

Minutes of Suffolk Special Education Advisory Committee – April 29, 2020

Attendees:

Voting: Vivian Evett, Leslie Schiefer, Courtney Richardson, Tiara Logen-Biggs, Holly Boyce, Regina Hall, Saul Godinez

Consultant: Stephanie Whitley, Julie Masters, Kelly MacPherson, Jamillah Silver

Guest: Sarah Bailey, Pamela Charles, Ann Dunn

Absent: Angela Bickerton, Anitra Simmons, Thea Davis, Jeff Davis,

I. Welcome and Introductions - Ms. Schiefer welcomed everyone. We did not do personal introductions due to the virtual platform.

II. Public Comment – Sarah Bailey wanted to know if all students enrolled in Special Education including SECEP, Inclusion, and Self-Contained classrooms were able to participate in distance learning in Suffolk Public Schools.

III. Announcements and Correspondence

Sarah Bailey, from the Endependence Center, mentioned an Independent Webinar for Independent Living available online every day starting at 11 am. Also, there is a Webinar for young adults and youth from age 14-21. They require pre-registration. Contact Amy Ouellette. They are offered twice a week starting at 3 pm. Mrs. Dunn shared information on Transition. The Daily Living Skills and Hired Hands have been conducting webinars and platforms.

IV. Old Business

A. Approval of January minutes - Approved as written.

B. Special Education Reports

1. Special Education Director's Report

Mrs. Whitley introduced and welcomed supervisors Kelly MacPherson and Jamillah Silver. At the last school board meeting, the SPED annual plan was approved by the board. Ms. Whitley is working to develop temporary learning plans to help children while school is closed. Teachers interviewed parents to determine what resources were available at home in order to complete distance learning. Learning platforms include Google Hangouts, and Zoom. Sarah Bailey wanted to know which students had access to Edgenuity and which students do not. Currently SECEP has access and a license to Edgenuity. Mrs. Masters mentioned that packets are being mailed out to the homes of students not participating in Edgenuity. OT, PT, and Speech specialists have been providing information to students via mail and email. They have been instructed to reach out to parents once a week. Mr. Godinez mentioned the survey that SPED conducted and that the questions were generalized. Mr. Godinez wanted to address the portions of the IEP that are unable to be addressed because of school being closed. Mrs. Whitley mentioned that the temporary learning plan is put in place because we cannot be in the brick and mortar buildings. Once school resumes, everyone will work very hard to get the children caught up. Mrs. Whitley stresses the importance of communication. The survey was to determine what the parents need and to determine what is available in the home. Mrs. Logan-Biggs wants to know what she can do with her three children at home while she is alone. She wants to know

what she can do to help her children when she is completely overwhelmed and stressed out. Mrs. Silver pointed out that the additional resources that SPS has provided are options to continue learning. The learning packets for elementary students were provided to review information. This is not a time for students to learn new material. Ms. Silver added that Ms. Logen-Biggs should not feel compelled to do all the work. Above all, maintain a routine that is normal for you. Mrs. Hall mentioned that there is a child that transferred schools right before the school closure and has not received a learning packet. Mrs. Schiefer mentioned that her son's teacher has been in contact with her every week. She feels the Special Education department has done a good job. Mrs. Schiefer asked if it will be possible, once children are able to be back in the building, to increase the time allotted for services such as OT, PT and Speech to make up for services missed during the shutdown.

C. Nominations Subcommittee

Nominations were supposed to be discussed during the March meeting. Due to the cancellation of the March meeting, the discussion was moved to April. Pamela Charles submitted a request to be a voting member, however, because she is a substitute teacher, she cannot. SEAC bylaws only allow one person receiving compensation to be a voting member on SEAC and that position is currently filled by Holly Boyce, teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing. SEAC is still currently looking for new SEAC voting members for the 2020 / 2021 school year. Vivian Evett will be the chair for the Nominations Subcommittee. Saul Godinez, Courtney Richardson and Regina Hall will be also be Nominations subcommittee members.

V. New Business

A. New SEAC Goals

Due to the governor closing school for the remainder of the academic year, the committee found it necessary to amend our committee goals and add new ones. Mrs. Whitley made several suggestions for goals that SEAC could work on during the school closure. She mentioned a Buddy Program that is being conducted in Norfolk. Mrs. Whitley looked up the information that was listed in VDOE. She recommends starting the program in one school and expanding it.

Also, in Norfolk Public Schools, they have several Special Olympics Programs offered; Little Feet Meet, Big Feet Meet, and Achilles Kids. These programs are much like a club in the schools that branches off into different areas. It is student driven and meets once a month. The clubs consist of students with special needs and typically developing students. Mrs. Whitley suggested exploring similar programs for Suffolk Public Schools.

Mrs. Whitley suggested that we should begin working on plans for the upcoming Disability Awareness fair. She has contacts and vendors from VA Beach that SEAC can get in touch with to get the ball rolling. She would like it to be a collaboration between SEAC and the Special Education department.

VI. Public Comment Review – The committee felt that the Public Comment was appropriately addressed during the Special Education Director's Report. No further action will be taken.

VIII. Open Discussion – Mrs. Whitley requested that the committee update SEAC brochure to ensure that it can be printed in time to be distributed to each school as soon as possible. Mrs. Schiefer mentioned that the nominated members will not be finalized until July. Mrs. Schiefer is also waiting for the School Board to finalize their appointment process and to add their members before the brochure can be updated. Mrs. Evett requested that the Chair should write a letter to the School Board Chair to request the status of their appointments. There was a brief discussion about SEAC brochures being disseminated to parents from the school. Mrs. Logan-Biggs feels that there are schools that do pass out the brochures to parents. She feels that there are families who see Special Education as a stigma and may not want to attend SEAC meetings. She feels that hopefully if the dynamics surrounding Special Education change that many more parents will attend. Mrs. Logan-Biggs also feels that getting the Special Education students more involved could also change the dynamics surrounding SEAC.

X. Adjournment - The next meeting will be held on May 20, 2020. This will be a virtual meeting.