <p>Question: Are you trying to see any student in the mission vision goals?<br/>Answer: Everything we write should encompasses every student in the division.</p> <p>All meetings are open to the public and have an opportunity for public comments. The strategic planning committee is accessible anytime by e-mail at <a href="mailto:engage@apsva.us">engage@apsva.us</a>, please put strategic plan in the subject line.</p> <p>See attached presentation for more details.</p> |  |
| <b>Committee Information</b>                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
| 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
| March Agenda                                                               | Discussed agenda for March we will discuss the budget.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |
| Meeting Adjourned                                                          | Meeting Adjourned at 9:28 pm                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |

NEXT MEETING: March 13 from 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. at Syphax Education Center - Room 101

**AGENDA:**

- 7:00 - 7:20 pm Welcome and public comments
- 7:20 - 7:40 pm Updates on outstanding items
- 7:40 - 8:00 pm Budget
- 8:00 - 8:30 pm ASEAC Proposed Year End Recommendation to School Board
- 8:30 - 8:40 pm 2018 – 2019 Planning
- 8:40 - 9:00 pm Open Discussion