

**Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee
Minutes
December 17, 2019**

Members Present:

Nadia Facey (Chair), Margy Dunn (Co-secretary), David Rosenblatt (Co-secretary), Nick Walkosak (Vice Chair), Wendy Pizer (Past Chair), Kristin Gillig, Kurt Schuler, Jay Hamon, Paul Timm, Minerva Trudo, Caitlin Davies (Teacher Member), Amber Baum, Matt Leland, Tauna Szymanski, Keith Chanon, Cristina Yacobucci

Members Absent:

Jennifer Johnson, Michele Best, Symone Walker, Sonia Rosen, Ella Robertson (Student)

Staff:

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

Guests:

Kathy Pericak (Yorktown/HB parent), Kathryn Linehan (HB/Tuckahoe Parent), Natalie Goldring (ACI liaison), David Siu (HB, Tuckahoe parent), Caroline Levy, Jennifer Beytin, Erin Smith, Monique O’Grady (School Board), Dana Milburn (ACI)

AGENDA:

| Agenda Items | Discussion/Decisions | What to do/who/when |
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| Welcome | | |
| 7:05PM Nadia Facey | Welcome and introductions | |
| Public Comments | | |
| Kathy Pericak | <p>During the meeting today, the committee will be voting on a memorandum to be sent to the school board related to transportation for students with disabilities. I am making a public comment today to provide information to the committee regarding my experience with a 504 meeting.</p> <p>My son has type 1 diabetes. T1D is an autoimmune disease in which a person's pancreas stops producing insulin, a hormone people need to get energy from food. Because the pancreas is not producing insulin, my son needs to regulate his blood glucose level through monitoring it on a continuous glucose monitor, taking insulin through an insulin pump, and eating carbohydrates when his blood glucose goes low. Although my son does an excellent job of monitoring and maintaining</p> | |

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| | <p>his own blood glucose levels, there is still a chance that he could pass out from low glucose, and someone would need to call 911 and give him a shot of glucagon.</p> <p>My son has a 504 plan to provide for accommodations while he is at school. Some of the accommodations he has are eating a snack anytime he needs to increase or maintain his glucose level, and being escorted by a friend or teacher to the nurse's office if his blood sugar is low, or he is not feeling well.</p> <p>We developed my son's latest 504 plan at a 504 meeting when he started middle school at the beginning of this school year. The meeting went very well, except that I was told that accommodations related to the bus could not be put into the 504 plan. I was told that I would need to contact the APS transportation office if I wanted to talk about accommodations for the bus. I called the APS transportation office and the call center operator put me through to the voicemail for the operations manager. I left a message, but I have not received a return call.</p> <p>As noted in the draft memorandum the committee is voting on today, 504 teams must consider the individual needs of the student when determining what accommodations to provide to the student throughout the school day, including on the bus. In addition, APS needs to provide safe and appropriate transportation to students with disabilities, which includes communication of students' needs to bus drivers, as well as appropriate training for bus drivers.</p> <p>Based on Wendy Pizer's public comment on October 22, 2019, this issue impacts other students with disabilities as well. This is an urgent safety matter that I hope APS will address immediately.</p> | |
| <p>Janna Dressel</p> | <p>My name is Janna Dressel and I am the president of Arlington's Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) and a special educator as well. However I am speaking now as a very concerned parent of a 10 year old son with multiple diagnoses, significant support needs, and a very complex medical profile. As parents, one of our number one concerns for our children is their safety and as a parent of a child with a number of critical special needs it is always on the forefront of my mind. I had planned to talk primarily about our family's experiences with bus transportation this evening, but after concerns from this morning I believe it is more valuable to speak more inclusively about the importance of communicating critical medical, behavioral, and safety information to all APS staff who interact with your child on a regular basis not just the bus drivers and attendants. My son is prone to wandering and elopement and has a tracking device anklet from Project Lifesaver coordinated through the Arlington County Police Department. This morning the monitoring device used to check the anklet didn't light up alerting us that there is an issue with his tracking device. Within 15 minutes, ACPD responded with an officer at our home to troubleshoot the issue. After determining that the issue could not be resolved with a simple battery change, the officer gave my son a loaner device with a different frequency # to use until his new device can be shipped. I brought my son into school to relay the new frequency identification information to the office and his instructional team. In the past, per our family's request, this critical information has been included in his IEP, as well as, written down in accessible locations throughout the school including the office. The office staff went to update his current safety/health plans only to find that the plans they had with them in the front office hadn't been updated in over a year despite being updated in his records more than once in that time. If my son had eloped off of school grounds earlier this year, the office staff</p> | |

