

Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee
MINUTES
 November 17, 2020
 Via Zoom

Recording of Meeting: <https://vimeo.com/480596677>
 (Meeting Chat pasted in Appendix 2)

ASEAC Members:

First Name	Last Name	Present?	Vote on Co-secretary position filled by Kathy Pericak
Nicholas	Walkosak	Y	y
David	Rosenblatt	Y	y
Amber	Baum		
Keith	Chanon	Y	y
Nadia	Facey	Y	y
Jason	Love	Y	y
Tauna	Szymanski	Y	y
Margaret	Dunn	Y	y
Michelle	Best	Y	y
Kristin	Gillig	Y	y
Kurt	Schuler	Y	y
Minerva	Trudo		
Cristina	Yacobucci		
Sonia	Rosen	Y	y
Matt	Leland	Y	y
Paul	Timm	Y	y
Symone	Walker	Y	y

Kathryn	Pericak	Y	
David	Siu	Y	y
Eli	Berg	Y	Y

Attendees:

Nick Walkosak, David Rosenblatt, Kathy Pericak, Keith Chanon, Nadia Facey, Kathleen Donovan, Michelle Best, Symone Walker, Alisa Cowen, David Siu, Heather Rothenbeuscher, Janna Dressel, Jason Love, Kelly Mountain, Kelly Krug, Kristin Gillig, Kurt Schuler, Margy Dunn, Matt Leland, Paul Timm, Rebecca Hunter, Sonia Rosen, Tauna Szymanski, Vicki Taylor, Eli Berg

Agenda:

- 7:00 - 7:20 pm Welcome, Member Introductions and Public Comments
- 7:20 - 7:40 pm OSE Updates and Response to October 2020 Public Comments
- 7:40 - 7:55 pm Level I and Level II updates
- 7:55 - 8:20 pm Breakout Groups for ACTL Report Discussion
- 8:20 - 8:30 pm ASEAC Updates

Welcome, Member Introductions and Public Comments

Meeting began - 7:02 pm

Chair Nick Walkosak welcomed members and attendees. Most introductions were in the chat (see end of this document for transcript). Three members provided a detailed introduction: 1) Kurt Schuler (strong interest in building accessibility); 2) Kristin Gillig (strong interest in accountability); and 3) Margy Dunn (wants all SPED students to have a good experience).

Public comment period began at 7:07 pm. In order of RSVP:

Rebecca Hunter: My daughter went to Wakefield as part of Level I. The first day was a disaster as she was alone in a classroom with no other students. She is High Functioning Autism/ADHD/now depression. Her value in returning to school was to be around other students – even if socially distanced. Sitting alone in a classroom does not meet that goal and caused depression.

The School has said the Central Office has to allow them to invite more students. Central Office says the school will solve the issue. No one has done anything at this point to resolve our issue - the school or Central Office. It appears we are just a casualty that is a 'one-off' and so sorry so sad it is not working for you. Third week and nothing. Nothing.

I think there are certainly more than the ~400 students invited that could benefit – even in the very constrained and limited Level 1 program (all virtual, mostly aides, not teachers). Why cannot we even attempt to help more students?

Alisa Cowen: Good evening and thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am Alisa Cowen, past Chair of ASEAC 2010-2012.

1. As a facilitator of NAMI family support groups for Arlington parents of children with issues I have heard the following comments during the past few months and wish to share them with you:

