

Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee

MINUTES

September 14, 2021

Via Zoom

Recording of Meeting:

https://vimeo.com/606003587/90c7c56fe2?utm_source=email&utm_medium=vimeo-cliptranscode-201504&utm_campaign=28749

ASEAC Members:

First Name	Last Name	Present?	Vote on June 2021 meeting minutes
Nicholas	Walkosak	N	ab
David	Rosenblatt	Y	Y
Keith	Chanon	N	y
Paul	Timm	Y	Y
Nadia	Facey	Y	Y
Margaret	Dunn	Y	Y
Michelle	Best	Y	Y
Kristin	Gillig	N	ab
Kurt	Schuler	Y	Y
Minerva	Trudo	N	ab
Matt	Leland	Y	Y
Symone	Walker	Y	Y
Kathryn	Pericak	Y	Y
Ellen	Fitzenrider	N	ab
Eva	Kerns-Varner	N	ab
Rebecca	Hunter	Y	Y
Jennifer	Wheelock	Y	Y
David	Siu	Y	Y

Motion to approve: Symone, Nadia

Non-Member Attendees: [Note list may be incomplete as participants may have left the meeting early]

Kathleen Donovan, Heather Rothenbeuscher, Kelly Krug, Gina Piccolini, Emma ParralSanchez, Amit ____, Ceclia Kline, Charles Smith, Christy Vigfusson, Claudia Cuellar-Ramirez, Harper ____, Jenn Seiff, Jill Buzby, Katelyn Gurgiolo, Mary ____, Sharon ____, Wendy Pizer, Mungunzaya Coughlin, Janet Pence, Sonia Rosen, Paige Shevlin

Agenda:

6:00 - 6:10 pm Welcome and Introductions

6:10 - 6:30 pm Public Comment

6:30 - 6:40 pm OSE Updates and Response to June 2021 Public Comments

6:40 - 7:00 pm ASEAC Business, Updates and Volunteer Opportunities

7:00 - 7:30 pm ASEAC 101

Welcome and Introductions (6:05pm)

David Rosenblatt welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda. He introduced himself followed by introductions from the Executive Board Members.

Welcome to new members:

- Jennifer Wheelock
- Dr. Ellen Fitzenrider (absent)
- Eva Kerns-Varner (Student Member from Wakefield H.S.)
- Rebecca Hunter (also a member of the Facilities Advisory Committee)

ASEAC Members introduced themselves via the Chat.

ASEAC plans to hold all meetings virtually at least through the fall.

ASEAC Leadership Team:

Chair - David Rosenblatt

Vice Chair - Symone Walker

Co-Secretaries - Keith Chanon and Paul Timm

Membership: 18 Parents/Community Members, 1 Teacher Member, 2 Student Members

School Board Liaison: Cristina Diaz-Torres

APS Staff Liaisons

Heather Rothenbuescher, Director of Special Education - Secondary

Dr. Kelly Krug, Director of Special Education- Elementary

Kathleen Donovan, Parent Resource Center

Public Comments (6:18 pm):

Note that comments are responded to by APS/Office of Special Education (OSE) at the next ASEAC meeting.

Mungunzaya Coughlin

Parent of a 6th grader at HB Woodlawn. Student has autism and was formerly in a self-contained classroom. Now that he's at HB, the SPED teacher indicated that he doesn't fit in the school and should not be there.

Tauna Szymanski

My name is Tauna Szymanski. I'm the co-chair of the 300-member [Arlington Inclusion Task Force](#), and I just finished six years on ASEAC. I'm the proud parent of a middle schooler with significant, disability-related support needs who, for the past three years, has been fully included with the supports she needs in the classrooms she would attend if she didn't have a disability.

In our experience, the most critical aspect of successful inclusion is a team of people with "can-do" attitudes: Leaders who are committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure every student, regardless of their support needs, is an equal, welcomed, and meaningful part of their school community. Leaders who will be creative and figure out how to remove barriers to access. Leaders who recognize that if something is "not working," it's not the fault of the person with the *fewest* resources and tools to fix it (the student with the disability), but that it's on the *rest of us* to ensure equal access. We need leaders who foster a culture that *values* disability as a *normal* part of human diversity; and leaders who put a culture and philosophy of social justice into practice every day. My child has been lucky to have experienced two different APS schools whose leaders and staff possess these qualities.

