

Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee
MINUTES
 November 15, 2022
 In Person with Zoom

Recording of Meeting: This meeting was not recorded

ASEAC Members:

First Name	Last Name	Present?	In Person	Virtual	ACTL	Virtual Dates - taken by consensus	Vote on September 2022 meeting minutes - postponed to next meeting
Claudia	Ramirez Cuellar	yes		x	yes		
David	Rosenblatt	yes		x	yes		
David	Siu	yes	x		yes		
Ellen	Fitzenrider	yes		x	-		
Emily	Remus	No			-		
Jennifer	Wheelock	yes		x	yes		
Kathryn	Pericak	yes	x		yes		
Keith	Chanon	yes	x		yes		
Kristin	Gillig	yes	x		yes		
Kurt	Schuler	yes	x		yes		
Laura	Bryant Njanga	No			-		
Matt	Leland	No			-		
Michelle	Best	No			-		
Minerva	Trudo	yes		x	-		
Nicholas	Walkosak	yes		x	yes		
Paige	Shevlin	yes	x		yes		
Paul	Timm	yes		x	-		

Raquel	Cepelak	No			-		
Rebecca	Hunter	yes		x	-		

Motion to approve minutes: postponed until next meeting

Second:

Virtual December meeting approved by consensus.

Non-Member Attendees

In Person	Kelly Krug, Heather Rothenbuescher, Kelly?, Cecilia Kline, Kathleen Clark, Kathleen Donovan
Virtual	Kathryn Linehan, Emma Parral Sanchez, Gradis White, Katharine Modisett, Reade Bush, Anne Paris, Jenny Roahen Rizzo, Janna Dressel, Bill Daus, Marisol (?), Laura Seals, Dr. Jason Ottley, Julio (?), Maria Soledad

Welcome

Agenda

- 7:00 - 7:20 pm Welcome and Public Comments
- 7:20 - 7:30 pm OSE Updates and Response to September Public Comments
- 7:30 - 8:30 pm Facilitated Discussion regarding Challenging Conversations (listen to podcast on Effective DEI ahead of time)
- 8:30 - 8:45 pm Introduction to the Bias Awareness Training in APS Dr. Jason Ottley, APS Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer
- 8:45 - 8:50 pm Parent Resource Center updates
- 8:50 - 9:00 pm ASEAC Business, Updates

Meeting opened at: approximately 7:02

Public Comments

Katharine Modisett

Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC)

November 15, 2022

Topic: COVID positive students on Day 6 through 10

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. My name is Katharine Modisett and I am a parent of a first grader at Arlington Science Focus School. I am also a Critical Care Physician.

I am calling to alert the committee that the current APS policies in place for students returning to school on Days 6 through 10 of a COVID-19 diagnosis are in violation of the CDC guidelines and present a safety risk to students and staff.

Per CDC guidelines, regardless of when an individual ends isolation, they should avoid being around people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19, wear a high-quality mask when indoors, and not go places where they are unable to wear a mask. (Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19 | CDC)

APS is not currently isolating students on Day 6 through 10 of COVID from high-risk students. I know this because my 6-year-old is on chemotherapy and per the current policy, these students returning to school will be with her in the classrooms and the cafeteria. I also have major concerns about the schools' ability to strictly enforce mask compliance with students returning. If parents can't be assured that masking will be enforced, then these students should not be allowed to return until day 11. Additionally, to be in compliance with CDC guidelines, students who test positive for COVID should not return to classrooms where there are high risk students or staff until day 11 of their illness.

There is also no current APS policy to ensure these students on Day 6 through 10 of COVID are eating away from other students. In fact, the policy notes that children will at most be 3 feet away from others, meaning these students who are known to remain contagious for COVID are eating in communal settings with the rest of the student body. This clearly violates the CDC guidance to avoid going places where one can't mask. It's hard to imagine that an adult would eat in a crowded restaurant on day 6 of a COVID illness, but we are asking our students to do just that by seating them in the cafeteria. As an alternative, students who are returning to school on days 6 through 10 should be eating all meals and snacks in private areas where they can be supervised by a masked adult to minimize transmission.