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| | <p>would not have had the necessary information handy to respond in an emergency. I have similar concerns regarding the lack of county-wide protocols for the communication of critical medical, behavioral, and safety information to bus drivers and attendants as well. Almost exactly a month ago, my son had a seizure when exiting his bus's stairs where he fell face first into my arms. I was incredibly grateful that I was standing in a place where I could catch him and break his fall. When I alerted his driver to the fact that he was having a seizure she looked at me with a confused look. It was evident that despite being a related service provider and part of my son's team, she did not have full knowledge of my son's medical issues or the training on how to respond. My son has a number of allergies and has an epi-pen which he is unable to self-administer so he does not have access to it on the bus to and from school and only has it on field trips because the drivers and attendants have not been trained to administer epi-pens. He also has rumination syndrome where he is prone to frequent regurgitation and vomiting occurring on the bus a number of times over the past 1.5 years. My son's bus driver and attendant also lack full training on how to respond when his rumination syndrome symptoms are active.</p> <p>We have had wonderfully loving and nurturing drivers and attendants over the years in APS and I believe whole heartedly that both my son's current driver and the attendant want to keep my son and all of the children on their routes safe, but due to the lack of consistent processes for communicating critical medical and behavioral information they are put at a significant disadvantage which compromises student safety. The same goes for our school staff. I am incredibly grateful for the caring and committed staff at my son's school and I know that they want to keep him safe too. Schools should not be in a position to figure these processes out on a case by case basis but should be given clear protocols for how critical student information is shared and where it is stored if emergency procedures are necessary.</p> | |
| <p>Nick Walkosak</p> | <p>Recently we had a rare miss meeting the afternoon special ed bus. Realizing we were going to miss it, my wife called our neighbor, who has been on our emergency pick-up list for a while now, to hopefully walk the 20 or so yards to the bus stop and collect our student. When the bus arrived the driver refused to release the student to our trusted neighbor. The driver did not have a list of authorized adults to receive our son. My wife called transportation (Elizabeth) and was told they didn't have access to that information and she needed to go through the school to get that information to the bus driver. The driver said she would take another student home and then come back while this situation was worked out. My wife was on the phone with our son when the bus came back and via speaker verbally authorized the driver to release to the neighbor. The driver finally let him off the bus. The following day we were able to contact the school and get the list to the driver. Why is this process the responsibility of the parents when the information has already been given to APS through parent view (I think)? Why is transportation not able to access bus-related emergency information? Why is the driver so unaware when any given day this can happen with any of their students? Why is communication within transportation so hard? It's like transportation is some private entity that is contracted to provide bus service outside the APS firewall.</p> | |
| <p>Carole Rashid</p> | <p>I am writing to express my concern over some issues with the bus 902 route.</p> | |