- a) For some students with social anxiety virtual learning has been great.
 - b) For other students who need socialization to motivate them to attend school and to engage with schoolwork – virtual learning has been a disaster.
 - c) The number of student 1st Quarter report cards with multiple E's ought to be a huge RED FLAG ALERT for APS ... because these grades are freaking out families while thoroughly eroding student self-esteem.
 - d) In fact – no report card like that should be issued... without first having a family/student/school conversation to discuss what's going on and offering interim services and assistance to intercede in the student's ability to access the curriculum.
 - e) While I am delighted that APS has a curriculum for Social Emotional Learning, I am concerned that APS equates the SEL initiatives with mental health counselling / services. It is not. And from my perspective this misunderstanding is harming the safety of the many children truly struggling with major depression, self-harm, and crippling anxiety.
 - f) And, although Sources of Strengths is a terrific program, as is Mental Health First Aid, I am not hearing that these are having any impact on minimizing serious mental illness issues during Covid-19.
 - g) From the increased participation in our NAMI support groups, to the reported increase in the psychiatric hospitalizations of our youth I am greatly concerned that the APS counselling leadership is NOT actually addressing those who exhibit non-engagement thru virtual portals, withdrawal, and school avoidance in any discernable or effective manner.
 - h) Also, I do not see any effort to assess the Trauma our students may have experienced which research shows results in reduced academic success and mental health illnesses later in their lives. Early intervention IS the best practice. And I see no energy from APS Student Services or the Partnership for Family, Youth and Children to reactivate a previously used Trauma screening tool.
2. I recommend that ASEAC request APS to ask the County Manager to designate COVID-19 CARES ACT funds for the implementation of ACES, the "Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey", as a screening tool for all middle schoolers and high school students. And that it be implemented by APS in the spring of 2021.
3. I also suggest that ASEAC request of APS a well-developed plan and an adequate budget to address the looming Compensatory Education obligations that APS owes to its special education students, and to all others who have not been able to

access the curriculum. For whom virtual learning has not been working. Again, this could be funded by the CARES ACT money that the County Manager has and is undesignated / un-earmarked now.

4. Additionally, I think ASEAC should be tracking the number of students with homebound and home-based services and comparing those figures to the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. As we all know students were dropped from homebound in the spring. I am not certain of the current policy or practice. It seems that this is a silent, yet impactful issue for families.

OSE Response from October

- Comment was received from an anonymous teacher. DTL has offered numerous professional development opportunities for teachers. Kelly Krug encourages teachers to contact their school administrator or OSE if they feel any specific training resources are needed.

OSE Updates: Level I and Level II

In Level 1. 230 students participated. Staffing remains difficult and finding substitutes is very hard. Level 1 families that initially declined can work with their school if they want to to give it a try. Schools have a level 1 manual that outlines safety measures, PPE availability, and schedules.

Sonia Rosen asked about the numbers of students currently in Level 1. OSE replied they would have to do a recount, but about the same number. They do have the numbers broken down by elementary, middle and HS.

Staff - While assistants are assisting students, in some cases, teachers are also assisting in-person. Do parents know if they have teachers or assistants? OSE believes the parents know.

Communication from OSE to schools in written form: Fall Guidance Document, Hybrid document, Student Support Manual. Communication sent through APS School Talk, and posted online.

Sonia R. - what feedback are you hearing from administrators and student support coordinators? Administrators - working out plans for level 1 for a long time. Now looking for areas of improvement, and talking about level 2 and level 3. Expectations for staff. How to communicate with the community so they are informed when making decisions. Working with staff on how they can do initial evaluations. Discussing compliance and procedural issues.

OSE has talked with a variety of teachers. Deaf and hard of hearing group, vision group. Kelly and Heather offer open office hours weekly.

David R. asked: how large is the initial backlog of initial evaluations? OSE responded that there were about 44 initial evaluations, and they completed 22 of them. OSE will be doing a work

session for the School Board in December that will include a review of those numbers. OSE reported that they were able to do some evaluations on MS teams, and other testing was done in person with specialized equipment as needed for social distancing.

OSE met with school administrators to discuss information on Level 1 and what they needed. OSE will meet with them again next week. OSE has made sure that the staff have reviewed IEPs and accommodations, and they have provided schools with more hands on materials for asynchronous time while in school. OSE is looking at what other supports the assistants and teachers may need in schools. If Level 2 is delayed, OSE is looking at how level 1 could be modified.

A question was raised in the chat asking why we have to wait until January to see if more students can benefit from "Level 1" or similar supports? OSE responded to that question during the meeting by saying that each school can take those students on a case by case basis. Level 1 is currently in person assistance to access distance learning. OSE is looking at what they can do to modify Level 1, if Level 2 is delayed.

