

Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee

June 12, 2018

Members Present (12): Wendy Pizer (Chair), Nadia Facey (Vice-Chair), Margy Johnson (Co-Secretary), John Best, Michelle Best, Leila Carney, Cloe Chin, Keith Channon, Caitlin Davies, Jennifer Johnson, Kay Luzius and Tauna Szymanski

Members Absent (8): Paul Pattson (Chair), Nick Walkosak (Co-Secretary), Alison Acker, Hannah Dannenfelser, Alison Dough, Sarah Jane Owens, Rebecca Patterson and David Rosenblatt

Staff: Paul Jamelske (Director of Special Education) and Kathleen Donovan (Parent Resource Center)

Guests: Donna Owens, Cory Fouilliard, Riley Fouilliard, Minerva Trudo, Kristin Gillig, Terrig Thomas and Millie Thomas

Agenda Items	Discussion/Decisions	What to do/who/when
Welcome		
Wendy Pizer, Chair	Welcome and introductions	
Public Comments		
Terrig Thomas	<p>Hello. I am a former ASEAC member (2006-2011). I currently have a 19 year old student at the Stratford program and I want to tell you about the Stratford program. It's been maligned recently; it has two HS MIPA, three HS life skills rooms and a total of 53 students. In reality the Stratford program is a loving program and parents are happy. We have an excellent Principal Dr, Gerry and great cooperation with our partners at H-B Woodlawn. My son has thrived at Stratford. We came to the program after a year at Kenmore in MIPA that was horrible, we had the complete opposite experience at Strafford and my son has been happy.</p> <p>Recently, we the Stratford community has been blindsided by potential move to Yorktown. Our community has come together.</p> <p><i>Please see the full public comment from the Stratford Parents Group at the end of the minuets.</i></p>	
Nadia Facey	<p>Currently, APS has the Secondary Program for Students with High Functioning Autism that is available to students in middle and high school. I know there are many children in APS in elementary school who would benefit from a similar program and I would like to work with ASEAC, the School Board and APS staff to help document the need of the creation of such a county wide program for students in elementary school. APS needs to have options within the school system that meet the LRE needs for its students, right now the district is falling short and I believe can do better.</p>	
Wendy Pizer	<p>We are having problems getting our daughter's needs met through her 504 plan at Williamsburg Middle School. She has a pretty straightforward 504 plan that has been in place for years without issue, until now.</p> <p>When we met with the WMS committee for her first annual review at this school, the school shocked us by unilaterally removing accommodations over our objection. There wasn't an effort to reach consensus. When we objected, they said that we didn't have to sign the plan.</p> <p>We have now had two 504 meetings, we have involved the 504 coordinator and we have made some progress with her help, but the school is still refusing an accommodation that a doctor says in writing is needed, and that VDOE says in a public document is appropriate for a 504 plan. We are also seeing problems in the implementation of her plan.</p> <p>We have tried to work with the school. But the school has said we don't do that, that's not our policy, she'll have to follow the regular policy, that's not appropriate to put in a 504 plan, or you'll have to work this out on your own. The school told us – incorrectly - that 504 does not cover extracurricular activities. The school told us the</p>	

