

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Special Meeting

Norfolk Public Schools (NPS) – Minutes 03/24/2022: *Adopted 04/07/2022 with revisions*

This meeting was held as an electronic meeting due to the emergency and disaster represented by the spread of COVID-19, pursuant to and in compliance with Norfolk City Ordinance 48,161. This meeting was conducted by the following electronic communication means telephonically and electronically through Zoom. The public may participate by providing their comments in an email to the Chairpersons or Department of Learning Support in advance of the meeting or by phone or video.

Meeting Date and Time: Via Zoom, 03/24/2022, 6:00 pm

Members Present	Tasha Washington, Vicky Manugo Greco, Christopher Keyes, Halima Akar, Dr. Nicole Anthony, Sarah Bailey, Charlene Christopher, Mildred Goolsby, Edna (Diane) Outlaw, Susan Williams, Vashti Washington, Matthew Moynihan
Members Absent	Nathaniel Almeida, Rita Bell
NPS Consultants Present	Dr. Glenda Walter, Senior Director, Learning Support; Ms. Denise Williams-Patterson, Assistant Director, Learning Support; Ms. Jerri Smith, Senior Coordinator, Learning Support
Guests	Nicole Broe, Jessica Libby, Kim Wint, Kevin Thompson, Korbin Thompson, Gilda Northern, Patricia Holmes, Nikia Bassett, Renee Howard

The meeting of the Norfolk SEAC was held Thursday, March 24, 2022, at 6:00 pm via Zoom Communications.

Welcome/Introductions/The Purpose of SEAC:

The purpose of today's special meeting was to review the Annual Plan Application for the Federal Flow-Through Funds for special education, as presented by Dr. Walter.

The agenda for the meeting was shared on the screen. Mrs. Greco called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm and asked attendees to introduce themselves. SEAC members briefly introduced themselves as well as guests and NPS consulting staff. Mrs. Greco provided the purpose and functions of the SEAC.

Norfolk Public Schools Special Education Annual Plan Flow-Through Grant Application Fiscal Year 2023

Dr. Walter completed a presentation on the Norfolk Public Schools Special Education Annual Plan Flow-Through Grant Application for the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23).

Questions & Discussion of Norfolk Public Schools Special Education Annual Plan Flow-Through Grant Application Fiscal Year 2023 with SEAC Members

Mrs. Greco raised a question about the number of students with disabilities (SWD) noted in the presentation. She asked if the total of 4,286 students included non-enrolled students receiving related services. Dr. Walter indicated those students are included in the total of 4,286 students.

Mrs. Greco noted those non-enrolled students homeschooled or private school students receiving related services aren't included in the school division's ADM (Average Daily Membership). She asked Dr. Walter for a total number of our enrolled SWD in order to determine the percentage of SWD as a percentage estimate related to the overall NPS student population.

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Dr. Walter indicated she did not have an updated overall enrollment as of this evening; however, based on data shared at division meetings she understands the ADM number to be around 27,000.

In addition, Mrs. Greco asked if the behavior specialists who are working at schools, such as the Southside STEM Academy at Campostella, are in any way part of the grant funding or under our Learning Support/Special Education operating budget, or whether they are considered regular education behavior specialists.

Dr. Walters responded that they are not funded under Learning Support or the special ed grants budget. Because they are not funded by Learning Support, Dr. Walter could not necessarily share where they are funded: behavioral specialist positions may be under the operating budget or some other grant. However, as far as service delivery they are not restricted to working with general education students.

Mrs. Greco shared her hope that the behavior specialists are participating in professional development opportunities to better reach and teach our students with disabilities because she has heard concerns about how some behavior specialist staff discuss and address student behaviors, which have also been exacerbated by the social-emotional toll of the pandemic.

Mrs. Greco asked whether the training and funding sources of behavior specialist could be determined for sustainable funding, while emphasizing her shared concern that NPS continue to have highly qualified and trained behavior specialists in place to address the significant behaviors that our children are demonstrating.

Dr. Walter re-emphasized that as far as service delivery behavior specialists are not restricted to working with general education students. Dr. Walter stated in light of the JLARC (Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission) report, that NPS administration has worked very hard to include all staff in training opportunities that support children with disabilities and they have had a good response from general education teachers, staff members, behavioral specialists, and administrative specialists.

Dr. Walter shared about a meeting they had with Student Support's Dr. Monica Williams, who works on student wellness efforts and supports the division's PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) program, as well as wraparound services. The behavioral specialists fall under her direct support, and both she and Dr. Walter have met collaboratively to discuss professional development and possibly developing some PLCs (Professional Learning Community) to include Learning Support staff as well as some behavior specialists in the division. These plans are being worked out for the upcoming year or in some sort of phased implementation. The goal is to allow staff to participate in targeted quality professional development opportunities that support SEL (Social Emotional Learning) instruction and other items.