Breakout Groups for ACTL Report

Keith C. introduced the assignment for the breakout groups. He explained that ASEAC is expected to submit progress reports to the Advisory Committee for Teaching and Learning (ACTL) highlighting what has been working well and not working well this school year. The meeting divided into four working groups. See Appendix 1 below for the notes from the working groups.

ASEAC Updates 8:27pm

- Kathy Pericak was voted in as ASEAC Co-Secretary
- Policy -
 - Transportation and Discipline policies currently being reviewed - Initial comments on the existing policy are due to APS by November 30th (Monday after Thanksgiving)
- Program Evaluation -
 - OSE will provide a report to ASEAC in December
- Transportation - Nothing to report
- ACTL - Nothing to report
- Call for volunteers -
 - Student Resource Officer (SRO) WG. Symone Walker applied
 - ASEAC considering sending a note to Brian Stockton to encourage greater participation from the SPED community.
 - Seeking volunteers for the Bylaws Subcommittee

- Eli Berg has become a student member. School Board voted on his membership tonight.

APPENDIX 1

ASEAC Brainstorming Groups on ACTL Report for December 2020

From a system-wide perspective, what are the key things that are working and not working for students with disabilities during the 2020-21 School Year?

Group 1

Difficulties

- Related services
 - Inconsistency in professionalism and effort (service providers)
 - Unclear who related services staff report to and/or are supervised by - Some related services providers seem to be “Rogue” agents - unclear chain of command...
 - Staff not showing up/being absent
 - Lack of services for many months
 - Sense that there is an attempt to “counsel kids out” of related services based on lack of progress on goals when families note that services have not been provided
 - Difficulty pivoting from live to virtual environment - response seems to be to switch to consult services

- Worries about required levels of parent advocacy needed to ensure FAPE
- Lack of communication to parents of Level 1 students
 - Parents not contacted
 - Not hearing about transportation, assigned staff members, etc.

Instructional Assistants not participating in virtual learning

- Some IEP teams unresponsive (Sonia: IEP teams only responsive when families talk about hiring a lawyer)
- Increased mental health concerns
 - Some students seem “off the radar” - failing classes, lack of communication when students are struggling or failing
 - Students in crisis - feeling as though they are failing
 - Permanent damage to self-esteem

Going well

- Case carriers really stepping up
- Some related services doing very well
- Virtual learning for some students going very well
 - Removal of social pressures
 - Reduction in anxiety
 - More flexibility for kids with ADHD, sensory needs, etc...

- Development of parent networks & groups
 - Use of What's APP, other groups & community building taking place
- Family engagement
 - Increased collaboration between family and staff
 - Parents having opportunities to closely observe learning/interact with staff
 - Learning opportunities/sessions
 - 12 week Project Core
 - Dyslexia Conference
 - CPI Training

Questions

- How to replicate successes that some students are experiencing?
 - Sensory needs
 - Flexible learning
 - Less anxiety producing environments
 - More hospitable environments
 - Over-stimulation
 - Relief from bullying
 - Small group social supports
 - Building friendship
 - Social supports
- Are some related service providers hired through contractor vs. APS - perception that APS is not hiring new related service providers?
- How are ATSS interventions being delivered in MS and HS?

Group 2

What is working:

- There is good engagement with students, especially compared to the spring
- Consistent use of Canvas and more structure
- Use of assessment results will be important to gauge progress of students. Glad to see evaluations happening again.
- Helpful having received supplies and manipulatives for students, including individualized materials for students.

What is not working:

- Social challenges. Could have more small group interactions

- **2. Poor use of instructional assistants.** Should find ways to better utilize the assistants through break-out groups. Possible use of rotations with students.

- Early on difficulties with technology issues

- **1. Use of the Monday asynchronous learning.** This is inconsistent across schools. Recommend revisiting how to use Mondays. [Kelly: Gen Ed. Teachers given guidance that time for CLTs should be prioritized. SPED teachers can provide student services. Trying to have assistants check-in with students. Hope to get input from the new task force groups. Amount of homework differs from week to week.]