	<p>wrong legal standard for providing accommodations. This is all inconsistent with the 504 manual and the law, not to mention with an effort to meet a student's individual needs.</p> <p>We are working through appropriate channels and I hope that this will be remedied. But on a broader level, there is a concerning lack of knowledge and understanding of 504s at the school level. I understand that it has been several years since school administrators were trained in 504. I urge APS to provide re-training on 504s to all school administrators, so that they are aware of their obligations to SWD, and so they are able and ready to meet students' needs going forward.</p> <p>Finally, I think it is important to recognize progress and success stories. My other child is at Nottingham; we have previously experienced serious difficulties in the IEP process at Nottingham. I know that APS has been working hard on changes. We have seen a dramatic, almost stunning turnaround - in collaboration, attitude, knowledge and willingness to work with families and identify and meet students' needs. I can truly say that the last two IEP meetings have been pleasant. If APS can do it there, it can do it elsewhere. I hope to see the same for all students in all schools across APS.</p>	
Cloe Chin	I would like to thank Paul J. for gathering the data on the number of students with disabilities who are in advanced classes. Can we rank the schools by the number of students at each school?	
Riley Foilliard	I am a student who previously attended Williamsburg, I now attend the McLean School. I would like to let the committee know that Williamsburg is extremely overcrowded and acts like a police state. I have ADHD inattentive type. I left Williamsburg in the spring because it was too mentally exhausting. The school didn't seem to care about me. The rules were so strict rules in part to keep the chaos under control, but it was so crowded students are not allowed to carry book bags. It made it hard to stay organized. I needed movement breaks, but they were not available for me. I had to wait to see teachers in wolf time, and I needed to remember to get a hall pass to see them. I did have some good teachers at Williamsburg, but overall it was a difficult experience and I'm happy now at the McLean School. Thank you.	
Elda LaRue	<p>I am writing you today to express my feelings about the upcoming move for the Stratford program which my daughter Alexa currently attends. Alexa is my 15 year old girl with Tuberous Sclerosis. If you are not familiar, it is a severe brain disorder that features many overlapping symptoms with autism and Tourette's. She also has frequent uncontrollable seizures, which we try to keep down with very sensory friendly environments. We realize her seizures are more frequent when put under stressful situations or when over stimulated with large crowds and unpredictable circumstances.</p> <p>For this reason I am writing this message to express how concerned I am about this current move from the Stratford Program on Vacation Lane to Yorktown, which is perceived as a more inclusive environment but is really just a more distressing environment for my child. Although I agree with the idea that all children should have the opportunity to engage with typical peers, I also believe this is not what is best for my severely disabled child. The Stratford program has been the best opportunity for learning and for a chance for a quality school experience for Alexa. This is a place she can call her school, where she feels she belongs. Her friends are all she needs along with caring staff who are my eyes and ears and I know are like family to us. I do agree time with typical children is important and I feel she gets exactly that with the school next door which is HB Woodlawn. My other child goes to HB so my husband Mario and I know both programs well. We get what we ask for when it comes for inclusion.</p> <p>I know most people don't understand me when I say I feel safety is more of a concern than anything else. Alexa is nonverbal so she cannot tell me what goes on in a typical day. This to me is my worst fear. To not know what goes on, what she feels,</p>	

	<p>what harm she is in. When I was pregnant with Alexa my hopes and dreams were big. We moved to Arlington County because we knew the school system was fantastic. Little did we know we would be looking at Stratford as an option for Alexa. She was diagnosed with her disease at birth and was put into FLS since preschool. We had her in Barcroft Elementary for preschool and Kindergarten then Glebe Elementary for 1-5th grade. It was wonderful and we enjoyed it for the most part. Alexa was safe with a wonderful staff and had many friends in her class. Sadly, I don't feel she was really included with the rest of the school. At lunch she would sit in a separate table from the typical peers. During gym time she would only go with her group and during assembly times it was not common to keep her there long given that she has loud outburst of laughter and uncontrollable chatter.</p> <p>Today, after seeing how much she thrives in this small program, which is her happy safe place I can't see how others believe she belongs in a FLS class in her homeschool with more than a thousand typical peers. She will not only be excluded from them for the most part she will also be put in danger. I fear for bullying and can't help but think of a rape scenario. I don't want to say all typical peers or APS staff are monsters but these situations do happen. I can't help but imagine if my daughter were abused she would not be able to tell me. Who would be responsible if a situation like this would happen? Please help us stop this move to Yorktown. It is not appropriate for my child.</p>	
<p>Anonymous, Read by Wendy Pizer</p>	<p>My son attended Jamestown and Williamsburg. He has had spelling and writing issues since first grade. During elementary school, he had several IATs, worked with the reading specialist, and had private tutors – yet he was not diagnosed with a learning disorder or provided the needed remediation. In middle school, he became very anxious and spent extreme amounts of time on homework. He suffered with stomach problems for the first year. Since anything physical had been ruled out, we had him privately tested, and he was diagnosed with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and general anxiety. We then hired an OG tutor and psychologist and requested and prepared for our 504 meeting. Unfortunately, my son was denied. This was crushing to our family!</p> <p>However, I continued to speak with APS staff and requested a second 504 meeting. Again, the meeting was difficult, but APS granted most of our requested accommodations. Just knowing about the diagnosis and having the 504 in place has tremendously lowered my son's anxiety and helped his self-esteem. I hope APS will consider improving dyslexia screening for students at an early age and invest in training school and county wide staff on the 504 process. Thank you.</p>	
<p>Anonymous, Read by Wendy Pizer</p>	<p>My husband and I are parents to a daughter in the Arlington Public School system in the 3rd grade, attending Discovery Elementary School. There are many wonderful things about the school and her experiences there. But we are also confronted with limitations in what Discovery is providing, and each year it becomes more obvious, more detrimental to our daughter's academic, social and emotional education. Although extremely bright, we were aware from the age of 4 that our daughter struggled with social understanding/interpretations and attention. No flags were raised from the schools or her teachers, but it was enough that we discussed it at parent-teacher conferences, which resulted in some of her teachers making adjustments within their classroom environment.</p> <p>Between ages 4 and 8, new developmental issues showed up. This culminated in our decision to have private testing done last fall by a neuro-psychologist. She has been formally diagnosed with, most importantly, high functioning autism spectrum disorder, plus other comorbid conditions, including anxiety, ADHD, a movement disorder that falls under Tourette's.</p> <p>To confirm the ASD diagnosis, we had our daughter further evaluated for higher order and pragmatic use of language by a Speech Therapist with expertise in girls on the autism spectrum. My husband and I provided both diagnostic reports to Discovery and requested a student study earlier in the year. The school ignored the</p>	

