

**Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee
Minutes
September 24, 2019**

Members Present:

Nadia Facey (Chair), Nick Walkosak (Vice Chair), Margy Dunn (Co-secretary), David Rosenblatt (Co-secretary), Minerva Trudo, Jay Hamon, Tauna Szymanski, Michele Best, Keith Chanon, Kurt Schuler, Sonia Rosen, Amber Baum, Caitlin Davies.

Members Absent:

Kristin Gillig, Jennifer Johnson, Wendy Pizer, Cristina Yacobucci and Erika White.

Staff:

Dr. Kelly Krug (Acting Director of Special Education – Elementary),
Heather Rothenbuescher (Acting Director of Special Education – Secondary),
Kathleen Donovan (Parent Resource Center),
Kelly Mountain (Parent Resource Center).

Guests:

Natalie Golding (ACI liaison), Paul Timm, Tesfaye Hillo, Janna Dressel, Jennifer Everling, Keith & Stacey Whyte

AGENDA:

Agenda Items	Discussion/Decisions	What to do/who/when
Welcome		
7:00PM Nadia Facey	Welcome and introductions	
Public Comments		
Caroline Levy	My name is Caroline Levy and I am the parent of a student at the Shriver Program. This past week, Shriver Principal Karen Gerry announced that she will be retiring and leaving as of December 1st. Dr. Gerry let me know that a replacement is expected to be in place by that date. I would like ASEAC to immediately recommend to Interim Superintendent Johnson that Shriver parents must be included in the selection process of a new administrator of the program. Over the past few years there have been a variety of opinions put forth about the direction of the Shriver Program. I myself have suggested that the program needs a leader who will encourage greater participation and inclusion in APS and the community. Other parents are concerned that if the Shriver program does not have a Principal, that our children run the risk of being a second thought under the HB Woodlawn administration. There is a history of miscommunications with the parents of the most vulnerable children in special education. It is imperative that there be an open process in selection of any new administrators for the Shriver Program.	
Keith and Stacey Whyte	Wakefield Parents – Had an incident a little over a week ago that was really troubling, want this incident not happen to anyone else’s kid. Child has ADHD, anxiety & depression. Student was sitting in an IS class. These classes are helpful for learning organization, executive function. Wakefield has been really great in the prep for school. Tours of school, introductions to school community. Could not have asked for more in terms of what they did. Two weeks into the school year, he had met his IS teacher five times, but was pretty unfamiliar with	

	<p>classmates. IS teacher passed out all students' IEPs to them without consulting with parents. Student learned via reading his IEP that he has an autism diagnosis. Psychiatrist recommended not sharing this information with student given other mental health issues. IEP included warning that diagnosis had not been shared with student. Teacher asked students to pick out the piece of their IEP they disagreed with the most and share with the class. Student disappeared and didn't answer contact from parents. Teacher contacted parents to let them know that he would be angry, that students are often angry when she does this every year. Student, in distress, was stopped from using his phone to contact his parents during class.</p>	
Kurt Schuler	<p>Kurt Schuler is ASEAC's representative on the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) for the expansion of the Arlington Career Center (Arlington Tech). The committee will offer advice to help the architects create a design that works well for students, staff, and the community. The plan is both to expand the Career Center and to build what could become the basis for a fourth comprehensive high school. The Web page on the building expansion is here: https://www.apsva.us/design-and-construction/arlington-career-center/ If you have suggestions for design features, especially those that would make things work better for students with disabilities, please send them to Kurt Schuler, kschuler@the-cfs.org</p>	
Jennifer Everling	<p>Good evening, my name is Jennifer Everling. I am the parent of 3 elementary students, including a 5th grade student who receives SPED services at Fleet, and previously at Patrick Henry. In our 5 years at Henry, we had a wonderful experience with special education, and always felt our needs were met promptly and adequately. In getting to know many special education teachers over these last 5 years, as well as other families whose children receive services, I have appreciated the dedication of the SPED teachers and the heavy caseload they carried to meet the diverse needs of their students.</p> <p>The reason I am here tonight is to express my concern with an apparent reduction in special education resources at Fleet, and how this reduction may be preventing students from receiving the necessary support to which they are legally entitled through their IEPs. Between what I have heard in our school community, and after reviewing the APS adopted budget for FY 20, it appears that Fleet's allocation for SPED teachers has been reduced almost 50%, despite only a small reduction in projected student enrollment. While I would like to think there is valid data behind this significant reduction, on its face it seems questionable, and no one from APS or our school administration has explained these apparent reductions to Fleet parents of SPED students.</p> <p>At the Fleet September PTA meeting, there were at least 2 parent questions about special education resources in particular grades, and unfortunately the meeting ended before all parents could ask their questions, including resource questions I had. Both my experience so far this year and general understanding is that there are not enough SPED teachers or SPED assistants to meet the special education needs of enrolled students at Fleet. I am grateful to my daughter's 5th grade team who are trying their best to provide as much support as possible given the limited resources. However, you can stretch a single teacher only so far in the course of a day, so ultimately the issue is whether there are enough resources to meet the documented, existing needs of enrolled students, as well as future needs that may be identified as the school year progresses. Further, I am disappointed that I have had to learn about these resource issues through bits and pieces of information; I don't even have a way to validate what SPED resources are actually available at Fleet because APS's central staff database on their website doesn't seem to identify SPED teachers at the school level and the Fleet website is not up to date.</p>	