Question: Is APS reviewing expected budget needs to address additional needs due to virtual schooling (i.e., recovery services, social-emotional needs). A: Kelly K: APS is planning for this and has requested grant funding to support it.

Group 3

- The shift to distance learning has been **positive** for some families.
- Students are better keeping up with homework, turning in assignments, grades are better than before distance learning. At the same time, some students are struggling more than they did before.
- **Being home is impacting parent/student relationships.**
- Encouraging students to ask for help and reach out, technology challenges, but we need enough attention and staff to check in with students.
- **Social connections are a challenge**, kids need a way to connect with others.. Even across schools and grade levels, we need to find a way to connect kids with peers.
- Some kids have found ways to connect with video games that they have put together groups privately that have been really successful.
- Finding access to tutors and/or ABA therapists that are not available for families.
- **Behavior** at home can be really challenging.

Group 4

Working

- Technology
- Synchronous Learning
- IEP Meetings
- Kids with anxiety, school refusal, bullying issues are flourishing
- Movement opportunities for students w/sensory and ADHD

Not Working

- SWDs often need adults to sit with/monitor during synchronous learning

- Mental health/social isolation – need creative ideas
- Too much homework/too many classes?
- Canvas Submissions to Synergy Grades
- Camera on/camera off/standard background/blur background
- Consistency and accountability between schools
- More professional development regarding virtual and concurrent teaching

Suggestions

- Efficacy of Platforms (Desmos/Nearpod/IXL/etc)?
- Explain Platforms – Parent Tutorials
- APS to collaborate with Parks & Rec
- Breakout rooms/collaborative projects
- Brain research?
- Makes specials/electives optional, especially at the elementary level

APPENDIX 2

Chat Transcript

18:51:13 From David Rosenblatt :
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OhrPivaCUOkRCJpAlcUPIFDmTwBk1Zw5UzSFsUfeQZI/edit?usp=sharing>

18:58:31 From David Rosenblatt : please change your display name to your actual name

19:00:26 From Kathy Pericak : Welcome everyone! Please check your display name and make sure it reflects how you would like to be acknowledged in the meeting. Thank you.

19:00:43 From Kathleen Donovan : Hi, all - nice to see you!

19:19:39 From margy dunn : Just wanted to share - my son is Level 1 (4th grade), and my friend has 2 kids in level 1 in 6th grade and our kids are having a very positive experience so far. Barrett and Kenmore

19:19:58 From Rebecca Hunter : We want to come back if there is a grouping for my daughter that works. APS has not provided what was planned... and if there are not additional families invited this will not change. There is not a critical mass of students that can create the needed groupings. without expanding the definition and opportunities for more 'invitations' it will not work... at least at Wakefield

19:21:41 From margy dunn : At Barrett my son is a classroom with 2 other students and 2 adults (the kids aren't in the same grade). It is loud but working. I'm sorry your daughter didn't have the other student contact, esp in highschool

19:22:40 From Janna Dressel : If families feel their child should have been considered for Level 1 and they were not originally selected, what is the appeal process?

19:23:13 From kelly.krug : They should talk to their school and IEP team.

19:23:24 From Janna Dressel : how are Level 1 students being supported on Mondays?

19:24:20 From kelly.krug : Through a variety of ways such as check-ins, small group, 1:1, accommodations

19:24:27 From david siu : Is there geographical variation in participation rates for level 1 instruction (e.g., North vs. Sout hArlington)?

19:24:36 From kelly.krug : no

19:24:49 From margy dunn : Great question David - I'm glad to hear the answer is no

19:26:01 From Nadia Facey (She/Her) : Good question Nick, it is still very inconsistent in terms of how teachers assign work.

19:27:07 From Wendy Pizer : Canvas is still not consistent at all so there is clearly a disconnect between OSE thinking this has been addressed and what is actually happening.

19:28:28 From David Rosenblatt : How large is the initial eval backlog currently?

19:28:50 From kelly.krug : Yes we acknowledge it is not perfect yet and content supervisors are still trying to work with teachers.

19:30:56 From margy dunn : Do we know how many families have pulled their SWD from APS for this school year? Either before it began or since Sept.

