

Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) - Fairfax County Public Schools
Wednesday, May 10, 2023, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Summary of Business Conducted:

- The ACSD heard updates from DSS regarding special educator recruitment and retention, actions to support the Burke School, and the Special Education Conference.
- The ACSD voted to send a recommendation to the School Board that they be mindful of the additional marginalization of students with disabilities and learning differences that may result when highlighting the sources of special education funding.
- The ACSD voted to submit a report to the School Board regarding staff recruitment and retention and the Public Day schools; a report that was informed by their recent survey of Public Day school staff.

Pending Feedback from the Department of Special Services that was Offered/Requested as a Result of This Meeting, or Still Pending from Meetings Previous:

- Are exit interviews completed with special education staff who have resigned? What information do we have on the reasons they are leaving? (Lauren McCaughey)
- Can FCPS Human Resources (HR) answer if there are any efforts to recruit or support former special education students to join special education staff? (Brandon Cassidy)
- Responses to Spring 2022 and Fall 2022 ACSD questions for the record; Mr. Bloom anticipates being able to provide these by the June meeting.
- Update on any action resulting from motions the ACSD has made, such as the emergency evacuation motion from December and March's motion for data on the increase in teacher workload as a result of the OCR resolution. Please deliver during DSS updates at the next meeting. (Requested by Amanda Campbell in April)
- How many Early Childhood Class-Based services (ECCB) preschool programs have a peer model? (Requested by Laura Jane Cohen, ACSD School Board Liaison, in March)

Executive Committee:

Chair, Harry Henderson

Vice Chair, Elizabeth Zielinski

Secretaries, Ally Baldassari (Recording) and Brandis Ruise (Corresponding)

Member Attendance: A quorum of voting members was confirmed by Recording Secretary Ally Baldassari with 24/29 voting members in attendance. There are 34 positions on the ACSD; five currently vacant. The full record of attendance, members, and vacancies is appended.

Liaisons/FCPS Guests:

Mike Bloom, Director, Office of Special Education Instruction and FCPS Liaison to the ACSD

Michelle Boyd, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Services

Dawn Schaefer, Director of Special Education Procedural Support
Judy DuPrey, Coordinator, Special Education Therapy Services
Jennifer Smetek, Program Manager, Procedural Support Liaisons
Laura Jane Cohen, School Board Liaison

Business Meeting Agenda date:

1. Call to Order, Harry Henderson, Chair
2. Approval of Minutes and Adoption of Agenda, Harry Henderson, Chair
3. General Announcements - Thank you to the public for coming with a reminder that interference with the meeting is not permitted.
4. Public Comment, Elizabeth Zielinski, Vice Chair
 - a. Bijoy George - Related services have not been offered to his child with Down Syndrome in special education preschool. Special ed teachers can't be expected to be experts in all areas that related service providers should be supporting. It shouldn't take parents having to move out of Fairfax County to get the support they need for their children.
 - b. Betsy Seitz - Ms. Seitz is a Key Center parent who wants to make sure we understand how much parents appreciate the option of a separate special education school. Her son's experience feels less restrictive at Key. He feels part of the class at Key Center, and the teachers who are there are the teachers who all really want to work with the high needs population. The staff at the school know and love all of the students.
 - c. Monica Favela - Writing to advocate for related services (speech, OT, and PT) for preschool students with IEPs. She has been told that it is a "language rich environment" and that the teachers there are all educated in supporting speech and all needs. Too much strain is being put on these teachers, and they can't be experts in all areas.
 - d. Rachel Herndon - Speaking on lack of related services provided to FCPS preschool students with disabilities. Her daughter was not offered related services. She was told repeatedly that services weren't necessary, and that it was "a language rich environment." Early intervention is key, and "wait and see" is no longer the model.
 - e. Nathanael and Katie Achor - Their son with Down syndrome was denied speech services. They had a speech evaluation, and were denied because he didn't have enough words to practice articulation with (he was utilizing signs and gestures for communication). Parents report being told repeatedly it was a "language rich environment" and that all teachers had a Master's degree and were highly trained. Therapy services given, including just one hour a month of PT, seemed to be limited by staff availability.
 - f. Stephanie Waterhouse - Wrote to advocate for an increase in special services for preschool students. FCPS has a dearth of providers, and that results in fewer and fewer students getting services. Getting services early in life has been shown to improve

outcomes overall, and the expenditure here for more early intervention would pay off in gains in the end. Again, a special education teacher is not a speech therapist.