	<p>I recognize that the apparent reduction in SPED resources at Fleet may be happening at other schools too, as a quick glance of other budgets showed sizable reductions in SPED teacher allocations. However, I can only speak to the little I know about Fleet and my experience so far this year. I am concerned for what this means for my daughter's needs, as well as for other parents and students who may not be aware of this issue and whose children may not be getting what they need to succeed. I am also concerned for what this may mean for the existing SPED teachers at Fleet, as they try to meet student needs that they simply can't because of a lack of resources. Overstretching any of our APS teachers, but particularly those who provide special education services, concerns me as both a parent and a taxpayer.</p> <p>Patrick Henry, as Fleet's predecessor, had a reputation within APS as one of the elementary schools that excelled at meeting the needs of special education students, and it would be a travesty to lose that stature and go backwards when we should always be improving in our ability to meet the needs of our special education students.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.</p>	
<p>Jennifer Seiff</p>	<p>I would like the committee to make sure that every student has a way to evacuate his or her school location without external/first responder assistance.</p> <p>My son LJ will be attending the brand new Fleet Elementary this Fall. Fleet is a beautiful new facility that is four stories tall. LJ's classes will be on the third and fourth floors of the new building – since he uses a motorized wheelchair, he'll be using the elevators to enter and exit the building and travel between classes. We have been told that, in case of fire or other emergency that prompts evacuation, students that can't go down the stairs independently will shelter in a "safe place" on the upper floors until First Responders arrive. First Responders will have a written plan that informs them to check these shelter areas first.</p> <p>While I have the utmost confidence in (and respect for) First Responders, this plan is far too complacent and puts students (and the Staff that must stay with them) at unnecessary risk. Sometimes help can't come soon enough or is spread too thin. Emergency planning must address broader situations (blackout, natural disaster, active shooter, etc.) and provide a safe, simple way for <i>every</i> student and staffer to exit the building in case of emergency or equipment failure. There are a number of tested, reasonably priced technologies available to aid in evacuating mobility-impaired individuals from multi story buildings. We have recommended several to the school's Principal and received no direct response.</p> <p>A "Shelter in Place" protocol may well meet the letter of the law or the building code, but it falls well short of the "reasonable accommodation" standard that is required under the ADA. Building egress is a basic life safety issue. Arlington County should hold itself to a higher standard for our children, including those with special needs. There should be a plan to get every student and staff member out of every facility, without relying on an elevator or First Responders.</p> <p>Evacuation Chairs or similar technology should be standard equipment for every exit staircase in the county. The cost and training burden are low and the stakes are very high.</p> <p>Thanks, J Seiff</p>	

