

Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) - Fairfax County Public Schools
Wednesday, November 8 2023, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Summary of Business Conducted:

- The ACSD welcomed Geovanny Ponce, Chief of Schools, to hear about his new position.
 - The ACSD welcomed Jeff Sisk, Manager of Assistive Technology Services (ATS) and Jennifer Carr, Educational Specialist, ATS to discuss the services provided by their office.
 - The ACSD heard updates from the Department of Special Services (DSS) on adopting FCPS's new language arts basal resources and on COVID 19 compensatory education.
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Executive Committee:

Chair, Elizabeth Zielinski

Vice Chair, Holly Stearns

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

Member Attendance: A quorum was confirmed by Recording Secretary Ally Baldassari with 27/30 voting members in attendance. There are 34 positions on the ACSD; 3 currently vacant and one pending approval. 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

Terri Edmunds-Heard, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Services

Dawn Schaefer, Director, Special Education Procedural Support

Kathy Murphy, Assistant Ombuds for Special Education

Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Manager of the Family Resource Center (FRC)

5 members of the public attended.

Business Meeting Agenda 11.17.2023

1. Call to Order, Elizabeth Zielinski, Chair
2. Approval of Minutes and Adoption of Agenda, Ms. Zielinski
3. Public Comment, Holly Stearns, Vice Chair (3)
 - a. Patty Carchner: FCPS should come up with solutions to difficult sensory environments, such as the cafeteria, that is consistent across all schools/pyramids. FCPS should take sensory needs into consideration when planning renovations.
 - b. Kate Volpe: There is a staff member at her student's school who has not gotten paid for providing compensatory services. This is unacceptable, as is the backlog of families awaiting reimbursement for services they've paid for.
 - c. Johna Ohtagaki: The staff at her daughter's school has not appeared adequately educated regarding ADHD and has made statements indicating a lack of understanding

and unwillingness to provide appropriate accommodations. All staff working with students with ADHD must be briefed on what students with ADHD need to be successful.

4. Chair's Message, Ms. Zielinski

- a. Welcome to new members, especially our student representative, Delaney Brooks
- b. We have new school board members as a result of yesterday's election [the new school board members were announced]. Thank you to the eight departing members for their time on the school board.
- c. New school board members could choose to replace their ACSD representative (allowed, but unlikely). Otherwise members continue to serve for a school year per our Bylaws.
- d. Tomorrow night is the virtual SR&R review. Register online for this event through the equity office. The ACSD has typically been interested/involved in the SR&R yearly review.
- e. In response to feedback, we have made adjustments so you can find meeting recordings at the very top of the ACSD webpage. We've changed the settings for the meeting recording in and attempt to make it a better viewing experience.
- f. Moving forward we will be more sensitive to acronym use, attempting to define them when a speaker uses them, and DSS documents should have acronyms defined. We will look at putting out an acronym reference. [An acronym guide was offered by Mary Beth Harrison Cunningham following the meeting, and that guide is appended.]
- g. Next month Dr. Nardos King, Chief Equity Officer, will be the guest and we are also working on having our Region 4 State Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) representative.
- h. Remember that all our ACSD work can be FOIA'd, so please ensure the contents of all your communications are business-related and appropriate for FOIA. She is aware that subcommittees are creating Google folders, and this applies to the contents of those.
- i. The school board is scheduled to discuss the virtual attendance policy for school board advisory committees tomorrow night, but is not expected to vote on one at this stage.
- j. Reminder on the ACSD Questions for the Record: You must submit before leaving the meeting and you must include your name. The answers will be returned monthly in a document all will stay in a record members will have access to.

