

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Norfolk Public Schools

Draft Minutes 12/5/19

Meeting location, time and date: School Administration Building 800 E. City Hall Ave., Norfolk, VA 23510, 8th floor Conference Room 12/5/19 6:00pm

Attendance:

Members present:	Vicky Greco, Ellen Fitzenrider, Matthew Moynihan, Tasha Washington, Vashti Washington, Diane Outlaw
Members absent:	Betty Boone, Shirley Confino-Rehder, Clifton Frank, Teressa Gordon, Katie McCurdy, Tonya Shell, Seraphine Nyuydine, Shirley Wilson
Consultants present:	Joy Richardson, Candice Lang
School Board Liaison:	Adale Martin (absent)
Guests:	Maureen Hollowell (Endeppendence Center), Chris Stratton (NPS Parent), Mary Stratton (NPS Parent)

Welcome/Introductions: The meeting was called to order at 6:12 p.m. Following the welcome by the SEAC Chair, Mr. Moynihan, members and stakeholders in attendance introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes: The Committee discussed the revised meeting minutes from 8/22/19, which were approved as written, and the draft minutes from 9/12/19. Approval of the 9/12/19 minutes was deferred until the next meeting in January.

Public Comments: *Speaker 1* gave public comments regarding her experience with non-compliance with learning accommodations and continued frustration experienced by herself and her student. Larger group discussion included continued compliance concerns about the implementation of IEPs with fidelity and the lack of communication by building principals and case workers about SEAC meetings, parent workshops, advocacy activities, and family engagement opportunities. *Speaker 2* made public comments about school building leadership transitions and how these changes in personnel affect the delivery of services and additional supports needed by students with disabilities and their families. They shared that they just found out about SEAC right before this meeting, but have been in the division for 4 years. *Speaker 3* gave public comments about whether some schools foster welcoming, healthy and safe learning environments for our students with disabilities and their families.

Ms. Hollowell gave an update regarding legislation submitted by the Endeppendence Center to the Virginia Board of Education that addresses the inappropriate use of restraints and seclusion by school divisions when attempting to manage behaviors of students with disabilities. She noted successful accountability efforts to prohibit the practice of prone restraints and the timeline for the legislation as it nears the final stages of implementation. In addition to review of reporting requirements, Ms. Hollowell discussed the need of SEAC to review related policies, practices and regulations prior to providing advisory summaries to the School Board. She noted that the Endeppendence Center and other agencies encourage current planning for training, including upcoming webinars to be conducted regionally by a core group of advocates at the state level, as well as the incorporation of additional protections by local school divisions for children with disabilities.

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Dr. Richardson will respond by email to those stakeholders who provided public comments at tonight's meeting. She gave copies of email correspondence to SEAC members in attendance with parents who have given public comments at previous meetings, as part of SEAC's formal response practice.

Membership Discussion: Similarly, Dr. Fitzenrider led discussion of preventative measures reported in the recent 4-part series produced and broadcast by our local public radio station, WHRV.

Dr. Richardson also noted that she serves on the Virginia Council of Administrators of Special Education (VCASE) Legislative Committee which has been involved with reviewing pending policy changes in the area of the use of restraint and seclusion in public schools which will include provisions for training. The Learning Support Department is contributing to a draft policy for NPS regarding the use of restraint and seclusion, which will include provisions for training. SECA requested the ability to review any draft policy before it is presented to the Board for approval.

Dr. Richardson gave updates regarding grant proposals that she has submitted to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) for additional resources. The grant proposal for the development of sensory hallway activities for 2 elementary schools and sensory boxes for 7 elementary schools that house district wide special education programs has been approved. She explained that these resources are designed to meet the needs of students with learning differences, including sensory processing needs, Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD), reduction of anxiety and stress, movement breaks, and self-regulation development. Dr. Richardson also reported that a grant application for additional staffing for the Parent Resource Center is pending approval.

Dr. Richardson discussed the progress made per the local special education plan that requires the expenditure of fifteen percent of the special education budget to be used to provide Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) to general education students. The purpose of these services set out to deliver effective supports and strategies to reduce the disproportionate discipline of minority students with disabilities, to increase alternative to suspension and to empower teachers and staff with culturally responsive practices. The plan included the hiring of and specialized training for a CEIS Specialist, 24 paraprofessionals, a social worker and a school counselor who support 12 schools (middle and high schools), as well as the K-8 Southside STEM Academy at Campostella. She noted positive trends in academic and behavioral progress for the 200 students and families who are currently being served, as well as positive feedback from targeted professional development from school staff as part of this initiative.

Dr. Richardson also reported student suspension data used to develop the CEIS plan that indicated most suspensions occurred for students in grades 6 through 9. She noted that elementary school data regarding suspensions is potentially skewed by practices used by some schools in having parents/guardians pick up their younger students who demonstrate disruptive behaviors rather than documenting a suspension. Dr. Richardson noted that the division currently recommends multiple alternatives to suspension as well as support/training for trauma-informed care/instruction and restorative practices. NPS has recently moved forward with the Virginia Tiered Systems of Support (VTSS), which includes establishment of Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) services for all students.

Meeting and Training Schedule Discussion: The revised 2019-2020 SEAC schedule is as follows:

September 5: Business meeting, 6 p.m., CAB 11th Floor Conference Room

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November 7: Ins-and-Outs of IEP training workshop, 6 p.m., Coleman Place Elementary

December 5: Business meeting, 6 p.m., CAB 11th Floor Conference Room

January 9*(2nd Thursday due to winter break): Business Meeting and Town Hall, 6 p.m., Bayview Elementary

February 6: Business meeting, 6 p.m., CAB 11th Floor Conf. Room

March 5: Invisible Disabilities training workshop, 6 p.m., location TBD

April 2: Business meeting, 6 p.m., CAB 11th Floor Conference Room

May 7: Critical Decision Points training workshop, 6 p.m., location TBD

June 4: Business meeting, 6 p.m., CAB 11th Floor Conference Room

Special Education Concern and Annual Report Discussion:

Mr. Moynihan led discussion regarding recent reports of the documented incidents of physical abuse of students with disabilities by a special education teacher and the related mismanagement of school and division administrators in failing to address these Child Protective Services (CPS) reported incidents adequately. SEAC members and guests discussed concerns for students, parents and staff and the need for effective transparency and communications in serving our students with disabilities.

To-date, no response has been made by the School Board regarding the last Annual Report/Letter submitted by SEAC. Following discussion and consensus, Mr. Moynihan will draft another letter on behalf of SEAC to the School Board that addresses recent and ongoing stakeholder concerns and requests an in-kind response. In order to give more NPS stakeholders an opportunity to make public comments, SEAC unanimously voted to conduct its January 9 business meeting as a special education town hall, with extended time to allow for public comments, to be held at Bayview Elementary. Per the Committee's request, Dr. Richardson will submit facility use applications for the January meeting for Bayview Elementary or, if needed, Lake Taylor School as an alternate meeting location.

Announcements:

Dr. Richardson made available copies of the SEAC roster which includes member contact info.

Dr. Fitzenrider shared the VDOE data that highlights that the NPS Department of Learning Support/Special Education Services is "larger than at least 75 entire school districts in Virginia" and noted that she will share this additional information to SEAC members in a follow-up email.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Vicky Manugo Greco
Secretary