

**Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee**  
**May 1<sup>st</sup> 2018**

Members Present 20: Paul Patterson (Chair), Wendy Pizer (Vice-Chair), Nadia Facey (Secretary), Alison Acker, John Best, Michelle Best, Leila Carney, Keith Channon, Cloe Chin, Hannah Dannenfelser, Caitlin Davies, Alison Dough, Jennifer Johnson, Margy Johnson, Kay Luzius, Sarah Jane Owens, Rebecca Patterson, David Rosenblatt and Tauna Szymanski and Nick Walkosak

Staff: Dr. Patrick Murphy (Superintendent), Dr. Tara Natrass (Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning), Paul Jamelske (Director of Special Education), Kathleen Donovan (Parent Resource Center), Kelly Mountain (Parent Resource Center), Colleen Koval (Compliance Specialist), Heather Rothenbuescher (Supervisor of Special Education), Reid Goldstein (Vice Chair, School Board) and Monique O’Grady (School Board)

Other Attendees: Stephanie Alisuag-Schreber, Maria Araya, Jamie Beletz, Kelyee Bisbee, Tina Chippelle, Cathy Copley, Nicole Davidson, Bob Davis, Debby Davis, Heather Eilers-Bowler, Cynthia Evans, Courtney Fox, Roma Ferrando, William Ferrando, Kristin Gillig, Laurie Gillenson, Elizabeth Hernandez, Mark Jones, Mimi Koumanelis, Kathy Linehan, Donna Owens, Miduri Rome, Lucia Sekeck, Katie Shrader, David Siu, Lee Walzer, Andrea Woodward, Cristina Yacobucci and Michelle Zamarin

Agenda Items	Discussion/Decisions	What to do/who/when
Welcome		
Paul Patterson	Welcome and introductions	
Public Comments		
Mimi Koumanelis	<p>My name is Mimi Koumanelis, and I have a 4th grade son, who until recently attended McKinley Elementary School. After hearing the stories about Nottingham for months, I realized their struggles are not unique, which is why I’m coming forward tonight.</p> <p>My son has struggled with reading and behavior issues since Kindergarten. I met with the team at McKinley often over the years to express my concerns, only to be told that he just “needed to work harder” and “to make better choices.” Some strategies were offered, including preferential seating, access to the counselor and OG, but OG was discontinued because there were only a limited number of slots and we didn’t have an IEP. We were never offered a student study.</p> <p>By 3rd grade the behavioral issues had escalated to a point where my son was often removed from the classroom, which humiliated him. We were in a terrible cycle: acting out/removal from the class/loss of instruction. The result? My son’s relationships with his peers and staff deteriorated. His academic struggles got worse. And his self-esteem plummeted. He begged me not to send him to school.</p> <p>At the end of third grade my son failed his reading SOLs and barely passed Math. He saw the school counselor weekly, if not more. Twice, my 9-year old son told McKinley staff that he wanted to die. Again, we were not offered a student study.</p> <p>In 4th grade the removals continued. During a school observation, the advocate I hired was told by the assistant principal that in some years my son spent more time outside of the classroom than in it.</p> <p>When I asked to see the records of his removals from class, I was told that none existed. When I tried to discuss ways to help, I was told by administrators that his behaviors were “attention-seeking” “deliberate” and “manipulative.” The principal told me that my son didn’t think that the rules applied to him.</p> <p>At my wit’s end, I had him privately evaluated in October. My son was diagnosed with AD/HD combined type, anxiety, and dyslexia (as a 4th grader, he was reading at a 2nd grade level). In February, after years of struggling, my 4th grader was found eligible for Special Education for an SLD in reading and OHI.</p>	