	<p>autism diagnosis, stating they don't see it and our daughter is meeting grade level curriculum requirements. The school team would not even evaluate our daughter for special education. They determined a 504 would be adequate, citing all they saw were attention issues. Despite having higher than average intelligence, as demonstrated in the tests and reports provided to the school, she performs at average or below average in class.</p> <p>We see a disconnect here. At the 504 meeting, the school administration pushed back on the overarching diagnosis of high functioning ASD, and instead wanted the 504 to state her issues are attention issues. On top of that, the meeting resulted in minimal support for our daughter, without consideration given to the recommendations provided in both reports. For the 504 instructional modifications, the school relied primarily on her teacher, who has only a few years of teaching experience and no demonstrated experience with autism or ADHD. While appreciated, these provisions do not meet the breadth of supports our daughter needs in order to thrive at school.</p> <p>As we understand it, APS has 2 or 3 Autism specialists that share responsibility for all of the schools. None were present for either the student study or the 504 meeting. If testing were done by the school, here again, no ASD specialist would participate.</p> <p>This does not make sense, as no one at either meeting demonstrated any expertise or understanding of girls with high functioning ASD, yet dismissed reports from two separate professionals.</p> <p>Our experience led us to question, "How can you do an evaluation for High Functioning Autism without someone who is a subject matter expert? And when presented with data from experts, how can you not act on it?"</p> <p>In summary, there appears to be a lack of knowledge about ASD by the school, and a lack of support by APS. Moreover, the school seemed to avoid addressing ASD as an issue. We find this inadequate and very troubling. We are at a loss as to how to move forward and acquire the necessary support for our daughter's educational needs. Thank you for your time and providing a place to voice our frustrations and concerns.</p>	
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Office of Special Education Response to Public Comments and Updates

<p>Paul Jamelske, Director of Special Education</p>	<p><u>Response to Public Comments</u></p> <p>There has been considerable discussion involving the temporary location of the Stratford Program for the coming year. The options have been shared to include a choice for students to move to the temporary site at the Reed Bldg or to consider moving to Yorktown HS. A student's neighborhood school could also be considered as a part of the IEP process.</p> <p>The Secondary Program for Students with Autism (SPSA, formerly known as the Asperger's Program) is available for students in middle and high school. Some of the main components of the program include social skills instruction, support with executive functioning, as well as a Case Carrier with a strong understanding of the needs of students with this type of disability. Our Autism/Low Incidence Specialists are able to work with elementary schools to build capacity to provide components of the program for students across grade levels.</p> <p>We encourage families who are working with schools on 504 plans to continue to engage with the leadership at the school, in consultation with the designated 504 Coordinator. The IEP and 504 processes develop over time. It is helpful for all parties to maintain communication and collaboration.</p> <p>The report of students with IEPs and 504 Plans in advanced classes and world language is not able to be disaggregated due to the small "N", or number of students in a group.</p>	
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Students with Special Needs in Advanced Classes

Access to AP/IB, Dual-Enrollment, and intensified classes (including world languages) may be available to all students, including students with an IEP or 504 plan. Accommodations may be considered for students through the IEP or 504 meeting process.

For AP or IB classes there are tests that students need to be able to participate. These tests are NOT regulated by APS, but rather by the College Board and the IBO. These institutions have a list of accommodations that are potentially available. These accommodations may differ from accommodations available to a student in APS, based on an IEP or a 504 Plan. Students need to document that they use accommodations in class on a regular basis and accommodations must be approved by the outside organization.