5. Subcommittee Updates

- a. School Board Charge: Discussed tonight last week's RATE conference and reviewed potential data requests last year's Student Achievement and Outcomes (SAO) report.
- b. Family Engagement and Community Outreach: Discussed progress made on special education document translation. They discussed how to make acronym definitions accessible to families and increase awareness of handbooks [such as the dyslexia and twice-exceptional (2e) handbook], how preschoolers can have help to complete the

- required physical exam form if they don't have a Medicaid or primary care doctor, and how to increase knowledge of the process for accommodations for high-stakes tests.
- c. Policy and Regulations: They are looking at the educational equity policy and also the supports for students in the SR&R. They are looking at what the Policy and Regulations subcommittee recommended last year and if there has been progress on those issues, such as staffing, considering how low staffing may impact behavioral supports.
 - d. Student Achievement and Outcomes: Jay Berkenbilt reports that they will focus on two topics. The first is literacy support for older students and students who are missed in focused literacy because they compensate well. The second is suspension for students with disabilities. They will look into data on the effectiveness and how much suspension is at the discretion of the principal, and make recommendations on suspension policies.
6. School Board Liaison Update, Ms. Zielinski for Rachna Sizemore-Heizer, Member-at-Large
 - a. The school board will discuss their advisory committee attendance policy tomorrow.
 - b. Let her know if you still wait your COVID compensatory services reimbursements.
 - c. Look for a work session on the Special Education Enhancement Plan (now renamed).
 7. Family Resource Center (FRC) News, Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Manager of the FRC
 - a. Working with DSS to provide a webinar for families on the new LRE data collection tool. The notice just went out today. Nov. 30th 6:30 PM evening session and a morning session in December. These will be recorded, and she is also planning to create a "one-pager" for families.
 - b. There will be a two-part series on executive functioning in Spanish Nov. 17 and Dec. 1st.
 - c. Staff turnover has resulted in a new liaison and a new program assistant they are excited to welcome on board.
 - d. They have a guide on community programs such as adapted Parks and Recreation and the Summer Camp Guide. They have a few new guides, including an LGBTQIA+ guide and a military-connected family guide.
 - e. There is a new FRC brochure. It contains QR codes to help connect you to the various resources.
 - f. 2024 webinars: Meet-the-author series will include Ellen Galinsky, author of [Mind in the Making](#), about the seven executive functioning skills all kids need. She will also do another webinar for the FRC. Local authors of [Raising a Kid Who Can](#) will present 1/5/24.
 - g. Behavior Intervention Services (BIS) will do a 4-part series in the Spring.
 - h. Please check out the [FRC Youtube channel](#).
 8. Attendance Report, Ally Baldassari, Recording Secretary - as above
 9. Guest: Chief of Schools, Geovanny Ponce, Chief of Schools

Dr. Ponce shared some of his background and affirmed he supports all students, including special education students which he has personal experience with from his schooling in Honduras and as a parent.

Questions

Carolyn Haydon: In the AIR Report [The report from the special education audit, done by American Institutes for Research] poor consistency of implementation is highlighted. What are you doing to make sure there is consistent rigorous programming and implementation no matter what pyramid you are in? A: Mr. Ponce says he will maintain high standards for all students. Relationships are foundational; making sure every student knows they matter.

Look at the unique problems specific to students that are in the way of their education.

Susan Edgerton: How might you improve literacy and pass rates of reading and reading comprehension standardized tests? A: Need to prepare students well with foundational skills in kindergarten. Teach students in the way that works best for them. Use the systems in place with fidelity.

Delaney Brooks: What can you do to amplify the voices of special education students and keep them involved in discussions of the services they are receiving? A: Dr. Ponce enjoys receiving emails from students. Hopefully systems of communication exist inside schools, and there is also the equity office.

10. Guest: Assistive Technology Services, Jeff Sisk, Manager, Assistive Technology Services (ATS) and Jennifer Car, Educational Specialist, ATS

- a. The RATE Conference at West Springfield HS was nice to have in person again.
- b. He has been involved in Assistive Technology (AT) in FCPS for over 20 years.
- c. ATS “provides assistive technology tools that increase, improve or maintain the functional capabilities of a student”.
- d. They build the capacity for school teams to implement assistive technology.
- e. Every school has an AT coach, with 32 total in FCPS (each having 6-12 locations). The coaches have diverse backgrounds (former SLPs, teachers of students of physical or intellectual disabilities, etc.)
- f. Evaluation process: Per IDEA they evaluate individual students' needs through a comprehensive evaluation process. The student’s team has consistent collaboration with ATS throughout their time at FCPS.
- g. ATS provides individual coaching and training.
- h. The [ATS website](#) has the Youtube videos from the RATE conference and other training resources and a linked Twitter feed.
- i. Assistive technology ambassadors are students that can speak to their successes and failures in utilizing AT in FCPS.