As my 6-year-old continues her battle against cancer, attending first grade is one of her greatest sources of joy. She is fully vaccinated, boosted, and has even received Evusheld as part of a pediatric clinical trial. She wears her mask at all times, is constantly sanitizing her hands, but she also has to eat – and she has no way to wear a mask or protect herself while students who are still positive and contagious for COVID sit alongside her. The minutes she spends unmasked and eating at school are the most dangerous moments of her week.

The teachers and school administrators at my daughter's school are working hard to keep our her safe. However, this policy is faulty and will lead to a preventable spread of COVID in our schools this fall and winter.

Margarite Gooden

Thank you! I thought about sending a written statement. If I can get it done I'll email it. I wanted to speak about how parents of special needs kids need advocates! I have a special needs grandson and my daughter has experienced excessive amounts of stress trying to advocate for her son's appropriate needs. Being a former APS employee, I am often viewed as intimidating when I attempt to advocate for them. My daughter, being a single parent of color, often feels as though she is dismissed and devalued!! This often leads to my grandson experiencing placements that are convenient for APS but detrimental to my grandson's educational growth.

Well, it seems I've done a little venting! I will truly try to share my concerns at your next meeting. Advocacy for minority students and parents has become very important to me. Thank you for listening!!

David Siu

My comments are occasioned by the multiple SPED staff vacancies at Tuckahoe this year. I want to start by acknowledging the incredible effort of our child's teachers under these labor constraints. They have had to do more without the full complement of staff.

Despite direct requests we have received only sporadic and incomplete information about the staffing shortages and missed instruction time. We would have expected there to be detailed, clear, and regular communication about this critical issue from the beginning of the year. What is APS doing to ensure parents are provided detailed and timely information regarding who is delivering their children's legally mandated education services, how many hours have been missed and in what settings, what the plan is to fill any vacancies essential to the delivery of these services, and progress of these staffing plans?

We have yet to receive a full accounting of exactly how many hours our child had missed and whether the hours were to be delivered in a general or special education setting. How exactly does APS keep track of whether or not special education service hours are delivered, by whom, and and in what setting? Does APS have a uniform system to track the delivery of all special education services akin to taking attendance or tracking Medicaid billable services? If it does not, what will APS do to put such a system in place?

While we have been offered compensatory services, these services are delivered exclusively in a special education setting, even though they are in compensation for hours that were to be delivered in an inclusive setting. Providing compensatory services in a restrictive environment runs counter to our child's IEP and APS's commitment to inclusion. What will APS do to develop a plan for delivering compensatory services in inclusive settings to honor the district's commitment to inclusion?

Finally, what else can APS do to staff schools with multiple vacancies in critical staff positions? Are there ways APS could redeploy existing staff to student facing roles on an emergency basis?

Thank you.

Reade Bush

Echoes what David said. Two children with IEPs and significant hours at Tuckahoe. Only found out piecemeal from kids about significant gaps in coverage. Resulted in reading groups and other services had more students, causing teachers to have to stretch thin

Hard to differentiate and meet students' learning needs when short staffed. How does the system track hours. Is there a system in place?

OSE Response to Public Comments

Mask Accommodations

Share comments with other offices and departments. Work with school based administrators to collaboratively put in place any required accommodations.

SPED Staffing at Tuckahoe

3 teacher vacancies. 1 long term sub. 2 teacher replacements. As of right now services are being implemented. The school has begun to reach out to begin offering compensatory services to students who have missed services and work with families to see if additional services may be needed.

Facilitated Discussion regarding Challenging Conversations

Alicia Jones McLeod and Dawn Kyser from Challenging Racism

Introduction by Kathy Pericak:

Our next agenda item is a facilitated discussion with two people from a group called Challenging Racism. Before I introduce our facilitators, I want to acknowledge that

Symone Walker resigned from ASEAC in early October following an email exchange between some of the members. I talked with Symone after her resignation, and she was hurt by both the content and the lack of content, or silence, in the exchange. I have invited our facilitators here today to help us learn how to have all of our voices heard, while at the same time respecting and empathizing with other people. The content of our discussion will focus on tools for having conversations, and how to interrupt bias. These tools can be used by everyone to interrupt all types of bias - whether it is based on race, nationality, disability, gender, or other forms of bias.

