

Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) - Fairfax County Public Schools  
Wednesday, February 21 2024, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

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**Summary of Business Conducted:**

- The Twice Exceptional Specialist, Nonye Oladimeji, was the guest and answered questions.
  - The Department of Special Services (DSS) presented their proposed updates on the FCPS Restraint and Seclusion Policy.
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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 24/32 voting members in attendance, two of which attended via Zoom after approval of the ACSD Chair, and didn't count towards the quorum. Harry Henderson attended virtually due to travel and Rachel Charlton due to a work conflict. There are 35 positions on the ACSD; 3 currently vacant. The full record of attendance, members, and vacancies is appended.

**Liaisons/FCPS Guests:**

Michelle Reid, Superintendent

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 of Special Education Procedural Support

Rachna Seizmore-Heizer, School Board Liaison

Kathy Murphy, Assistant Ombuds for Special Education

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

Kelly Raich, FCPS Crisis Prevention and Policy Specialist, Office of Due Process and Eligibility

**Business Meeting Agenda 2/21/24:**

1. Call to Order, Elizabeth Zielinski, Chair
2. Approval of Minutes and Adoption of Agenda, Ms. Zielinski - Public comment will be moved later in the agenda, now behind subcommittee updates.
3. Chair's Message, Elizabeth Zilelinski
  - a. A virtual participation policy for school board advisory committees has been approved by the School Board. It defines limitations on the allowance for virtual attendance. You must let the Chair know your intent, with reasoning, in order to approve (illness, lack of childcare, travel outside area). Details will be in minutes of virtual attendance, so if you

don't want the reason for virtual attendance in the minutes then consider that before requesting. You get a maximum of three opportunities for virtual attendance in one calendar year (not school year). We still need a quorum of members physically present in the room to conduct business.

Amanda Campbell: Will there be an opportunity for virtual public comment, if not live streaming? A: Chair Zielinski will have to ask school board liaison Rachna Sizemore-Heizer (who had yet to arrive). Ms. Zielinski supports virtual public comment.

- b. Draft subcommittee reports are due at the March meeting. Between the March and April meeting, we will combine to one full ACSD Final Report. The April meeting will be devoted to reviewing the document. Please make sure that your report is submitted on time. If you must be late, inform the Chair with details prior to the March meeting.
- c. The school board liaison would like us to know that while ACSD members may be frustrated about making recommendations that aren't implemented, school board members are also frustrated when they don't get a full approved budget and have barriers to following through on recommendations they support. Please note in the report when a recommendation was made years prior, and include your unique perspectives on issues they have heard before but haven't been able to act on yet.

Holly Stearns: Is there a different way to do it so our recommendations would align with the budget cycle? A: There is a requirement for an annual report, but it doesn't say when, so this is a good question.

Amanda Campbell: Would it help to have more recommendations that align with goals already supported in the Special Education Enhancement Plan? Should the ACSD have access to the Enhancement Plan so each subcommittee could see how their work relates to DSS goals for special education, and help DSS figure out how to meet their own goals? A: Mr. Bloom offered to send the Enhancement Plan to the entire committee.

#### 4. Subcommittee Updates

- a. Policy and Regulations - Susan Edgerton represented the committee and reported that Chair Ms. Haydon had already helped divide up who would tackle each part of the report, and they discussed this. They also began discussing the Restraint and Seclusion Policy, which they will be in charge of suggesting recommendations for the committee.
- b. Students Achievement and Outcomes - The subcommittee discussed information from an off-the-record (and authorized by DSS) meeting with the Burke School principal about use of out-of-school suspensions. This meeting informed recommendations the subcommittee is considering. The subcommittee also discussed which members would contribute additional recommendations.
- c. Family Engagement and Community Outreach - Received data and is working on their draft report.
- d. School Board Charge - Reviewed data received and discussed how to tackle the report.

