

Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) - Fairfax County Public Schools
Wednesday, April 17, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Summary of Business Conducted:

- The ACSD heard updates from the Department of Special Services (DSS) regarding the Family Summit, which will be held this weekend, and on hiring for Extended School Year (ESY).
 - The ACSD reviewed their Final Report, unanimously approving the report with amendments.
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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 of voting members was confirmed by Recording Secretary Ally Baldassari with 25/32 voting members in attendance. One additional member, Brandon Cassidy, attended virtually with approval for illness. There are 35 positions on the ACSD; 3 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

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)

Agenda:

1. Call to Order, Elizabeth Zielinski, Chair
2. Approval of Minutes and Adoption of Agenda, Ms. Zielinski
3. Chair's Message, Ms. Zielinski
 - a. Thanks for everyone's work on the final report.
 - b. Thanks for the Family Engagement subcommittee's work on the First Class awards, which reviewed a high number of nominees. The job was hard as there were so many wonderful nominees.
 - c. Winners:
 - i. Annisa Chestnut, Silverbrook ES - Elementary School Teacher Award
 - ii. Emily Cope, Principal, Hunter Woods ES - ES Administrator Award

- iii. Jessica Davis, Westfields HS - Adapted Program Lead Teacher (Team Award)
 - iv. Todd Utter, Westfields HS - Adapted PE Teacher (Team Award)
 - v. Amy Brown, West Springfield HS - Assistant Principal (Team Award)
 - vi. Shannon Matheny, West Springfield HS - Assistant Principal (Team Award)
 - vii. Elizabeth Fawsett, West Springfield HS - Assistant Principal (Team Award)
 - viii. John Basta - West Springfield HS - Director of Student Services (Team Award)
 - ix. Lisa Decandia, Instructional Assistant, Westfields HS - Support Staff Award
 - x. Christian Lanzaro, ISD-Office of ESOL Service - Central Office Award
 - xi. Chad Clayton, Principal of Davis Center - Specialty Program Staff Award
 - xii. Rising Hope Mission Church, Alexandria VA - Community Contributor Award
 - xiii. Olivia Bradley, 2nd Grader at West Springfield ES - Student Award
- d. Nominating Committee for ACSD Executive Board 2023-2024
 - i. Colleen Jones has agreed to serve.
 - ii. Anyone else interested please see Ms. Zielinski.
 - e. Requests for subcommittees to do in their last two meetings
 - i. Create a list of guidance and issues to address for next year's subcommittee
 - ii. Consider what a good School Board Charge would be for next year.
 - f. If you want to serve next year make sure to let your appointing school board member or organization know you are interested in serving again.
4. Subcommittee Updates
- a. Policy and Regulations: They met this evening with DSS to examine the redline Policy on Restraint and Seclusion, and it was a robust conversation that will engender recommendations. They also received an update on the Students' Rights and Responsibilities (SR&R) document. There is no substantive change that requires our review. They did add language regarding appreciation for neurodiversity. The subcommittee approves of this language.
5. Public Comment, Holly Stearns, Vice Chair
- a. Holly Stearns - Had her senior son's final IEP meeting today and she thanks her IEP team for being a model team. Her son felt well supported, solutions were offered and creatively addressed, and he is headed to college next year.
 - b. Callie Oettinger - She feels she did not have a good experience in her IEP team and that not all families experience the same level of success in their IEP teams. She is dissatisfied with the results of the OCR reimbursements/compensation, and expresses concern about a reported FOIA request to determine what parents had made OCR complaints.
6. School Board Liaison Update, Rachna Sizemore-Heizer, Member-at-Large

