

## Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities January 15, 2025

Committee Members in Attendance	Committee Members Absent	Staff and Guests in Attendance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elizabeth Zielinski, <i>Chair</i></li> <li>• Holly Stearns, <i>Vice Chair</i></li> <li>• Mimi Abdulkadir</li> <li>• Ally Baldassari</li> <li>• David Bean</li> <li>• Jay Berkenbilt</li> <li>• Delaney Brooks</li> <li>• Ahsen Cakez</li> <li>• Amanda Campbell*</li> <li>• Brandon Cassady</li> <li>• Rachel Charlton</li> <li>• Anita Chinyavong</li> <li>• Daniel Cronnell</li> <li>• Shannon Duncan</li> <li>• Susan Edgerton</li> <li>• Carolyn Haydon</li> <li>• Colleen Jones</li> <li>• Lauren McCaughey</li> <li>• Nita Payton</li> <li>• Brandis Ruise</li> <li>• Rajiv Satsangi</li> <li>• Stephanie Smith</li> <li>• Adriana Van Breda*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kristine Bennett</li> <li>• Mary Kay Ciziunas</li> <li>• Harry Henderson</li> <li>• Hope Luong</li> <li>• Sonan Sahgal</li> <li>• Elizabeth Shapiro</li> <li>• Joanne Walton</li> <li>• Amanda Wittman</li> <li>• Daniel Yeum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shannon Anderson <i>Director, Family Resource Center*</i></li> <li>• Mike Bloom, <i>Director, Office of Special Education Instruction</i></li> <li>• Terri Edmunds-Heard <i>Assistant Superintendent, Dept. of Special Services</i></li> <li>• Kathy Murphy <i>Assistant Ombuds for Special Education</i></li> <li>• Dawn Schaefer <i>Director, Office of Special Education Procedural Support*</i></li> <li>• Rachna Sizemore-Heizer, <i>School Board Representative</i></li> </ul>

\* Participated virtually.

### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm. A quorum of committee members was present in the room; two members participated virtually.

## **Minutes**

The committee unanimously approved the November and December agendas. The November agenda had been deferred so a small edit could be made.

Ms. Zielinski reminded all committee members to please sign in upon arrival in order to maintain an accurate attendance report, and also to check their file folders at the sign-in table for handouts. She also reminded all attendees that a committee member has a working service dog in attendance, and that it's not appropriate to interact with the dog unless its handler gives permission.

Since this meeting was in the style of a Town Hall, Ms. Zielinski explained the purpose of the ACSD and the parameters for public comment (which was limited to four minutes per person). ACSD members briefly introduced themselves so members of the public would know their names and which organizations/regions they represent.

## **Public Comment**

Public comment was extensive. Many members of the public spoke about their children's experiences in FCPS. One teacher spoke about her recommendations for improving special education services. All comments were recorded and are available to view on the ACSD website. Written transcripts are being prepared, but will require additional time to produce.

## **Family Resource Center (FRC) Updates**

Dr. Shannon Anderson reported on the FRC's previous and upcoming webinars, a description of which is attached to these minutes.

## **School Board Liaison Report**

Rachna Sizemore-Heizer made the following report:

1. She thanked members of the public who spoke and invited them to contact her to talk further.
2. The School Board has begun reviewing the school facilities budget. She is advocating for sensory-friendly designs. Bond funding covers about \$8/square foot, which is much less than in surrounding counties; therefore, major maintenance funding comes out of operational funds. That shortfall in funding means that renovations are on a 42-year schedule rather than a more traditional 25-year schedule.
3. She encourages members of the committee and the public to reach out to School Board members about what they believe the budget needs are.

4. Upcoming boundary work will address capacity issues. She invites members of the committee and the public to speak on that issue.
5. She advocates for a continuum of services, including inclusion (if “done well”) and teacher training.

Delaney Brooks asked how many school buildings are up to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Ms. Sizemore-Heizer believes that all are, but that she will look into it. She noted that federal standards are not high, and that FCPS would not be able to pass the permitting process if buildings did not meet those standards.

## **DSS Updates**

Mr. Bloom gave a brief update this month in order to reserve time for public comments. He noted that at the February meeting, he will inform the ACSD on plans for inclusion work for which DSS would like committee input. DSS had brought those plans to the School Board in December.

Lauren McCaughey asked if ACSD members would receive a draft to review prior to the February meeting. Mr. Bloom said he would work with Dr. Edmunds-Heard to get the information to members before the meeting.

## **Old Business**

Subcommittee chairs gave their monthly reports. All reported that having an extended amount of time to work on subcommittee business before the main meeting was helpful.

1. Strong Start: PreK-12 discussed the option of using community centers as resources for use as well as areas in FCPS buildings that are not currently in use.
2. Safe, Supported, Included, and Empowered discussed data requests for submission to DSS, mainly regarding the issues of discipline and staffing.
3. Academic Growth and Excellence created an outline for their goals and assigned parts of it to subcommittee members.
4. Equitable Access and Opportunity discussed possible speakers to inform their work.
5. Leading for Tomorrow’s Innovation discussed data requests and the desire to talk with Daniel Cronnell about his role on the Community Services Board. Daniel agreed and asked for parameters for discussion, which the subcommittee will provide.

Ms. Zielinski reminded committee members not to interactively edit online documents. Jay Berkenbilt noted that his subcommittee uses meeting time to edit their documents.

Nita Payton reported on her role as the ACSD's liaison to the FCPS Boundary Review Committee. She received a demonstration on the boundary review tool, which provides a great deal of data. She expected to receive more information at the committee's meeting the following week.

Susan Edgerton reported on her role as liaison to the FCPS Family Summit Committee. She is on the subcommittee for vendors and exhibitors. The Family Summit will take place on Saturday, March 15 from 8:30 am to 3:30 p.m. at South Lakes High School.

Joanne Walton reported on the ACSD's First Class Awards. Nominations were to open soon. Ms. Sizemore-Heizer said she would ask School Board members to include information in their newsletters.

## **New Business**

Elizabeth Zielinski and Lauren McCaughey are both members of the new FCPS Superintendent's Advisory Committee for Twice Exceptional Students. The first meeting is scheduled for January 28th.

## **Member Time**

Brandon Cassady noted that the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD), on which he sits, is hosting its 11th Education & Transition Conference on March 15. Registration is available at [viriniadsa.org](http://viriniadsa.org).

Mimi Abdulkadir reported on upcoming events hosted by Parents of Autistic Children (POAC): Understanding Echolalia was held on January 22 and a caregiver support group meeting was held on February 1.

Jay Berkenbilt noted that public comment did not include much discussion on public day schools. He praised the staff, noting that they put themselves in harms' way every day. However, he noted dissonance in that many students are provoked by their peers, but are not able to leave the public day school setting until they can prove they can withstand the highest level of school. That vicious cycle often leaves them stuck in the public day school setting. (One public commenter discussed this issue as it pertained to her daughter.)

Colleen Jones noted that her family has benefitted from FCPS's partnership with Varsity Tutors. She encouraged parents to use this resource.

Ally Baldassari, who represents the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA), noted that joining and donating to SEPTA provides money for teacher mini-grants. The spring mini-grant application period will open on February 14.

Amanda Campbell said that the previous day's School Board work session included work on the pedestrian accessibility tool. She encouraged anyone who has had difficulty with pedestrian accessibility to get involved in the discussion.

### **Action Items**

1. Members will submit nominations for the First Class Awards to Joanne Walton.
2. Ms. Zielinski will share the transcript of the Town Hall with ACSD members, School Board members, and FCPS staff.
3. Mr. Bloom will share inclusion documents for review prior to the next meeting.