

**Fairfax County Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD)
Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2021**

Member Name		Organization	Attendance
Darcy	Acquavella	City of Fairfax School Board	P
Ally	Baldassari ***	SEPTA	P
Sanaa	Bouzit	Member at Large-Abrar Omeish	P
Liz	Brocato	Braddock District-Megan McLaughlin	P
Brandon	Cassady	Hunter Mill District-Melanie Meren	E
Sandi	Dalhoff	Neighborhood & Community Services	P
Susan	Edgerton	Member at Large-Rachna Sizemore-Heizer	P
Mary Kate	Ganley	Student Representative	
James	Gillespie	Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board	P
Meghan	Gray	Lee District-Tamara Derenak Kaufa	P
Mary	Hackman	Providence District-Karl Frisch	P
Harry	Henderson	Mason District-Ricardy Anderson	P
Lissy	John	Dranesville District-Elaine Tholen	P
Lynn	Kiewel	Fairfax Co. Health Dept.	P
Andrienne	Konstas	League of Women Voters	P
Toby	Latham	Springfield District-Laura Jane Cohen	P
Connie	Lorentzen *	Mount Vernon District-Karen Corbett Sanders	P
Rachel	Macias	Region 4- -Jay Pearson-Assistant Superintendent	P
Linda	Mason	Higher Education	P
Phara	Rodrigue	Member at Large-Karen Keys Gamarra	P
Brianne	Russell-Morris	POAC-NoVA	P
Michael	Simon	Sully District-Stella Pekarsky	P
Dena	Sonneborn	Region 3-Nardos King-Assistant Superintendent	P
Joanne	Walton**	Faculty	P
Ann-Marie	Ward ***	Fairfax County Council PTA	P
Niki	Zimmerman	Region 2-Fabio Zuluaga-Assistant Superintendent	P
* Chair **Vice-Chair *** Secretary		P = Present E = Excused Absence R = Resigned	

FCPS Staff Who Were Present:

- Michelle Boyd, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Services
- Mike Bloom, Director of Special Education Instruction
- Jane Strong, Director of Procedural Support
- Dawn Clements, Assistant Ombudsman for Special Education
- Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Director of Parent Resource Center
- Lea Skurpski, Director of Operations and Strategic Planning

School Board Members Present:

- Rachna Sizemore Heizer, At-Large, Committee Liaison

This meeting was held virtually via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra and live-streamed on the FCPS website. The meeting was recorded. Public comment was submitted electronically.

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Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Connie Lorentzen.

Agenda & Minutes:

- Ann-Marie presented the minutes from the February 2021 meeting. Joanne motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Niki seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- Ann-Marie introduced the agenda for the meeting. Joanne motioned to accept the agenda as presented. Sandi seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

- Amanda Campbell
- Lily Sahada

- Transcripts of the public comments are appended to the minutes.

Attendance Report:

- There are 26 appointed members who serve on the ACSD. A quorum is established with 14 members present. There were 24 members present at tonight's meeting. FCPS staff in attendance included Mike Bloom, Director of Special Education Instruction, Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Director of the Parent Resource Center, Dawn Clements, Assistant Ombudsman for Special Education, Jane Strong, Director of Procedural Support, and Dr. Michelle Boyd, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Services. The school board liaison to the ACSD, Rachna Sizemore Heizer, was also present.

Parent Resource Center News

- Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Director of the Parent Resource Center, shared an update.

PRC staff will be returning to the Dunn Loring Center the week of March 16, but by appointment only. The library will have an additional pick-up day at Dunn Loring, on Fridays. Webinars will continue virtually. Having an Arabic language webinar for parents in March. Another Spanish language webinar is slated for the beginning of April. Partnering with the Fairfax County Health Department to offer webinars about the COVID vaccine in 5 languages. Adding 600 e-books to the library.

The community can continue to see past webinars on the PRC YouTube channel.

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Presentation: IDEA Annual Plan

- Lea Skurpski, Director of Operations and Strategic Planning, gave a presentation on the IDEA Annual Plan. This is required by state and federal law. FCPS must demonstrate eligibility to receive federal IDEA funding via the VDOE. This plan will also be presented to the school board on April 8, voted on by school board on April 22, and due to VDOE by May 14.
- For FY22, the proposed FCPS special education budget (18.8% of total) is \$580.1 million. The Annual Plan is for how FCPS will spend \$38.3 million from the federal government as part of IDEA. This funds K-12 (\$37.5 million) and preschool activities (\$.8 million).
- The application includes the following components:
 - Superintendent's Certification
 - Policy Statements
 - Statement of Assurances
 - Special Education in Local and Regional Jails
 - Report on the Implementation of the Prior Year's Plan (2019-20) – numbers decreased because schools were closed in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic.
 - Maintenance of Effort Eligibility – state and local contributions toward special education must equal or exceed prior year funding.
 - Coordinated Early Intervention Services (\$5.7 million – 15%) – for students who are not identified as needing special education or related services – behavior, attendance, restorative justice, psychology, social work, and substance abuse programs and Proportionate Set-Aside – funds services (via ISP for related services) for parentally-placed private school children with disabilities enrolled in private schools - \$0.3 million.
 - Application for Use of Federal Funds for Sections 611 and 619 – funding is primarily used to fund full-time equivalent employees (salaries and employee benefits).