Questions

Elizabeth Zielinski: What is something that you would like us to represent to the school board about your department (ATS)'s needs? A: We would like to make all tools, including those currently listed in Tier 3, available to all students.

Colleen Jones: What kinds of resources do you provide to families directly, and do you offer parent/caregiver coaching? A: Yes. And much of the information is on the public-facing website.

Ally Baldassari: I like how the 3-tier structure demonstrates a commitment to having the tools in all classrooms, and to Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This benefits students waiting for services and those students embarrassed to be identified as a sped student; the only one utilizing tools. But to really make the tools available to everyone, the teacher must be able to teach, demonstrate, and model them. What training is mandated for all teachers so that all teachers are ready to do this? A: There are no mandated trainings. Resources are very accessible to teachers such as asynchronous trainings, and the help of the AT coaches.

Amanda Wittman: What is the time period to identify a student and get the AT into their hands? Also, how do the supports go from something a student is trying, as a universally-available tool, to a documented accommodation officially in the student's 504 or IEP plan? A: They do try to have tools in their hands immediately. All the tools that students use can be documented as the best tools even without a plan. Note they have 65 days to do an evaluation, but they can start servicing a student by meeting with them and trying tools as soon as the family signs consent.

Anne Hobbs: There seems to be a gap from when training is provided on AAC to the teaching team and families. A: They prioritize the coaching, and don't expect there to be a gap. This might occur if there is a centralized training vs the operational training; centralized training can take longer. Providing a device can create a lag, as usually the device is ordered specifically for a student. They do three trainings a month. Sometimes the trialing of different tools can create a lag from the parent being offered a training.

Amanda Campbell: Do you have any resources separate from the website, such as one-pagers or short videos that can be given to parents or emailed? A: Y, they do have print resources and ones that can be emailed. Mr. Sisk thanked her for the reminder.

Shannon Duncan: Families going through the IEP process considering AT is part of the process, but is there such a thing in the 504 process? Also, do you track where your referrals are coming from (setting, such as gen ed, and from students on IEPs, etc)? He says there is a box to check in IEPs and a little different to the 504 process, you can fill out a request to access, a pdf that is shared with the AT Coach. (504 doesn't generate an automatic email, but they do assess students in the 504 process). [Note that Kathy Murphy sent a copy of the 504 meeting agenda which shows consideration for AT is included in 504 meetings; this document is appended.]

11. Department of Special Services (DSS) Updates, Dr. Terri Edmunds-Heard, Mike Bloom, and Dawn Schaefer

- a. SR&R Listening Session: Tomorrow 11/9/2023 6-7:30 PM.
- b. The VDOE released an initial list of approved language arts basal resources for grades K-3 in June 2023, and will release a second list of approved resources for K-5 in November. In January, a review committee of FCPS community members, administrators, and teachers will review the second cycle, as they had the first cycle last summer. In Spring 2024 FCPS staff will recommend new FCPS language arts basal resources to the school board.
- c. The public can review physical texts and digital materials from Nov. 15 - Dec. 15 at the Pimmit Hills Center 9 AM -9 PM Monday-Thurs. There will also be a digital materials review; access details to be posted soon. A digital feedback form will soon be available.
- d. COVID-19 Compensatory education: 99.7% completion of required meetings, which is over 36,000 meetings and more than 6,800 eligible students and 72,000 hours provided.
- e. Reimbursements for compensatory education: They are working through outstanding requests and working on increasing staff capacity.
- f. Saturday school (Saturday Academy) is another option available for school teams to use to complete compensatory education service hours. There will be an elementary and secondary location in each of the six regions. IEP team decisions determine if a student will receive hours during Saturday school, but you can reach out to your child's case manager if you think Saturday services are a good option for your child.
- g. The LRE data collection tool FRC webinars were announced today. Her office will send an eNotify informing families these webinars are Nov. 30 (evening) and Dec. 5th (morning).
Amanda Campbell - Thank you to DSS for getting the word out to families via eNotify.
Ms. Zielinski- Have you successfully reduced the LRE data collection tool from 9 pages to 2 as promised? A: Yes, it has been reduced and teachers are delighted.
Stephanie Smith: When is implementation required? A: Some IEP teams are using it now, it will be required by the 3rd quarter.
Harry Henderson: Requested an update on what has been done in the 6 months since the public day school survey revealed challenges and safety concerns at the public day schools. Mr. Bloom, Ms. Zielinski, and Mr. Henderson agreed to table the question. Mr. Henderson will submit a Question for the Record, and Mr. Bloom promised to cover this topic at the next ACSD meeting.