5. Public Comment, Holly Stearns, Vice Chair
  - a. Callie Oettinger: The Office for Civil Rights released new data and resources, including 2020-2021 restraint and seclusion data. They also released guidance documents on the four most common medical disabilities, food allergies, asthma, diabetes, and GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease). She reports a 2017 resolution agreement between FCPS and OCR regarding the discrimination of students with diabetes. She notes that to qualify for a 504, you have to have an activity limited by your disability. The limit on activity afforded by disability is not supposed to undergo extensive analysis, which she feels FCPS violates. The January 2024 US Department of Education document on assistive technology should be reviewed. It addresses myths about AT considerations at IEP meetings. AT must be considered in each and every IEP meeting. Many meetings have no AT specialist at the meeting.
  - b. Jill Casseta - Parent of 14 and 18yo students with IEPs. Parents are not equal participants at the IEP table. Her son was happy to enter HS and be able to take standard-diploma track classes. The families felt blindsided by what she describes as 20 Gatehouse staff members who were not on the IEP list who did not want to implement the draft IEP; at which point they had to hire an advocate and make a VDOE complaint. VDOE found in their favor, but the school has still not implemented the IEP. This has impacted her son greatly; the effect of seeing his school system does not presume his competence. It is an immeasurable emotional toll for someone who was initially excited for his course of learning, and is now failing classes and refusing school.
6. School Board Liaison Update, Rachna Sizemore-Heizer, Braddock District Representative
  - a. The advertised budget will be passed by the school board tomorrow. Unfortunately the County funding falls short of the submitted needs, and the county provides 70% of FCPS funding. 20% is from the state, and 10% federal grant (including the underfunded IDEA).
  - b. Their biggest priority was a teacher pay increase, which will be 6%. Currently they are just keeping up with surrounding jurisdictions, though it is more expensive to live in our jurisdiction, and we would prefer to be number one in compensation.
  - c. Inclusive preschool is another big focus in the budget. The social skills they can learn in preschool set themselves up for success later on being more successfully included in later years. The data supports that.
  - d. There is also a focus on the higher enrollment as well as a higher proportion of special education and English Language Learners and other higher-need students.
  - e. Chronic underfunding of VA K-12 education: The jLARC study showed state staffing formulas have led to chronic underfunding compared with surrounding states. Unfortunately the Governor's budget hasn't addressed this.

Ms. Zielinski: The underfunding of IDEA has caused a disproportionate burden on the schools. She has concerns about pointing out funding shortfalls related to the underfunding of IDEA. That may place blame for budget stress on students with disabilities. She notes that the school board could disclose that they are underfunded federally, but not say why. A: Ms. Sizemore Heizer responded that it is a civil rights act. Underfunding IDEA needs to be lifted up, we need to lift up civil rights violations.

Amanda Campbell: Regarding the virtual attendance policy, is it possible to offer virtual public comment opportunities, or even better live streaming? A: Ms. Sizemore-Heizer doesn't believe there is anything in the law to prevent public participation; nothing in the governance manual prevents virtual public participation and the school board allows virtual public participation. Some school board advisory committees don't have public comment. Ms. Zielinski said she would check with the state SEAC.

7. [Family Resource Center \(FRC\)](#) News, Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Manager of the FRC
  - a. Ann Dolin will come back for a webinar this Friday with a webinar to help children when they have disappointing grades.
  - b. The Behavior Intervention Services and Psychology Services will have webinars and learn about the FBA/BIP process.
  - c. Math instructional team will present on understanding secondary math course offerings.
  - d. They are still in the middle of a four-part series from the Behavior Intervention Services team on different behavioral challenges.
  - e. The Family Academy will be launching in March. This is a "one stop shop" website to go to for info on various opportunities and district-wide events. This is a collaboration with the FRC and the Communications Department.
  - f. They recently did a division-wide mailing to spread info about the FRC. Info went to five different entities in every school: The sp.ed. department chair, each family liaison, each social worker and school counselor, and the PTA president. There is also a Google site for FCPS staff to access FRC info to print for families.
  - g. Mary Beth Harrison Cunningham will retire at the end of the school year, after 40 years.
  - h. [FRC YouTube Channel](#) ; [FRC Digital Resources](#)
8. Attendance Report, Ally Baldassari, Recording Secretary - as above
9. Guest: Dr. Nonye Oladimeji, FCPS Twice Exceptional Specialist
  - a. She is excited for this new job, having been in the division for many years. She described her experience with a twice-exceptional (2E) child who made her a better parent.
  - b. Described creating a summer bootcamp to identify lacking skills to help students with disabilities to pass the Algebra SOL, and her experience helping write math SOL for VA.