Special Education Update:

- Jane Strong spoke about the updated Special Education Parent Handbook – available online, as a PDF, and printed copies upon request. There is also a Spanish version online. A Spanish print version is coming soon. Will there be other translations done? There are plans to do so. Question whether parents are given access to the handbook before an initial IEP. There is currently no process in place. It is not available in SEASTARS (as a link for teachers) at this time – could there be a checkbox for staff to share the information about what is available (website, PDF, print copy). How have staff been informed about access to the handbook – to be able to send the handbook to parents? The Special Education Process webpage is the handbook in web form.
- Mike Bloom gave some updates.
 - ESY services information will be publicized soon – locations and dates for school-based in-person services.
 - Recovery services may also be needed by the same students as ESY.
 - Other summer programs are also being offered.

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- OSEI is discussing how families can be flexible to participate in multiple programs.
- ESY can be virtual and also doesn't have to fit into the window of the school-based in-person services.
- Special Education Conference information is available online – registration will open soon. <https://www.fcps.edu/node/42997/> - includes Student Strands.
- Staff is working on next steps to include Decoding Dyslexia Virginia as an appointed member.
- Questions about how hours are counted on Mondays – no clear answer was given.
- Classroom monitors – how many students with special education services are covered by a monitor – data is being collected – monitors have some mandatory training and some optional training – support and coaching can be provided by additional staff, such as ABA coaches – teachers would provide monitors with information from the IEP, if necessary, but monitors are always working under the direction of the teacher.
- ACSD website has been updated with some new links.

Old Business:

- Connie has requested the staff response to the 2019-20 report and it will be posted on our website when available.

Chair Update & New Business:

- Connie shared that the First Class Award Nominations form is available on our website.
- Connie has offered our assistance to the outside agency who is conducting the Special Education Audit.
- Ally will be sending cards to two of our members who have been absent due to health reasons.

Subcommittee Reports:

Members should read each subcommittee's report prior to our next meeting. Any proposed amendments should be forwarded to the Recording Secretary in writing in advance of the meeting.

- School Board Charge – Susan
 - How can DSS deploy its rich array of resources?
 - School based compliance
 - Mechanisms to address compliance.
 - Offices: OSEI, Procedural Support, Ombudsman, Auditor General
- Family Engagement and Outreach – Joanne
 - Livestream and recording of meetings should continue whether virtual or in-person.
 - Continue video, audio, and written public comment.

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- ACSD periodic reporting on school board action items.
- All eligibility, testing, and IEP documents should be translated for families for which English is not their first language.

- Student Achievement and Outcomes – Mary
 - Needs of children with dyslexia.
 - Challenges in interventions – training, communicating programs and progress to families, fidelity of implementation, accountability.
 - Comments from families in an informal survey.

- Policy and Regulation – Brienne & Ally
 - Restraint and Seclusion Policy
 - Recovery Services
 - Equitable Access for Secondary School Students with Disabilities
 - Effective Use of PBIS and Tiered Behavioral Supports

Member Time:

- Rachna shared about the board’s work. Current budget work does not include COVID funding – it will be done separately. Advertised budget has been approved. Board of Supervisors will pass their budget and then the board will have to modify the budget as necessary. Calendar planning for next year. Special education audit is ongoing – ensure that special education families complete the survey. Public Engagement Subcommittee is looking at the function of the advisory committees. Partnership with the police department and the Arc of Northern Virginia for practicing police stops for people with disabilities.

- SEPTA Meeting on March 23. SEPTA Awards nominations are being solicited.

- The Virginia PTA Annual Meeting will be held virtually the week of March 15. It is free for all PTA members. Each unit may have up to 3 voting delegates, but all PTA members are encouraged to register to receive a link to the livestream on YouTube. On Tuesday, March 16, PTA delegates will be voting to adopt two resolutions, one pertaining to Restraint and Seclusion and one pertaining to Special Education, Funding, Training, and Oversight. Details about the resolutions, the schedule of events, the slate of candidates for Virginia PTA officers, and how to register can be found at <https://vapta.org/events/events-3/annual-conference>

Next meeting is April 14, 7 pm – 9 pm.

Meeting adjourned: Connie adjourned the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

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Public Comment

Amanda Campbell

Good evening. My name is Amanda Campbell, and I am speaking tonight as Vice President of Fairfax County SEPTA. Governor Northam proclaimed March to be Virginia School Board Association Equity in Education month. FCPS' School Board followed up with its own Resolution. What stands out to me in both of these acknowledgements, is the specifically named inclusion of disability as a factor that has "a demonstrated history of impacting the educational opportunities provided to a student."

This stands out to me because, in practice within FCPS, disability is often left out of the equity discussion. Take a look at the FCPS #EdEquityChallenge materials - nothing on those resources includes looking at these issues through a disability lens. This is not to take away from the issues that the #FCPSEdEquityChallenge does address, but rather to suggest this should be a "yes, and" moment where the disability lens is woven into the equity conversations that are already happening.

