

**Fairfax County Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD)  
Meeting Minutes  
December 9, 2020**

<b>Member Name</b>		<b>Organization</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
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	P
Sandi	Dalhoff	Neighborhood & Community Services	
Susan	Edgerton	Member at Large-Rachna Sizemore-Heizer	P
Mary Kate	Ganley	Student Representative	E
James	Gillespie	Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board	P
Meghan	Gray	Lee District-Tamara Derenak Kaufax	P
Mary	Hackman	Providence District-Karl Frisch	P
Harry	Henderson	Mason District-Ricardy Anderson	E
Lissy	John	Dranesville District-Elaine Tholen	P
Lynn	Kiewel	Fairfax Co. Health Dept.	E
Andrienne	Konstas	League of Women Voters	
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	
Dena	Sonneborn	Region 3-Nardos King-Assistant Superintendent	E
Joanne	Walton**	Faculty	P
Ann-Marie	Ward ***	Fairfax County Council PTA	P
Niki	Zimmerman	Region 2-Fabio Zuluaga-Assistant Superintendent	P
<b>* Chair **Vice-Chair *** Secretary</b>			<b>P = Present E = Excused Absence R = Resigned</b>

**FCPS Staff Who Were Present:**

- Michelle Boyd, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Services
- Mike Bloom, Director of Special Education Instruction
- Jane Strong, Director of the Office of Procedural Support
- Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Director of the Parent Resource Center
- Dawn Clements, Assistant Ombudsman for Special Education

**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 November meeting. Joanne motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Ally seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- Ann-Marie presented the minutes from the December forum on the Policy on Seclusion and Restraint. Joanne motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Ally seconded. The motion passed unanimously with one abstention.
- Ann-Marie introduced the agenda for the meeting. Joanne motioned to accept the agenda as presented. Ally seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment:**

- Video testimony from Lauren McCaughey about seclusion and restraint policy and how her son's life could have been negatively impacted if he had been subjected to these practices.
- Video testimony from Kerry Murphy about her experiences with seclusion in FCPS and her desire for seclusion to be banned at all schools as soon as possible. <https://youtu.be/jNulZ-Xictk>
- Audio testimony from Norm Hall, who has experience with teaching, tutoring, and SACC, and is a parent of a former FCPS student. He shared his concerns about students who are in SRS not receiving the correct supports. A written transcript appears at the end of the minutes.

**Parent Resource Center News:**

- **Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham**, Director of the PRC, provided an update. Ebooks are coming to the PRC library in January. Last week, the PRC had a successful webinar for parents who speak Spanish and look forward to future collaborations for parents who speak Spanish, as well as Arabic. December webinars: Coping Strategies for Anxious Kids (340 registrants). Behavior Intervention series – All Behavior Happens for a Reason – Behavior as Communication. In January: Ann Dolin will present Zoomed Out: 5 Strategies to Get Even the Most Reluctant Kids Focused, Engaged, and Motivated; Career and Transition Services will present on the Transition IEP and Exploring Post-Secondary Options through the College and Career Center; Math specialists will present Supporting K-2 Child in Math and Supporting Grade 3-6 Child in Math; Behavior Intervention Services will present Strategies for Increasing Replacement Behavior; Social Work Services will present Sibshops for siblings; and College 101 for Families of Students with Disabilities. The PRC will be closed during Winter Break.

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**Presentation: I'm Determined**

- Diane Loomis, Project Coordinator, presented about the I'm Determined project funded by the VDOE ([www.imdetermined.org](http://www.imdetermined.org))
- Self Determination for Youth with Disabilities – freedom to make choices that impact their own lives and have a voice
- Students have better in-school academic outcomes, have richer adult lives, and be employed after graduation
- Students participate in their own IEP meetings. I'm Determined helps prepare them to do so.
- One Pager – students complete in advance: My Strengths, My Interests, My Preferences, My Needs (can be adapted)
- Good Day Plan: Good Day, Now, Action, Support
- Goal Plan: My Goal, Next Steps, Outcomes, People Who Can Support Me
- Youth and Parent Summits – free to Virginia students with disabilities, ages 13-21 and parent, 3 day summer camp atmosphere, students learn self-determination skills, parents meet separately to learn and network. 2020 I'm Determined Summit was virtual.
- MOVE: for Virginia rising 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> African American males with a disability
- Statewide I'm Determined Project Youth Leaders
- I'm Determined Virtual Symposium for Educations (Feb 8-22) – synchronous and asynchronous – register early
  - Feb 8 – Student-led IEPs
  - Feb 15 – I'm Determined in the Classroom
  - Feb 22 – Transition and Self Determination
- Films for teaching each core element of self-determination with PPT lessons to accompany the film
- [dloomis@gmu.edu](mailto:dloomis@gmu.edu)
  
- Rachna mentioned that she is working on bringing I'm Determined into the Transition Process in FCPS. Is there any consideration of changing the date of the annual summit or offering it more than once per year?

