

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Norfolk Public Schools

Minutes 12/3/20 – Adopted 2/11/21

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and Governor Northam’s Executive Order Number 53 (2020), effective March 23, 2020, this meeting was held via Zoom Communications, in accordance with Code of Virginia §2.2-3708.2.

Meeting, time and date: via Zoom, 12/3/20, 6:00 p.m.

Members present:	Ellen Fitzenrider, Vicky Greco, Matthew Moynihan, Diane Outlaw, Tasha Washington, Vashti Washington
Members absent:	Betty Boone, Shirley Confino-Rehder, Clifton Frank, Teressa Gordon, Katie McCurdy, Seraphine Nyuydine, Tonya Shell, Shirley Wilson
NPS Consultants present:	Dr. Glenda Walter, Learning Support Director; Jerri Smith, Learning Support Senior Coordinator; Denise Williams-Patterson, Learning Support Asst. Director
Guests:	Sarah Bailey (Endependence Center), Marilyn Booker (Norfolk Commission of Persons with Disabilities), Emily Torres (NPS Parent)

Welcome/Introductions: The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by SEAC Chair Mr. Moynihan, who welcomed everyone in attendance. Meeting attendees briefly introduced themselves.

Committee Membership: Mr. Moynihan provided pertinent membership information including the status and terms served/to be served by current members, the potential allowance for 2 consecutive terms of service per available slots, and the need for members to reapply online for membership during this current school year by the 12/9/20 deadline set by the School Board. It was noted that SEAC member Ms. Diane Outlaw also serves on the Virginia Education Association's SEAC.

Meeting Schedule for 2020-2021 School: Mr. Moynihan led discussion regarding the benefits of virtual meetings and the need to develop a flexible meeting schedule that encourages increased stakeholder participation. The Committee agreed to keep the monthly meeting schedule for the first Thursday of the month at 6 pm for the remainder of this school year, via Zoom as appropriate.

Announcements:

Ms. Greco announced key dates for the NPS FY2022 operations budget planning and adoption by the School Board:

*Wednesday, 1/13/21: NPS administration to provide update on the Governor's proposed budget to the School Board

*Wednesday, 2/17/21: Superintendent submits proposed FY2022 Budget to the School Board

*Wednesday, 3/3/21: School Board budget hearing to receive public comments from stakeholders

*Wednesday, 3/17/21: Budget adoption by School Board

*4/1/21: Submission of budget to City Council

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*5/22/21: City's public hearing re: Operations and Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Budget

Mr. Moynihan informed meeting attendees of an immediate opportunity shared by staff with the Parent Education and Advocacy Center (PEATC). The Commonwealth's Joint Legislative, Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) is finalizing their study of K–12 special education services and has asked the participation of parents who are interested in having JLARC staff observe their students' IEP meetings.

The overall purpose of the study, to be published at the end of 2020, is "to examine the processes used by school divisions to enroll students in special education, to determine the services needed by students with disabilities, and to provide needed services, as well as to review the effectiveness of VDOE in its supervisory role."

Ms. Bailey announced classes offered by the Endependence Center:

Wednesdays, 11-12 pm: Independent Living Skills

Tuesdays/Thursdays, 3:40-4:5:15 pm, Youth (ages 17-24); contact Amy Ouellette, Endependence Center Youth Coordinator (aouellette@endependence.org)

Please contact Ms. Bailey, who is the Education Advocacy Coordinator at the Endependence Center, for upcoming advocacy classes.

Public Comments:

Following a summary of guidelines for public comments, Mr. Moynihan opened the floor for public comments from the stakeholders in attendance.

Dr. Fitzenrider discussed available parent resources, including a recent article link which she posted in the Zoom meeting's chat, as well as wrightslaw.com, an online guide for special education law and advocacy for children with disabilities. She also expressed concerns regarding the lack of appropriate staffing, as well as the challenges of implementation and understanding of accommodations by school staff, for students with disabilities (SWD), including such elective classes as P.E. and music.

Issues Confronting Special Education during Covid-19:

Mr Moynihan and Vice Chair Mr Washington led discussion with SEAC members regarding continued concerns and challenges:

*the level of appropriate and effective instruction and delivery of services, including the burden of parents/guardians to provide related services/therapies, for SWD while learning-in-place phase continues

*the lack of resources and supports for special educators and general education staff to better reach and teach their students with learning differences

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*the need for a comprehensive self-assessment/audit to determine the needs of the current state of special education services, instruction and supports and subsequent advocacy for identified priorities

*improved communications, outreach, and engagement, including learning support updates and advocacy opportunities to parents, guardians, staff, volunteers, community advocates and other stakeholders

Dr Walter discussed current efforts by Learning Support and the Parent Resource Center to continue to provide parent workshops, such as the "Back-to-School" series and resources regarding supplemental security income (SSI) for parents new to the system.

She also noted that Mrs. Kenita Matthews, the new Communications and Community Engagement Director for the school division, will be a welcome collaborator for continuous improvement efforts by Learning Support and SEAC.

Other Business/Closing:

Mr. Moynihan and Dr. Walter thanked all the meeting attendees for taking the time to attend the first SEAC meeting of the current school year.

The meeting adjourned at 7:21 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Vicky Manugo Greco
Secretary