This is not the first time these concerns have been raised with FCPS. Similar concerns were raised regarding the Family Engagement Survey done 2 years ago, and in review of the initial drafts of the Family Engagement Policy last year. Yet still, the inclusion of disability does not appear as a priority in this FCPS educational equity movement. So, then, I must ask:

Is it educational equity to have Cat B teachers instructing students in multiple grade levels in one classroom? Would any single general education teacher be asked to teach 2 or 3 different grade levels in a single classroom? What about 6 different grade levels? There are Cat B classrooms that serve K-6 in one room. Beyond the academic issues of needing to teach 6 different grade levels, imagine the potential safety issues with students at such varying ages and stages of development.

Is it educational equity for those teachers that teach multiple grade levels simultaneously to have no planning time? To have to apply for waivers to get a substitute for one day/month so they can get even 1 day to plan, when general education teachers get planning periods built into their daily schedule? To not even be consistently guaranteed a duty free lunch?

Is it educational equity for students to not have the supports to access the curriculum beyond their IEP goals because the teachers are overloaded with the multiple grade levels they need to balance?

Is it educational equity to expect one adapted curriculum specialist to support the needs of an entire region?

Is it educational equity to deny preschool students access to speech and language services as a default position because preschool is a "language rich environment"? That assertion operates under an assumption that the child has not yet been provided with a language rich environment prior to ChildFind. The implicit bias in that assertion is significant.

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Is it educational equity for central office to provide prepared materials and resources, such as project based learning assignments, for general education classrooms while providing no such central office-created resource support for special education teachers?

Is it educational equity when disability history and education is not included in the standard curriculum? We do have teachers making the individual choice to include this information at a school based level, but it is not standard across the county. For example, imagine the empowerment and understanding that could occur for AAC users - and their general education classmates - learning about Micah Fowler - an actor with cerebral palsy that starred on the show “Speechless”? Or Steve Gleason, or Stephen Hawking? Or for Deaf students to learn about Marlee Matlin’s extensive acting career, or that both Beethoven and Thomas Edison were Deaf/HOH?

Educational Equity is an important conversation that needs to occur for all populations whose access to educational opportunities have historically been negatively impacted by bias and prejudice - and that includes students with disabilities. Thank you.

Governor Northam’s 2021 VSBA Equity in Education Month Proclamation:

<https://www.vsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Virginia-School-Boards-Association-Equity-in-Education-Month-March-2021.pdf>

FCPS School Board’s Equity in Education Month Resolution:

<http://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BYDKAM50F363>

FCPS Announcement - <https://www.fcps.edu/news/march-equity-education-month-0>

Equity & Cultural Responsiveness Office - <https://www.fcps.edu/equity>

Ed Equity Challenge Calendar Week

<https://twitter.com/FCPSEquity/status/1365386226518421509/photo/1>

Micah Fowler: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micah_Fowler

Steve Gleason: <https://www.prentrom.com/articles/the-steve-gleason-enduring-voices-act?mode=view>

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Lily Sahda

FCPS needs to address inconsistency in implementation of Special Ed Policy. By the time my son turned 6 years old he had suffered ongoing trauma through the tactics used by the school to discipline for behaviors far from his control and a manifestation of his disability as he was being screened for an IEP. The school took a "wait and see approach" from 2018 to 2019 disregarding the information I shared with administrators and teachers detailing the proven, research-based strategies that had been most successful in support my son. As well, as outside Doctor's recommendations regarding best supports- they kept ignoring me.

Even after my son was found eligible for Special Education Services, as a student with an emotional disability and OHI, the school continued to use the same isolating and traumatizing tactics to discriminate against my son for his disability.

Without the swift identification of my son's disability under the IDEA and the implementation of specialized, systematic, and research-based instruction to address his significant deficits, his disability was further exacerbated. Due to the lack of appropriate training for all staff members that interact with my son to mitigate situations when he experiences heightened emotional responses and to effectively intervene when he is unable to control his actions or emotions, he continued to be subjected to trauma on an ongoing basis. I had to finally hire an advocate to help me be heard. Spending over \$15,000 has been a struggle for me as a single mom. Hiring the advocate we called in Central office supports- PSL, Behavior Intervention (Susan Cooner), Dyslexia Specialists (Dottie Skincosky).

FCPS needs to be more transparent with families and hold their administrators accountable for failing our KIDS when it is on them to reach out and ask central office for more training- NOT the parent's advocate.

Behavior is communication! Kids do well when they can! Adults know and should do better. FCPS needs to do better!!

My son didn't need help with his behavior. He needed help with the underlying problems causing the behavior stemming from his ability to meet the demands at school due to his disabilities that the school could not see beyond!

I trusted the professionals but, it turned out I am the professional on my son and I was 100% on point when I asked for help in 2018 which they didn't come through with until 2020 after a record of 7 suspensions, restraint, seclusion and spending over \$15,000 to fight FCPS. Can you hear the hurt, disappointment and anger!