

Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) - Fairfax County Public Schools
Wednesday, April 13, 2022, 7:05 - 9:00 p.m.

Summary of Business Conducted:

- The ACSD four standing subcommittees read their final reports aloud to the committee. Pending Feedback from the Department of Special Services that was Offered/Requested as a Result of This Meeting, or Still Pending from Meetings Previous
 - Information from the Human Resources department regarding flexibility in hiring, so that early childhood positions could be filled by teachers without early childhood endorsements
 - An update on the progress of the AIR Special Education Audit was requested.
 - A review of the Department of Special Service's Behavior Education Plan was requested.
-

Executive Committee:

Chair, Harry Henderson

Vice Chair, Elizabeth Zielinski

Secretaries, Ally Baldassari (Recording) and Lauren McCaughey (Corresponding)

Member Attendance: A quorum of voting members was confirmed by Recording Secretary Ally Baldassari with 23/28 voting members in attendance. There are now 34 positions on the ACSD; six currently vacant. The full record of attendance, members, and vacancies is appended.

Liaisons/FCPS Guests:

Mike Bloom, Director, Office of Special Education Instruction

Michelle Boyd, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Services

Dawn Schaefer, Acting Director of Special Education Procedural Support

Debbie Lorenzo, Coordinator, Procedural Support Services

Kristina Roman, Acting Coordinator, Due Process and Eligibility

Kelly Conn-Reda, Program Manager, Multi-Agency Services

Angelina Prestipino, Program Manager, Procedural Support Liaisons, Office of Procedural Support

Laura Jane Cohen, School Board Liaison

Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Manager of the Parent Resource Center

Business Meeting Agenda date:

1. Call to Order, Harry Henderson, Chair
2. Approval of Minutes and Adoption of Agenda, Harry Henderson, Chair - March minutes approved; agenda amended to move the school board liaison update to item #7 due to

school board liaison Laura Jane Cohen joining the meeting later, and removing the Subcommittee Spotlight on the Family Engagement and Outreach committee, who prefers to present at the May meeting.

3. Public Comment, Elizabeth Zielinski, Vice Chair [Full comments appended]
 - a. Kathryn Ramchand, written comments read aloud: Ms. Ramchand asks FCPS to consider alternative scheduling for ESY to enable participation in morning community activities such as swim team.
 - b. Elizabeth Zielinski - Thanks FCPS for replacing “autism awareness” with “autism acceptance, but she would like to further advocate for “autism appreciation.” She suggests listening to autistic advocates who prefer to be labeled autistic without “low” or “high-functioning” labels. Preserve the dignity of the autistic individual by forgoing additional descriptors of educational, medical, or other personal information.
4. Parent Resource Center News, Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Manager of the PRC
 - a. April webinars: Supporting Early Learners - Growing the caregiver’s toolbox for PreK-2 families, Flashforward post secondary options
 - b. May webinars: Worry and Anxiety in Children and Adolescents - a partnership with NIMH, guest presenter Dr. Ramaris German; Managing Fighting and Aggression: A Webinar for Families
 - c. Sibshops - Sat 5/14/2022 will be the last one, in person at Providence Community Center
 - d. Reminder available for consultations and resources... Just call to see what we have!
 - e. The PRC has updated their Parent Summer Resource Guide. They have hard copy or PDF, and it contains summer camps in it and guides to adapted sports and recreation.

Questions:

Nicole Zupan asked if this summer guide is translated for parents. Currently it is not translated, but will make translations on request

Susan Edgerton asked if PoAC-NoVA could distribute the summer guide: yes, please do!

5. Attendance Report, Ally Baldassari, Recording Secretary - as above
6. Department of Special Services (DSS) Updates, Dr. Michelle Boyd, Mike Bloom, Deb Scott, and Dawn Schaefer
 - a. Mike Bloom informed the ACSD of the Autism Acceptance Activities on the fcps website provided by the ABA program. Access by searching fcps ABA.
 - b. Mike Bloom - The department is still accepting ESY applications, and is currently giving out offers. There is still a need for both teachers and paraprofessionals.
 - c. Dawn Schaefer- The DSS is being audited by the VDOE this year. This is in progress right now. The department is in the middle of a “two week visit” with classroom visits and interviews with randomly-selected families. When the report is complete Ms. Schaefer believes it will be public. Ms. Schaefer reports she was told by the VDOE representative

that the randomly-chosen parents who they interviewed by phone had positive things to say. Her department feels it was a good cross section of parents.