Unfortunately, over the past two weeks, I've heard from APS families who are experiencing far less positive and welcoming cultures in their schools. A parent was told that because their daughter in high school couldn't "keep up" with the material, she would have to move to a fully segregated classroom. Another parent reported that their son's IEP goals and accommodations couldn't be provided at his current middle school, so he'd have to move elsewhere. An elementary student was marked absent when staff refused to ensure the student went to his regular ed classes as provided for on his IEP. A middle school student was pulled -- without notice or consent -- from a core academic course in front of the entire class to receive their occupational therapy services. And families at three different elementary and middle schools have reported that staff have already called IEP team meetings to try to *reduce* the number of regular education hours in existing IEPs -- in other words to try to place the student in *more* restrictive, *more* segregated settings.

Despite recent efforts by APS leadership aimed at reducing forced segregation in APS, these alarming examples make clear that there is significant room for improvement. In addition to improving staff familiarity with the concepts of ableism, discrimination, Universal Design for Learning, and the various laws that guarantee equal access and equal opportunity for students with disabilities, I encourage APS leadership to do more to foster a *cultural* commitment to inclusion -- one that already exists in pockets in APS but must be expanded.

I am thrilled with APS's new commitment to inclusion. We have some pretty amazing teachers and administrators here in APS. I look forward to the day when I no longer hear stories about students with disabilities being steered into segregated settings, especially based on outdated, uninformed notions that they "can't keep up," or because the student "doesn't fit," or because we

can't or we don't have students "like that" here. Thank you for your leadership.

Jennifer Wheelock

Good evening. My name is Jennifer Wheelock and I have questions tonight with regard to funds in the American Rescue Plan and APS plans for post-pandemic recovery.

On July 1, the US Department of Education released an [additional \\$3 billion](#) that was appropriated in the ARP specifically for infants, toddlers, and students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). While these additional funds do not appear to be subject to the same transparency and engagement requirements as the \$19 million allocated to APS under ESSER III, I do have several questions:

- Does APS expect to receive an allocation from the Virginia Department of Education of these specific funds (provided for in Section 2014(a) of the American Rescue Plan)?
- If not, does APS know how the Virginia Department of Education intends to distribute or otherwise use these funds? (See this [fact sheet](#) for intended uses)
- If APS expects to receive an allocation, how much do they expect to receive and how do they intend to utilize it to serve students under IDEA?

Further, at the August town hall, APS indicated that any unused ARP funds from summer school or the virtual learning program would be subject to the community engagement process required by the US Department of Education. While it is too soon to know the cost of VLP this year, are there leftover ARP funds from summer school? I applaud specific investments APS made with ARP funds, including 12 new math and reading coaches for specific elementary schools, but remain concerned that is not a sufficient investment to meet the challenge that APS faces, especially for students with disabilities and English language learners. I also note that there do not appear to be any specific new resources or investments in APS to address learning recovery among middle school and high school students. How is APS supporting and resources those needs among middle school and high school students with disabilities?

Finally, many of us look forward to further engagement with APS on these issues. To that end, what does the Office of Special Education identify as the greatest needs within APS at present? How can parents help advocate to make sure these needs are addressed in the next budget process? I appreciate that APS faces significant budget challenges in the coming years, with a [projected deficit of \\$100 million by 2025](#). However, as APS continues to recover from the pandemic, how do we make sure that students with disabilities remain at the middle of these conversations and not the periphery?

Cecilia Kline

Pre-Service Training: Drew Elementary. The training proved to be too short and not adequate to cover the diversity of issues for students with IEPs and AAC users. Concerned about the elimination of the Communications Program. Disappointed that none of the planning and training for AAC users was done before school started. Today was the first day that the coaches met with the student's team. Case Carrier had no training in using the device. Recommends that APS do more to prepare staff and better involve parents.

Jill Buzby

Commenting on ongoing transportation issues for SWDs.

W&L and Wakefield - daughter didn't have a bus for the first two weeks. Told that it was because of the schedules of her classes. Son started HS this fall - on first day of school, he and at least seven other SWDs at Wakefield did not have busses. School administration did not respond after multiple attempts. Told by transportation that it could be weeks due to driver shortage. Transportation dept claimed that the school turned in the transportation needs late. This was included in my son's IEP months prior.