Dr. Anthony inquired into paid funding for teacher services to local jail education programs. Dr. Walter stated that we currently have 2 teachers to provide support to incarcerated students with disabilities. Dr. Anthony also asked about the number of NPS Students who are currently being served in our correctional facilities.

Dr. Walter stated she can provide that number to SEAC following tonight's presentation. SEAC Co-Vice Chair Mr. Keyes, who is one of the special education teachers for the correctional facility, noted

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that NPS is currently serving 12 students in the Norfolk City Jail and that seems to be about the average number.

Dr. Anthony stated nationally that 85% of students in juvenile detention or detainees have at least one disability. She asked what mechanisms in place or systems are in place to identify NPS students who are coming through the juvenile justice process who might also have disabilities. Additionally, Dr. Anthony asked about allocated funding for additional services to meet the needs of the students who are currently incarcerated.

Mr. Keyes stated he could only speak about his experience in teaching at the Norfolk City Jail; classroom instruction is provided utilizing a computer-based online program called GED Academy. The students are identified when they come into the jail and NPS teachers have a 10-day window to identify and offer our programming to them. Mr. Keyes doesn't have any information about the detention center.

Dr. Anthony also noted that the presentation indicated that the number of paraprofessionals nearly doubled the amount of certified special education teachers. Dr. Walter stated that is correct in terms of the grant. Dr. Anthony asked about funding allocations for a program that offers a pathway for paraprofessionals to return to school to become certified, as in the case of teacher preparation programs that support teacher certification or similar licensure for speech-language pathologists.

Dr. Walter responded that such funding is not provided for in the flow-through grant, however, the division does have opportunities as NPS has a policy on tuition reimbursement, as well as teacher preparation programs, including the Teacher in Residence (TIR) program which is open to paraprofessionals. Dr. Walter also explained that while Learning Support has not addressed plans specifically focused on "grow your own" programming that supports paraprofessionals along the career pathway of full teacher certification, this recommendation can be reported by the SEAC to administration and the Board.

Mrs. Christopher asked proofreading questions pertaining to Page 8 of the draft application which indicated 40 special education teachers yet the PowerPoint presentation indicates 39. Dr. Walter noted the error was a typo. Mrs. Christopher indicated that on Page 9 the data point of 4,286 students seemed to conflict with the number of 3,944 students noted elsewhere in the presentation. Dr. Walter explained that the number on Page 9 is the December 1, 2021 child-find reported count, not the total number of students with disabilities being served by NPS as of March 11, 2022.

Mrs. Christopher inquired as to the nature of the services offered to the students in the jail and if the students have the right to refuse to participate. Dr. Walter stated that if it is a minor child where the parent is still responsible then the parent can certainly refuse services. In the case of a student who has reached the age of majority and in which most cases at the jail they would likely be, the student does have the right to say no and we provide them prior written notice the same as we would do in any situation.

Mrs. Christopher noted the projected allocation by Learning Support for 39 teachers and shared her hope that this staffing level will be fully funded. She also asked about the nature of carryover funding that results from unfilled teacher positions from the previous year.

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Dr. Walter explained that the grant funds always remain within the grant and they do not carry over into the operating budget. The funds from this Federal flow-through grant application are available to NPS for spending from July 1, 2022 until June 2024, as the window is two years to spend it down and the spend-down date is usually September 30. After that first year, if there are some vacancies and the division didn't spend all the money on personnel compensation and benefits, then the division is allowed to move the money to other budget line items within the grant for other purposes. Grant funding doesn't go into the operating budget; administration would then decide how to utilize it to support students with disabilities. Typically, NPS moves the monies into, for example, instructional and general supplies and offer more funding to support school needs.

Ms. Akar asked in looking at the grant application if there is an earmarked amount of funding for pandemic-related non-compliance with IEP plans? Additionally, acknowledging the nationwide staffing shortages, she asked about the use of grant funding for compensatory-related services, or whether funds from the operating budget would be used.

Dr. Walter stated that typically compensatory-related services would be funded out of the operating budget. Regarding any pandemic-related expenses, Dr. Walter explained that multiple funding sources due to the pandemic will be used to support compensatory service needs as well as recovery service needs. She noted that the current challenge is not the funding necessary to provide the services but rather securing the appropriate staffing levels needed to provide the services for our students.

Ms. Kim Wint asked about the periodic nature of the grant application and if the grant application is automatic or whether NPS has to apply each year. She also asked about the determination of funding requests versus actual grant monies spending.