**Special Education Update:**

- **Mike Bloom** shared that the Special Education Handbook is being made accessible – feedback from ACSD and SEPTA has been incorporated. New Restraint and Seclusion policy information will be incorporated and hope that the handbook will be published in January. Last year's Special Education Conference was cancelled due to the pandemic, but this year's Special Education Conference will be held virtually. A member of the ACSD will serve on the Planning Committee. This is Inclusive Schools Week – “The Time for Inclusion is Now”
  
- **Michelle Boyd** thanked the ACSD for their feedback on the Restraint and Seclusion Policy.

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**Old Business:**

- None

**Chair Update & New Business:**

- Connie shared about correspondence regarding the presentation of the 2019-20 annual report to the school board, which typically occurs in May. Because the presentation has not yet occurred, our report is not in the public record. It is unclear if any presentation to the school board will occur. Hank Millward from VDOE recommended that we email the annual report to the superintendent to transmit to the school board and that way it will be entered into the public record and be made available on Board Docs and eventually be available on our website.

**Subcommittee Updates:**

- Subcommittee reports are due at the March meeting and the annual report will be compiled at the April meeting.
- Susan spoke for the School Board Charge subcommittee. Looking at inconsistency in application of policies across the division. List of questions for FCPS staff. Query to ACSD: Share anecdotes of times when you feel that the decisions being made at your school are different than at other schools – [scedgerton@yahoo.com](mailto:scedgerton@yahoo.com)
- Brandon spoke for the Student Achievement and Outcomes subcommittee. They are determining what questions and data they need from FCPS.
- Joanne spoke for the Family Engagement and Outreach subcommittee. Trying to get ACSD brochure translated and out to all schools. Figuring out how to do an Outreach event and choosing topics that would be of interest to the community, such as neurodiversity. Partner with other stakeholders to present a webinar? Annual Back to School Meet and Greet should be a focus going forward.
- Brianne and Ally spoke for the Policy and Regulation subcommittee – recovery services, secondary schools, positive behavior supports, will continue to look at the restraint and seclusion policy as it must be reviewed each year. Would like a presentation to the entire committee about the plan for recovery services as well as a presentation on MTSS (Multi Tiered Systems of Support).

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**Member Time:**

- Susan brought a letter from POAC NOVA in support of the ACSD recommendations, which has been appended to the minutes.
- Joanne mentioned to like and share and comment on our social media posts so that the algorithm puts those posts in more people's feeds.
- Ally mentioned that SEPTA and FCCPTA issued a joint position on Restraint and Seclusion, which was also signed on to by Formed Families Forward and The Arc of Northern Virginia. The position is also appended to the minutes.

Next meeting is January 13.

5 pm – 7 pm for Subcommittees,

7 pm – 9 pm for the whole Committee.

**Meeting adjourned:** Connie adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

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Testimony from Norm Hall

As a planner drawn to complex problems, I apply background knowledge to conduct systems analysis.

What's my background knowledge?

Over the past 16 years I have been an FCPS intern, a 5th Grade Teacher, spent most of those years as a substitute teacher in elementary and middle schools, but also a homebound teacher and an AVID Tutor for middle and high school students. I'm now used to using Blackboard Collaborate and Google classroom with 5 classes. Apart from FCPS, I have done gigs as a private tutoring over the past 15 years. The past 2 years I've been a SACC teacher.

My daughter's a former FCPS student who received in-school speech therapy. After she came down with chronic illness, including dysautonomia, there was a 504 plan, an IEP, Online Campus (forerunner to today's distance learning), placement at a CSS site in our local high school and placement at a private day school. She needed accommodations for physical limits and for mental health issues which arose after she had extreme difficulty following the proscribed educational path. She left FCPS by passing GED exams.

