

Alexandria City Public Schools  
Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting  
January 9, 2019  
11:45 a.m.  
Bradlee Safeway Community Room

Meeting Minutes

**Call to Order**

**Note: There was not a quorum at this meeting.**

**Introductions**

In attendance: Janet Eissenstat, Coral Childs, Courtney Davis, Abina Durity, Cindy Hart, Margaret Lorber, Deanne McNulty (on phone), Janet Reese, Mildred Rivera, Mark Sullivan, Terry Werner

**Public Comments**

Abina Durity expressed concern about the transition process from TCW to college/work. Deanna McNulty concurred with this concern. Janet Eissenstat said it would be covered later in the meeting.

Mildred Rivera expressed concern about the lack of emergency plans for special education students. She has asked about this for a number of months and the lack of response from ACPS concerns her.

**Report from the Director of Specialized Instruction – Terry Werner**

The meeting with the School Board re: the Special Education Draft Action Plan was held. So was the ACPS staff meeting. The public comment period has closed. There were very few responses. Most attendees had not read the report, so they were not able to comment in a meaningful way. Additional (meaningful) feedback is needed, especially from ACPS staff. The online survey on the action plan will be open until January 18, 2019. When the survey closes, the contractor (PCG) will prepare a summary of the comments. The final plan will go to the School Board March 7, 2019.

Mildred asked how many people had responded through the online survey. According to Terry, less than 50 people responded. There were no negative comments and some questions.

Terry continued that her office had starting planning for spring (March) recruitment. She has permission to issue early hire contracts. ACPS has been at a disadvantage at job fairs because other school districts routinely issue early hire contracts. She hopes to have a pool of 10 staff members for principals to select from next fall. She also plans to have a special education staff member on each principal's hiring panel.

Cindy Hart asked if the job fairs were for recent college graduates or experienced teachers. According to Terry, most of them are for recent college graduates. The Philadelphia job fair is an exception.

Abina Durity asked if the new hires would be strictly for the elementary schools. Terry said “no”.

Mildred Rivera asked if the new hires would strictly be teachers or if they would include other professionals who work with special education students. Terry is only hiring teachers at this time.

Margaret Lorber asked if the goal was to hire only recent college graduates. Terry is recruiting other places besides college job fairs and will consider experienced special education teachers as well.

Janet Eissenstat asked if there was anything SEAC could do to help. Terry asked SEAC to let the School Board know it supports her actions, especially before the March 7, 2019 School Board meeting and especially the new School Board members.

Janet asked a follow up question on the workings of the interdepartmental collaboration committee. Terry is discussing the appropriate level of participation with the superintendent. Janet commented that participation needed to be at a high level. She proposed writing a letter to the superintendent stating this. According to Terry, the draft plan requires people at a “significant” level to staff the committee. Janet followed up by asking if parents were part of the committee. Terry stated that it was an internal ACPS committee and parents would not be involved. Margaret agreed that it was an internal ACPS committee but suggested that it request periodic parental feedback. Mildred concurred.

Terry then discussed emergency plans for special education students. Not all special education students can follow the “general” emergency plans. In addition, schools need “safe spaces” for those students who cannot evacuate a building for any reason. Terry has developed a process for addressing these issues that is currently under review. She hopes to implement the process in fall 2019. Mildred said the physical location of special education students in some schools left them vulnerable, as potential targets.

Coral Childs reminded the committee that safety is a balancing act between placing students in safe physical locations vs. placing them where they can evacuate quickly.

Terry suggested inviting someone from the facilities staff to a future SEAC meeting to address this issue. February was tentatively suggested.

Terry then addressed the issue of transitioning students from TCW to college/work. ACPS has a staff to do this for students with IEPs. Guidance counselors should cover this for students with 504 plans. She will follow up with Abina on this.

Janet Reese announced there will be a “transition fair” on February 20, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. in the TCW cafeteria. It is for students age 14+. It will include workshops on interviewing.

**Report from the SEAC Chair – Janet Eissenstat**

Meagan L. Alderton is the School Board member assigned to SEAC. Margaret Lorber has moved to Student Health. Janet encourages SEAC members to meet with School Board members whenever possible.

Terry Werner commented that in the past SEAC held a briefing session for new School Board members, she recommends SEAC do it again.

#### **Anne R. Lipnick Awards for Specialized Instruction Update -**

The awards ceremony is May 23, 2019. The call for nominees needs to be issued and a committee is needed to review nominations. Cindy Hart volunteered to lead the review committee.

Terry Werner commented that the call for nominees needs to go out quickly and asked how it was distributed last year. Janet Eissenstat responded that the Parent Resource Center (PRC) sent the call out via their email list and that Terry sent it school principals.

Terry suggested contacting Susan Nielson, the Clerk of the Board, to see about revising the nomination questions before sending out the call in mid-February. Currently the nomination package asks for a single, long narrative. It should be replaced with 3 shorter questions. Winners should be selected by mid-April. Janet and Cindy will review the questions.

#### **Committee Membership and Elections – Janet Eissenstat**

There is not a quorum so elections cannot be held.

The current committee is not “healthy” and needs new members.

Cindy Hart asked if SEAC could do a flyer and emailing on what SEAC is and asking for new members. According to Terry, it is difficult to do paper flyers because they rely on the schools for distribution. The preparation is very labor intensive and they don't have staff to do it.

Janet suggested having PTAC send an email. She also noted that SEAC needed a PTAC representative. PTAC meetings are the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month at Minnie Howard School.

#### **Report from the Parent Resource Center (PRC) – Courtney Davis and Janet Reese**

A printed copy of the PRC report was distributed.

There will be a “transition fair” on February 20, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. in the TCW cafeteria. It is for students age 14+. It will include workshops on interviewing.

New materials in the library include Stick and Move by Jared Parks. It is available in school libraries and at the PRC.

Upcoming workshops include “Childhood Trauma and Resilience” on January 23 and “Problem Behaviors in Younger Children” on January 30.

### **Announcements – Janet Eissenstat**

Partners in Policymaking (PIP) is accepting applications to join their 2019-2020 class. The 2019-2020 PIP class will consist of seven two-day sessions beginning September of 2019 and lasting through April of 2020. Eligible participants are people with developmental disabilities and/or parents of young children with developmental disabilities. Individuals participating in the program will attend advocacy training and skill-building workshops designed to hone them into effective and passionate advocates.

January 30, 2019 ACPS families and community members are invited to hear ACPS Superintendent Dr. Hutchings share what he has learned in his first 100 days in Alexandria. Childcare, interpretation, and transportation included with registration. Register at:

[https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07efxn065194ff1e1a&oseq=&c=&ch=&utm\\_source=ACPS+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=2bd85970ad-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_07\\_07\\_16&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_343e386a8d-2bd85970ad-213401669](https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07efxn065194ff1e1a&oseq=&c=&ch=&utm_source=ACPS+Newsletters&utm_campaign=2bd85970ad-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_07_07_16&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_343e386a8d-2bd85970ad-213401669)

Margaret Lorber announced that the School Board will be voting on the operational budget at the January 10, 2019 meeting. Public comment on the budget closes January 24, 2019.

### **Next SEAC Meeting – February 6, 2019**

Adjournment