Dual-Enrolled Classes with Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)

We are having conversations about dual-enrolled classes, mostly coming from students currently enrolled in Arlington Tech. These classes are offered in partnership with NOVA, and students need to apply through the NOVA Disability Services Office for approved accommodations. Please be advised that there are limitations. Students do not need to give up their IEP or 504 Plan in order to participate, and thoughtful advance planning among students, families, schools, and external organizations is helpful.

Dyslexia and Dyslexia Testing

In recent years Kelly Mountain has done a lot of work in identifying additional assessments that can diagnose Dyslexia that were not in our "regular tool kit." I want to thank her for identifying these tests. School Psychologists also have a variety of assessment tools and strategies when considering possible disability on the Autism Spectrum. In some situations, an observation from an Autism/Low Incidence Specialist may be helpful, or for a Psychologist to consult with a Specialist.

Through the work of Dr. Kelly Krug, APS is also preparing to pilot an additional screening assessment, RAN/RAS or Rapid Automatized Naming and Rapid Alternating Stimulus. More to come on this assessment that may assist with early identification.

We are encouraging all teachers to go through multi-sensory training, not just special education teachers. The ATSS process should be able to enable students who are not formally identified to receive OG instruction. We have several summer trainings planned, and they are already full. An additional reading program, Phonographix has also proven helpful. OG is not at the same level of roll out at all APS schools, we know there are pockets of excellence and Kelly Krug is working with schools to meet needs.

Dyscalculia and Multi-Sensory Math Instruction

As a district we have done some exploration looking into best practices for multi-sensory math instruction for students with dyscalculia. I'd like to thank Kelly Krug and Shannon Ellis for researching some multi-sensory math instruction, there is a team working in Montgomery County using some of the same methodology, techniques and strategies for math instruction. Marilyn Zecher will be visiting APS for demonstration lessons with staff, and several training sessions may be developed.

Two things we plan to have next year, Goal Setting and Assessment Data to be maintained in Synergy. Teachers providing ATSS interventions will have a feedback loop within 6 weeks to look at students and see if they are making progress. This will be especially helpful as students move within school levels and school buildings.

	<p><u>OSE Summer Agenda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, APS has a standard operating procedures manual, we have posted a draft on our website. Ideally, this summer are working on something that would be interactive and up to date – similar to 504 manual but clickable. • We will engage in professional development with special education coordinators • OSE will be supporting extended school year staff. • As always, student evaluations that need to take place and OSE will ensure this happen in a timely manner. • We also have teams working on materials/trainings to deliver during the pre-service week. One will be by Assistive Technology (AsTech) and the ability for students to access accommodations that are already available. For example read and write software is currently available to all APS students. <p><u>Other</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a few comments from parents about “death by meeting” we have a lot of meetings and they are required by law, but we are looking at ways to streamline some of our meetings to make things easier where appropriate. • Parents should not need feel that they must get outside testing, as most testing may be available through the school. In some cases, a family may request an Independent Educational Evaluation or IEE. • There were some past public comments that were very personal for specific student situations. In order to preserve confidentiality, I can say that we are working to strengthen our work with Special Education Coordinators and Specialists to support the needs of students within APS. 	
<p>ASEAC Committee Updates</p>		
<p>Wendy Pizer</p>	<p><u>2018 – 2019 ASEAC Schedule</u> ASEAC schedule is set for next year. Our meetings are scheduled to take place from 7:00 – 9:00 at the Syphax Education Center in room 456, 2110 Washington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22204</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 25, 2018 • October 23, 2018 • November 27, 2018 • December 18, 2018 • January 22, 2019 • February 26, 2019 • March 26, 2019 • April 23, 2019 • May 28, 2019 • June 18, 2019 <p><u>Advisory Committee on Instruction (ACI)</u> Next year is non-recommending year for ASEAC at ACI. We would like to invite all ASEAC members to attend the ACI kick off meeting in early September it will be an “ACI 101” session and all ASAC members are invited to attend.</p>	<p>All ASEAC Members Attend ACI 101 in Sept. 2018</p>
<p>Tauna Szymanski</p>	<p><u>ACI Inclusion Presentation</u> I was asked to give a presentation at ACI about inclusion, which I did with Dr. Tara Natrass, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Teaching and Learning. The genesis of this was that the school board is looking at policies and wanting to know if they want to do something.</p> <p>The presentation was well received and there was a lot of good questions from ACI members.</p> <p><u>APS Transportation</u> Passed out a 1 pager on transportation. I would like to hand this off to another committee member to work on for ASEAC and the larger community.</p>	