Which is when I began to publicly speak out about other students who struggle.

I am here to repeat concern for the needs of those children accessing their education through SRS (Supporting Return to School) classrooms. As I wrote before:

Because there is no way for SRS/SACC staff to know how many students may need specific accommodations for the children to engage in meaningful learning, I would like to ask for everybody's help tonight to make sure that SRS/SACC staff, classroom teachers, and parents of students with disabilities are able to access a common platform to share concerns and expectations so that all children, by name and by need, can succeed.

DSS responded to my concern about hidden children with hidden needs by saying that identified children could be supported with notification to appropriate school personnel. True, but not helpful.

There are now plans to combine the SRS bubbles at current sites and open more SRS bubbles at other sites. Let's look at the success rate of these students to gage progress on academic, social and emotional goals. The standard should be high, because the premise of SRS operations during the COVID pandemic was that tight bubble compliance would result in protection of staff and children from the coronavirus. However, the data on FCPS's dashboard suggest that there have been cases at these very locations. In addition, the return to school plans that have been presented no longer feature strong cohort separations as a mitigation strategy.

A separate problem that deserves attention are the plans that combine SRS distancing with the concurrent model of teaching. Will teachers really be able to connect well with students in a remote classroom wearing headphones and sharing support from an SRS person responsible for

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up to 9 other students? Before this happens, I would like to know that **SOMEBODY** has done some simulation about how this works.

Finally, I want to call for a public presentation about how the AIR study will take place in the midst of distance learning, yet still be relevant to support budget decisions over the next two years. When is a public stakeholders meeting? Is a draft plan being submitted for public review?

Events this month suggest the importance of bringing the public in sooner rather than later.

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families helping families: education. community. support.

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[www.poac-nova.org](http://www.poac-nova.org)

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December 9, 2020

Fairfax County School Board  
8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 5400  
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Chairwoman Anderson and Members of the School Board,

Parents of Autistic Children of Northern Virginia (POAC-NoVA) wishes to express our strong support for the [recommendations made by the Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities \(ACSD\) regarding restraint and seclusion](#).

Far too many of our children with disabilities have been subjected to episodes—and often multiple episodes—of restraint and seclusion, which traumatize our children and unnecessarily expose staff to injury. These incidents too often go unreported to authorities and parents and create serious liability for the schools too, as pending lawsuits attest.

Fairfax County has been a leader in developing effective education for students with disabilities. It should once again show its leadership by eliminating its use of seclusion and supine restraints, which will exceed the VDOE policy effective 1/1/2021. There are better ways of managing crisis intervention. Ukeru, developed by Grafton Integrated Health Network, and adopted by many schools across the country, uses trauma-informed practices based in Applied Behavior Analysis and has successfully eliminated the use of restraint and seclusion. Dr. Ted Hoch, an associate professor of special education at George Mason University, who served as the director of psychological services at the former Northern VA Training Center, also eliminated the use of restraint and seclusion using ABA during his tenure there. It is not easy, but it can be done, and with the right leadership, training, and oversight, Fairfax County can meet the high watermark expected of it as a leader in special education.

We ask you to offer your support for the ACSD Recommendations on Restraint and Seclusion. We also ask that you set a time for public discussion of the VDOE policy and the ACSD recommendations. Many of our parents would welcome a healthy and transparent exchange about this issue, which disproportionately affects our children.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Edgerton

President

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Cc:// Dr. Scott Brabrand, Superintendent

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**Position Statement Adopted by Fairfax County Special Education PTA  
November 23, 2020**



**Position Statement Adopted by FCCPTA  
November 24, 2020**



**RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION**

The 2015 National PTA Resolution on Restraint and Seclusion states, “all students need to be educated in environments which are supportive and free from abuse, assault, injury, trauma, and risk to life. The inappropriate use of restraint and seclusion methods by school personnel has resulted in the assault, injury, trauma and, in some cases, the death of children.” Nationwide investigative reporting has exposed widespread misuse of restraint & seclusion in public schools. While Fairfax County Public Schools’ (FCPS) Strategic Plan commits to a “responsive, caring, and inclusive culture where all feel valued, supported and hopeful,” the practices of take-down restraints and seclusion are antithetical to that goal. Fairfax County SEPTA and Fairfax County Council PTA (FCCPTA), as constituent organizations of the National PTA, therefore takes the following position on the use of restraint and seclusion:

**DEFINITIONS:**

1. **Seclusion** - “the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving.”\*\*\*\*
2. **Restraint** - “mechanical restraint, physical restraint, or pharmacological restraint.”\*\*\*\*
3. **Physical restraint** - “a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to move freely.”\*\*\*\*
4. **Prone/Supine restraints** - restraints that pin a person to the floor, either face down (prone), or face up (supine). Prone restraints are banned per the 2021 regulations governing the use of seclusion and restraint in public elementary and secondary schools in Virginia.\*\*\*\*
5. **Safe De-Escalation Spaces** - quiet, private areas in the visual and auditory range of staff in which students can take time to self-calm and re-regulate themselves.

**BAN SECLUSION:\***

Seclusion is traumatic for all parties involved - the student being secluded, the students witnessing the seclusion, and the staff implementing the seclusion - which is counter to National PTA’s stance referenced above.

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Seclusion has a high potential to be abused because it takes the student out of view of other students and staff.

**BAN SUPINE RESTRAINT**

Supine restraints, in which a student is pinned to the floor on their back, have also resulted in death and must be banned to ensure student safety.\*\*\*

**CREATE SAFE DE-ESCALATION SPACES\***

Safe de-escalation spaces must be separate from any space used for punitive discipline. Such spaces may be furnished with sensory equipment such as weighted blankets, swings, soft mats, music, etc. Safe spaces should be within the visual and auditory range of staff at all times, while allowing a quiet, calm space to de-escalate without demands from staff

**PROVIDE A “CHAIN OF INTERVENTIONS” PRIOR TO RESTRAINTS**

FCCPTA recognizes the need for staff to have training in interventions to help a student de-escalate, thus avoiding the need for restraint and seclusion. These interventions must be evidence-based de-escalation practices that do not involve staff physically handling a student. (ie. verbal redirection, evacuation of peers from the setting leaving the student with supportive staff, use of Ukeru system,\*\* Ross Greene’s Collaborative and Proactive Solutions\*\*\*\*, etc.).

**DATA REPORTING AND FOLLOW UP**

When an incident requiring restraint occurs, the parent/guardian must be contacted expediently, on the same day, by the school staff. If the staff implement restraint, the school must call an IEP meeting to include or review a functional behavior assessment to address the student’s unmet needs.

**ADDRESSING EMOTIONAL NEEDS POST-RESTRAINT**

Restraints are traumatic for both students and staff. As such, both students and staff must be offered the opportunity to meet with a mental health professional, or student-preferred or trusted staff member, following any incident of restraint.

***Fairfax County Council PTA and Fairfax County SEPTA urge FCPS to act immediately in enacting these changes to the FCPS restraint and seclusion policy.*** A bold and progressive new policy based on the above recommendations will help to rebuild the public trust while affirming the dignity of all students.

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- \* Please see the recommendation from ACSD 2019-2020 about “safe places and spaces,” which should be used instead, with the guidelines for their use as previously outlined. This is on pp. 13-14 of the report, which we are unable to link because FCPS has not put school board advisory committee reports from 2019-2020 on their website. Please instead contact [ACSDChair@fcps.edu](mailto:ACSDChair@fcps.edu).
- \*\* Ukeru Systems utilizes safety equipment, which can be purchased, and methods that are evidence-based. <https://www.ukerusystems.com/>. Use of Ukeru Systems is described in this April 2020 article by Jennifer Smith Richards and Jodi Cohen: [These schools did away with seclusion and restraint. They say Illinois can too.](#)
- \*\*\* The dangers and associated death with supine restraint are covered in this 2011 report:  
[Equip for Equality -The Lethal Consequences of Restraint](#)  
61 restraint-related deaths were examined by Equip for Equality, IL and the National Disability Rights Network, with funding from the Department of Health and Human services. Equip for Equality’s current position is to ban seclusion, prone, and supine restraints. Standing and sitting restraints remain available. <https://www.equipforequality.org/>
- \*\*\*\* [8VAC20-750 CHAPTER 750: REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE USE OF SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA](#)
- \*\*\*\*\*Lives in the Balance - Ross Greene’s website for Collaborative & Proactive Solutions <https://www.livesinthebalance.org/>