

**Alexandria City Public Schools
Special Education Advisory Meetings
T.C. Williams High School – 3330 King Street
T.C. Williams Principal’s Conference Room**

**Wednesday, August 14th, 2019
7:00 PM**

Meeting Notes

In Attendance: Meagan Alderton – School Board Member and SEAC Liaison, Margaret Lorber – School Board Member, Terry Mazingo – Chief Academic Officer of ACPS, Janet Eissenstat – Chair SEAC, SEAC members – J-Lynn Van Pelt, Cherlyn Jenkins, Alexis Stackhouse, Deborah Perry, Sandra Strachan-Vieira, Jeff Zack, Cindy Hart, Michael Behrman, Member of Public – Van Thomlinson

SEAC Members Not in Attendance: Coral Childs, Leilani Allwine

Call to Order: 7:05pm

Introductions: New and returning members, School Board members and a member of the public gave brief introductions of themselves, their experiences with special education and their professional backgrounds.

Public Comment: None

Report from the Chair: Janet Eissenstat gave her report that highlighted several areas for committee consideration and-or concern such as:

- the 2018-19 SOL scores for students with disabilities (though there was an uptick in some Math scores)- final scores should be available very shortly,
- the challenges of getting a quorum in the past year,
- the Special Education Evaluation and Implementation plans have taken a lot longer to get done than anticipated – the Evaluation it started out smaller and then the scope of it was broadened – (SEAC’s request to the ACPS School Board for an independent, outside evaluation was in 2015 -2016)
- not a lot of surprises in the Evaluation – IEPs, professional development, disproportionality, site-based management model, etc.
- the State of Virginia’s Department of Education conducted an audit of ACPS’ delivery of Specialized Instruction in February - March of 2019 - the Director of Specialized Instruction received the VDOE draft report the prior week in August and is preparing ACPS’ response and we should have the final report within 10 days,
- A member contributed they had been contacted and interviewed by the VDOE as part of the audit and was told the reason for the audit was due to the fact that Alexandria’s

special education scores had been so consistently below the rest of the state for so long and it tripped a bunch of red flags (and there could be a possible loss of funds),

- ACPS' Chief Academic Officer contributed that there had been a conference call with the State regarding the audit and there would be no loss of funding,
- how the findings of the Special Education Implementation Plan and the VDOE State Education ACPS Audit report would work together after the VDOE report is released to SEAC will be determined,
- there has been a delayed re-organization at Central Office – the question of where Special Education has been located in the organizational hierarchy and the Executive Director's role has been and is currently being discussed,
- hold discussion on Evaluation, Implementation Plan and the SOL scores until the September meeting,
- a member contributed that the Bylaws needed to be revisited again this year,
- SEAC should do a Special Education 101 for the School Board again.

Report from the School Board Liaison:

- 3 School Board members are working on a framework to evaluate the Superintendent – they want to really align parts of his evaluations to his actions – the School Board is looking to take action around how he is evaluated shortly and will be ready to present their draft to the other School Board members
- The High School Project is a really big decision that the School Board must undertake – as everyone know capacity has been a big issue for ACPS (TCW is the largest High School in the State) – the School Board has looked at 2 ideas – 1) keeping one big high school or 2) a 'connected" high school concept – we have been looking at models that have a positive impact on all the kids
- The School board is discussion culture – what are our values? What do we want our school to look like? We have an opportunity to make big changes and culture is one of the frames around those decisions

Report of the Nominating Committee:

- The Chair reported that the nominating committee consisted of herself, Coral Childs and Cindy Hart
- The Chair out forward the slate devised by the nominating committee of Cindy Hart for Chair, Michael Behrman for Vice-Chairman and Coral Childs for Co-Secretary with nominations from the floor.
- A member of the SEAC asked how the nominating committee was formed since they had no recollection of the committee membership being determined at the prior meeting – several committee members answered they recalled the committee being discussed but not necessarily who would be on the committee
- The Chair replied that she asked Coral and Cindy to be on the committee – they never really met in person though there were phone calls - she asked Cindy to stand for the role of Chair, she agreed and then she called Michael Behrman a new member of the committee to stand for Vice-Chair

- A committee member replied there had been no outreach to all members until August (about the 8th or 9th) - about 5 days before the election
- A member replied that they sent an email volunteering to stand for Chair because they had not heard anything from the committee and thought there would be a leadership vacuum.
- Members commented that transparency is the good for the health of committees and without it a healthy committee cannot move forward and they hope the Chair/Vice Chair would be transparent moving forward
- Two members nominated Jeff Zack from the floor to stand for Chair but he declined to run citing the process
- Vote on slate took place by paper ballot with Margaret Lorber and Meagan Alderton counting the votes - Cindy Hart elected Chair, Michael Behrman as Vice-Chair (with one abstention) and Coral Childs as Co-Secretary with the other Co-Secretary position vacant for the time being

New Business:

- Discussion centered around devoting part of a SEAC meeting to having ACPS presenters come and “educate” SEAC members on various aspects of the system e.g., Human Resources. These presentations have been helpful in the past but tend to go on too long and there are too many areas to cover. A suggestion was, could we limit them to 15 minutes? Another suggestion was to post the presentations to the ACPS website on the Special Education page. Another comment suggested that perhaps SEAC should wait to discuss potential topics until we get to discuss the SpEd evaluation report, Implementation Plan, the VDOE report, etc. or the Scope of Work.
- SEAC’s new principal liaison Pree Ann Johnson arrived and introduced herself to the committee. The ACPS teacher had not been selected as of yet. The question of a student representative came up and a former Co-Chair replied that the School Board a number of years ago felt that it would not be possible due to a number of reasons.
- There was a brief discussion regarding potential sub-committees.
- A member mentioned the ACPS website is hard to navigate and find information and, additionally, there was a lack of SEAC notes, agendas, etc. on the School Board site for SEAC. A former Chair mentioned that she is working with Susan Neilson, the School Board Clerk, to rectify the missing notes from the last several years.
- The budget process and timing was very briefly mentioned.

Motion to Adjourn: Seconded and approved unanimously - 8:45 pm.