Nadia Facey	<p><u>Special Education Evaluation</u> The Evaluation of APS Services for Student with Special Needs and the ATSS program will take place during the 2018-2019 school year. We look forward to closely working with APS throughout the entire process.</p> <p><u>Stratford Tour</u> As a representative of ASEAC I toured the Stratford this morning. I was joined by other ASEAC members Keith Chanon, Kay Luzius and Tauna Szymanski. Monique O’Grady, School Board Member and ASEAC representative also attended the tour. Dr. Karen Gerry, Principal of the Stratford program lead the tour. She said her biggest challenge was getting students who come in at 6th grade who have not had a lot of access or ability to communication via communication tools or AAC devices. For example, some new students are not able to type in their lunch number when buying lunch. Caitlin Davies, current ASEAC Teacher member and former Stratford teacher and was willing to answer any follow-up questions about Stratford.</p>	
New Member Applicant Introductions		
Wendy Pizer	<p>We are sad to see some current members leaving the committee, including Paul P our current Chair and Cloe Chin, former Secretary. We would like to introduce the following individuals who are interested in joining ASEAC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christina Yacobucci • Jay Hamon • Amber Baum • Minerva Trudo • Kristin Gillig 	
Membership vote on ASEAC Year End Report to School Board		
Wendy Pizer	<p>Paul Patterson wrote the report which highlights the following concerns to the School Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritized Needs and Recommendation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication Improvements ○ Standard Operating Procedural Manual Needed • Need for Consistency and Accountability • Needing Core Competencies in Special Education <p>ASEAC Committee Vote: Yes: 12, No: 0, Abstain: 0 Motion Passes.</p>	Report sent to School Board
End of Year Wrap-up and Planning for 2018 - 2019		
Wendy Pizer	<p><u>Planning for ASEAC 2018-2019</u></p> <p>Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ACI: Non-Recommendation Year for ASEAC - Report on Past Recommendations - Spring 2019 ○ ACI: Recommendation Year Report - Fall 2019 ○ ASEAC Reports directly to SB - Mid-Year and EOY Reports, other communications as needed <p>ASEAC’s Mandate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Advise,” “Participate in development of priorities and strategies,” “submit reports and recommendations,” “review policies and procedures.” ○ Regarding needs of children with disabilities. <p>Areas of Committee Need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Budget ○ Outreach ○ Organization ○ Data ○ Others? <p><u>Potential Topics for Meetings and Working Groups</u></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ OSE Annual Update to ASEAC (September or October?) ○ ASEAC 101, Planning for the Year (September) ○ Data 101? ○ Program Evaluation • Follow Up on Past Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accountability/Consistency/Written Guidance (Principal Panel) ○ APS Professional Learning Framework ○ ATSS ○ Psychologists and Social Workers ○ Seclusion and Restraint ○ Inclusion • New Areas? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive Behavioral Interventions (PBIS) ○ Math Interventions (multi-sensory) ○ Social-Emotional Needs of SWD ○ An all Public Comment meeting 	
Meeting Adjourned	It has been a pleasure working with everyone this year. Meeting Adjourned at: 9:05	

See everyone in September!

Public Comment from: The Stratford Parent Group

Lessons learned from the events leading to the proposed move of Stratford to Yorktown and proposed strategies for avoiding future conflict

POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO MEANINGFUL INCLUSION

Public Comment to ASEAC (6-12-2018) – By Stratford Parent Group

THE PROBLEMS

1. Choice Matters

- Not all disabilities fit within the same rubric or require the same accommodations. For example, some sight-impaired individuals may be able to read when provided with glasses as an accommodation, but others may require braille. Just as there is broad variability within the disability category “sight-impaired,” variability exists in abilities within other categories such as Down syndrome or Autism. Categories of students with disabilities (SWD) also overlap. APS provides many choices for students without disabilities (e.g. Montessori Program, Science Focus, Arlington Tech and International Baccalaureate Programs). Likewise, parents of SWD require a variety of programs from which to choose to address the varying needs of and desired outcomes for their children.
- An important reason that choice is so valuable for SWD is that an educational approach that works for some students may not work for others with the same disability
- Too often, parents of SWD are unable to make informed decisions about available Programs because APS will not allow parents to observe them when the Programs are fully operational. The best way to assess any Program is when it is active and in-use. Empty hallways and empty classrooms identify where the Program is housed, but do not demonstrate the Program’s relevant features.