Ms. Zielinski: Agrees she is a better parent because of having an exceptional child. All members here represent a region or a service. How can we help her to spread her message and support her work? A: Kids really need different skills. Be an educated consumer on what the child needs and how the skills will be gained, even if they are in a special education class such as Strategies, Personal Development; they need to be working on their own skills and gaining them in their own way.

Holly Stearns: How do you address the culture that your child belongs only if they can sit and do the work in a traditional way? How do we prevent students from feeling that they are not the desired students for teachers to have? A: It takes all of us to set an example for celebrating what everyone brings. Universal Design of Learning (UDL) is key.

Amanda Campbell: Thanks for discussing the importance of inclusion and presuming competence.

Jay Berkenbilt: Letting the student have a voice resonates with him. How can we help students who aren't identified as AAP but are still below academic potential due to their disabilities? A: She is asking for teachers to look for solutions like providing a scribe.

Rachna Sizemore-Heizer: Strengths-based education resonates. She is a parent of a twice-exceptional musician who was between CAT B and CAT A classes when in FCPS. Says we need to interrogate typicality. If such students aspire to a college track, we need to understand college will be based on neurotypical norms, so preparing them socially is vital. College completion rate for people with autism is 37% A: She pushes for every school to have a social lunch buddy program.

Ally Baldassari: Have you considered division-wide policy to address lack of access of 2E kids to honors and IB classes, as typically support is provided through team-taught models, which aren't provided for honors or IB? A: Lake Braddock is an example of a location that has crafted a solution within their science program, but such solutions still need to be individualized by schools who have varying numbers of 2e students who want access to the classes. UDL should help support 2E students adequately in any class.

Brandon Cassidy: Wants more than words. Spoke passionately about showing dedication to students with disabilities by being willing to consider them for jobs.

10. Department of Special Services (DSS) Update: [Restraint and Seclusion Policy](#) proposed revisions, Dr. Terri Edmunds-Heard, Mike Bloom, and Dawn Schaefer, and Kelly Raich
  - a. Update purpose statement to align with current FCPS language and practices
  - b. Adding definitions for social-emotional learning and trauma-informed practices
  - c. Clarify that FCPS can refer students to private schools that utilize floor restraints
  - d. Remove references to seclusion now that seclusion is not allowed anywhere in FCPS. (references to the Key/Kilmer allowance for seclusion, and guidelines for seclusion).

Dawn Schaefer noted there are students at private schools that use seclusion or prohibited restraints. They were in that school prior to the FCPS policy, and the family wants them to stay at the school. She also mentioned a private day school that uses Virginia-allowed (but not FCPS-allowed) floor restraints but not seclusion.

Ms. Zielinski clarified that the Policy and Regulation subcommittee will draft the response/recommendations for the proposed policy update, and present it to the ACSD to approve it as our official review/response.

11. Old Business & New Business, Ms. Zielinski - none

12. Member Time, Ms. Stearns

Ally Baldassari: Appropriate to the discussion tonight, SEPTA will be hosting a continuing conversation with Superintendent Dr. Reid regarding Twice Exceptional issues. That event will be a hybrid event, held at the Gatehouse Café and also Zoom on Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at 7PM. You can find the registration link at [fairfaxcountysepta.org](https://fairfaxcountysepta.org).