Our facilitators today are Alicia Jones McLeod and Dawn Kyser. Ms. Jones McLeod is the Executive Director of Challenging Racism, with a background in marketing. In prior jobs, Ms. Jones McLeod helped raise awareness of Ellicott City's "Main Street" and founded the Maryland Black Chamber of Commerce. She is also currently in a Masters of Public Administration program at the University of Delaware with a concentration in non-profit management.

Dawn Kyser is the Facilitation Coordinator at Challenging Racism, and has been involved in the work of the organization for over 15 years. Ms. Kyser was Lead Curriculum Writer and Facilitator for the Arlington County Discussions on Race and Equity Project that began in 2020. As a teacher in the Arlington Public Schools, she was in the first cohort of trained facilitators moderating Courageous Conversation for teachers and staff in schools across the county.

Diversity: number of people in the room

Inclusion: value diverse viewpoints coming across

Equity: everyone has same access to sharing views, being a successful part of organization; given what they need to participate fully; move past scarcity, we can all have what we need; equal access to everything that we need

Identify people the way they ask you to identify them.

Can use framework to address ableism and other forms of bias.

To disrupt bias teams need a:

- Shared vocabulary (the whole team decides what the signal will be to call in or call out bias.)
- Shared norm (What will the team do about observed bias? When called in or out, some responses could be "Thanks for bringing this to my attention; I get it" OR "Actually, I don't get it. What do you mean?")
- Shared commitment (what are the organization's values/culture?)

Need to disrupt harms when they occur.

Pay attention to things that cause you discomfort.

Stop and acknowledge when something has happened. The shared language could be something like: “Ouch.”

Person who is harmed does not have accountability to respond.

Acknowledge harm. There should be a collective norm as a way to flag when someone says something that does not sit well with you. E.g., “ouch”, “vibe check”,
Not every flag has to interrupt the conversation. Don’t have to address every person’s emotions every time. But, stop the meeting if there is significant harm. Other people than the victim can disrupt the harm.

A question was raised as to when to call out vs. speak in private. Response: it depends on the relationship with the person. Sometimes you say something in public, but others you address later in private.

Could address whether someone would like you to step in after the fact.

How do you benefit from being right when someone is hurt. Relationship building is important, and sometimes you have to let things go to save the relationship or promote the relationship. Difference between impact and intent. Only insist on being right when it is central to the organization.

Norms. Policies for groups or responses. Shared commitment. Accountability and tracking results: response and follow through.

1. Make sure the group is ready for DEI. Discuss and set up as guidelines
2. Term to use. What is the procedure for handling when the term is used? How do you resolve the issue when trust is broken? What do you do when someone is harmed?
3. Either commit to making the place open and equitable or you do not.

In response to a question about email exchanges: email exchanges are easiest to disrupt because you can take some time to respond and bring things back up. Need to resolve the issue. Can also have a direct chat in Zoom.

Introduction to the Bias Awareness Training in APS

Dr. Jason Ottley, APS Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer gave an introduction about the Bias Awareness training that is being rolled out in APS.

By raising awareness of the mental shortcuts that we all take, we can better interact with a more diverse population (students, employees, and communities).

The APS training is about HUMANS...how we are programmed and how we show up wherever we are. Take this knowledge and make it practical. Your job is to take the content away and become a different human being - not just a different supervisor or teacher.

Manage bias. Can't eradicate. Bias goes beyond race [presumably to ableism]. How do you manage actions before they become hurtful

Do staff and students feel empowered to address bias and hold each other accountable.

Question for Dr. Ottley - as we look to define a set of norms or principles that guide our work - does APS already have some principles that would help us - acknowledgements - if we have those statements - then it could be pointed to

Dr. Ottley - the challenge is accountability - that takes time - this is how we move within the organization.

ASEAC will get access to the on-line version of the Bias Awareness training that we can do on our own, and then Dr. Ottley will come back and talk with us about it more in January.

Parent Resource Center Updates

Provided information on upcoming seminars and talks.

ASEAC Updates

Discussed recommendations being forwarded to the School Board through the Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning recommendation process. A question was raised about the cost of planning factor adjustments. David Rosenblatt responded that it is not ASEAC's place to provide detailed cost estimates. ASEAC talks about the need and flags ballpark costs, but APS and the superintendent should provide more exact figures.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:20 pm.