

## Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

### Norfolk Public Schools

4/1/21 Minutes: Adopted 5/6/21

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, date and time:** via Zoom, 4/1/21, 6:00 p.m.

<b>Members present: *some members' attendance might have been affected--see note below</b>	Halima Akar, Theresa Apker, Sarah Bailey, Rita Bell, Charlene Christopher, Mildred Goolsby, Vicky Greco (Secretary), Christopher Keyes, Matthew Moynihan (Chair), Diane Outlaw, Jackie Spainhour, Tasha Washington, Vashti Washington (Vice Chair)
<b>Members absent:</b>	Nate Almeida, Betty Boone, Seraphine Nyuydine
<b>NPS Consultants present:</b>	Glenda Walter, Learning Support Senior Director, Jerri Smith, Learning Support Senior Coordinator; Denise Williams-Patterson, Learning Support Assistant Director
<b>Guests:</b>	Nicole Anthony

**Welcome:** Mr. Moynihan called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and welcomed new members and meeting guest Dr. Nicole Anthony.

**Approval of March Minutes:** The Committee approved the March 4, 2021 minutes as written.

**Note:** Graphic and audio disruptions to tonight's meeting began at 6:10 p.m. and continued at the beginning of Dr. Walter's Annual Plan presentation. The virtual meeting resumed at 6:12 with some difficulty experienced by several members,\* including the Chair and Vice Chair, who were unable to rejoin the meeting immediately or altogether. Dr. Walter noted that the meeting recording would be made available to SEAC members. Mrs. Greco served as presiding officer pro tem for this meeting.

**Annual Plan:** Dr. Walter presented the division's Special Education Annual Plan/Part B Flow-Through Federal Grant Application, as provided for under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 and related VDOE regulations. NPS is required to submit its annual plan to the VDOE for providing special education and related services to identified children with disabilities and demonstrate funding eligibility by May 14, 2021. Dr. Walter had previously emailed the presentation to SEAC members in advance of the meeting to facilitate Committee discussion and feedback.

Dr. Walter gave background information regarding funding determination and final grant awards. She reported that as of March 24, 2021, NPS serves 4,389 students with disabilities. This number is on-trend with December 1 Child Counts of 4,329 and 4,458 identified students with disabilities (SWD) in 2018 and 2019, respectively. She noted that since 2016, the number of students receiving special education services has increased incrementally each year.

Dr. Walter highlighted the following **departmental focus areas and objectives** by Learning Support/Special Education to support and serve our students with disabilities:

#### **Improving Academic Achievement**

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- **Close achievement gaps** in the areas of reading, math, and graduation.
- **Increase attendance** and engagement.
- **Reduce suspensions** for students with disabilities (SWD).

### Attracting and Retaining Highly Qualified Teachers and Staff

- Provide quality **professional development for building administrators** in leading special education programs.
- Provide **targeted professional development** for special education teachers and paraprofessionals to include **on-going coaching and support**.
- Increase staff expertise in **specially designed instruction, high leverage practices, and effective co-planning and co-teaching**

### Developing & Sustaining Community & Engaging Stakeholders; Creating a Culture of Caring in Norfolk Public Schools

- Build knowledge around special education to **promote positive parent advocacy** through expanded and frequent parent & community workshops.
- Develop and maintain a reputation as **collaborative advocates for students with disabilities** with parents, guardians, and community agencies.

Dr. Walter explained the required annual plan components by VDOE, including special education for incarcerated youth in local and regional jails, Maintenance of Effort Eligibility (MOE) budgeting provisions, Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) and Proportionate Set-Aside (PSA) services and funding, and the Application for Use of Federal Funds for Sections 611/Part B and 619/Part C of IDEA.

As part of her review of the funding portion of the grant application, Dr. Walter explained that IDEA mandates that school divisions meet a **maintenance of effort (MOE) obligation**. The MOE regulation requires school divisions to spend at least the same amount of local or local plus state dollars for a current school year on the delivery of special education and related services, as were spent from the same source for preceding fiscal year. Dr. Walter noted that NPS uses "level funding" projections to develop the grant application, with the possibility of a subsequent request by VDOE to revise dollar amounts based on its determined grant award to NPS.

Dr. Walter reported that the FY22 application for Section 611/Part B Grant for school-aged students (K-12 and post-secondary through age 21) maintains the staffing based on level grant funding projections using FY21 award amounts, which funded nearly \$6 million in salaries and benefits for the following full-time positions:

- 40 special education teachers
- 75 special education paraprofessionals
- 1 teacher specialist 4 administrative assistants
- 1 special education administrator

Dr. Walter reviewed line items for the proposed grant budget table for Section 611/Part B Flow-Through Funds for July 1, 2021-September 30, 2023, including allocations for personnel salaries/benefits, professional development, grant administration overhead, and materials expenses relating to the grant-funded operations

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of Learning Support, as well as the implementation of Coordinated Comprehensive Early Intervening Services (CCEIS) and **Proportionate Set-Aside (PSA) services**. The required amount for PSA services is calculated by VDOE annually based on the total award for the division and is **allocated by the division for special education and related services for parentally placed private school or home-school students (PPHS)**. Dr. Walter reported that currently NPS serves 34 PPHS students, in addition to students undergoing the referral process. She noted this reflected an increase from the previous school year of 18 parentally placed students and the increase is likely due to the impact of Covid (e.g., more parents electing to homeschool or delay kindergarten enrollment).