12. Old Business & New Business, Ms. Zielinski

Appoint ACSD Liaison for Special Education Conference - Brandon Cassady indicated interest and Ally Baldassari moved that a vote be taken. Brandon Cassady was unanimously elected the ACSD Liaison to the Special Education Conference.

13. Member Time, Ms. Stearns

- a. Holly Stearns had been emailed about former ACSD member Hideshi Ishikawa's wrestling club for participants of all abilities.
<https://banditswrestlingclub.teamsnapsites.com/bandits-without-barriers/>
- b. Amanda Campbell gave an update for SEPTA about SEPTA's upcoming Jingle Jangle Ball. As the representative for School Board member Laura Jane Cohen on last year's motion to update emergency evacuation plans. The work continues, but the next step involves discussions with the fire marshall.
- c. Brandon Cassady got an email from a past member of the ACSD who Chairs a VA workforce and training initiative [Ms. Zielinski asked him to send the link to Ally Baldassari].
- d. Colleen Jones is willing to help draft the virtual attendance policy.

14. Adjournment - 9:11 PM

PUBLIC COMMENT (3)

1)

Hello!

FCPS needs to provide calm, predictable alternatives to the sensory-rich environment of the cafeteria for students at all school levels. As the parent of a twice-exceptional student, I am reaching out to ask FCPS to come up with consistent solutions to this often unmet need. The cafeteria is place where students can experience social interaction and inclusion. It can also be an overwhelming sensory environment with the smells, noise, and commotion for students with and without disabilities. If we can prevent or diminish sensory overwhelm for these students, that will be a big step toward supporting emotional regulation and preventing meltdowns in the general education classroom setting.

Currently, FCPS has no consistent way of providing predictable alternatives to the cafeteria. There are schools who allow students to eat in libraries, in the hallways, outdoor courtyards, in classrooms if they find a sympathetic teacher, or in the main office. At the elementary school level, even these alternatives are difficult to obtain. There are very few FCPS schools with a dedicated space for quiet, calm, and supervised lunch spaces. When FCPS is planning school renovations, it would make sense to be proactive and plan for these quiet lunch spaces.

I spoke about this at the Hayfield Community Conversation with Dr. Reid on September 27, 2023. I also met with DSS staff this summer to discuss what can be done to address this need. FCPS leadership is aware of this need, and we now need to move forward in providing calm, predictable alternatives to the cafeteria at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in all our schools.

Thank you for your efforts!

Best regards,

Patty Karchner

2)

I wish to share the following as public comment at the ACSD meeting on November 8, 2023.

I want to state my concerns with paying staff for providing COVID-19 compensatory services for students. I think the ACSD and FCPS Central Office staff are well aware of the significant delays in reimbursing families for paying for outside providers for compensatory services. However I just became aware of staff at my kids school who have not been paid for tutoring work they did over the summer. In one case, an IA signed a contract for providing services, worked under supervision of the Special Ed Chair, and completed the hours over the summer (and agreed to do it even though she was supposed to be taking time off to recover from surgery). She received a call a few weeks ago from someone in Central Office saying that she most likely would not be paid for the work. After she explained that she had followed the requirements to the letter, the staff person said that she would look into it and try to get her paid but it would not be until January. For work she completed over the summer!