2. Disability community’s lack of consensus

- Some parents of children with SWD wish to revamp the system to accommodate the particular needs of their own children—but not necessarily the needs of other children. Such changes, when implemented without full knowledge of their impact, may result in real harm to other children in the same SWD category (e.g., Down syndrome) who may not exhibit the same behavior pattern(s) or have the same learning and sensory needs.

- APS is made up of educators who are tasked with educating children in a manner that is responsive to the entire community, but who may not be aware of disagreements amongst parents of SWD. This divisiveness among parents of SWD regarding what is best for our children has led to a disconnect between APS administrators and the whole parent community. Our experience as parents of SWD is that no single approach works best for all students. APS should, therefore, expect a variety of perspectives from parents of SWD reflecting the varied needs they perceive for their children.
- APS should also recognize that typically only a small number of parents of SWD have the time and energy and resources to participate in lengthy public discussions about educational approaches for their children. APS needs to be sensitive to the needs of a potentially substantial silent majority.
- The “Medically Fragile Child” refers to a subset of SWD who may benefit from a separate public school facility for a variety of reasons, including the ability to toilet with dignity, receive medication in a secure setting, etc. That said, these students should be given the opportunity to access grade level curriculum, to take SOLs, and to obtain a high school diploma and not just a VAAP. Low expectations for the disability community are unacceptable, but realistic expectations are necessary.

3. Administrative lack of transparency and lack of parental engagement leads to poor planning

- Parents of SWD frequently encounter APS administrators, specialists and teachers having an attitude that “they know better” than the parents what is best for their children. That APS perspective is inaccurate and could lead to planning and implementation decisions that negatively affect SWD.
- APS has not always afforded parents of SWD the same opportunities for collective input prior to implementing decisions as it has provided to parents of students without disabilities, actions that suggest a lack of transparency. The State recognized this problem and created regulations to counter it, hence the formation of Special Education Advisory Committees.
- The fact that as recently as July of 2017, APS had to create and adopt policy to ensure that the well-being of the child is not ignored when implementing curriculum is a testament to this on-going problem. <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/25-3-support-for-students-wellness-PIP.pdf>

THE SOLUTIONS

APS SANCTIONED INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The regulations governing special education programs for children with disabilities in Virginia provide that ASEAC shall advise the School Board through the APS Superintendent on the educational needs of children with disabilities and participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities. [See 8VAC20-81-230D.] ASEAC should fulfill this mandate by creating an ASEAC Subcommittee on Inclusion that will invite participation from all stakeholders and that is distinguishable from any other self-appointed “task force.” The School Board should ensure that ASEAC is empowered to fulfill its regulatory responsibilities to advise the Superintendent and School Board on priorities and strategies for inclusion.

APS should not create any inclusion policy without receiving parent input via ASEAC. APS should presume that self-appointed task forces, despite the best of intentions, do not speak for the entire disability community and should encourage such groups to provide their recommendations through ASEAC.

Every school division is required to have a SEAC as detailed in Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, effective January 25, 2010 (special education regulations).

The major purpose of SEACs is to provide an opportunity for parents and other school board appointees to have a voice in the way school divisions provide services to students with disabilities. SEACs are extensions of local school boards since members are appointed by them, and SEACs provide reports and recommendations to their school boards.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/committees_advisory/special_ed/local_sped_advisory_committees/index.shtml

Under the auspices of ASEAC, the ASEAC Subcommittee on Inclusion should study inclusion of SWD from multiple perspectives and provide recommendations regarding:

1. Preservation of choice to accommodate SWD varying needs

2. SWD and their parents' ability to see programs in action. HIPAA laws are not prohibitory but require written consent from all parties.
3. The critical need for consensus while full agreement may not be possible. Therefore, the Committee must provide recommendations to APS based on compromise of all stakeholders, including many different definitions of inclusion.
4. The medically fragile child, who is the most vulnerable subset affected in decision-making and who must be protected from harm.
5. The concept that parents know better than any educator what is right for their child and, therefore, there should be no judgment if one parent chooses differently from another.
6. Strategies to overcome the prejudice of low expectations and actually educate the children such that all have the opportunity to obtain a high school diploma and are not relegated to VAAP's simply because they are in a certain program.
7. Preservation of the safety, well-being and happiness of the child when educating the child.
8. Strengthening and studying existing successful programs: Start with Stratford, examining why it works and how it could improve.