- g. Jack Kamensky and Erica Klenicki - They are parents of separate FCPS preschool students who both also attend Easter Seals. Both families are no longer offered bus services to Easter Seals, which has been essential to getting their children the services they need. Not having bus services means that their students will not be able to attend both programs, which have been integral to the progress the children have made thus far.
- h. Callie Oettinger - Ms. Oettinger reports filing a number of complaints with VDOE recently, one of which is FCPS providing appropriate related services. She also states FCPS is in noncompliance with the OCR resolution regarding compensatory services for COVID. She asserts students who had not yet qualified for the IEPs or 504 plans at the start of the pandemic are being inappropriately being denied services. There are a number of staff members she feels should lose their jobs for failure to provide services.
- i. Amanda Campbell - Ms. Campbell is speaking as an individual. She represents Lauren Jane Cohen on the ACSD, but is speaking for herself and does have the support of Ms. Cohen to make her statements. Ms. Campbell recounted Dr. Boyd's acknowledgment that over ten thousand FCPS students were screened for speech services and not granted an evaluation. Ms. Campbell says her daughter is an example of a student who was denied services who could have benefited. Ms. Campbell says her daughter has not received adequate services to be able to communicate with her AAC device. Her inability to communicate recently impacted the medical care and resulted in a lot of discomfort and treatment delays when medical staff weren't able to appreciate signs of an acute injury and assumed her symptoms were from a developmental disability.

5. Chairman's Message

- a. The June meeting will be our last meeting. At that meeting we will be submitting the ACSD feedback on the SEEP. He hopes for good attendance at this meeting to finalize our ACSD response.
- b. Also note the June meeting has been moved forward a day to Tuesday, June, 2023.
- c. Please contact your appointing school board member or organization to let them know if you wish to return to your position
- d. Elections will take place next month. Please bring your interest to the attention of Susan Edgerton, Chair of the Nominating Committee

6. School Board Liaison Update, Laura Jane Cohen, Springfield District

- a. Update on Strategic Plan: Thanks to all ACSD members working on this, especially ones serving on committees supporting the planning. She's pleased to report that inclusive Pre-K should become a goal and measure in the part of Goal 1 regarding Pre-K (as

- recommended by the Superintendent). Recommended updates to the Strategic plan will be presented at the School Board meeting tomorrow.
- b. The level of urgency for staffing at Key, Kilmer and Burke school has been transferred to Dr. Reid, and she herself had a conversation with Dr. Reid about this last Friday. Strategic supports are being developed for these schools.
 - c. She is increasingly concerned about hearing repeatedly the same reports from special education preschool parents about a “language rich environment.” She thanks our committee for being a megaphone for this issue.
7. Family Resource Center News, Mike Bloom for Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Manager of the PRC
- a. Reminder of the hours, M-F 8-4PM, and that walk-ins are always welcome
 - b. EAL Plan overview for elementary families on 5/11 and EAL Plan overview for secondary families 5/17 are among the 4 [webinars](#) offered in May. There are 4 planned for June.
 - c. The name has officially been changed from Parent Resource Center to Family Resource Center.
 - d. Ms. Harrison-Cunningham thanked the ACSD for their work on the First Class Awards and was truly honored to have won for the Family Resource Center team.
8. Attendance Report, Ally Baldassari, Recording Secretary - as above
9. Department of Special Services (DSS) Updates, Mike Bloom
- a. Burke School - Immediate actions have been taken to support them through the end of this school year. They have allocated two full-time permanent behavior intervention teachers. These two additional teachers are based there and stay exclusively at the Burke School through the end of the year. They also allocated 1.4 curriculum resource teachers to provide job-embedded support in the classrooms. These teachers provide instructional support as well, directly engaging with students. This should free up administrators to be administrators vs being the behavioral support in the classroom. The Behavior Intervention Services team is also working with the Burke School to develop short and long term goals to plan for SEL supports, instructional, and professional development. Also embedded in the Special Education Enhancement Plan (SEEP) are a number of things related to looking into the public day sites and their overall frameworks and how to staff them.
 - b. Special Educator Retention:
 - i. Mr. Bloom summarized the actions appearing in the FY 223-2024 budget towards attracting and retaining exceptional employees by offering market-competitive compensation packages. There is an additional \$80.9 million for a market scale adjustment of 3.0% for all eligible employees and a 1% percent retention bonus

for eligible employees based on state criteria. They will provide a step extension for all salary scales.