Kelly Krug, Heather Rothenbuescher – Office of Special Education Updates

7:37pm

- Student support process manual posted, hard copies sent to school, APS Talk sent out. PRC Session set up for parents, principal training complete, school staff in process.
- Hope to have a winter revision and a spring revision of the manual, and then annual revisions following that.
- Did not make a lot of hard copies because of expense and potential changes
- Thinking to hold off on translation until the Spring, creating a one-pager for translation into five major languages and will send out to all schools.
 - Question – why not translate first draft and then deal with changes later?
- Training of teachers has not fully rolled out yet – Principals are being coached to get this done.
 - Question – is it one of the roles of the Student Support Coordinator to provide training on the manual at the school level. A: Yes, that is part of the role, challenging to find the time/space, and working to make this more consistent.
- VDOE survey has been sent out
- APS Survey has been streamlined to include student support team meetings, Intervention Plans (IAT) and 504. Should go out in a much more timely way, pulling data from database each week to send out surveys.
 - Questions – when will the surveys be triggered? Only when the process is finalized? ASEAC members suggest that the survey should go out in mid-process to catch issues prior to finalization.
- Staffing update.
 - Down one teacher of the visually impaired, seeking one
 - Down one student support coordinator
 - Otherwise fully staffed
- DOJ-settlement related requirements
 - Translation of major documents
 - Need to offer translations of final IEP documents in Amharic, Arabic and Mongolian this year, Spanish next year
 - Other requirements as well

Kelly Krug and Heather Rothenbuescher – Annual Report to ASEAC

8:00PM

- Indicators (PPT)
- Indicator 1 – High School Graduation – exceeded state target
- Indicator 2 – SWD dropout rate – exceeded state target
- Indicator 3b 1-2 – Math and English participation rates – exceeded state target
- Indicator 3c1-2 – Reading & Math proficiency - State target dropped significantly, which allowed APS to exceed target w/55% and 51%, an area of focus for improvement.
- Indicator 4a-b – met state target, no discrepancy, but still a priority for APS “we know that many of our boys, many of our black and Hispanic boys are the ones who are being suspended, and this is very important to address”
- Indicator 5a - 80% or more of day in regular classroom – state target is 70%, APS is making slow progress at 64.76%
- Indicator 5b – 5.55%, lower than state target
- Indicator 6a – Students 3-5 majority in regular ECE – 22%, below state target

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicator 6b – Students aged 3-5 – in a separate class, school or residential facility, above state target at 19.77%, possibly driven by countywide program and lack of gen ed preschool • Discussion about Prek Indicators – why is APS consistently low on social emotional outcomes for pre-k students? • Indicators 9 & 10 – shows no disproportionality, but remains a critical focus for APS <p>Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have access to the data on a school level? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Answer (Krug) – yes, we have information about inclusion on a school level, and we need to have a conversation as a community about staffing. This is a huge factor in inclusive practices. ○ On suspension (Rothenbuescher) , discipline committee is digging deep into data about discipline, happy to have members of that committee come and share. • Krug – when looking at the program evaluations action plan we need a five-year plan to target a few key areas of change. 	
ASEAC Updates – Nadia Facey		
8:30PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASEAC 101 presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regulatory requirement – every school division has a SEAC, advise, develop, priorities, report, review priorities. ○ Public body – post agendas, conduct business in public, FOIA ○ ACI connection and recommendations – we are in a recommending year ○ SEAC resource links ○ Need more members – two more spots open, need student members • Approval of June Meeting Minutes (10-0) • Communications update – we have a flyer in English and Spanish • New data request form – on the ASEAC google drive • January meeting date change – change to January 21st to avoid conflict with SB presentation (no objections). • Program Evaluation – fall release and action planning, looking at the next 3-5 years, school board work session with PCG on Nov 13th • Expectation that the report will come out in mid-October. • PCG at ASEAC (we hope) in January 	
Policy Review Committee Update – Nick Walkosak		
8:53PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bullying/Harassment Prevention Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This policy was not shared with ASEAC in a timely fashion, but has now been rescheduled and we have time to share our input. ○ Nick W. reviewed key suggested changes to the draft policy and ASEAC's feedback on the overall document. - Leadership announced plan to delegate authority for urgent policy feedback to the Policy Committee - Any further feedback on policy requested to Nick before end of the week 	
9:08	<p>Proposed Working Groups for approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy Review – Nick Walkosak 	12-0

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental Health – Michelle Best - Student Support Manual Updates – Wendy Pizer - Outreach – Cristina Camacho-Yacobucci - 2019 Program Evaluation Accountability – Amber Baum & Kristin Gillig 	
Meeting Adjourned	Meeting Adjourned at 9:12PM	

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, Oct 29, 2019 from 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
 Syphax Education Center, 2110 Washington Blvd, Room 456, Arlington, VA 22204