Dr. Walter explained that NPS does have to submit an annual application for the Federal flow-through grant funds as part of the Annual Plan. In terms of unspent funds, Dr. Walter is not familiar with what happens if we do not use the funds and is not sure that the VDOE necessarily reduces the funds as the funds provided are based on the total number of SWD, and the services we need to provide to our SWD. Funding determination by the VDOE does not necessarily rely on the complete expenditure of grant funds each year but if expectations are not met for appropriate oversight of fiscal management by the school division, corrective action may result.

Mrs. Greco noted the Annual Plan's provision for additional Pre-K positions at Easton Early Childhood Center, as well as enhancements in the Superintendent's proposed operating FY23 budget for the significant expansion of the Pre-K classrooms at James Monroe Elementary. She asked about the tracking of enrollment data in order to plan adequately for any additional special education support needs depending on the children who are admitted or enrolled in the expanded early childhood programs. Mrs. Greco expressed concern about data-based, strategic funding requests that will support expanded Pre-K programming.

Dr. Walter stated her office has been collaborating with the Early Learning Title I Office about efforts to increase preschool services in Norfolk. As those plans continue to develop, Learning Support will certainly be working with the Early Learning Title I Office to determine staffing levels, support and resource needs as it relates to additional preschool students with disabilities who enroll in NPS Pre-K

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classes. Dr. Walter acknowledged that planning will ultimately depend on what students are enrolled in the City's Child Find efforts.

Additionally, Mrs. Greco asked if Easton was going to be consolidated into Fairlawn School for the upcoming school year. Dr. Walter confirmed that as of the recent School Board vote, the current Pre-K program at Easton will be moving this Fall for the upcoming school year 2022-2023.

Ms. Broe asked Dr. Walter about the timing of her pending presentation to the Board at the Board Work Session on April 6, 2022 and the subsequent vote by the Board at the Business Meeting on April 20, 2022, in light of the Superintendent's proposed FY23 operating budget. Dr. Walter explained that the Board had voted on the FY operating budget at their last business meeting and it is now up to City Council to determine the funding level for the proposed budget.

Mrs. Greco shared that the Superintendent's proposed budget is due to the City by April 1 each year. She encouraged public education advocates to attend the upcoming City budget hearings and support the Council to fully fund the largest part of the City's budget—the proposed funding request for the NPS operating budget.

Dr. Anthony asked how many students are currently identified to receive services under the Coordinated Comprehensive Early Intervening Services (CCEIS). Dr. Walter stated that for this school year, NPS has provided CCEIS intervention support to 135 students, 54% of whom are students with disabilities and 89.6% of those hundred and 35 students are black or African-American students. The CCEIS program is intended to set aside funds to support students that are at risk for disproportionate suspensions or have significant behavioral concerns and are at-risk for disproportionate suspensions.

Acknowledging the increase in student behaviors which is more than likely due to the pandemic, Dr. Anthony also noted the 185 CCEIS students identified last year as well as the 135 currently served this year and asked if NPS has enough staff members currently to service the needs of all of these students. She shared her observation to address the need for additional social workers within the budget request as there is only 1 on staff and 1 CCEIS specialist and 12 counselors. She further noted her concern that additional funding be allocated for enhanced social work or administrative specialists to support this group of students in need.

Dr. Walter stated that they did consider social workers as interventionists instead; however, given the scope of the grant funding, Learning Support had to account for what is the best level of training and background that could be afforded in the grant. Social workers cost more than school counselors and to have staff that has a good background in supporting student needs in multiple school locations, particularly our secondary schools where a majority of the CCEIS counselors are, where the data demonstrates the need, we wanted to ensure that each school had an opportunity for support to students in each building identified for that need. Dr. Walter summarized that the grant request was based on level grant funding optimization and what the grant could afford.

Mrs. Greco asked for clarification about the job responsibilities of the CCEIS counselors, specifically if the CCEIS student intervention counselors are also asked to serve as academic counselors as in the case of school guidance counselors. Dr. Walter confirmed that CCEIS counselors are not academic

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counselors; while they are licensed school counselors and are school counselor trained, they only serve CCEIS students.

Mrs. Greco noted the mention of a summer CCEIS event within the presentation and asked if we can look forward to hearing about plans for such a program. Dr. Walter explained that there are no plans for a summer CCEIS program for students; rather the summer CCEIS event is a workshop for professional development.

As there were no additional questions, Mrs. Christopher moved for the Committee to go to closed session to discuss the Membership Report as part of preparation for the Board's votes on new appointments to the School Board Advisory Committees (SBAC) next month. The motion, which was seconded by Dr. Anthony, carried. Mrs. Greco thanked the meeting guests for their attendance and adjourned the public meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:11 pm. The next regularly scheduled SEAC meeting will be Thursday, April 7, 2022, at 6:00 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Halima M. Akar, Recording Secretary