Arlyn Elizee

I have twin 3rd graders. Speaking on behalf of parents of VLP. Many didn't and don't have teachers. There are 17 open positions for SPED. SPED has still not been addressed in VLP. Teachers have reached out to parents about IEPs because they don't have case coordinators. Why can't the homeschool SPED Case Carriers help and assist the VLP teachers? VLP doesn't have a SPED Coordinator. 43% of students are Spanish language speakers. Persons of color are over 80% of students in VLP

Nadia Facey

Hi, My name is Nadia Facey and I'm a former ASEAC chair; I have a few quick questions and comments that I'd like to make tonight.

First off, I wanted to say congratulations to the new ASEAC leadership team, David, Symone, Paul and Keith. I know you will all do a great job but it's also a lot of work too and I wanted to thank all of you for your service.

I have a quick question about rapid COVID screenings taking place within APS schools. I'm thankful APS is testing, it's a critical part of necessary safety and mitigation measures we need to keep our community safe.

It is my understanding that these tests, especially in middle and high school, are self administered. I would like to know what measures APS is taking to ensure proper accommodations are in place for students who are not able to self administer these tests. Further, where is testing being done, inside or outside? If inside, are there any mitigation efforts being taken to protect against a potential increased risk that comes from the need to remove a mask for testing.

My final question is more of a request for clarification regarding how families who have a student with an IEP make a setting change from in-person learning to the virtual learning program or vice versa. It has been my understanding that this change can be made by IEP teams, but I heard that some have been asked to produce a doctor's note stating the need for the setting change. Can you please clarify this at our next meeting and I would encourage you to send out more information about this process in the next PRC Monday message.

Thank you very much.

Janet Pence

(1) I wish to recommend the formation of grade level cadres among faculty at APS in order to share best practices, especially involving teaching aids that benefit students enrolled in special education. For example, I heard about a fourth grade teacher who had created a number of graphics that were helpful to students learning about Virginia history. At Nottingham, in fifth grade, my son's teacher created great summaries of the science curriculum that I was able to use at home with my son to supplement his learning. As APS is using Office 365, something like One Drive would be the perfect repository for shared content. Additionally, I believe that regular grade level meetings across APS would enable teachers to share best practices and collaborate, resulting in more uniformity of approach across the schools.

(2) I request ASEAC and CESAC to actively sponsor, support and/or create virtual family networks so that families are better able to connect with each other to learn about opportunities for specific special education communities.

Melissa Schwaber

Hi, I'm Melissa Schwaber and I'm sorry that I'm not able to attend in person tonight, our Middle School back to school night starts at 6. I would like to address Arlington school clinics and students that have daily medical needs. While this is a school health issue, it disproportionately affects students with IEPs and 504s.

Last year, APS set up isolation clinics in each school for students with COVID 19 symptoms. This allowed the clinic staff to treat students with minor injuries, chronic medical conditions and non COVID illness separately in the main school clinic.

APS and Arlington Health Department decided to discontinue the isolation clinics this school year because of staffing and lack of space. This is a major concern because some APS students who are at greatest risk of COVID complications need to visit the school clinic daily.

These are students with asthma that need an inhaler. Students, like two of my children, with Type 1 diabetes might need to treat low blood sugar with juice or a snack. Or students that need to take daily medication for ADHD or other medical concerns.

All of these activities require the student to take their mask off. Some for short periods of time, have to take a pill. Others for longer periods of time, for example, can take up to 20-25 minutes for a low blood sugar to come back up to normal while the student is cognitively impaired.

I've heard that some parents have decided to not have their child take their lunch dose of medication to keep them out of the clinic. This isn't fair to students who might need these medications to do their best work during the school day.

I've sent emails to Engage and the School Board without a response. I'm asking APS to come up with a plan to keep these students safe.

Ellen Fitzenrider

Dear ASEAC committee:

Thank you for considering this submission for public comment for the ASEAC meeting that occurred last night on Tuesday, September 14, 2021. Due to another commitment, I was unable to sign in to the ZOOM until the allotted time for Public Comment was over. I am the mother of a 10th grader identified as having a learning disability who attends Washington-Liberty high school. Transportation is listed as an accommodation on my daughter's IEP due to her challenges combined with the treacherous location that I find our apartment to be located in. We live 1.1 miles from school, and our neighborhood consists of the "quadruple threat" of 10th St. N, Washington Blvd., Fairfax Avenue, and Wilson Boulevard. It is challenging for an adult to navigate these streets, and it would be utterly unsafe for my daughter to attempt to do so alone.

