

Minutes of Meeting
Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting
Date: January 18, 2023
Alexandria City High School Library

Mr. Olson called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM

	Name	Role	Present	Not Present
SEAC Members				
	Rachel Dixon	Member	X	
	Cindy Hart	Member	X	
	Laura Fontaine	Teacher Member		X
	Carolyn Meza	Member		
	Ryann Morales	Member	X	
	Jennifer Niccolls	Member	X	
	Ruchir Narayan	Member	X	
	William E. Olson	Co-Secretary	X	
	Kate Radt	Student Representative	X	
	Alexis Stackhouse	Member		X
	J-Lynn Van Pelt	Member		X
Consultants				
	Meagan Alderton	School Board Liaison		X
	Patricia Zissios	Principal Liaison		X
	Theresa Werner	Staff Liaison	X	
Other	Courtney Davis	PRC Liaison		X
	Janet Reese	PRC Liaison		X

Attendance

Attendance was taken as reflected above.

Public Comments

Joyce Sullivan made a comment asking if ACPS has filled any of the vacant speech / language therapist positions discussed during the prior meeting.

Old Business and Action Items

A motion was made to approve the Minutes of the November 30, 2022, SEAC Meeting. After being seconded, the motion carried without objection.

New Business and Reports

- Reports
 - **Executive Director of Specialized Instruction:**

Ms. Werner reported that teachers are currently working on second quarter progress notes. Regarding the speech / language therapist positions discussed in the previous meeting, Ms. Werner noted that one speech pathologist has returned from FMLA and she had received an application the previous evening from a speech pathologist who had school experience currently working in the hospital setting. Ms. Werner noted that the three other speech pathology positions remain open. Ms. Werner noted that responsibilities to complete IEP progress notes are being shared by other speech pathologists on staff and that records are being kept of students who have not received speech therapy because of the vacancies to provide for future make-up therapy.

Ms. Werner further reported that Specialized Instruction is headed into recruiting season. She also noted that the progress monitoring tool continues to be adopted and that Specialized Instruction is providing input on the general ACPS focus on lesson planning.

Mr. Narayan asked about the nature of the Specialized Instruction positions for which there are vacancies. Ms. Werner noted that ACPS has classroom teacher and Instructional Assistant vacancies. She stated that ACPS is currently using hundreds of thousands of dollars of ESSER funds to pay for contractors who are registered behavioral technicians to serve as Instructional Assistants. Ms. Werner further noted that ACPS is not receiving applications for the Instructional Assistant positions. She added that the positions do not pay much and require college experience. Ms. Hart asked if ACPS's current Instructional Assistants could be provided additional training to qualify to work at a higher-level Instructional Assistant position. Ms. Werner responded that Specialized Instruction does not decide whether such an approach can be taken.

Ms. Nicolls asked if ESSER funds were used to pay bonuses Specialized Instruction instructional staff. Ms. Werner responded that all the instructional staff received a bonus payment in the amount of a percentage of their salary.

There was further discussion on the progress monitoring tool. Ms. Werner stated that the progress monitoring tool is used to record data collected over the quarter and to prepare progress

reports. Mr. Narayan asked whether the data collected in the progress monitoring tool could be shared with families. Ms. Werner said when the goal would be to share data once the progress monitoring tool is fully implemented. In response to a question from the member of the public, Ms. Werner stated that the Commonwealth of Virginia requires school districts to have a mechanism to collect data. She noted that staff can easily use the progress monitoring tools once they receive training on it.

Ms. Hart asked about the types of positions for which there are vacancies in Specialized Instruction. Ms. Werner that Specialized Instruction has vacancies in multiple positions but noted that positions in the Citywide classrooms are often harder to fill. Ms. Hart asked further about the Instructional Assistants vacancies. Ms. Werner described the different categories of Instructional Assistant positions utilized by ACPS and noted that the IA-1 positions have the most vacancies. In response to a question from the member of the public about whether the pandemic has caused more students to have developmental delays that require specialized instruction, Ms. Werner responded that such students are evaluated through the IEP eligibility process.

Mr. Olson asked about ACPS's announcement of Dr. Erin Stone's new position within Specialized Instruction. Ms. Werner responded that after Michelle Hopkins resigned last fall, Ms. Werner spoke with the Interim Superintendent about realigning the responsibilities within Specialized Instruction. Under that re-alignment, there are two directors under the Executive Director of Specialized Instruction position. Dr. Stone has become the Director of Special Programs and Related Services under the Executive Director of Specialized Instruction. Ms. Werner stated that she would provide SEAC an organizational chart illustrating this re-alignment which are attached to these minutes.

- **Student Representative**

Ms. Radt reported that students with disabilities have a long-standing concern about programs said to be available to students with disabilities being only available to a sub-set of such students. Ms. Radt noted that there are circumstances where a program is available only to students with disabilities eligible to receive specialized instruction. Ms. Radt noted that students with physical disabilities in the general education setting can be excluded from such programs. In response to Ms. Werner's questions about a specific example of such a program, Ms. Radt referenced a recent survey.

With respect to issue raised by Ms. Radt, Ms. Werner discussed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) and noted that students with physical disabilities can qualify for an IEP if they have academic issues. Regarding the scope of issues within the purview of SEAC, Ms. Hart noted that each SEAC can ask the School Board to broaden SEAC’s area of focus to include students eligible for a 504 plan.

○ **Members:**

Mr. Narayan noted that parents of students with disabilities often are unaware of SEAC and asked about how to develop greater awareness of SEAC. Ms. Werner noted that SEAC, in the past, had committed to contacting each school’s PTA and encouraged each PTA to have a special education liaison. Ms. Hart noted that SEAC had issued a flier, that was translated into multiple languages, listing the dates and times of the SEAC meetings. There was a discussion of how parents have differing levels of access to documents transmitted via e-mail.

● **2022-2023 SEAC Scope of Work**

After discussion of the draft 2022-2023 SEAC Scope of Work circulated and posted prior to the meeting, a motion was made to adopt the 2022-2023 SEAC Scope of Work with a correction to a scrivener’s error in the document. After being seconded, the motion carried without objection.

● **Vacant Officer Positions (Chair, Vice-Chair, Co-Secretary)**

There was a discussion of the vacant officer positions and the process, as set forth in SEAC’s by-laws, to solicit nominations for those positions and to hold an election for them. Ms. Werner spoke about her view of the importance of SEAC nominating and electing a full slate of officers for the 2023-2024 school year to ensure that the committee continues to function.

Announcements

There was a discussion about the process for accepting nominations for, and selecting winners of, the Anne Lipnick award. Ms. Werner noted that to be eligible for the award, staff need to have worked for ACPS for five years and not previously received the award. Ms. Werner stated that she would check with school administrators about whether they support the Anne Lipnick award being awarded this year.

DRAFT

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM. After being seconded, the motion carried without objection.

Next Meeting: March 15, 2023