

# Minutes of Meeting of Suffolk Special Education Advisory Committee

**March 16, 2022**

## **Attendees:**

Voting: Angela Bickerton, Holly Boyce, Saul Godinez, Regina Hall, Katie Morse, Leslie Schiefer

Consultant: Vivian Evett, Kelly MacPherson, Julie Masters, Irhonda Ricks, Stephanie Whitley

Guest: Sarah Bailey, James Gunther, Latricia Russell-Wilkerson

Absent: Deborah Kliche, Shawynee Love, Kirstyn Oneill

## **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. Morse welcomed everyone. Everyone in attendance introduced him or herself to the group. A quorum was achieved for this meeting.

## **II. Announcements and Correspondence**

- A. The Endependence Center is holding another regional SEAC meeting on Saturday, May 28, 2022. There will be in-person and virtual options.
- B. The Endependence Center has one more session remaining of its Youth Program. Those classes are held on Saturdays from 10 to 12.
- C. Special Olympics area 29 is still looking for members for the swim team.
- D. Chesapeake Special Olympics is getting ready to start track and field, cheering, and softball at the end of March. There is a post about it on the SEAC Facebook page. You do not need to live in the city you compete in, and the different cities have different sports available.
- E. Suffolk Parks and Rec has a new recreational therapist on staff. She will be making available spring break and summer camps for children with special needs, and she is looking for help spreading the word.

## **III. Public Comment**

No public comment was made to the SEAC committee at this meeting.

## IV. Special Education Reports

### A. Director's Report

1. There will be a virtual information session about the Early Childhood Special Education program on March 31, 2022 from 5:30 to 6:30. This program is for children with special needs who will turn three before September 30, 2022.
2. Little Feet Meet will be held on May 12 and May 13, 2022. This will be held at nine of the elementary schools in the district, since the other two do not have any program classes. This format has been chosen for this year in lieu of one large event. The kids work with partners from their PE classes when they participate in Little Feet Meet events, which is one of the many ways that Little Feet Meet helps to raise disability awareness. James Gunther has put together information kits for the schools so they can involve their entire student population with Little Feet Meet to whatever level they wish, through morning announcements, a bulletin board, etc. Hopefully, volunteers and visitors will be allowed in the building before Little Feet Meet occurs.
3. Young Athletes is an eight-week curriculum by Special Olympics for preschoolers that provides different ways to engage the students and different ways to modify the activities. The program is designed to be used with the ECSE kids, but additional available funds and additional donated equipment are being used so that this program could be extended to more kids, such as the blended classrooms and Early Start classrooms. Once all of the equipment is received, this program will be rolled out at the various elementary schools. This program can be run multiple times throughout the year if teachers wish.
4. Commonwealth of Virginia Superintendent's Memo 059-22 came out on March 11, 2022. This memo delineates additional required actions as a result of the JLARC study. These actions include comprehensive monitoring of 20% of the state's school divisions annually on a rotating basis and targeted reviews, which are more focused in nature and are triggered when complaints or concerns are brought to VDOE's attention. There was previously very little oversight of and feedback on the data, which was self-reported by the school divisions. Guidelines involving complaint procedures and mediation have also been tightened so that these disputes are solved more quickly.
5. Each year, the localities in Virginia are required to submit an annual application for funds for special education under Title 6B of IDEA 2004. The Federal government provides funding under two parts of IDEA to the States, and it flows to the localities according to their applications. This money can only be used for special education. The special education

department is required to present this information to the SEAC for feedback prior to presenting it to the school board. As of December 2021, SPS has 1830 special education students. That is an increase from the previous year, when the division was at 1778. Prior to COVID, the division had 1896 special education students, so there are still fewer special education students than there were in December 2019, but the number is back on the rise. This year's application for the fund for school-age kids (section 611) is for \$3,134,963. The allocation for the preschool age kids (section 619) is \$62,063.

## B. PRC Report

1. SPS collaborated with PEATC and the PRCs from Chesapeake and Newport News to present a virtual parent workshop on the ABCs of Behavior on March 9, 2022.
2. An in-person parent workshop on behavior is being planned featuring our SPS Behavioral Specialist, Nadine Pittman, as well as additional parent workshops to include eligibility assistive technology, extracurricular opportunities and manifestation determination reviews.
3. The Disability Awareness/Resource Fair is scheduled for April 27, 2022 from 2 to 5:30 at Nansemond River High School. There will be an in-person option as well as a virtual option. The virtual option will be available after the in-person fair, to maximize in-person attendance.
4. The PRC has received approval of its VDOE subgrant funding application for \$4000 to be used for the Disability Awareness/Resource Fair. These funds will be applied to printing costs for Fair signage, including posters and flyers, as well as imprinted tote bags for the use of Fair attendees while gathering resource material from presenters.
5. In collaboration with other Region II PRCs from Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, and Newport News Public Schools, we are also submitting a subgrant funding request for the Project DE-STRESS parent webinar mentioned at the January 2022 SEAC meeting. The tentative date for this event has changed to September 2022. This event will feature a speaker and provide tangible supports such as fidget and decompression toys, conversation dice, and mindfulness books.
6. The PRC continues to provide resources to stakeholders, including PEATC, VDOE and local agency updates, as well as the bi-monthly newsletters and news flashes as needed. Ms. Evett also continues to provide individual support and resources to families who contact the PRC.

**V. Old Business**

A. Approval of January minutes (action required)

The January 2022 minutes were approved as written.

**VI. New Business**

A. Subcommittee Reports

None of the SEAC subcommittees has an update to offer since the previous meeting.

**VII. Public Comment Review**

There was no public comment made this evening.

**VIII. Open Discussion**

Ms. Evett has seen an uptick in parents asking about PBIS on local social media. PBIS is a positive reinforcement system designed to encourage students to exhibit positive behaviors and to help get to the root cause of behaviors. This system began in special education and has been extended to general education. Schools in which this system is used have the rules and expectations that come with this system posted in the hallways and other locations to remind students of those expectations and have seen an increase in achievement and a decrease in the achievement gap as a result. This program has been most effective at the elementary level, perhaps because it is harder for the adults to ascertain the motivations behind negative behavior because they tend to be more complex at the secondary level.

**IX. Adjournment**

The next SEAC meeting will be held at 6:30 on Wednesday, May 18, 2022.