Questions:

Susan Edgerton asked about guidance for recovery services. Her personal experience was that her IEP team was unaware of the guidance and felt recovery services were only for students who were out due to COVID this year. Ms. Schaefer said thanks for the feedback; her department is always looking to identify failures of communication. Ms. Schaefer reported there is a meeting the following Monday with elementary lead teachers and secondary department chairs said they continue to share the message that recovery services should be considered.

Ally Baldassari echoed Ms. Edgerton's concerns about a lack of understanding on what is in the current [Guidance Document for IEP Teams for COVID Recovery Services](#) and recommended linking it on every communication that goes out from DSS to special education families. Ms. Baldassari then asked about the Behavior Education Plan that appeared in the R&S second quarter report, which is being developed by DSS in conjunction with Dr. Ross Greene. Will the ACSD be able to review the plan? Mr. Bloom replied that DSS is studying the required and recommended trainings that exist already with Dr. Ross Greene, and trying to make sure trauma informed practices are a part of the plan. The plan is still in development, but they hope to have it by the end of this month and will "share details with the ACSD." "There will be opportunities for the ACSD to see that as we are moving forward."

Harry Henderson asked to clarify that the ACSD would see the plan. Mr. Bloom responded affirmatively, while stating that the Behavior Education plan is not a policy, but a plan for all students, not students with disabilities.

Nicole Zupan asked if special education teachers without an early childhood endorsement would be able to apply for early childhood positions, in light of staff shortages. Mr. Bloom replied that this would be a question for the Human Resources teacher licensure office, but he would be happy to inquire about this possibility.

Amanda Campbell wanted to clarify that the ACSD reviews procedures as well as policy according to our mandate in 8 VAC 20-81-230(D); so therefore she feels the ACSD is entitled to review the Behavior Education Plan.

Ally Baldassari clarified that she would prefer that questions on which plans/policies the ACSD should review should be posed to Hank Millward vs. an FCPS interpretation of 8 VAC 20-81-230(D).

7. School Board Liaison Update, Laura Jane Cohen, Springfield District
 - a. Asked to respond to the previous statements by Ms. Baldassari and Ms. Campbell. She is aware that R&S applies disproportionately to students with disabilities, as does the

SR&R. She feels that the ACSD “should have a seat at the table,” and believes the ACSD should have seen the full redline restraint and seclusion policy before it went to the board. “There is gap that is happening that I am determined to be a part of fixing.” She also understands that there is no mal-intent.

- b. She is excited about the new superintendent and tells us that special education students were front and center in the questions involved in the superintendent process.

Questions:

Ally Baldassari asked if the annual report on restraint and seclusion data required by the R&S plan would occur with a discussion, given that we need to assess FCPS seclusion ban readiness. Ms. Cohen responded she didn’t know when the report would occur, but she will request it be with a worksession.. She understands that organizations must “do the work” in addition to having a new policy to make the seclusion ban safe for staff and students.

Lauren McCaughey asked if the School Board has any updates on the AIR Special Education Audit, as the Committee has not received information on it. Ms. Cohen notes that she is not on the Audit Committee that follows the process. She will reach out to Tamara Derenak Kaufax for an update and share that. Dawn Schaefer contributed that she knows AIR is hard at work finishing classroom observations to conclude prior to the commencement of SOL testing, and then will proceed to conducting 40+ focus groups.

8. Reading of draft Annual Report: Chair (or chair appointee) of the four ACSD standing subcommittees read their section of the report.
9. Old Business & New Business - None
10. Member Time

Amanda Campbell - Toured Burke School with Laura Jane Cohen, and thanks Principal Deborah Strayhorn for her hospitality. They observed many students in crisis, and the crises being well-handled. But the new practices to prevent and manage crises are labor intensive, so staffing at this site and other schools in the division may need to be adjusted accordingly.