Last spring our IEP team decided as a group that transportation was appropriate to include on my daughter's IEP. The school informed me multiple times that they had reached out to transportation, yet I was never contacted by transportation to confirm a bus route. As I was working from home at the time, I opted to drive her to and from school for the rest of the year (April, May, and June).

It is now the third week of school, a new year, and my daughter still has not been assigned a bus. The school has confirmed to me that they have requested multiple times as well as spoken to transportation about assigning my daughter to a bus route and confirming that transportation is on her IEP. Multiple Arlington Public School busses in fact pass our apartment building every day, and this is very frustrating. My daughter does not even have special transportation needs, she is entirely capable of riding a general ed bus, and I have stated as such in my calls to transportation.

I myself have called multiple times, and each time was told that my daughter "was not listed in the system." On one such phone call I was told "those requests are located in another office, let me go check," I was put on hold for over 20 minutes, and ultimately the call disconnected. Yesterday my daughter's case manager, Chameka Day, and I attempted a three-way conference call specifically to Ms. Archer in transportation (whom Ms. Day had already spoken with about this on the phone the previous week). She was not in and we left a message for her to call Ms. Day back to rectify this. That has not happened.

I understand that we are not the only family with children with disabilities with transportation on their IEP's that are waiting to be assigned bus routes. I would appreciate the entities that review these public comments look into this matter, and please help assign my daughter to a bus. IEPs are Federally-mandated, and it is gravely concerning that despite my and my team's persistence, we (and other families) continue to have this delay.
Respectfully submitted, Dr. Ellen Fitzenrider

OSE Responses to June 2021 Public Comments (6:41pm):

Public Comments related to administrative transfers were resolved through transition IEP meetings.

Students leaving APS: OSE and the Office of Academics closely tracks students with special education services who leave the public school system to identify trends.

OSE Updates:

1. Heather Rothenbeuscher:
 - a. Provided pre-service training to all special education teachers on IEP development and changes in Synergy.
 - b. Provided multiple LEA training sessions.
 - c. Delivered assistive technology equipment to schools for students
 - d. Provided an update on the 5 year plan to the Superintendent's Cabinet today.
 - e. Created a planning factors workgroup. These are used to staff schools based on the student population. Assess these to determine if planning factors are hindering staffing?
 - f. Biweekly communication to staff on inclusive practices. Created an inclusive practices plan for teachers and staff. Includes activities for teachers to implement (for schools that are not "model sites). Non-model schools also receive biweekly communications with some activities and also provide information to the PRC.
 - g. AAC Awareness week and training updates - Kelly leading working group - Oct 25th. Will provide training to all schools with students using AAC.

Parent Resource Center Update:

Kathleen Donovan - The PRC is open and will continue to also hold virtual meetings.

Gina Piccolini DeSalvo - new colleague. Introduction in the chat...has been a teacher and coordinator in APS previously.

"Good evening! I am looking forward to learning from ASEAC and look forward to collaborating. I am a new coordinator at the Parent Resource Center (PRC) and am lucky to partner with Kathleen Donovan. My background is as a special education coordinator and teacher in APS, from PK-Transition levels. I am currently working on my doctorate in Special Education with a speciality in traumatic brain injury."

ASEAC Updates (6:50pm):

Policy Update:

- Kathy Pericak - ASEAC's Policy Review Sub-Committee Chair. Invites anyone to join the Sub-Committee. ASEAC membership is not required. Is exploring ways to increase engagement of ASEAC.

- Overview of policy review process. APS maintains a list of Policies for Revision/Amendment on the Engage website. The full process allows for comments at 4 different times: (1) before APS begins to revise a policy, comments can be provided on the current version; (2) when the revised version is posted for public comments, (3) when the revised version is presented to the School Board for Information, and (4) when the revised version is posted for Action by the School Board. ASEAC has provided comments on many different policies impacting students with disabilities, including those addressing special education, discipline/student conduct, physical interventions (restraint), and prevention/remediation. ASEAC has also reviewed drafts of the Student Rights and Responsibilities, Code of Conduct Handbook.
- Kathy maintains an email list on policies. Email her if interested in information on policies at: pericak.kathy@gmail.com

ASEAC Business:

Need a new Teacher representative.