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| | <p>My son, Jamal, is on the autism spectrum, and he is very sensitive to loud sounds. He has expressed that a certain bus, bus #14, has very loud and squeaky brakes and that this is very upsetting to him. Whenever he rides that bus he becomes agitated and upset. It has escalated to the point that he gets so agitated he is screaming, hitting and kicking people or trying to run away. This is very out of character for him. He usually loves riding the bus and loves going to school. Recently I have been called to school by the front office because his teachers are not able to calm him down and are unable to get him to come inside and go to class. He becomes so overstimulated that he is often unable to go to his gen ed class and complete his class work. I cannot overstate the negative effect bus 14 is having on his emotional well being and on his ability to access his education. It is also becoming a safety issue, as he becomes so upset that he is hurting other people or trying to run away into the street. I understand that there are many buses and routes to manage in the school district, but I wanted to reach out to you personally to ask if bus #14 can be removed from route 902? Or can we at least have the brakes repaired so that they are not so loud?</p> <p>Occasionally we have bus 5, which he does fine on. Perhaps that can be the permanent bus for the route? Last year he requested a Thomas bus instead of a bluebird bus because the bluebird bus had a much louder engine. He was very grateful for this. Please let me know if this change can be accommodated. This is not just a trivial request from a boy who just likes school busses (which he does!!) but a need for a very special boy with legitimate sensory issues who's needs may not make sense to most people. Another serious concern of mine is with the bus attendant, Dayana. My older daughter, Amina, has told me that she has been very mean to Jamal, especially during the times that he is upset and screaming. One time Dayana yelled at him to CALM DOWN, which I don't really think was very effective in calming him down. And today Jamal was upset and crying on the way home, and apparently Dayana shouted at him to "stop crying, you are one of 12 kids on this bus and you shouldn't act this way" I have heard complaints about her treatment of the kids from other parents as well. I feel that she may not have the proper training to be supervising this group of special needs kids. It seems that she is getting angry and scolding or yelling at them often and that she does not understand or appreciate the reasons for their behaviors. I wouldn't have known about this if Amina would not have told me. Many of these kids cannot verbalize or communicate things that happen to them and are unable to advocate for themselves if someone is being verbally or emotionally abusive. We have a great responsibility to ensure that our kids are supervised by people who have the training, patience, and sensitivity that they need and deserve.</p> | |
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Dr.Kelly Krug, Heather Rothenbuescher – Office of Special Education Updates

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| 7:24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 year action-planning from evaluation: PCG will be here in January to continue action-planning work for two days. OSE will provide an update next month. Goal is to have a solid draft of the plan done by the end of February. • Policy review process: when policies are ready for feedback, they will come to OSE leadership, which will send them to ASEAC for review. • Restraint and Seclusion: provided a guidance document at the beginning of the year, along with a very detailed form to document any use of restraint or seclusion. APS is now shifting to an electronic version of this form, working | |
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| | with the IT department. This system will allow the staff to run reports and generate statistics on the use of restraint and seclusion. | |
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Update and Q&A with Interim Superintendent Cintia Johnson

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| 7:28pm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up on policy work – all policies will be posted publicly on Engage this year, with a window for comment. • Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intro to Ms. Johnson’s professional background in APS ○ Multiple pathways to success – CTE enrollment increasing ○ EL students are a bright spot and also an area for growth (DOJ settlement) ○ Healthy, safe and supported students – participating in extracurriculars, increasing breakfast participation ○ Respect for community expertise ○ Strategic priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving performance in ways that address achievement gap ▪ Mental health resources ▪ Students can identify trusted adults in school ○ Interim Superintendent is focused on visiting schools and connecting with students ○ #OneThingChallenge – ask students if they have positive relationship with one adult • There is a lot of strategic planning going on right now in response to things that have been brought to our attention, in part through the program attention. • Need to look at how Special Education is organized – need to have two individuals leading the work, one at the Elementary level and one at Secondary, moving in this direction. • Importance of student support coordinators to ensure consistency. • In response to the letter Ms. Johnson received from ASEAC in August. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Asst. Superintendent for Teaching and Learning will be in place by mid-January ○ Want to change the approach to summer school – innovation academy will target students who are a year or more below grade level. ○ Aware of professional development, consistency across the county as key needs. • Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer position – pretty thorough process, nearing the end. Five rounds of interviews, including two representatives from ASEAC. • Q&A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Q: Do you have any indication of the written process of how policies will be reviewed? ○ A: Will check. ○ Q: Consistency and accountability has been a key focus of this group’s recommendations. What’s happening with this? | |
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- A: The action planning will address this. [Dr. Krug] Our action planning will need to provide much more specificity about expectations and requirements.
- Q: What is the process on planning factors?
- A: We need to revisit our planning factors. [Rothenbuescher] Will start with a needs assessment, focused on what factors need to be adjusted to address goals around inclusion. [Krug] Having conversations about where services are located is also important, not all hours are equivalent.
- Q: Are you involved in the policy about paying benefits to Special Education assistants?
- A: I am not.
- Q: How are 90-day plans being used, what's the accountability structure that works?
- A: This is something that I worked with Dr. Murphy very closely with. Every management plan needed to have an academic goal that focused on an achievement gap for a specific group of students. The goal was to show progress and eliminate the gaps. I am looking for a way to be more strategic on the accountability piece. There have always been questions about how to hold principals accountable. If we are reducing the gap, we are making progress – sometimes people want to see gaps closed in one year.
- Q: Do school management plans need to connect to strategic goals?
- A: Not to my knowledge. We are trying to increase the hiring of a diverse workforce, including the need for EL and SPED endorsement in job descriptions, for example.
- Q: Want to thank staff for work around augmentative communication supports – have you considered meeting with those students.
- A: Will do.
- Q: School management plans are really focused around SOL results, which leaves out students under 3rd grade and may not be the best assessment for all students.
- A: APS uses many assessments internally to guide our work, not just SOLs.
- Q: Recommendation from program evaluation was to include metrics around special education in performance evaluations of principals. Is this possible, and do you support it?
- A: Yes, I think this could come out of the action planning process.
- Q: How are the action plans between OSE and EL going to interact and support each other?
- A: [Krug] EL will share their plan with OSE when it is drafted. Plan is for quarterly check-ins with PCG on progress. When new Asst Supt for T&L starts, I have confidence that she will support alignment among all the streams of planning. [Ms. Johnson] There are plans to provide ongoing updates to superintendent and School Board.