13. Adjournment - 9:03 PM

A	Name	Organization/Representing	Orientation	10/10/23	10/11/23	10/12/23	10/13/23	10/14/23	10/15/23	10/16/23	10/17/23	10/18/23	10/19/23	10/20/23	10/21/23	10/22/23	10/23/23	10/24/23	10/25/23	10/26/23	
Ahsen	Cakez	Sully District-Stella Pekarsky	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Ally	Baldassori	SEPTA		E	X	X	X	X	X												
Amanda	Campbell	Sprinfied District-Laura Jane Cohen		X	X	X	X	X	X												
Amanda	Whittman	Dranesville District-Elain Tholen		X	X	X	X		X	X											
Anne	Hobbs	PoAC-NoVA		X	X	X		E	X	X											
Brandis	Ruise	Fairfax Area Disabilities Services Board	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Brandon	Cassady	Career and Transition Services	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Carolyn	Haydon	Braddock District-Megan McLaughlin		X	X	X	X	X	X												
Colleen	Jones	Fairfax County Council of PTA	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Daniel	Cronnell	Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board		X	X	X		E	E												
Darcy	Acquavella	City of Fairfax School Board		X	X	X	X	X	X												
David	Bean	Providence District-Karl Frisch		X	X	X		E	X	X											
Delaney	Brooks	Student Representative	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Elizabeth	Zielinski	Assistive Technology		X	X	X	X	X													
Harry	Henderson	Mason District-Ricardy Anderson		X		E	X	X		E											V
Holly	Stearns	Region 2-Fabio Zuluaga-Asst. Superintendent		X	X	X	X	X													
Hope	Luong	Fairfax County Health Department	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Jay	Berkenbilt	Region 4-Penny Gros-Assistant Superintendent		X	X	X	X	X	X												
Jennifer	Skaggs	Fairfax County Federation of Citizens	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Joanne	Walton	FCPS Teacher	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Keena	McAvoy	Member at Large-Karen Keys Gamara	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Krista	Sharp	Region 6-Michelle Boyd-Assistant Superintendent	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Kristine	Bennett	Region 3-Grace Taylor-Assistant Superintendent	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Lauren	McCaughey	Hunter Mill District-Melanie Meren		X	X		E	X		E											
Nita	Payton	Region 5-Rebeca Baenig-Asst. Superintendent		E	X	X	X	X													
Nora	Rahman	Member at Large-Abrar Omeish			X	X		E	X	X											
Rachel	Charlton	Early Childhood Education (Preschool)		E	X	X	X	X													
Rajiv	Satsangi	Higher Education		X	X		E	X	X	X											
Rebekah	Stone	FC Dept. of Neighborhood and Community Service	NY	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
Shannon	Duncan	Decoding Dyslexia Virginia		X	X	X		E	E												
Stephanie	Smith	Franconia District-Tamara Derenak Kaufax		E	X	X	X	X													
Susan	Edgerton	Member at Large-Rachna Sizemore-Heizer		X	X	X	X	X													
Vacant		League of Women Voters, Fairfax Area																			
Vacant		Mount Vernon District-Karen Corbett Sanders																			
Vacant		Region 1-Douglas Tyson-Assistant Superintendent																			
X	Present																				
E	Excused absence																				
NYA	Not yet appointed; hadn't been appointed to this position at the time of the meeting																				
V	Attended the meeting virtual per policy allowing virtual attendance under limited circumstances																				
*Please note that attendance was not required of returning members at the 9-13-2023 Orientation.																					

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### Family Resource Center Update – ACSD – February, 2024

- 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](mailto: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:

- February Webinars/Workshops
  - **Meet the Author Series: Mind in the Making with Ellen Galinsky** – 2/2/24 – 10 am
  - **Youth Mental Health First Aid (in-person workshop)** – 2/9/24 – 8:30 am-3:30 pm
  - **Behavior Solutions Series: Proactive Strategies for Elementary Families** – 2/16/24 – 10 am
  - **How to Handle Disappointing Grades: Ways to Uncover the Reasons Behind Your Child’s School Performance and How to Help w/Ann Dolin** – 2/23/24 – 10 am
  - **FBA/BIP** – 2/29/24 – 6:30 pm
- March Webinars
  - **FBA/BIP** – 3/1/24 – 10 am
  - **Understanding High School Math Course Offerings** – 3/8/24 – 10 am
  - **Behavior Solutions Series: Taming Tantrums and More for Elementary Families** 3/15/24 – 10 am

#### New Webinars on the FRC YouTube Channel:

- ✓ **Meet the Author Series: Raising a Kid Who Can** - <https://youtu.be/XHlet9sjnVg>
- ✓ **Twice Exceptional (2e) Learners playlist** - [https://youtu.be/1MIUo\\_xdb6Y](https://youtu.be/1MIUo_xdb6Y) and <https://youtu.be/QE-SFE0p7NY>
- ✓ **Using the Data Collection Tool to Inform LRE** - <https://youtu.be/KpNNdEGH764>
- ✓ **Mind in the Making with Ellen Galinsky** - <https://youtu.be/uJ-j521qw1M?si=8f-zWGhBl3DuEApg>
- ✓ **Proactive Strategies for Effective Communication (elementary families)** - [https://youtu.be/BNzCFLNit6A?si=F7qr3A\\_Ai9J\\_dbjr](https://youtu.be/BNzCFLNit6A?si=F7qr3A_Ai9J_dbjr)

#### The Family Academy

- will be launching soon
- one stop shop for information, learning opportunities and district-wide events for families, educators, and the community.