	<p>In March, we secured an administrative transfer to Campbell. We finally have an IEP in place and are now at a school that recognizes my son’s disabilities and more important his abilities.</p> <p>We still have a long way to go, but for the first time in years, he talks about what he’s learning, instead of how much he hates himself. I recently heard words that I never thought I’d hear again – “Mom, school is fun.” Intensive private reading therapy is also helping my son catch-up.</p> <p>We are in a good place now. But it cost me thousands of dollars in private testing, private interventions, and required the assistance of an advocate.</p> <p>I’m a life-long Arlington resident and an APS graduate. I’ve always been proud of my county, particularly our schools, which is why I am so saddened by my son’s experience at McKinley.</p> <p>We are so lucky to be at Campbell. But there needs to be consistency across APS. Thank you.</p>	
<p>Jamie Beletz</p>	<p>Mr. Beletz had 5 question for the committee and APS staff to address.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is there a description for case carriers? What about job descriptions for special education assistants, special education drivers and special education para-professionals? Job Descriptions highlight the primary responsibilities, requirements, qualifications and challenges of a given job. In short, a job description will tell you what your employer will expect from you, as well as what you can expect from your employer. I was told in a meeting with Paul Jamelske and Tara Nattress that we didn’t have a job description for case carriers. If one of our core values is to hire high quality personnel, shouldn’t we have a job description for these positions?</li> <li>2. When a special education child is attacked, sexually harassed, et al. by an employee or attacked on school grounds by another child, what is the process for the parent of the special education child who attacked to be notified that their child has been attacked, harassed? What is the process, policy to let them know they are now safe? What type of protections are there in order to ensure that acts of violence never happen again to the victim or any other children? If paras, assistants, carriers are not allowed to discuss with each other, with parents of the victim, the perpetrator etc. how can the situation be “made right.” Is transferring a predator to another campus from where the initial incident happening the right thing to do?</li> <li>3. What is the written policy surrounding mediations? Are they different for special education kids than other children? Is every effort made to ensure that special education child is accommodated, understands what is going on, their rights and responsibilities are understood, et al? Will parents be notified and asked for permission prior to the mediation for their child to participate?</li> <li>4. How does a parent go about filing a complaint about school employees? What is the timeline and policy and procedures surrounding filing complaints?</li> <li>5. When boundaries are changed, what efforts are made to measure the effects these changes will have on kids with special needs? Are they data driven? Is inclusion a concern that is addressed during the process? What are the policies and procedures concern boundary changes regarding kids with special needs? How much was factored in prior to the recent proposal?</li> </ol>	
<p>Lee Walzer</p>	<p>Parent of middle school student who is in a private school now, was in APS two years ago. Budget this year had a lot of good data about SOL performance. Performance declined by more than 10 points in some cases. How is this happening in what is supposed to be the best school district in VA? There’s a great program in APS called Challenging Racism. Is there a similar program about addressing misconceptions and prejudices against students with disabilities? Challenging Racism has been a huge success. We talk a lot about the achievement gap but wonder whether this should be</p>	