| ASEAC Updates | | |
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| 8:05pm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve November Minutes (Nadia Facey) - Transportation Letter to APS (Wendy Pizer) - Policy (Nick Walkosak) – happy that the policy will be coming through OSE. ASEAC has a dedicated group of parents focused on policy review. - Guidance document on facility planning – working on this over the next few months. - Considering the needs of students with disabilities when APS does planning and boundary changes. Goal is to have this done in January. - Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is in process. - APS Superintendent Search (Monique O’Grady) – SB signed a contract with BWP on a national search for a new superintendent. Engagement plan will include a survey and community forums, as well as stakeholder group meetings. Plan is to have a superintendent in place no later than July 1st. BWP has done searches in our area in the past. - Ms. O’Grady also mentioned the importance of working on Pre-K inclusion as a key focus. | <p>Approved 14-0 (1 abstention) Approved 16-0</p> |
| Discussion on Preliminary ACI Recommendations | | |
| 8:20pm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review ACI process (Natalie Goldring & Dana Milburn) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o ACI is designed to provide independent advice to the school board o Mix of top-down and bottom-up priorities - ACI has requested a one-page set of recommendations - Review past recommendations - What about structural change to the way school-based administrators are supervised? (David Rosenblatt) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o [Ms Johnson] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beginning, middle and end of year evaluations ▪ Alignment work though DTL for administrators – change that started taking place under Dr. Natrass - What about an ombudsman role? (Wendy Pizer) - For reference - 2019-20 School Board Action Plan (Monique O’Grady) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Hiring a chief diversity officer – what should this role be focused on o Implementing Special Ed/EL and DOJ Settlement o At this point, looking at a budget deficit - Planning Factor Reform (Caitlin Davies) - Professional Development (Christina Yacobucci) - Behavioral Needs in Schools (Kathy Pericak) | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental Health – more access to counselors (Nadia Facey) - [Ms. Johnson] – everything you’ve mentioned exists in our system, but you are looking for consistency systemwide. - [Committee indicates interest in recommendation areas using stickers on gallery walk] - Top two recommendations indicated by committee members’ stickers: - 1) Accountability for administrators to support consistent implementation of best practices across all schools - 2) Planning Factor reform to support inclusion | |
| Meeting Adjourned | Meeting Adjourned at 9pm | |

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, January 21, 2019 from 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
 Syphax Education Center, 2110 Washington Blvd, Room 456, Arlington, VA 22204