I found out about this as I was asking this staff member if she was available to provide services for my son, who is still waiting to start his 39 hours of compensatory services. I have reached out through multiple means - ESY over the summer, directly contacting staff at my kid's school, emailing the Special Ed Chair, and I have not found anyone willing to provide services, even though I know my son is well-liked at school. It's clear that teachers are overworked and stressed, and are not willing to work extra hours before or after school. And if staff are not being paid in a timely manner, it's no surprise that they are declining to agree to provide tutoring to other families. FCPS's management of the compensatory services has been disastrous, and delays in paying staff and reimbursing family members are only making problems worse, and leading to more staff being unwilling to work extra hours to fill the backlog in services needed. I'm asking Central Office to look into issues of staff not being paid and to correct any delays and problems with processing their payments.

Thank you,
Kate Volpe

3)

Hi ACSD- Thank you for your service to students with disabilities in FCPS. I just wanted to share a brief concern for possible consideration. I am concerned that almost none of the FCPS teachers or administrators my daughter has had so far seem to have any knowledge or understanding of ADHD, how it impacts students, and how to accommodate them so that they can access education in FCPS schools on a level playing field with neurotypical students.

As a result, my daughter's teachers often seem to treat her attentional or executive functioning challenges as if they were the result of laziness or a choice on her part. They continually blame, punish, and penalize her for them. By the fourth grade, my daughter was so anxious and

depressed, she was crying daily, didn't want to go to school, and was telling us things like "I'm stupid" and that she wished she had "never been born."

For example, during our first 504 meeting in elementary, an administrator told us that "most children grow out of ADHD" so teachers and parents just need to continue to "hold her accountable" and eventually we'd figure out the point at which she would "comply." When I requested extended deadlines for her assignments (she was completing them on time with me at home, but having trouble remembering to take them physically out of her backpack to turn in), the administrator told me that the school doesn't grant that accommodation because they "can't allow parents to disable their child in that way."

Its terrifying to think that FCPS staff members are saying these sorts of things to other parents and teachers and how it prevents ADHD students from accessing equal education in FCPS. Unsurprisingly, the school's entire special education team took the position that their number one job was to limit the "burden" of accommodations on teachers and prevent students from accessing special education resources. The teachers (with a couple notable exceptions) at her school held the same views.

Given the prevalence of ADHD and other executive functioning disabilities, FCPS should ensure that all administrators (as a first priority) and teachers have some basic training. And certainly no administration or staff should be allowed to sit in an IEP or 504 meeting for a student with ADHD without first receiving a hand-out explaining what the disorder is, how it impacts their ability to access their education, and common accommodations used to address those issues.

Thank you for drawing attention to this issue and for your work to help all FCPS with disabilities access their education.

All best, Johna

A	Name	Organization/Representing	Orientat	10.13	11.13	11.23	11.08	2.13	10.22	11.23	10.24	11.24	11.25	11.26	11.27			
Ahsen	Cakez	Sully District-Stella Pekarsky	NY													X		
Ally	Baldassari	SEPTA		E	X		X											
Amanda	Campbell	Sprinfeld District-Laura Jane Cohen		X	X		X											
Amanda	Whittman	Dranesville District-Elain Tholen	X	X	X		X											
Anne	Hobbs	PoAC-NoVA		X	X		X											
Bennett	Kristine	Region 3-Grace Taylor-Assistant Superintendent	NY														X	
Brandis	Ruise	Fairfax Area Disabilities Services Board	NY													X	X	
Brandon	Cassady	Career and Transition Services	NY													X	X	
Carolyn	Haydon	Braddock District-Megan McLaughlin	X	X	X		X											
Colleen	Jones	Fairfax County Council of PTA	NY													X	X	
Daniel	Cronnell	Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board		X	X		X											
Darcy	Acquavella	City of Fairfax School Board		X	X		X											
David	Bean	Providence District-Karl Frisch	X	X	X		E											
Delaney	Brooks	Student Representative	NY														X	
Elizabeth	Zielinski	Assistive Technology		X	X		X											
Harry	Henderson	Mason District-Ricardy Anderson		X	E		X											
Holly	Stearns	Region 2-Fabio Zuluaga-Asst. Superintendent		X	X		X											
Hope	Luong	Fairfax County Health Department	NY													X	X	
Jay	Berkenbilt	Region 4-Penny Gros-Assistant Superintendent	X	X	X		X											
Jennifer	Skoggs	Fairfax County Federation of Citizens	NY														X	
Joanne	Walton	FCPS Teacher	NY													X	E	
Keena	McAvoy	Member at Large-Karen Keys Gamara	NY														X	
Lauren	McCaughey	Hunter Mill District-Melanie Meren		X	X		E											
Nita	Payton	Region 5-Rebeca Baenig-Asst. Superintendent		E	X		X											
Nora	Rahman	Member at Large-Abrar Omeish			X		X											
Rachel	Charlton	Early Childhood Education (Preschool)		E	X		X											
Rajiv	Satsangi	Higher Education	X	X	E		X											
Shannon	Duncan	Decoding Dyslexia Virginia		X	X		X											
Stephanie	Smith	Franconia District-Tamara Derenak Kaufax		E	X		X											
Susan	Edgerton	Member at Large-Rachna Sizemore-Heizer		X	X		X											
Rebekah	Stone	FC Dept. of Neighborhood and Community Service	NY															NYA
Vacant		League of Women Voters, Fairfax Area																
Vacant		Mount Vernon District-Karen Corbett Sanders																
Vacant		Region 1-Douglas Tyson-Assistant Superintendent																
Vacant*		Region 6-Michelle Boyd-Assistant Superintendent																