	better understood as an opportunity gap. Opportunity gap suggests the district rather than the student is at fault.	
Kristin Niemi Gillig	3rd grade boy and 2nd grade girl with IEPs. McKinley. Last year was traumatic. Last year son was suspended twice for a total of 7 days. McKinley refuted his diagnosis of autism "because he demonstrated empathy." Was told by McKinley that they were going behind their back to talk to the Parent Resource Center. Team suggested sending him to Interlude. Then said the son was requiring "too many resources." He had five hours a week of services. Got him transferred to Ashlawn. McKinley principal said "changing schools will not change the problem." Luckily they were wrong. He is thriving at Ashlawn because he is nice. McKinley has more than 50% fewer SWD.	
Cloe Chin	I want to share a frustration. Three weeks ago I asked for information regarding the number of students with special needs who have an IEP or 504 plan are in intensified or advanced classes. After four emails only got an answer yesterday saying that the request was complicated. Whole lack meeting we talked about how there's a lack of transparency. This information is really important for the ACI meeting tomorrow night.	
Cathy Copley	I have two children at Tuckahoe Elementary, one child in 1st grade and another child in 2nd grade. My 1st grader Will started with IEP with DD and ADHD, now has a 504. My daughter started at Reed, continues to have an IEP. Has SLD and dyslexia and ADHD (privately secured). I'm here tonight to talk about what worked. Daughter with dyslexia at 2nd grade is reading at grade level and is fully supported. She had an IEP and was able to get support. She receives OG. It works masterfully. Let's get it everywhere. My 1st grader showed some reading challenges. His teacher on her own accord, took OG training last summer and now has received support by Mrs. Morris at Tuckahoe.. Progress is being measured. And needs are being reassessed.	
Jane Doe (Read by Nadia Facey)	Our child had been at McKinley since kindergarten and by all accounts seemed to have been happy during their time there. My child has liked every one of their teachers, has made lifelong friends and we found the teachers and staff to be caring, warm and friendly. Our child was born with a clinically diagnosed disability. Consequently, I've had annual meetings at McKinley about needed accommodations. Without getting into specifics, I've felt that the relationship with Eileen Wentzel was adversarial such that even small accommodations were fought over tooth and nail despite concerns by both parents and teachers. My perception is that in order to shield teachers and the school of additional requirements or even the remote possibility of legal action, any additional request was viewed as too burdensome and/or too difficult to guarantee 100% compliance. In short, despite the broad belief that teachers care about all children, I never felt that Dr. Wentzel was on our side. We have since left for another APS school and our experience has been that what we thought was easy and straightforward to accommodate but were told was too onerous or too ambiguous to do at McKinley, were easy to do at this school.	
Allison Glatfelter (ready by Nadia Facey)	<p>I am an APS parent at Tuckahoe of two current students, one is a special education student. I am also active in the general community. While I have been happy with my son's services at Tuckahoe I am very concerned with the length of time it took for the service denial issues at Nottingham to get to the attention of APS staff beyond the school. Parents of kids receiving special education services or requesting services may be private, unaware or not have the time due to home life stress to act on an illegal service denial. This can easily lead to unreported systemic school problems as has happened at Nottingham and unfortunately I am sure elsewhere in our wonderful school system.</p> <p>To make sure this doesn't happen again APS should publish yearly statistics showing the number of requests for student study committees and 504 eligibility meetings with the corresponding outcomes, including parent declined services by school. I know how hard my school staff and APS staff work to make sure our kids are getting a world class education and I want to ensure future situations like the one we are hearing to address aren't repeated and I think increased self-reporting will help. Better self-reporting will allow staff and parents to notice trends across schools as</p>	

	<p>well as outlier schools which may need greater attention. Without this data APS will leave concerned parents with more concern and mistrust than needs to be present.</p>	
<p>Anonymous</p>	<p>I came here tonight to support the McKinley families. My son started Kindergarten at McKinley in September 2014. By Oct 2014, we had been called between 30 or 40 times. There were weeks he couldn't attend school. He had already been identified as gifted so missing so much instruction time didn't impact him academically. However, given the challenges our child was presenting the staff at McKinley was pushing for Interlude Program. I did not believe this was the best program for my son, but it seemed the only option presented by McKinley staff and APS. Finally, I caved and I regret it terribly. I think Interlude should be dissolved; it's a quarantine program. My son is absolutely miserable. He'll do great for 3 months, however it takes a month to move up the color levels, purple is at the top. They scrutinize every word a child would say. If you take any child and scrutinize them like this, you would find trouble. If you have a child with meningitis, you get them cured, they are out of there. He'll get well, but then they bring in other kids with problems. He'll be at purple, and then he'll melt down to red and he is devastated. I'd like to see him go back to his home school. He's at Campbell now in Interlude. I would like to see him mainstreamed there at Campbell or at Ashlawn, but no longer in the Interlude program. You're putting the worst of the worst in one room and expecting change.</p>	
<p>Paul Jamelske response to Public Comments: The Arlington Tiered System of Supports (ATSS) is a part of every school's processes for considering student needs. Students may be considered for interventions, such as Orton-Gillingham reading instruction, math support, social/emotional/behavioral support, and more. The ATSS model of intervention and support also includes data collection and progress monitoring. Families and/or staff may also consider a referral for Section 504 screening, or a Student Study to consider the possibility of evaluation for Special Education. Each school may have a slightly different approach with these student supports, but they are all available. The most common starting point is a conversation with Teacher(s) and/or a School Counselor and/or Principal/Asst Principal.</p> <p>We are working toward an improved process for Student Supports that would combine elements of ATSS, 504 screening, and Special Education Student Study, into a more streamlined process with one Coordinator to consider multiple options as a School Team collaborates with families to support students.</p> <p>A Case Carrier, aka IEP Case Manager or Monitor, is a Special Education Teacher assigned as the primary Point of Contact in a school to manage and implement a student's Special Education Program as described in the IEP. I have described the Case Carrier as the in-house expert on a student with an IEP. This Teacher provides instruction, collects data, communicates with students, other school staff members, and families.</p> <p>Teacher Assistants or Paraprofessionals are support staff in schools who work in classes, under the direction of Teachers and Related Service Providers.</p> <p>The Mediation process is typically managed through the Counseling Office. A common model of mediation involves at least two Counselors sitting down with students who may have a conflict, with the goal of hearing each student's perspective, and facilitating an honest conversation to resolve differences.</p> <p>If a parent has a question or concern, it is best to start as close to the source as possible. We recommend that parents communicate with their child's Case Carrier, other Teachers or Related Service Providers first. Further concerns or questions may be directed to School Counselors, Asst Principal, and the Principal. The vast majority of questions or concerns are managed at the school level. If the question or concern requires further consideration, The Office of Special Education may be of assistance, with the Parent Resource Center (PRC), The Supervisor of Special Education, the Compliance Specialist, or the Director of Special Education. The next level of intervention would be the Asst Supt-Dept of Teaching &amp; Learning, followed by the Superintendent, followed by the School Board. I would reiterate that virtually all questions or concerns are best resolved as close to the source as possible, at the school.</p> <p>The Parent Resource Center (PRC) provides a wide variety of supports and family learning opportunities. I cannot emphasize enough how valuable our PRC staff members are to the entire school community. Coordinators Kathleen Donovan and Kelly Mountain, and Administrative Assistant, Emma Parral-Sanchez, are always available to work with families. Here is the link to the PRC section of the APS website: <a href="https://www.apsva.us/special-education/parent-resource-center/">https://www.apsva.us/special-education/parent-resource-center/</a></p>		

