**Advisory Council on Instruction**

 **Meeting Minutes**

 Wednesday, December 5, 2018

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

**7:00** **Welcome and Opening -** Meredith Purple, ACI Co-Chair

**7:03 Approve November Meeting Minutes -**  Meredith Purple, ACI Co-Chair

November minutes approved.

**7:05 Committee Report: Early Childhood Advisory Committee -** Alison Acker, Chair, and Meredith Jaeckel, Committee Member

**Allison Acker** started presenting the early childhood advisory committee report. Allison wanted to highlight a few portions of the first recommendation of the report.

* Enrollment has gone up approximately 100 students since that data was taken across the various programs.
* An update on recommendations from the previous reporting year include a recommendation that was made about making consistent and increasing recess times. This was all supported by state legislation and APS has made the adjustments.
* There was a recommendation focused on developing rules for personalized visual learning devices, including evaluating their effectiveness. Those rules are presently being handled by each individual school and we are expecting a formal study on those topics in February 2019.
* Recommendations that are being presenting this year, focuses around ideas that have been well researched and recognize that early childhood experiences are imperative to Kindergarten success in and life beyond Kindergarten.

**Ms. Meredith Jaeckel** spoke about the 2nd recommendation. She stated that research dating back to the 1980s states that students with or without disabilities benefit from being educated together. However, not all inclusion is created equal. Research shows that there are factors that impact its efficacy. High-quality inclusion requires proactive and effective leadership from administrators. Research shows that building a culture of inclusion starts at the top. Therefore, our committee is recommending additional professional development for LEA staff and IEP team members to support innovative and flexible educational programming.

**Elaine Perkins** school staff liaison for the Early Childhood office thanked everyone who participated in the report.

Please see complete Early Childhood report [here](ECAC%202018-%202019%20Recommending%20Year%20Report.final%20.pdf)

**Round 1 Questions or Comments:**

**Comment from an ACI member:** For 99% of the kids in Arlington who have IEP‘s, total inclusion in a regular classroom will work, but it does not work for everyone. We need to be careful of the language used regarding special needs students and inclusion. I don’t think that every special needs student needs be in a classroom with typically developing students They can have access to those kids without being in the classroom, and it is better for those special needs children.

**Response to comment:** These special needs students are part of the reason we started having the conversation regarding our recommendations. There are children that need smaller class sizes who need a smaller environment for an individualized instruction.

**Question:** Regarding the Early Childhood population now - how many of the students and what percentage of those children are provided access to early childhood education?

**Answer:** The latest research states there are about 13,000 students under the age of five in Arlington and that between private Pre-K and APS programs and Family childcare providers APS is only reaching about 6000 students. The September 30 data shows it has grown by about 100 students.

**Question:** To what extent in Arlington County including APS do the organizations work together to provide early childhood education training, whether it is an in home daycare or an outside center? And, once you get into the school are there any plans for before and after care?

**Answer:** The Early Childhood office will be working with the Extended Day office to help ensure that the wait for our Pre-K programs are reduced. Regarding training - the Early Childhood office provides staff Professional development.

**Comment:** In the first recommendation, the part where it says communicate with future APS families before they start school. How will this happen?

**Answer:** There has been much brainstorming regarding this topic. More study is needed on this to find what works. Therefore, that’s why it’s so general.

**Questions:** What will the communication be to families for Pre-School kids?

**Answer:** We would like to communicate with other committees regarding communication to families, and study other school districts. Brainstorming and listening to other committees and find out what is the best way to do appropriate outreach.

**Comment:** Outreaching regarding Pre-K through pediatricians is a great way to get information out to parents regarding all topics.

**Comment:** Did not see within the recommendation about how APS will integrate all the groups who are working on this same topic.

**Elaine Perkins:** Currently working on trying toorganize under one group to be more effective.

**Question:** Would like more clarity on what is meant by the “Service Model”. Is the emphasis on co-teaching for the elementary school level?

**Answer by Elaine Perkins and Meredith Jaeckel**: All students have different learning needs. In the recommendation we said we would like a more robust continuum. We would like more co-taught models in VPI and Montessori. We will continue to work more with private partnerships, expanding co-taught classrooms, and bringing in peer models. This is what we meant when we mentioned models. As far as the question regarding training, we did not have any specific training in mind.

**Round 2 Questions or Comments:**

**Comment:** Both the VA Department of Education and the Federal government have released some guidelines on Early Childhood Inclusion within the last couple of years, I did not see either of those referenced in the recommendations. These are very good resources.

**Question:** Regarding Program Evaluation and Strategic Plan, where are you now in the evaluation process?

**Answer:** Early Childhood’s last evaluation was done November 2016.

**Wendy Pilch, Director of Early Childhood,** wanted to quickly address an earlier mention regarding the number of students APS serves for Early Childhood. APS is constrained by numbers based on capacity. Essentially, we fill what is allowed.

**Comment:** On the 2nd Recommendation regarding co-teaching models of inclusion, don’t assume it’s happening at all school levels or in every classroom.

**Question:** As a system, is there tracking done for students through elementary school for those who attended Early Childhood vs. those who did not?

**Answer:** We don’t have that information. We will work on getting it.

**8:00 Committee Report: ESOL/HILT Advisory Committee** - Anne Zebra, Chair

**Anne Zebra, Sam Klein**

They shared that they spent time in schools, parent group, and student groups and Recommendation number 1 came from these conversations. This recommendation will help empowers parents and help them feel involved.