Ally Baldassari informed the committee of the SEPTA general membership meeting to occur via Zoom Tues., 4/19/22.

Brianne Russell Morris reported on an upcoming PoAC-NoVA meeting. Please see:

<https://poac-nova.org/events/event/talking-to-your-child-with-asd-about-relationships-and-sex/>

Sandi Dalhoff notes that [Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services](#) is still hiring for their summer programs. Ms. Baldassari clarified she had posted the information to the ACSD webpage, but perhaps failed to send it out to our members to share with their constituents. She will do that for whatever current information Ms. Dalhoff provides.

11. Adjournment - 9:10 PM

Member	Name	Organization/Representing	2021-09-08	2021-09-15	2021-09-22	2021-09-29	2021-10-06	2021-10-13	2021-10-20	2021-10-27	2021-11-03	2021-11-10	2021-11-17	2021-11-24	2021-12-01	2021-12-08	2021-12-15	2021-12-22	2022-01-05	2022-01-12	2022-01-19	2022-01-26	2022-02-02	2022-02-09	2022-02-16	2022-02-23	2022-03-01	2022-03-08	2022-03-15	2022-03-22	2022-03-29	2022-04-05	2022-04-12	2022-04-19	2022-04-26							
Ally	Baldassari	SEPTA	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V					
Amanda	Campbell	Sprinfied District-Laura Jane Cohen	IP	IP	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V				
Ann Marie	Ward	Fairfax County Council of PTA	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V			
Brandis	Ruise	Disabilities Services Board	IP	IP	IP	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V			
Brianne	Russell-Morris	PoAC-NoVA		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V			
Darcy	Acquavella	City of Fairfax School Board		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V		
Deane	Kiley	Preschool	NYA	NYA	V	E	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V			
Elizabeth	Zielinski	Assistive Technology	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V		
Harry	Henderson	Mason District-Ricardy Anderson	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	
Jennifer	Benecke	Lee District-Tamara Derenak Kaufax	NYA	NYA	IP	V	E	E	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V		
Joanne	Walton	Faculty	E	E	IP	IP	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	
Joe	Alston	Region 2-Fabio Zuluaga-Assistant Superintendent	NYA	NYA	NYA	IP	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Lauren	McCaughey	Hunter Mill District-Melanie Meren	IP	IP	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Linda	Mason	Higher Education		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Lissy	John	Dranesville District-Elain Tholen		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Liz	Brocato	Broddock District-Megan McLaughlin		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Mary	Hackman	Providence District-Karl Frisch		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Michael	Simon	Sully District-Stella Pekarsky	IP	IP	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Nicole	Zupan	Faculty	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA
Phara	Rodrigue	Mount Vernon District-Karen Corbett Sanders		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Rachel	Macias	Region 4-Jay Pearson-Assistant Superintendent	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Sanaa	Bouzit	Member at Large-Abrar Omeish	IP	IP	V	E	IP	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Sandi	Dalhoff	Department of Neighborhood and Community Service		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Shannon	Duncan	Decoding Dyslexia Virginia	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA	NYA
Stephanie	Bailey	Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Susan	Edgerton	Member at Large-Rachna Sizemore-Heizer		V	V	V	IP	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Tania	Damavandy	Region 1-Douglas Tyson-Assistant Superintendent	NYA	NYA	NYA	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Vivienne	Goldstein	Fairfax County Health Department	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Zahraa	Hassan	Student Representative	IP	IP	V	E	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Vacant		Member at Large-Karen Keys Gamarra																																								
Vacant		Region 3-Nardos King-Assistant Superintendent																																								
Vacant		Region 5-Rebeca Baenig-Assistant Superintendent																																								
Vacant		Federation of Citizens																																								
Vacant		League of Women Voters																																								
Vacant		Transition Services																																								
V	Attended virtually																																									
IP	Attended in person																																									
E	Excused absence																																									
NYA	Not yet appointed; hadn't been appointed to this position at the time of the meeting																																									
R	Resigned from the ACSD.																																									

Please note that attendance was not required of returning members at the 9-08-2021 Orientation.