- ii. Extended-day contracts for eligible special education teachers, which results in increased compensation for sped teachers, will continue for an additional year due to grant funding. They hope to find the funds to make this permanent, or may otherwise provide differentiated pay for special education teachers.
 - iii. Actions embedded in the proposed SEEP that will aid retention: (1) Enhance partnerships with colleges/universities for robust special education teacher preparation programs (2) Establish a dedicated HR special projects administrator to liaise with the colleges and universities, focus on special education recruitment and hiring, establish new pipelines for special education teachers, and support the Grow Your Own program. (3) Expand partnerships with targeted colleges/universities to develop a rapport with special education majors earlier in their collegiate experience, (4) Signing bonuses (\$3,000) for new sped teachers and \$1,500 for paraprofessionals. (5) Retention bonus for those with 5 or more consecutive years of experience (\$1,000 teachers, \$500 paraprofessionals). Increase tuition reimbursement by 50% for staff in special education positions. (6) Conduct a desk audit to determine if a separate pay scale is warranted for special education staff at public separate schools.
 - iv. He will be meeting every-other-week with HR and receiving data about shortages. OSEI and HR will work together to problem solve, come up with contingency plans, and be better prepared in the case of continued vacancies.
- c. Special Education Conference
- i. Thanks to Elizabeth Zielinski as the ACSD liaison to the planning committee. Thanks to the whole ACSD for supporting the First Class Awards.
 - ii. All sessions, the opening and the workshops, are on the webpage, as are links to all this information from the previous two conferences.
 - iii. There were over 1,300 registrants.
 - iv. Mr. Bloom announced the First Class Awards winners. (The presentation which includes announcements of the winners, their pictures and qualifications; is appended.)

Lauren McCaughey - Please provide an update on the OCR process for compensatory services, especially as she's heard of an audit of the IEP meetings which is causing special educators to redo their process. (1) How is staff being supported in the process, (2) how are these audits being conducted, (3) what feedback are staff members receiving, and is there a Central Office contact for questions, (4) Are the staff conducting the meetings the ones assigned to the child, (5) how has the increased work associated with the process impacted

staff leaving, and (6) are you conducting exit interviews on the staff that have left? A: Dawn Schaefer reports that as of today 50% of the IEP meetings for compensatory services required by the OCR agreement are complete. She says staff are being supported with 6 hours of office hours weekly so that staff can ask questions on particular students. Three hours of the six are focused on process and the other three are focused on utilizing the tools they have (SeaStars and other technical issues.) They go into a breakout room when there are questions specific to a student for the privacy of the student. They will be auditing (the process hasn't started yet); as this was required by the OCR agreement. They are required per the agreement to provide data to OCR on a quarterly basis. The OCR request was that FCPS would do their own auditing. The Assistant Region Superintendents will be involved and they've received information. Again, the auditing hasn't begun yet. However, as the staff submits reimbursements, she is following up with staff when the documentation is not correct. She follows up with parents and staff. She isn't requiring additional meetings to figure these out. She will get us more information as the audits begin. Ms. Schaefer is not the one in charge of the auditing. She is supporting staff through the PSLs who attend meetings. The leadership staff also offers support. She said regarding her last question about staff leaving, she will have to get back, and she doesn't know anything about exit interviews. Auditing will be done by Central Office staff with clear feedback supplied.

Carolyn Haydon - Appreciates the proactive strategies they are looking into for retention, but what are we doing right now about current vacancies? Are there other strategies beyond the extra 30 minutes of compensation currently being offered? What is being done now to retain teachers this year until next year? A: Mr. Bloom responds that HR is at the forefront of recruitment and retention, more so than his OSEI office. He may bring them to the next meeting to respond to what they are doing right now. The special education teachers graduated yearly in VA are less than the needs for FCPS alone.