2nd recommendation is one that has been recommended in previous years. The ESOL office needs a fulltime Early Childhood ESOL Specialist who can coach and educate all Early Childhood teachers on effective and appropriate educational strategies for dual language learners and English language learners. Currently there is only a part-time specialist for this.

Please see complete ESOL/HILT Report [here](ESOLHILT-CAC-REPORT-WITH-RECOMMENDATIONS-2018-%20%281%29.pdf)

**Question:** In the recommendation regarding communication, can this be broader to make sure parents understand so they can engage and understand test scores?

**Answer:** There was a World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) training session for parents who don’t understand the language to be able to read and understand test scores. Some of the schools took advantage of a PowerPoint training and shared with parents.

**Comment:** Wakefield High School Rep spoke to ESOL teachers at Wakefield regarding recommendations, they agree with all recommendations.

**Question:** Do families currently sign consent to enter the ESOL program in APS?

**Answer:** They don’t consent in, but they can opt out. State mandates that we inform parents what the services are being provided. In this letter there is an option to agree on services or disagree.

**Comment:** There needs to be a track on usage of ParentVue to add evidence on this recommendation.

**Questions:** Statistics suggest in this report that there are gains across subject areas, is that usually a year of progression?

**Answer:** It’s hard to call year to year, levels anticipate a stair step. Levels all depend on what the student comes to APS with.

**Round 2 questions:**

**Question:** Do you have any information on how many students at secondary level go on to pass exams for graduation requirements?

**Answer:** That is an area that needs to be further studied.

**Comment:** When sending the letter to the parent about their kids and what services are being provided, it may be an opportunity to invite them to meet to discuss in groups, in case they don’t understand the language.

**Comment addressed:** **Sam Klein, Supervisor, ESOL/HILT:** Letters to parents are sent out in the home language for parents to understand. Many parents come to the school and ask for someone to help them with the information. There are many resources for parents to use.

**Questions:** Is a second language important when hiring ESOL staff?

**Answer:** All the Instruction for ESOL is all in English, so it is not a requirement.

Anne ended by thanking the ESOL/HILT committee and those present in the room. She is new on the committee and very excited to continue the work.

**8:55 Wrap Up and Rubric Instructions** Meredith Purple, ACI Co-Chair

 Rubric ranking will be open online and will close on December 17th at midnight.

**9:00 Adjourn** - Meredith Purple, ACI Co-Chair

**Addition to agenda:**

**Report from ACI Liaison to the FAC (Advisory Council on School Facilities and Capital Programs)**

The FAC has sent two letters to the School Board this month: (1) emphasizing the need for long range planning and APS-County collaboration; and, (2) urging that school boundary changes be considered more regularly and more comprehensively.

The FAC authored a report last year, "The Future Facilities Needs Report," and the Amazon announcement has deepened the need for long range planning to make efficient use of limited space. "APS and the County will need to look to alternatives, such as repurposing non-instructional facilities, building up (rather than out), sharing space with other enterprises, and non-facilities options. In short, we need to be prepared for growth and to be in the best possible position to manage and successfully respond to any growth scenario that ultimately occurs," the letter states.

The FAC also sent a letter encouraging the School Board to review the current policies related to school boundary adjustments, and consider changes to make the process more routine and predictable; to be comprehensive in scope every time a process is started; and to better address a recurrent imbalance. Some schools remain overcapacity by a large margin while others remain below capacity.

**Other Announcements:**

The Arlington County Government is hosting a Virtual Learning Series on Facebook, offering interactive Q&A on specific topics related to Amazon HQ2 on specific dates:

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/events/virtual-learning-series-economic-development-and-planning/>

Schools and workforce are the main topic on Wednesday, December 19th at 6:30 PM.  The way to ask questions is to go to [Facebook.com/ArlingtonVA](http://facebook.com/ArlingtonVA) on that date and time.

**Announcement from ASEAC:**

 As you have hopefully heard, the APS Department of Planning and Evaluation is conducting an external evaluation of special education and Section 504 services and contracted with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to complete this evaluation.

 As part of the evaluation, PCG sent out surveys and conducted several focus groups of parents and staff.  They met with leadership from the Arlington Special Education PTA (SEPTA) and Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC), held file reviews and attended the November ASEAC meeting.

 As part of the evaluation process, ASEAC and SEPTA leadership wanted to make sure that any parent, teacher, staff member or community member (including parents who have withdrawn students from APS) has an opportunity to share anything they would like with PCG. As a result, PCG has set up a confidential email for anyone who wants to send additional comments and feedback directly to PCG.

 **The email is:**[APSSpecialEducationReview@pcgus.com](https://exchange.apsva.us/owa/redir.aspx?C=746btPYLtEe3AK2TS3z0uHpSw-yOYNYI001z50cuKudTrW5rvW57bpMu8P-078tKSozAq_esaVY.&URL=mailto%3aAPSSpecialEducationReview%40pcgus.com)

 **The email will be available to collect feedback until 1/31/19**.  Results from the information gathering will be used to improve programs and services offered by APS to students receiving special education and 504 services and their families.  Your voice matters, please reach out to PCG if you have anything you want to share.