

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE ALEXANDRIA, VA SCHOOL BOARD ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (ACPS) SUMMARY OF MEETING

November 20, 2019

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was convened for a meeting at 7:02 P.M. on November 20, 2019, in the Library at T.C. Williams High School, Alexandria, VA. Co-chair Cindy Hart and Michael Behrmann welcomed attendees.

In accordance with the provisions of the Code of Virginia § 2.2-3707, the meeting was open to the public. Cindy Hart received written comments from Alex Sprague, which she read to the committee. The author has autism and wrote in support of SEAC and asked for more teacher training and special setting classes.

Attendees:

	Name	Role	Present	Not Present
SEAC Members				
	Cindy Hart	Co-chair	X	
	Michael Behrmann	Co-chair	X	
	Coral Childs	Co-secretary	X	
	Abena Durity	Member		Excused/Personal
	Janet Eissenstat	Member	X	
	Cherlyn Jenkins	Member	X	
	Deborah Perry	Member	X	
	Tammy Rotz	Teacher Rep	X	
	Alexis Stackhouse	Member		Excused/Personal
	Sandra Strachan-Vieira	Member	X	
	J-Lynn Van Pelt	Member		X
	Jeffrey Zack	Member	X	
Consultants				
	Meagan Alderton	School Board Liaison		Excused/School Board Event
	Pree Ann Johnson	Principal Liaison		Excused/Medical
	Theresa Werner	Staff Liaison		Excused/Medical
Other				
	Courtney Davis	PRC Liaison	X	

	Margaret Lorber	School Board Member	X	
	Terry Mazingo	Chief Academic Officer	X	
	Jennifer Abbruzzese	Director, Policy and School Board Initiatives	X	

Advisory Committee Policies and Procedures

Jennifer Abbruzzese Director, Policy and School Board Initiatives spoke to the committee about the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VAFOIA) and its application. A gathering of any 3 committee members constitutes a meeting, even electronically. All meetings must be held in a public location. The committee must give advance written notice of all meetings.

Jennifer also suggested that committee meetings use Robert’s Rules of Order as a guide for conducting meetings. She handed out copies of the Advisory Committee Handbook.

Minutes

There were suggested edits to both the September and October minutes. Cindy Hart proposed tabling them until December.

Janet Eissenstat made a motion to table the September and October minutes until the December meeting. Deborah Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Report from the By-Laws Subcommittee

Sandra Strachan-Vieira reported that the draft by-laws will be available at the December meeting.

Report from the Action Plan Subcommittee

Michael Behrmann reported that the subcommittee has reviewed the combined PCG/VDOE action plan and has organized their comments by topic. The major topics are professional development, human resources, reading, behavior, scheduling, compliance, and inclusion resources.

- Professional development – ACPS staff needs mandatory training, not just special education teachers, but general education teachers, and administrators. This will require funding from the school board.

- Human resources –The Office of Specialized Instruction (OSI) needs more involvement in hiring.
- Reading – This topic was not specifically addressed in the action plan. However, low reading proficiency scores continue to be a concern.
- Behavior – ACPS staff needs more familiarity with special needs students and how to work with them.
- Scheduling – Someone with a special education background needs to be part of the scheduling process.
- Compliance – It is not clear from the action plan who at ACPS is responsible for compliance with state and federal regulations.
- Inclusion – More resources, including staff, need to be shared across departments.

In addition, the non-negotiables in the action plan need to be defined and an index of findings and recommendations.

Following discussion, Janet Eissenstat made a motion to combine the existing action plan feedback with an executive summary. Deborah Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Report from the SEAC Chair

Cindy Hart asked committee members to see pages 24 and 25 in the packet she handed out. These pages asked for information on committee members and their children. Several committee members expressed privacy concerns with providing the information and Cindy rescinded the request.

Old Business

Special Education 101

This school board briefing has been moved to spring 2020.

Scope of Work

Cindy Hart provided a long list of possible items to include in the Scope of Work: PCG/VDOE action plan, visibility, review of data, parent communication, transportation, building design, career and transition planning, literacy, and behavior. In addition, there are mandatory Scope of Work topics: the Lipnick awards, by-laws, budget, and policy and procedures. Cindy suggested that the Lipnick awards be expanded to include implementation of special education best practices in addition to recognizing excellent staff members. The committee needs to prioritize these topics.

Deborah Perry made a motion that the committee vote on its priorities. Janet Eissenstat seconded the motion. The following priorities received a majority of votes:

- Review of Reports and Action Plans - Assist ACPS in setting priorities to address reports from the PCG evaluation and VDOE audit

- Monitoring Implementation Plan - Assist ACPS in implementation of Action Plan prepared by the Department of Specialized Instruction to address the PCG and VDOE evaluations regarding students with disabilities in ACPS.
- Visibility of SEAC - SEAC will work in collaboration with parent constituents, the School Board, the PRC, and ACPS leaders to give parents a strong voice and build a culture of cross-collaboration and trust.

Adjournment

Jeff Zack made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Janet Eissenstat seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Upcoming Meetings

- December 18, 2019
- January 15, 2020
- February 19, 2020
- March 18, 2020
- April 15, 2020
- May 20, 2020
- June 17, 2020

These minutes will be formally considered by the Council at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.