- a. SR&R vote is coming soon, she thanks the Policy and Regulations subcommittee for reading it.
 - b. Regarding choosing a School Board Charge for the ACSD next year, she wants the ACSD to consider what a culture of neurodiversity would look like for FCPS? Start with the end goal in mind and work backwards to decide what we need to do to make that happen.
 - c. They are working on a new [Advisory Committee Operating Manual](#) that will affect us. Executive committees won't be included in advisory committees anymore and there will be guidance for new members. The idea was to get consistency among all school board advisory committees, some of which aren't as well-structured.
 - d. The Enhancement Plan for Students with Disabilities was discussed in the [school board work session](#) yesterday (4/16/2024). There is a [video of the meeting](#), and she would love to hear the ACSD's thoughts on issues raised.
 - e. Per the SR&R, principals have a lot of choice in using the tools of discipline. They are being encouraged to use existing tools. Issues surrounding this should be monitored by the ACSD, as shifts could represent more of a "zero tolerance" policy.
 - f. Governor Youngkin's decisions regarding the state budget will impact FCPS's plans for the overall budget. From the county side, we still see no indication they are going to fully fund our budget ask. This might mean teachers don't get a full 6% salary raise.
 - g. It is not currently in the proposed budget to fund extended day contracts for special education teachers, but FCPS may be able to use year end funds for this.
7. [Family Resource Center](#) (FRC) News, Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham, Manager of the FRC
- a. They now have a "Let's Talk" function on their webpage. You can ask a question and have the opportunity to text message through this feature.
 - b. Behavior Solution webinar this Friday is the 3rd out of 4 for that series, the final is "Taming the Teenage Brain"
 - c. New partnership between FCPS and Varsity Tutors. There will be info sessions coming up. Families are beginning to be notified if they qualify for this service.
 - d. Family Summit is this Saturday at Marshall High School. There will be two sessions to attend and a total of 4 speakers, so you will choose which to attend. The authors coming were FCPS families as well clinicians. There is an in-person resource fair with 16 vendors. There will be asynchronous videos with lots of options, the link will be released on Friday. The live presentation will be recorded and available afterwards as well.
 - e. (Mike Bloom) First Class Award winners will be recognized at the summit with a powerpoint presentation with photos and information on the winners that will be highlighted at the opening session. Also at the ACSD table they will also show the video. Mr. Bloom will call all the winners and set appointments with all the schools to present the awards to them at the school.

Amanda Campbell thanks Ms. Harrison-Cunningham for having an anonymous option for the “Let’s Talk” feature. She also asks Mr. Bloom if SEPTA can still opt in on the resource fair? Apparently SEPTA and PoAC did not get an invitation. A: Yes.

Joanne Walton wants to know if “Let’s Talk” has translation abilities. A: Yes. Ms. Walton also notes that the West Springfield team will impress us once the winner information is published!

Rachel Charlton - Are all nominees, even if they didn’t win, contacted to let them know they were nominated? A: Ms. Zielinski is considering that. Wondering if that would be helpful to those who didn’t win to learn of their nomination without winning. Ms. Charlton feels it is.

Darcy Aquavella suggests that if you nominated someone who didn’t win, please submit the same information as an FCPS Cares. Ms. Zielinski supports this idea.

Anne Hobbs suggested publicizing the list of nominees. Ms. Zielinski sees logistical problems without permission of the nominees. She plans follow-up discussion with the executive committee, and offered to talk to Ms. Hobbs offline for her recommendations to take to the Exec. Committee.

8. Attendance Report, Ally Baldassari, Recording Secretary - as above

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

- a. The Family Summit -update already shared
- b. Progress on Extended School Year Services (ESY) update: Target at this point was 33%, but that we are 75% hired at this point. We are also 100% hired for school administrators.
- c. In all ACSD member folders will be a one-pager regarding updated guidance from the VDOE regarding proportionate share private school expenditures, which was reported on during the Annual Plan at the last meeting. Lea Skurpksi said that if the change engenders any follow-up questions, she welcomes them.
- d. The School Board Work Session around the Enhancement Plan was yesterday, and he will talk to Executive Committee members how to share with the ACSD work on the plan. He recommends ACSD members watch the [recording](#).

Lauren McCaughey asked why the goal for ESY hiring by mid-April is not always 75%, could it always be such moving forwards? A: It was in response to previous hiring levels at this point, and they have implemented many enhancements to encourage hiring. He is willing to adjust up the hiring goal for next year.

Joanne Walton has a point of information that now the pay schedule is different such that ESY staff will receive their full pay at the end of July, and that may have enhanced hiring.

Stephanie Smith was wondering about inclusive preschool models. Her understanding is that there is no cap on peer models added, and how that will affect preschool teachers if

they are not to be offered more staff. State guidelines have these classrooms capped at 8 students. She believes there are classrooms over the cap with peer models.

Ms. Zeilinski encourages moving this conversation as a conversation for next year.

Holly Stearns asks if there is an update on the previous ACSD recommendation that all teachers have the IEPs of their ESY students before ESY starts? A: Dawn Shaefer they are undergoing a collaborative effort to do so.

Amanda Campbell wanted to add it is not just about receiving the IEPs ahead of time, but also that teachers need the appropriate training for those students.