The School Board authority and mandate to create this committee is referenced here: <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/10-06-Advisory-Committees.pdf>

Parent Thoughts about Inclusion and the Stratford Program:

"We have been very happy with the Stratford Program, which we think has allowed our daughter to continue to develop to the best of her abilities. In a small classroom she has the opportunity to shine—that would not be possible for her in an inclusive classroom, because she would always be well behind her peers. We particularly appreciate the concentration of expertise at the Stratford Program, which could not exist in the same unified way if many of the students were dispersed to neighborhood schools. Many of the parents we know who are gung-ho for "full inclusion" do not themselves have children with our daughter's level of disability, and we find that their beliefs are based on abstract notions rather than on the reality of bringing up such children. For us the Stratford Program is a sign of the success of APS in addressing the needs of some special needs children rather than a sign of failure to be inclusive." Janet Sater and Kurt Schuler – Stratford parents

"Please do not force my child's disability to fit into Yorktown. As residents of Arlington, our family makes the choice for his special education needs -- and the Reed School is what we choose for our child as the right venue where he fits in, the same venue where the Stratford Program is set to continue, and will provide the best and most appropriate learning environment for my son, which has been clearly prepared for in my his IEP". Margaret Lacson – Stratford parent

"I would challenge you, your staff and the Arlington County School Board to reconsider your past levels of support for and views of the Stratford Program. Rather than place obstacles to every chance of continued success of this outstanding program, you, as well as the Arlington community should be proud that this county offers educational options not just to typical students and their families, but also to this unique population of special students". Anne Davison Dolaher – Stratford parent

"I am the parent of one disabled child and four typically developing children. I know most parents can be pushy for asking what they feel their typical children need from the school system. As the parent of a disabled child I feel I am her only voice and have not used it in the past because we were happy at our current location which is Stratford. My child is thriving and is in a safe environment with just the right amount of inclusion tailored to her individual needs". Elda LaRue – Stratford parent

"If someone were to ask me what I love about Stratford – and what I look for in that program – inclusion would not be my first response. Actually, inclusion would not be in my top five features and likely not in my top ten. Safety, routine, small class sizes, understanding and attentive teachers – those are the features I appreciate and hope will continue at Stratford's next location". Suzanne Garwood – Stratford parent

"If the Yorktown proposal is being pushed because the idea of inclusion, I strongly urge you to let Stratford parents have a voice in this inclusion initiative. Inclusion can be done in many different ways in many different levels, and we know what our kids need. If inserting a small and vulnerable special needs program in to one of the largest schools in Arlington is considered to be a good inclusive idea, then inclusion is truly not understood by APS". Sylvia Orli – Stratford parent

“We actively chose the Stratford Program because under Karen Gerry, it is a well-run cohesive middle and high school not a group of isolated FLS or MIPA classrooms. It is not segregated but rather, is an educationally rich, integrated and safe community where all staff and students know each other. [Our son] has had a lot of medical issues over the years and in particular bowel issues, which cause him great embarrassment. His distress and humiliation can become so significant that he resorts to self-injurious

behavior. The Stratford Program allows [him] to toilet with dignity. That is critical for his self-esteem, which previously had been low after being maligned in a large middle school.” Millie and Terrig Thomas- Stratford Parents

“...we have all been content with the wonderful program Dr. Gerry has nurtured at Stratford. Last night [at the School Board Meeting], I listened to 26 parents demand “equality” for their kids concerning the Career Center proposal. But it did strike me that at least those parents had been given multiple prior opportunities to comment on the plans...Compare that with what has just happened to Stratford parents. We were given NO notice of the proposed Reed-Yorktown change... We were only given a chance to meet with APS staff and our School Board member Mr. Goldstein...because we complained. The Career Center parents were at least afforded the due process inherent in the “Arlington Way.” Stratford parents feel that we were given the “my way or the highway” treatment. If we were involved in the planning process from the beginning, we wouldn’t be where we are now. Lee White- Stratford parent

Signed Stratford Parents Group:

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Elda LaRue

Margaret Lacson

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Maithily Nandedkar-Thomas, M.D. (Former ASEAC Vice-Chair)

Alisa Cowen (Former ASEAC Chair)

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