From time to time, school boundaries must be adjusted. This is particularly true when a new School or Program is opening. Arlington Public Schools participates in collaborative engagement with the community when considering boundary changes, and multiple factors go into these decisions. The Engage with APS webpage has more detailed information: <https://www.apsva.us/engage/>

APS believes in engagement for all students. Students with IEPs or 504 plans may consider accessing advanced classes and world language instruction. A student's IEP Team-school staff, parent/guardian, and student-should consider a student's strengths and weaknesses, special interests and talents, and collaborate on appropriate course options for students in middle and high school.

Dr. Murphy and Update on APS's Response to Public Comments including Public Comments on Nottingham Elementary

Dr. Patrick Murphy, Superintendent

First, I would like to make some comments on the public comments that were just made. I took some notes and I will follow up on all of the particulars. We need to look at consistency and staff development. This evening, McKinley and Nottingham are the two schools I've heard the most concerns about. I'm sorry. We need to continue to look for training for staff. I applaud your advocacy and passion. I'm very glad that in the two cases with Campbell Elementary and Ashlawn Elementary that the students are on a nice path forward and are in a good place.

We are still only 10 months since we made a significant structural change to integrate the Office of Special Education into the newly created Department of Teaching and Learning. This change has been an effective step forward and we will continue to grow forward on the trajectory. While I know there's the immediacy of today, we need to look forward on that trajectory. Now, I will ask Dr. Natrass to talk about changes division wide and Nottingham.

Dr. Tara Natrass, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

Dr. Natrass: Thank you. I echo the comments made by Dr. Murphy. We want to address the issues presented tonight in public comments and I thank you for speaking out. Please reach out to teachers, Principals and Paul Jamelske so we can continue to work systematically to address problems.

*ASEAC, APS staff and guests continued to discuss several subjects at length.*

Nottingham Update

APS has done the follow five things at Nottingham since the public comments have been presented at ASEAC:

- (1) Professional learning, including LEA training, staff meetings
- (2) Identification improvements - We are piloting some additional assessments next year in addition to PALS. APS will have 8 schools who are piloting K and 1st grade assessments. Nottingham will be one of those schools. Nottingham is also doing the DRA for all students sooner so we have that data – in Jan/Feb instead of June.
- (3) Strengthening Interventions - ATSS team has been working on an intervention protocol that talks about the evidence-based interventions depending on the struggle (e.g., phonemic awareness, blending).
- (4) Teacher Collaborations – strengthening this. Have a lot to do to work with our universities. Building time for teacher collaboration.
- (5) Department Support – Look at needs across the division across schools. Working specifically at schools. There are two Dept. staff at Nottingham each week. Happy to say there have been some very concrete shifts. The areas of support at NES system wide.