## 2/21/24 ACSD Meeting – Public Comment from Jill Janson Calsetta

Hi, my name is Jill Janson Calsetta and I am the parent of two children with disabilities, ages 14 and 18, who have IEPs. As such, I have been a parent participant in IEP meetings for the last 16 years, so I am not new to this world of parent advocacy and the discussions of educational services and supports for students provided by FCPS.

Tonight I would like to talk about how difficult it is for families to meaningfully participate and be regarded as an equally respected participant around the IEP table. While our individual case involves Oakton High School specifically, I have come to understand there other families who have similarly experienced such difficulties around the County.

After an IEP is discussed, negotiated, and signed, it is supposed to be a legally-binding document. In our case, we had a non-contentious IEP that was signed and agreed-upon at the middle school level before our son's transition to Oakton High School. My son was full of excitement to start high school and finally having access to Cat A diploma-track classes. He expressed enthusiasm for learning, even providing a prioritized list of 12 different choices for electives because he couldn't decide—he couldn't wait to take them all. (And in the end, not getting a single elective from his list.)

Our first IEP meeting with the Oakton team was scheduled just prior to school starting in August. The Special Ed Lead suggested I should bring my son to this meeting so they could meet him for the first time in person. Hindsight being 20/20, I'm glad he was not available to attend the meeting because we were completely blindsided as we walked into a room with over 20 administrators and directors from Gatehouse (who were not on the IEP invite list) in what could only be construed as an attempt to intimidate, if not outnumber, us at the IEP table. They thought it appropriate to question the nature of his disability and the justification for the supports that were documented in the IEP. In that meeting and the several IEP meetings held thereafter, Oakton made it very clear that they were not interested and understanding of the nature of my son's disability nor were they willing to implement the IEP as written. Although we reminded the team of our parental rights and our son's student rights under IDEA, they regarded the signed IEP as merely subjective and not enforceable.

We had no choice but to engage a professional advocate and file a VDOE complaint to compel the school to implement the IEP as written. In mid December, we learned that we won our VDOE complaint and the school must implement the IEP with fidelity. It's been 6 months since the beginning of the school year, 8 months from the date of our signed IEP, and now 2 months since the VDOE found in our favor, and yet the school has still failed to make any forward motion toward implementing the IEP as written.

My son is no longer the same kid he was in middle school. He tells me how his teachers fail to presume competence in him and regard him as someone who is cognitively unable and should not have access to the material being presented in his Cat A classes. He is failing all of his diploma-track classes because he is unable to show them his understanding and competency due to Oakton's failure to provide the supports

legally prescribed by the IEP and underscored by the VDOE complaint finding. As far as we are concerned, he is being denied an education. But moreso, the emotional toll it is taken on my 14-year-old boy is immeasurable. We have gone from a student who couldn't wait for academically challenging classes and had a real love of learning, to a student who has acute anxiety, sleep disturbances, self-harming and injury, and now outright school refusal.

We have never seen so many people who claimed to devote their careers to helping students with disabilities work so hard to deny one his education. In fact, if FCPS put in half the amount of effort and expense they put forth in fighting us these last 8 months as they could have put forth in actually implementing the IEP, we wouldn't be in this predicament today.

While we are still in the middle of our fight to get the school to implement the IEP as written, I can't help but think about how exceptionally difficult it has been to advocate and hold the school accountable for my son's right to an accessible education. It is also not lost on me that there are other families in this County with far less privilege than ours, and how exponentially more challenging it would be for them...families who are not English-speaking or native English speakers, families who are economically disadvantaged, families who do not understand their legal rights or their child's legal rights to an education, or are unsure where to go for help when those rights are wholly disregarded.

I understand that there are times when families and schools can't find middle ground in their discussions and negotiations around the IEP table. But that's not what this is. We found consensus. We had a signed and agreed-upon IEP from the middle school, that is not being implemented by the high school. FCPS has failed our son for half a school year already, and our attempts to collaborate and communicate with his IEP team have been met with **intimidation, aggression, false testimony**, and a complete and utter **disrespect** and **disregard** for a student with disabilities. We were forced to file a complaint with the state VDOE, they found in our favor, and the school continues to fight us and fail our son. It is beyond disgusting and reprehensible, and all I think about is if they could do this to us just think what they can do to other students and their families in the county.