19:31:13 From kelly.krug : Yes we get a report each week.

19:32:04 From margy dunn : Is it a significant percentage or nominal?

19:32:18 From Nadia Facey (She/Her) : Hi OSE, just wanted to ask when you are reporting to School Board on the special education indicators that you need to report to VDOE. Thanks!

19:32:53 From kelly.krug : I need to check on that- I want to say March but I'll look at get back to you.

19:33:11 From Nadia Facey (She/Her) : Thanks, it's been the fall for the past several years which is why I wanted to ask. Thanks!

19:33:27 From Rebecca Hunter : Why do we have to wait until January to see if more students can benefit from "Level 1" or similar supports? all else seems to be flexible and fluid as needs arise (sports, health metrics)... so why is Level 1 definition fixed?

19:34:55 From Nadia Facey (She/Her) : Dear all, I'll be a part of the middle school focus group, if anyone has anything you want o reach out to me about things you want to share with APS about middle school, please reach out to me directly at nadia.aseac@gmail.com Thanks.

19:35:16 From Rebecca Hunter : so it is the 'system of school' issue vs a 'school system' issue? ie inconsistency school by school

19:35:16 From David Rosenblatt : I'm on the 2nd-5th group

19:35:33 From David Rosenblatt : Michelle Best is representing our community on the High School group

19:36:34 From Wendy Pizer : Great to hear that the manual is being updated. How is that being provided to teachers?

19:36:43 From Kathleen Donovan : Congrats, Eli, and thanks for stepping up as a student rep!

19:36:46 From Jason Love : Congratulations Eli!!!

19:36:56 From Symone Walker : Welcome Eli!!! So great to have you and your perspective!

19:36:58 From Michelle Best : Congrats to Eli!

19:37:02 From Nadia Facey (She/Her) : Rebecca, I find things still very school by school, especially with SEL learning and all middle schools are having sync classes on Monday except for TJ... it's hard to understand why this is the case for only one middle school.

19:37:19 From Michelle Best : And I am collecting comments for the HS focus group. We meet tomorrow at 4pm.

19:37:28 From Nadia Facey (She/Her) : Welcome Eli!

19:37:48 From Eli : I don't know if you guys herd me but I said thank you. My microphone camera sometimes get messed up

19:37:59 From David Rosenblatt : Thanks, Eli!

19:38:24 From Kelly Mountain : Hi Eli--so glad to have a student member!

19:38:49 From David Rosenblatt : Here is the link for breakout notes:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OhrPivaCUOkRCJpAlcUPIFDmTwBk1Zw5UzSFsUfeQZI/edit?usp=sharing>

19:39:21 From Nadia Facey (She/Her) : Thanks for the link!

19:44:17 From Tauna Szymanski : level 1 students who are high risk and can't enter high transmission risk classrooms aren't able to access any virtual learning unless a parent quits a job to become an unpaid full time paraprofessional. big equity issue.

19:46:49 From Tauna Szymanski : positive: parents of kids in segregated classes are seeing how little instruction actually takes place in those classes. I've gotten TONS of comments like this.

19:47:49 From Tauna Szymanski : yes, great for kids who need to move around more too

19:48:40 From Tauna Szymanski : yes, there does seem to be a lot of work

20:28:28 From Tauna Szymanski : I vote yes

20:28:41 From Paul Timm : yes!

20:29:16 From Janna Dressel : Thank you Kathy! You will be great in this role!

20:29:32 From David Rosenblatt : Yay, Kathy!!!

20:29:49 From Kathy Pericak : Thanks, everyone!!

20:36:11 From Alisa Cowen : The Virginia State PTA has resources and state specialists in physical design re: school accessibility issues

20:37:04 From Kathy Pericak : If anyone would like to review the Discipline or Transportation policies who is not receiving my e-mails, please email me at pericak.kathy@gmail.com

20:37:36 From Janna Dressel : Thanks all!

20:37:41 From Jason Love : Thanks

20:38:00 From Kathleen Donovan : Good night, and Happy Thanksgiving!