Additionally, Dr. Walter discussed the required provisions for the **Superintendent's Certification and Statement of Assurances**. Upon the approval of the Annual Plan by the School Board at its April business meeting, Superintendent Byrdsong provides **certification that the school division will:**

- Provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
- Maintain Individualized Education Programs (IEP).
- Educate students with disabilities with their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Develop policies and procedures designed to prevent over-identification, under-identification, or disproportionate representation by race and ethnicity of students with disabilities.

School divisions such as NPS that have demonstrated significant disproportionality of racial/ethnic groups in the identification, disability, placement, and/or discipline of children with disabilities must use 15 percent of the total amount of its 611 and 619 Part B IDEA funds for **Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS)** to help address issues of disproportionality. Dr. Walter explained the use of mandatory set-aside of Section 611 funds based on identification of significant disproportionality in the rate of suspension/expulsion of SWD by race (Black/African American students). VDOE previously required that funds be set aside but used primarily on students without disabilities in the general education setting. Recent changes allow school divisions to primarily, but not exclusively, use funds to provide intervening supports for students with disabilities. The plans for FY22 application funds reflect this refocus of services to the SWD group affected by disproportionality and will provide for the following full time positions dedicated to CCEIS efforts:

- 1 CCEIS Specialist
- 1 CCEIS Social Worker
- 12 CCEIS Counselors
- 24 CCEIS paraprofessionals from the previous CCEIS implementation year will be moved to special education paraprofessional positions open under the 611 grant and operating budget.

Dr. Walter emphasized that there is no reduction in force (RIF) planned and in fact, additional CEIS counselors have been added. She reviewed extensively CCEIS efforts implemented during this current school year, which at its peak served a total of 186 students, under the maximum limit of 300 students. The CCEIS Specialist coordinated the implementation of the CCEIS grant activities and interventions in all the 5 high schools and 7 middle schools primarily for students without disabilities in grades 6-7 and 9-10, under the supervision and support of Learning Support Senior Coordinator Ms. Jerri Smith. Dr. Walter reported that the CCEIS Social Worker and a CCEIS School Counselor provided support to CCEIS school students and families by working

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directly with schools to develop intervention supports and strategies, family engagement efforts, and assistance with accessing mental health and community-based services. 24 paraprofessionals provided direct support to referred students by building positive relationships with students and families, working with students in small groups or individually on academic and behavioral goals/supports, and participating in training to increase expertise in alternatives to suspension, de-escalation, social emotional learning, and data-based improvement monitoring.

Dr. Walter reported that general and instructional materials, including evidence-based, social-emotional learning lesson plans using the Rethink E-Learning Platform, were provided to increase capacity of staff to support students in the general education environment. She feels positively about current and planned efforts, including the CEIS referral process and identification guidelines, that address whole-child supports and services through enhanced staff collaboration designed to benefit the SWD and identified students without disabilities. Dr. Walter would like to share with SEAC the CEIS plan that will be developed and presented to VDOE in August.

Dr. Walter also noted the following positions provided for in Section 619/Part C for Pre-School services in the FY21 application funded the following full-time positions at Easton:

- 2 early childhood special education (ECSE) teachers
- 1 ECSE paraprofessional

Furthermore, Dr. Walter noted that, as part of the overall proposed Operations Budget for the division, additional special education positions have been planned for, based on SWD numbers: 3 additional special education paraprofessionals, 1 additional special education teacher, 1 additional teacher specialist to serve Emotional Disability (ED) classrooms, and 1 PK assessment team member.

Throughout the presentation, Dr. Walter answered questions posed by members and guests, including concerns regarding:

- CCEIS efforts in conjunction with Behavioral Intervention Plans, manifest determination reviews, Functional Behavioral Assessments, and other preventative/alternate measures to suspension;
- CCEIS identification and referral guidelines
- School assignments of CEIS counselors based on student needs
- Bias training provided to general educators as part of restorative justice, cultural competency and trauma-informed instruction measures
- Additional funding in the form of CARES Act monies for services for PPHS once PSA monies were exhausted this year

Dr. Walter will present the Annual Plan to the School Board at the work session scheduled for April 14, 2021. The School Board will vote on the Plan at its business meeting on April 21, 2021.

**Adoption of Bylaws:** Mrs. Greco presented revisions recommended by the Bylaws Subcommittee to the current bylaws, which were approved and adopted by a vote of the members present. She thanked Dr. Walter for providing recommended revisions to her, Ms. Christopher and Ms. Apker, who served on the Bylaws Subcommittee.

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**Announcements/Other Business:** Dr. Walter announced that SEAC membership applications are being accepted through the spring for the next school year. Dr. Anthony, and other parents, are encouraged to submit member applications to SEAC via the online link. Dr. Walter also reported that as part of the revised advisory committee policy, a response from the School Board is expected for the annual report that will be submitted by SEAC in June.

Dr. Walter added that the School Board has directed advisory committees to review and recommend applicants before the Board votes on new advisory committee members at its late May or June meetings. She will email individual SEAC members to finalize the Committee roster. Only names of members, not personal contact info, are posted the the NPS website. Also, advisory committee meetings will remain virtual until further notice. She is waiting for word from the School Board Clerk and City Attorney's offices regarding whether the use of Public Notice Announcements for public boards and commissions applies to advisory committees of the School Board. At a future meeting, Ms. Terese Toth can address the Committee on the use of Microsoft Teams as a shared SEAC mailbox.

Mrs. Greco announced the need to develop the slate of officers for next year, to be voted on at the June meeting. The Nominating Committee, Ms. Outlaw, Ms. Goolsby and Mrs. Greco, will present a report at the next meeting.

**Adjournment:**

The next meeting is Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 6 p.m. via Zoom conferencing.

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vicky Manugo Greco  
Secretary