10. Old Business & New Business, Ms. Zielinski : The ACSD Annual Report Review

- a. Thanks to Vice-Chair Holly Stearns for her help editing the Annual Report.
- b. Ms. Zielinski noted for Ms. Sizemore-Heizer how we aligned all recommendations with the AIR Special Education Audit and Strategic Plan, and noted when the recommendation was made in years previous. Ms. Zielinski asked Ms. Sizemore-Heizer to please keep an open conversation if the way the ACSD has evolved in producing their report is not helpful. Ms. Sizemore-Heizer notes that upcoming changes to the governance manual will provide guidance for the annual reports.
- c. Amanda Campbell asked if the recommendation summary chart on page 5 should include the page numbers in which the recommendations could be found. Harry Henderson and Rachna Sizemore Heizer expressed support for this, with Ms. Sizemore-Heizer adding a request to include the subcommittee submitting the recommendation. Amanda Campbell moved to add page numbers and subcommittee names to that table on pages 4-6 of the report. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
- d. Jay Berkenbilt said it would be helpful to us to have feedback from the school board on what they found useful, what was “in the works,” or wasn’t doable considering the budget. Ms. Zielinski noted there is official feedback from DSS staff each year. Ms. Sizemore-Heizer noted it is helpful for subcommittee members to think about budgetary impact of their recommendations especially considering the current shortfall. Sometimes the recommendations are operational vs policy, and the board only contributes to policy. She prefers to see rationale provided on how they affect outcomes. Mr. Berkenbilt would like some guidelines on how to write good recommendations. Ms. Zielinski answered that she and Ms. Stearns are considering how to offer that to next year’s ACSD, and Ms. Sizemore-Heizer notes that this will be covered in the proposed Advisory Committee Operating Manual.
- e. Mr. Berkenbilt moves to add language to Recommendation 3, “Data Collection” on page 10 (and also on 12, and in the chart on page 5). After the phrase “begin collecting data”

insert the language “disaggregated by IDEA category” immediately after. The motion was seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- f. In the rationale for recommendation #3 that appears at the bottom of page 12, Ms. Campbell moved to strike the sentence beginning “For example,...”. Motion was seconded. The motion to strike the full sentence was passed unanimously.
- g. Rachel Charlton moved to make an addition to the recommendation on assistive technology in the School Board Charge subcommittee report. They wish to add a recommendation 6(d) regarding FCPS providing Assistive Technology Services as a Related service in addition to accommodation considerations in a student’s IEP or 504 Plan. Motion was seconded. Ms. Z asked why this was added at this stage. Ms. Charlton clarified that due to a technology glitch, the recommendation didn’t get seen by all the people intended. Motion passed unanimously.
- h. Colleen Jones moved that for Recommendation 6a on page 26, we replace “each school’s leadership” with “The Department of Special Services”, so that we put the responsibility at the county level not at the school level. Motion passed unanimously.
- i. Keena McAvoy moves to strike the first paragraph of the “RATIONALE” for recommendation 2a on page 23. The second paragraph of that rationale, “A workload model to determine the caseload assignments” would remain. Motion was seconded. Ms. McAvoy said the paragraph was created based on incorrect information. Ms. Stearns was concerned that striking this leaves no data to support the rationale. Ms. McAvoy notes that they do not have data now to support this. Ms. McAvoy moved to amend her motion that we replace the first paragraph with something that explains the difference between a caseload and workload model. [She will provide the language by email later that would be accepted by an email ACSD vote.]. Amended motion passed unanimously.
- j. Colleen Jones moved to allow the executive committee to make typographical corrections as needed to the report. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
- k. Stephanie Smith moved to accept the report as amended. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

11. Member Time, Ms. Stearns

- a. Susan Edgerton - PoAC NoVA is having a meeting on new autism diagnoses at 10am on April 27th at the West Springfield Government Center.
- b. Jay Berkenbilt is happy for the compassion and thoughtfulness the committee demonstrates in the range of challenges our students face.
- c. Ally Baldassari notes the SEPTA awards Ceremony the evening of May 11th.
- d. Amanda Campbell is highlighting the event “Storytelling as an Advocacy Tool”, an AAC community discussion with author Tiffany Hammond on Sunday April 21 at Ravensworth Baptist Church 2-4PM. Will be attended by Dr. Reid and Ms. Sizemore-Heizer.

- e. Ms. Zielinski notes it is Assistive Technology Awareness day. She, as the AT rep, wants to speak to a common misconception. AT does not always involve “technology.” She recommends a recent podcast episode of Two Sides of the Spectrum in which they interview an AAC user.
- f. Rachna Sizemore-Heizer notes that there is a Stanford Neurodiversity Summit each year. She is hoping to see FCPS present at this in future years. Also notes that with the neurodiversity proclamation there are now large posters in each school regarding neurodiversity affirmation.

12. Adjournment - 9:08 PM.