

Minutes of Meeting of Suffolk Special Education Advisory Committee – January 20, 2021

Attendees:

Voting: Saul Godinez, Katie Morse, Kirstyn O'Neill, Amber Feliciano, Amanda Plotner, Callie Koelling, Carolyn B. Johnson, Shawynee Love

Consultant: Holly Boyce, Jessica Joyner, Kelly MacPherson, Julie Masters, Jamillah Silver, Stephanie Whitley

Guest: Carly Bosco, Shawn Dickerson, Ann Dunn, Vivian Evett, Leslie Schiefer, Lugonda Vann

Absent: Angela Bickerton, Pamela Charles, Anitra Simmons, Danielle Scarborough, Melissa Gomes, Olivia Adamson-Delk, Stephanie Garrett

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Godinez welcomed everyone. Pertinent guests and consultants for this evening were introduced. Quorum was ensured.

II. Special Education Reports

The SOL data and graduation data for the 2019 - 2020 school year were presented by Shawn Dickerson.

A. SOL Data

There is no SOL data from the 2019 - 2020 school year to present. There will be SOLs this year, but they will serve as a baseline. School accreditation is therefore waived for this year and next year.

B. Graduation Data

The on-time graduation rate of students with disabilities dropped by 1% last school year, but the on-time graduation rate of all students was down last year overall. These on-time graduation rates are still better than they were for the division in 2017-2018.

Last year, there were 113 students with disabilities who received a diploma or completed their education program. This is consistent with the year before, in which there were 117 students. The standard diploma has historically been the most popular diploma among students with disabilities, and 60% of students with disabilities received this diploma last year.

The dropout rate for all students increased from 4 to 6% and the dropout rate for students with disabilities increased from 11% to 17% between last spring and

this fall. That equates to 24 students with disabilities who did not return to school this fall. It is important to note that these students may have moved or enrolled in private school or a homeschool setting and the school didn't receive the usual documentation or requests regarding these changes. It doesn't mean that these students dropped out of school entirely.

C. Special Education Powerpoint Presentation

Stephanie Whitley shared an organizational chart of the special education department, defined some important terms, and explained some changes that have been implemented this year in terms of special education support.

The special education department is recruiting for the position at the Parent Resource Center and hopes to have it filled soon.

III. Public Comment

No public comment was made to the SEAC committee this evening.

IV. Announcements/Correspondence

- A. Keep an eye on the SEAC Facebook page for details about the inclusive playground going in at Bennett's Creek Park.
- B. Last month, the Tidewater Autism Society had a presentation from DARS on employment. This should be available on YouTube shortly. Their website is www.tidewaterasa.org.
- C. The Pacer Center (www.pacer.org) has various resources available at their website.
- D. The I'm Determined summit will be online this year. Participants must pre-register and apply for it like in past years. It will be held June 14-17 and is for ages 13-21. The application process will start in March.
- E. The UVA STAR mailing list is a good resource for webinars and other resources on autism.
- F. The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities Partners in Policymaking course is a great course for learning a lot about special education. It is an 8 month course. Applications are due in March and classes will start in September.

V. Old Business

- A. Approval of November Minutes (action required)

The November meeting minutes were approved as presented.

B. VDOE SEAC Training

The VDOE SEAC training will be on February 1st at 6:00 pm. It will be recorded for anyone who can't make it at that time.

VI. New Business

A. First review of the Restraint and Seclusion Policy

The committee reviewed the changes to the Restraint and Seclusion Policy. The changes are being made to comply with changes in state law, and are mostly language changes. There are, however, some instances where Suffolk Public Schools' prior policy performed better than the minimums required by state law (for example, in the reporting timeframes required when such an incident occurs), and the SEAC committee would like to see the new policy reflect those expectations from the old policy.

The SEAC committee will convene a meeting of the Policies and Budget Subcommittee to assemble a list of suggested changes to this policy. Any other interested members may attend the meeting.

VII. Public Comment Review

No public comment was made to the SEAC committee this evening.

VIII. Open Discussion

- A. The SEAC committee would like to see cameras in the program classroom and areas used for seclusion to protect the kids, particularly those who are nonverbal.
- B. The March meeting is typically when the SEAC committee would nominate members for next year. The SEAC committee needs clear guidance from the School Board on how exactly members will be selected for next year.
- C. The SEAC committee would like to look into the possibility of meeting in person in March. A virtual feed would still be available for anyone who doesn't wish to meet in person.

IX. Adjournment

The next SEAC meeting will be held at 6:30 on Wednesday, March 17th, 2021.