*This position does not currently exist based on the School Board

X Present
E Excused absence
NYA Not yet appointed; hadn't been appointed to this position at the time
R Resigned from the ACSD.

*Please note that attendance was not required of returning members at t

Family Resource Center Update – ACSD – November 8, 2023

- FRC Hours – Monday-Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm
 - Consultations – please call or email for an appointment but walk-ins are accepted
 - 703-204-3941
 - frc@fcps.edu
 - The library is open for walk-ins and check-outs

FRC website: <https://www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center>

You Tube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@FCPSFamilyResourceCenter>

Digital Resources: <https://www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/family-resource-center/fcps-resources-topics-parents-and-educators>

Updates:

- November and December Webinars/Events:
 - **Sibshops/Sibshops Teen** – 11/6/23 – 10:00 am
 - **Moving on to Life in the Community (CTS)** – 11/9/23 - 6:30 pm at Annandale HS
 - **Executive Functioning- Helping your kids with organization, emotional regulation, and flexibility (part 1)** – presented in Spanish – 11/17/23 – 10:00 am
 - **Understanding the New LRE Data Collection Tool** – 11/30/23 – 6:30 pm
 - **Executive Functioning- Helping your kids with organization, emotional regulation, and flexibility (part 2)** – presented in Spanish – 12/1/23 – 10:00 am
 - **Understanding the New LRE Data Collection Tool** – 12/5/23 – 10:00 am
 - **Coping Strategies for Anxiety, Depression and Stress (part 2)** – 12/12/23 – 10:00 am
- **All webinars will be recorded, and many will have interpretation in Spanish, Arabic and Korean**

New Webinars on the FRC YouTube Channel:

- ✓ New School Year, New Strategy How to Plan, Persist and Achieve Academic Success this Year – Ann Dolin: <https://youtu.be/1DuBgigibls>
- ✓ Meet the Author Series: The Self Driven Child - Dr. William Stixrud - <https://youtu.be/O8jRRBHxiwQ>
- ✓ Characteristics and Needs of Twice Exceptional (2e) Learners - https://youtu.be/1MIUo_xdb6Y
- ✓ Who's the Boss? 5 Ways for Families to help Kids with Big Emotions – Kirk Martin - <https://youtu.be/FRyceQNatD4>
- ✓ Building Family and School Partnerships for Twice Exceptional (2e) Students K-12 - <https://youtu.be/QE-SFE0p7NY>
- ✓ What Your 11th & 12th Graders Are Learning in School About Drugs and How You Can Talk with Them - <https://youtu.be/MxlpUY487lw>
- ✓ Worry and Anxiety: Using Evidence Based Strategies to Help Children and Adolescents - Part I - <https://youtu.be/6oSKuHHHfh4>