Amanda Campbell - (1) She is disappointed not to see discussion on compensation for planning time, which is especially a problem in multi-grade level special education ES classrooms. She reports that some states limit the age difference in these classrooms to 36 months. (2) Dr. Boyd had made a comment about being in discussion with the ACSD about the number of speech screenings that did not result in an evaluation. She doesn't recall this, is this happening soon? A: Mr. Bloom responded that planning time is addressed in the draft plan of the SEEP. Dr. Boyd joined the meeting at this point and spoke to the concern on speech evaluations. They are now aware that the overall increase in evaluations and services was not seen specifically in speech and are trying to address through creating consistency in the evaluation process and addressing in the SEEP. They do want to make sure that communication modality of the student does not affect the award of speech services.

Brandon Cassady - On special education teacher recruitment, he is wondering if there is any tracking or support of former FCPS students with special education needs entering FCPS as

special education staff. A: Mr. Bloom says he will ask HR to respond to that question also next month. There is differentiated support for special education staff coming into the county to help them advance, such as the special education cohorts and the Grow Your Own program.

10. Old Business & New Business

- a. Motion by Elizabeth Zielinski [motion with rationale is appended]: “The Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities recommends that the School Board be mindful of the additional marginalization of students with disabilities and learning differences that may result when highlighting the sources of special education funding.”
 - i. The background provided by Ms. Zielinski included that during an April 13th School Board work session, discussion began around the amount of special education funding required and the burden on the taxpayers as IDEA is not fully-funded with the mandated 40%. The 2:12 minute mark of the April 13th meeting is where these comments can be found. Citizens were thanked for their generosity in helping make up for the shortfall, and the same school board member suggested a report to help demonstrate the budget expenses required for special education, especially those resulting from the shortfall in IDEA funding. Ms. Zielinski recognizes this was simply a discussion, and creating a report delineating for the public FCPS’s special education expenses hasn’t been done, and there wasn’t mal-intent on the part of the school board member. However, IDEA funding shortfalls have persisted for several years and indications are that the IDEA funding could further be cut. Framing the obligation of taxpayers to pay taxes, some of which will be used for the education of students with disabilities to receive an appropriate education, as generosity implies charity which belies the rights of all students to be educated. This information is already available to the public, but if they frame it in a separate report, it would cast a spotlight on the cost of educating one segment of the population over others. The unintended consequences could be assigning blame to students with disabilities for tax obligations. Please don’t place public scrutiny on these families.
 - ii. Brandon Cassady - Even before IDEA, education is a treaty right. It is a part of federal law and therefore not a concern for the taxpayer. Therefore he comments in support and seconds the motion.
 - iii. Ms. Zielinski responds the school board in this discussion was in support of fulling funding IDEA and getting students supported.
 - iv. Amanda Campbell wants to add her support and note that she does recognize the school board was trying to help get funding for special education, however, we don’t note the taxpayer burden for other large ticket items like Thomas Jefferson

- SST, and the foreign language immersion in ES, so doing so for special education students is unnecessarily discriminatory.
- v. Linda Mason asked ACSD members to look for the reports directly from the [US] Office of Special Education because it has a link to how this directly affects funding for VA.
 - vi. Motion passed unanimously; Michael Simon had stepped away for the vote.
- b. Presentation of report from the School Board Charge Subcommittee: [Recruiting and Retaining Ready and Qualified Staff for FCPS's Public Day Schools](#)
- i. Ally Baldassari moved for the ACSD to vote on transmitting the report to the school board through the Superintendent. This report was sent to ACSD members the previous week.
 - ii. Amanda Campbell asked a clarifying question, and Carolyn Haydon thanked the subcommittee for gathering the information and uncovering a situation, especially at the Burke School, that was dangerous.
 - iii. The motion passed unanimously.
- c. Questions for the Record - Questions for the Record have not had a formal response received. We would like to talk about how we are able to get our questions answered that time does not allow during the meeting. Ms. Zielinski gave the floor to Mr. Bloom. He reports that it was a misunderstanding that involved the questions being missed, and the need for a standardized process to prevent misunderstandings/miscommunication of the questions. He has gathered all outstanding questions and will get the answer by the June meeting.