1.

Good afternoon,

Please consider this my public comment for the Advisory Committee on Students with Disabilities. My daughter has been receiving special education services since she was 2, and I have long held concerns about ESY scheduling requiring parents to choose between healthy, inclusive community-based activities such as swim team or camps or accessing the educational supports needed during the summer. I recently learned that my daughter's ESY location is set to start at 7:45 -- this would preclude her from participating in swim team practices for the entire month of July. Last year, ESY started at 10:00AM which was much more accommodating to enable participation in summer activities such as swim team. In the 12 years my daughter has been eligible to attend ESY, she has only been able to attend 2 years -- one year 2 days a week, and last year, when it was scheduled at a time that more appropriately considered the engagement of students with disabilities in activities within their communities. The non-classroom ESY alternatives are not effective. Please encourage FCPS to take a more community inclusion focused approach to scheduling ESY -- swim teams are extremely common in this county, and most are exceptionally inclusive to children with disabilities. Forcing parents and kids to choose between education and community participation shouldn't be the norm; scheduling ESY at a time that enables community engagement should be.

Thank you,
Kathryn Ramchand

2.

Public Comment to ACSD
April 13, 2022
Submitted by Elizabeth Zielinski

Although you know me as vice chair of the ACSD, my comments tonight are as an individual constituent. I am the parent of an autistic teenager, and I'm speaking tonight on the topic of April as Autism Acceptance Month.

I'm glad we've moved past autism awareness, because that only says that we acknowledge autism exists. I'd like to see us also move beyond acceptance, everyone deserves acceptance regardless of their abilities. Let's consider instead, autism appreciation. Because everyone benefits when we embrace diversity.

There are over 4000 students in Fairfax County who have autism documented as their primary category of disability. At a rate of 1 in 44 students, there is no “them,” there is only “us.”

But the nature of being autistic means that many of these students are unable to self-advocate. That does not deprive them of their right to be respected, heard, and included.

So how do we offer these things to students who can't easily tell us more about themselves? Our best option is to listen to that part of the autistic population who can. And if you do, you will learn that some practices we have adopted over the years, while done with good intentions, may also have been misguided.

For example, autistics generally prefer identity-first language. They will explain that autism is who they are, not something they have. They choose to be called autistic, not a “person with autism” or “on the spectrum.” They also reject labels such as high- or low-functioning. These terms not only lack any meaningful definition, but there's no way to use them without reducing a complex, highly nuanced human being into simple categories of high and low.

Instead, we should simply say that someone is autistic. No diagnosis entitles strangers to know more than that. Anything more is a personal decision. And if that decision must be made by a parent, teacher, or other caregiver, it should always be done in a manner that preserves dignity for the person being described. Too often I see explicit medical, emotional and educational information shared in public forums about an autistic person that would never be shared about a neurotypical one.

Autistics also reject puzzle pieces as being symbolic of autism. The puzzle piece symbol was first used in 1963 to demonstrate that autistics are “puzzling”, have “missing pieces” and “don't fit.” Not only do we know so much more about autism now, but it can be hard to be taken seriously when the world associates you with those messages. Puzzle pieces have been removed from use by most autistic advocacy groups for this reason.

You may have seen the rainbow infinity symbol used instead, and that's better – it's a symbol of neurodiversity, which includes autism, but also extends to a wide range of other neurological and behavioral differences. The gold infinity symbol I'm wearing tonight is one chosen by autistics because the chemical symbol for gold is Au, and because autism has infinite individuality.

Tonight does not allow me to detail this topic comprehensively, but I welcome questions. The important thing to know is that my comments have been driven by those who are autistic, not by others making decisions on their behalf – however well-intentioned those decisions may have been at the time.

Words and symbols matter, and they can work together to change mindsets. We are charged as a body to represent the community of individuals who have disabilities in FCPS, and thousands of them are autistic. Let us model education in all its forms, and learn from those who have the most to teach us.

Thank you.