NES Parent: Thank you for being here, we sent you a letter in January. 17 families were offered meetings with Mary Beth Pelosky. Many families had good meetings with her. Who is in possession of her notes? What happened to the progress that was made in these meetings and now, we have been left without a path forward? Who will follow up with us?

Dr. Murphy: I will call Connie Skelton, acting Principal of Nottingham, we will follow up with her.

NES Parent: I'm concerned about the overall culture in APS. My child is not getting included with typical peers. I am concerned about transparency and school culture which has been disrespectful to parents and students with special needs.

Dr. Natrass: We are addressing culture and inclusion in our professional development. When we talk about professional learning, it is also about culture and beliefs. We understand you can't have one without the other.

Donna O: How do we get the intervention protocol into a document that is parent friendly? Is this something we can do? It needs to be on the website.

Dr. Natrass: Yes, Kelly Krug is working on this

Keith: Thank you for being here tonight. The problems at Nottingham are wide spread. Our family is at Discovery and we know families who have left because the school isn't able to address the needs of individual children? Might there be a centralized mechanisms to submit our challenges to the county?

Dr. Natrass: Do you feel like the Parent Resource Center (PRC) is doing that?

Keith: PRC is great, but we need to be able to address the challenges with the people at the school who are in the meetings.

Dr. Natrass: One of the things we are working on, if you look at our website you will see that the contact us page, needs to be updated. Now it lists ever director, every person... if you have a concern start here, on the APS website.

#### Further Discussion

Jamie B: Sometimes when we have IEP meetings for our daughter, I need to address that my kid isn't disabled, my daughter is a person with a disability. I don't know if other people have experienced this, but it is difficult to hear teachers grind their teeth. Our child is always going to autistic.

Nick: We had a list of professional learning, we discussed consistency. We didn't hear about accountability. When ATSS got started almost 5 years ago I asked where is the accountability? It is going to take a lot longer to bring culture shift to schools than it would for us to identify minimum standards for principals to support students with special needs. Every parent need to fight for their kids across the country – what is the root cause of this.

Parent: I'm here to support the McKinley families. My son was gifted, but he missed so much school. I was pushed into Interlude and my son is struggling in this program. Students are "stuck" in this area. I'd like to see my son go back to his home school.

McKinley Parent: We were redistricted from Tuckahoe to McKinley. My child had a hard time last year last year we didn't know where to turn. Anxiety is seen as a behavior issue, parents are seen as they don't know their own children. I didn't know the structure of APS. I was trying to be a "good" parent and attend meetings and be positive. I didn't know what to ask for in meetings.

Caitlin: I have a question... staff is tasked with creating interventions for students. The challenge we see is that we don't have enough staff to do that? Especially as we are seeing staffing cuts at Patrick Henry, as we lose staff. We get pressure to keep numbers down. Is there any advice from central office about how we can staff these interventions?

Dr. Natrass: That is a good conversation, is that we are looking at IAT, TASS, Student Study, Special Education and 504. Are the processes we have in place working the

way we need them to... how our processes can work more fluently together. We need to look at the structure of schools, our master plans are really important. ATSS can't just be a period within the school day, how can we creatively staff the needs of students to provide the supports that they need. We are reaching out to teachers to see h

Cathy: Thanks Caitlin, I wanted to also ask a question about staffing. For my child getting access to OG was difficult. At Tuckahoe we had a reading specialist who didn't know OG. I had to wait for Tuckahoe to train staff before my child could get access to OG. How are you addressing the lack of staff resources, not just for OG but for providing resources needed for all students with 504 plans and IEPs?

Dr. Natrass: This is part of what I was getting at, we have wonderful reading specialists who know OG. We need to make sure that our reading specialists can look at all the data to help students, but also help teachers. We are trying to build that capacity.