APS has been inviting ASEAC to be involved in interviews for key positions in APS. Will email opportunities to members to see if they're interested and available.

ASEAC submitted comments to APS on its draft "Inclusive Practices Guide" over the summer.

Meeting dates reminder for 2021-2022:

September 14, 2021

October 12, 2021

November 16, 2021

December 14, 2021

January 18, 2022

February 22, 2022

March 22, 2022

April 19, 2022

May 24, 2022

June 14, 2022

Rebecca Hunter provided a reminder about the upcoming School Bond. This includes funding for accessibility upgrades at Schriver. Community field and upgrades to parking. Kitchen upgrades - moving from a centralized kitchen, every school must prepare their

own food onsite. Continuation of upgrading security and access of buildings.
\$23.1million. Need to make sure the Shriver program has what they need.

ASEAC 101 - David Rosenblatt

- VDOE mandate
- Public body, FOIA
- Business conducted in public
- Public notice shall be published annually listing the names of committee members and including a description of ways in which interested parties may express their views to the committee. 8 VAC 20-81-230 D
- Committee meetings shall be held at least four times in a school year and shall be open to the public.
- Committee business must be conducted in public.
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
 - Notice of the Meeting
 - Meetings are Open to the Public
 - Minutes Required
- ASEAC Website

The functions of the local advisory committee shall be as follows:

1. Advise the local school division of needs in the education of children with disabilities;
2. Participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities;
3. Submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of children with disabilities to the division superintendent for transmission to the local school board;
4. Assist the local school division in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services;
5. Review the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services prior to submission to the local school board; and
6. Participate in the review of the local school division's annual plan, as outlined in subdivision B.2. of this section.

Responsibilities of Members:

- Appointed by School Board for one year term, maximum of six years.
- Required to attend meetings per School Board policy, needed to provide Quorum

and vote. Notify leadership if *need* to be absent.

- Work **collaboratively** with members and APS staff to fulfill the functions defined in Virginia regulations.
- Actively participate in ASEAC.
- Participate in sub-committees/working groups as appropriate.
- Consider issues/needs at a **systems level**, not individual agendas.
- Be informed of committee activities, special education issues and plans.
- Review and abide by bylaws and state regulations.
- Encourage parents and other community members to attend ASEAC and/or provide public comments.

ASEAC's Role within APS

Unique Functions:

- Exist per State Regulations
- Report directly to School Board as often as needed
- All Members must be Appointed by School Board
- Review APS Policies and Procedures
- Review APS Annual Plan

Within Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning (ACTL):

- One of 14 Advisory Committees that Report to ACTL, Chairs attend ACTL meetings
- Collaborate with other instructional advisory committees and with ACTL

APS Strategic Plan - six year plan with initiatives, desired outcomes, and strategies. Encourage all to review, especially in relation to ASEAC issues.

<https://www.apsva.us/strategic-plan/>

Resources for Members:

A Guide for Local Special Education Advisory Committees in Virginia (VDOE):

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/committees_advisory/special_ed/local_sped_advisory_committees/products/guide/guide.pdf

Virginia Department of Education Website for Local Special Education Advisory Committees:

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

Arlington School Board Policy B-3.6.31 - Advisory Council on Instruction:

<https://www.apsva.us/school-board-policies/>

Virginia Department of Education Parent's Guide to Special Education

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

Questions:

Paige Shevlin: How are students involved?

David - We have two spots for student members. Currently we have one student member. One open spot remains.

Cecilia Kline: What is the relationship of SEPTA to ASEAC?

David - currently it is a very close and collaborative relationship. The Special Education PTA has liaisons at every school. ASEAC is more formal. SEPTA is more grassroots and connected to more families.

<https://www.apsva.us/special-education-advisory-committee/get-involved/>

ASEAC Nominations for Membership:

<https://www.apsva.us/special-education-advisory-committee/get-involved/>

Adjournment:

- Motion to adjourn: Paul
- Adjourned at 7:34 pm: