

Minutes of Suffolk Special Education Advisory Committee – January 15, 2020

Attendees:

Voting: Vivian Evett, Leslie Schiefer, Courtney Richardson, Tiara Logen-Biggs, Thea Davis, Jeff Davis, Holly Boyce, Angela Bickerton, Regina Hall, Angela Miller, Saul Godinez (phone in)

Consultant: David Mitnick, Stephanie Whitley

Guest: Shawn Dickerson, Sarah Bailey, Shekeita Linton, Bonnie Dooly, LaCrecia, Riddick, Pamela Charles, Ann Dunn

Absent: Anitra Simmons

I. Welcome and Introductions - Ms. Schiefer welcomed everyone and people introduced themselves.

II. Public Comment – None.

III. Announcements and Correspondence

Ms. Schiefer said she has sent out many e-mails regarding seminars, and workshops. Ms. Schiefer also mentioned to the committee to check the SEAC Facebook page.

Ms. Dunn said Tidewater Autism Society is having their monthly Chat ‘N Chew on Thursday, January 16 at Panera in Harbor View at 6 PM. They also have a Peninsula Resource Fair in Newport News on Saturday, January 18 from 9 AM to 3 PM at Denbigh Baptist Christian School Gymnasium. Numerous sensory jump events happening in the Hampton Roads area. A few parks include Sky zone who does Sensory Sunday. Parents and families with special needs children are able to enjoy the facility, with various accommodations. Tidewater Autism Society is having a Respite Night.

Kristyn Troyer is conducting a 14-week Social Skills for Teens event Group meets Mondays 5:00-6:30pm

IV. Data Report and Graduation/Drop-out Report Presentation by Shawn Dickerson

Mr. Dickerson is the supervisor of Data and Research for Suffolk Public Schools. Mr. Dickerson gave a presentation on SOL results for 2016-2017, and 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 He discussed the performance on the VAAP (Virginia Alternative Assessment Program). The Blue line in the charts represented all students in Suffolk. The Green represented students in Suffolk with Special needs. The scores remained constant in the Reading SOL. In Writing, students with Special Needs dropped 5% from the previous year. History continues to decline. Ms. Schiefer wanted to know why History had dropped significantly. Questioned if the reason was due to more focus on Reading and Math. Mr. Dickerson said History has been pushed back and was less of an emphasis. In Mathematics, children with disabilities increased in Math. Ms. Dunn wanted to know if it was because less High School children were taking the Sol and were not required for math. In Science, children with disabilities have remained stable between 47-48%.

VAAP: Reading was unchanged, Writing, Math, and Science. There was a decline. History was the only area that improved. For the areas that decreased there were fewer VAAPs that were accessed. Ms. Schiefer confirmed that VAAP stood for Virginia Alternate Assessment Program. It's a different curriculum. They are adapted SOL. The level that it is presented to the students is different. Children who partake in VAAP do not get a standard diploma.

On time graduation rate there was a 3% increase of completion. For children with special needs there was a 68-89% jump for children with special needs. Most schools have graduation coaches who have had a huge impact. Mr. Dickerson went over diplomas award. The most common diploma is the

standard diploma. There has been a constant increase. The second most common diploma is the Applied Studies. Modified studies diploma is no longer being offered.

Drop-out rates in the overall division has continued to decrease. Mr. Dickerson said a drop-out could be a student who leaves school or a child who transfers to a different school. Graduation coaches have come up with ideas to keep kids in school. Mrs. Whitley said that graduation coaches have implemented a student closet to help students who may not have clothes be able to get clothes to continue to go to school. Ms. Dunn recommend that a washer and dryer be place in the Independent Living class so that children might be able to help other children with clothes. Mr. Dickerson said the graduation coaches have been around for 3 years and it is a program they plan to keep.

Mr. Godinez wanted to know about the writing SOL and questioned the Writing SOL. If 117 students took the test if 30% passed, then 70% failed.

Mr. Dickerson said he wasn't aware how many students took the test, but Mr. Godinez was correct that only 30% of students passed the test.

V. Old Business

A. Approval of November minutes - Approved with 2 corrections SKIP school counseling changed to SCIP and resources changed from recourse.

VI. Special Education Reports

A. Special Education Director's Report

Ms. Whitley has been sending information to Ms. Schiefer. The Understand Special Education seminar is Scheduled for January 30th at 5-7pm. Information has been passed out. The Robots for Autism Grant has been forwarded up the chain. Suffolk was approved for \$19,700 out of the \$20,000 requested. Robots to help with Social Skills, coding, and give students opportunities to help and be social. This is for children in all grades within the Self-Contained class. Ms. Evett expressed a desire to have the Robotics department make a presentation at the March SEAC meeting. SPS was awarded with the VCU Ace Grant. Ms. Whitley thanked Ms. Evett for the letter that she provided on behalf of SEAC. It provides 3 years of technical assistance. They will help the division with goals. It will provide 40-50 hours of support to students in Suffolk in the division.

Ms. Richardson asked if there were any plans as of now to replace the vacant position in the Special Education Teacher at Elephant's Fork Elementary. Ms. Whitley said that there are 8 or 9 vacancies. 3 or 4 teachers have left since winter break. Currently they have long term substitutes in place. The Special Education department is actively looking to replace these teachers.

B. Parent Resource Center Report

Ms. Whitley gave the report. As of January 14, the PRC has received 7 visits and 16 incoming calls. The calls ranged from inquiries regarding the ASL classes, resources and materials for families with students new to SPS Special Education Program and partnering with an organization for tutoring.

On January 30th, the PRC will host a training/ workshop with a presentation by PEATC at Booker T. Washington Elementary School from 5pm -7pm. The title of the session is Understanding Special Education.

On February 20th PRC will host an information session titled "Roundtable Talk". Flyers with detailed information will go out 1/31/2020.

Sign Languages Classes (ASL) are being held. Classes are held the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 5:15 pm-6:15 at Northern Shores Elementary.

Training and information is offered to parents and guardians at the PRC Center. Dates and times will be published and posted on Peach Jar as well as SPS website.

C. Finalize 2019/2020 SEAC Goals

1. Address membership policy change with the school board.
2. Address budget requirements with City Council to support the school board appeal for additional funding for transition.
3. Develop a Buddy Program for Special Needs students.
4. Develop Recycling IEP Goals
5. Determine Methods to improve communication between parents and students.
6. Develop recommendations to improve readings skills for students receiving Special Needs services.
7. Develop transition procedures for Students Receiving Special Education services moving from Elementary to Middle.
8. Increase outreach of SEAC Facebook to other sites like Parents for Better Schools
9. Promote formal policy division wide on communication of IEP/504 to exploratory staff
10. Promote aides on every school bus.

VI. New Business

Ms. Dunn asked a question regarding career and technical classes. If students have an IEP, do they have to let the testing company know before the test can be administered? Can students be informed in advance when students are needing information? Ms. Whitley recommends talking to the principal of the school before to rule out any information.

VIII. Public Comment Review – None.

IX. Open Discussion – Ms. Bickerton wanted to know if they are putting an aide on every bus. Mr. Mitnick said they are putting aids on buses where there are behavior issues. Schools are determining if there is a problem on the bus. They are using teachers and teacher aides as bus aides in some instances. They are also using teachers, who have commercial licenses, to drive buses to help with the bus driver shortage. Transportation is using available funds to remedy the transportation issues they are having.

X. Adjournment - The next meeting will be March 18.