Wendy: At Nottingham, and I've heard the same story from other schools, something that happened was that the parents knew their kids had needs, but the school kept saying "no." What is the impediment, what is the challenge? Outside IEP meetings teachers told parents and said there was a need, but wouldn't voice this in an IEP meeting?

Dr. Murphy: I don't know why there is a culture of No. This is the tone of the conversation we are having. I will reach out to staff and bring it forward to them and the other piece we need to do a better job communicating the process. We can do a better job. I understand there is a fear of retaliation. There also seems to be a theme of a second look, I am hearing that people keep needing to revisit issues multiple times. It seems valuable to bring this forward.

I do want to follow up with more information. Thank you to Paul Patterson for your leadership.

*Dr. Murphy needed to leave the meeting due to another commitment.*

Donna: We need to recognize that it takes a long time to move things forward... We need backwards reporting – to help the previous elementary schools to look at the kids that they passed over.

Dr. Natrass: Part of what we put in place is the online intervention system.

Nadia: I understand we track interventions in Synergy, but at my child's school they are slow to do this. We just started tracking reading only interventions, when will we start tracking all interventions being used?

Dr. Natrass: In elementary schools we are looking at all data, but some are only doing reading interventions, Kelly Krug knows the roll out of this for other subject areas.

Paul P: We need a hand book, we need to get the pieces together. We have known interventions and it's a pay us now or a pay us later system.

Cory F: At Nottingham we had a special education open house, I encourage schools to do this. When Kelly Krug came to NES she learned that basically everything that should happen with ATSS isn't happening.

Michelle: Can we talk about transitions to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. We had an IEP meeting and I was told "we don't do that." Do we have a commitment to support our students in special programs such as Arlington Tech or Montessori? APS needs to support kids in their boxes but we won't support them "there."

	<p>Dr. Natrass: Our commitment is that we will support kids anywhere, but we know we have work we need to do. I have been a part of the conversations at Arlington Tech.</p> <p>Parent: How should a parent respond when we hear “we can’t support you”?</p> <p>Dr. Natrass: Schools are reaching out to central office when there is something they are not sure what to do. We have both Heather R. and Paul J. for parents to speak with as well.</p> <p>Courtney: Language is so important, I learned that there were magic words that you need to know. I implore you as you are thinking about ways to engage the community... don’t always put things under the heading of special education. Please include the Nottingham parents, we made public comments, we want to be part of the solution. We waived our rights to privacy because we wanted to be part of the solution to some of these very systemic issues.</p> <p>Lee: Lots of talk about Data, is there a commitment to the whole child within APS; sometimes this conversation is so focused on data.</p> <p>Dr. Natrass: Yes, absolutely, of course.</p>	
Discussion on Policy Implementation Procedures (PIP) 50-1.2 Building Level Planning Committees		
Paul Patterson	The Policy Implementation Procedures (PIP) 50-1.2 Building Level Planning Committees (BLPC) is being rewritten. ASEAC and SEPTA have been asked to be included to provide members to all new BLPC. This will be an opportunity to ensure our community voice is heard on all new building plans. However, there is a downside to do this; it mean more meetings and more commitment from individual members of ASEAC. It may be hard to find individuals who are able to attend. Tauna Szymanski said that she is willing to participate.	Tauna will be attend from ASEAC
ASEAC Proposed Year End Recommendation to School Board		
Paul Patterson	We are still working on the draft end of year report ASEAC will send to the school board. The goal of the report will be to highlight our work for the year and the issues raised by public comments.	Draft report will be sent out
Open Discussion Period		
ASEAC Voting on Secretary	ASEAC discussed and set forward dominations for Margy Dunn and Nick Walkosak for ASEAC Secretary. The Nomination is approved. Vote: 20 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain.	
ACI meeting tomorrow	Please attend the ACI meeting tomorrow, they are discussing advanced and accelerated classes – this is a topic of importance to our community as we believe students with special needs are not given the same ability access these classes when appropriate.	Please attend ACI if able
Meeting Adjourned	Meeting Adjourned at 9:05	

NEXT MEETING: June 12<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. at Syphax Education Center – Last meeting of the school year!