11. Member Time

- a. Amanda Campbell - She wants to thank Dr. Boyd for hearing that discussions have started on speech evaluations. Please take the data of who received speech services, and disaggregate the data for age, grade level, race/ethnicity, region, and eligibility label. If the information is unavailable, please consider this a formal request to collect the data for the following school year.
- b. Ally Baldassari - SEPTA held their annual awards ceremony last Saturday honoring many wonderful special educators, administrators, community partners, and students. SEPTA's website, fairfaxcountysepta.org, has a press release describing the event and listing the winners. You can look for a recording of the event to be posted soon.

12. Adjournment - 8:52

Ally	Baldassari	SEPTA	IP	IP	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Amanda	Campbell	Sprinfeld District-Laura Jane Cohen	V	IP	IP	V	IP	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Anne	Hobbs	PoAC-NoVA	IP	IP	IP	V	V	V	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	V
Brandis	Ruise	Fairfax Area Disabilities Services Board	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	E	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Brandon	Cassady	Member at Large-Karen Keys Gamarra	NYA	NYA	NYA	IP	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Carolyn	Haydon	Braddock District-Megan McLaughlin	IP	IP	IP	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Colleen	Jones	Fairfax County Council of PTA	IP	IP	IP	IP	E	IP	V	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	V
Daniel	Cronnell	Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board	IP	IP	IP	E	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	E
Darcy	Acquavella	Fairfax City School Board		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
David	Bean	Providence District-Karl Frisch	NYA	NYA	IP	IP	E	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Denise	Stitt	FCPS Teacher	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	V
Elizabeth	Zielinski	Assistive Technology	IP	IP	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Harry	Henderson	Mason District-Ricardy Anderson	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	E	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Hideshi	Ishikawa	Region 5-Rebeca Baenig-Asst. Superintendent	NYA	NYA	IP	IP	V	IP	E	IP	E	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Holly	Stearns	Region 2-Fabio Zuluaga-Asst. Superintendent	NYA	NYA	IP	IP	IP	E	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	E
Jovieh	Liray	Fairfax County Health Department	E	E	V	V	V		V		V		V		V		V		V		V
Kaitlenn	Erkilla	Mount Vernon District-Karen Corbett Sanders	IP	IP	V	IP		E	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Lauren	McCaughey	Hunter Mill District-Melanie Meren	IP	IP	IP	V	V	IP	IP	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Linda	Mason	Higher Education		V	V	E	V	E	IP	V	E	V	E	V	E	V	E	V	E	V	V
Michael	Simon	Sully District-Stella Pekarsky			V		V	V	IP	E	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Nita	Payton	Region 1-Douglas Tyson-Assistant Superintendent	IP	IP	V		V	IP	IP	IP	E	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Rachel	Charlton	Early Childhood Education (Preschool)	IP	IP	IP	V	IP	IP	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	IP
Randi	Cosentino	Dranesville District-Elain Tholen	IP	IP	IP	IP	V	V	IP	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	E
Sanaa	Bouzit	Member at Large-Abrar Omeish	IP	IP	IP	IP	E	V	IP	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	V
Sandi	Dallhoff	FC Dept. of Neighborhood and Community Service	NYA	NYA	IP	V	E	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
Shannon	Duncan	Decoding Dyslexia Virginia		V	V	V	V	V	V	E	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	E
Stephanie	Smith	Franconia District-Tamara Derenak Kaufax	NYA	NYA	IP	V	V		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	IP
Susan	Edgerton	Member at Large-Rachna Sizemore-Heizer		V	IP	IP	V	V	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP
Yasmeen	Merani	Student Representative	IP	IP	IP	IP		IP	IP	E	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	V
Vacant		Region 3-Grace Taylor-Assistant Superintendent	car																		
Vacant		Region 4-Penny Gros-Assistant Superintendent																			
Vacant		Fairfax County Federation of Citizens																			
Vacant		League of Women Voters, Fairfax Area																			
Heather	Sable	Region 3-Grace Taylor-Assistant Superintendent	IP	IP	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Mirna	Galeano	Career and Transition Services	V	V	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R

- 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 9-14-2022 Orientation.