

# Minutes of Meeting of Suffolk Special Education Advisory Committee – September 16, 2020

## **Attendees:**

Voting: Pamela Charles, Saul Godinez, Katie Morse, Kirstyn O’Neill, Anitra Simmons

Consultant: Sarah Bailey, Holly Boyce, Kelly MacPherson, David Mitnick, Jamillah Silver, Stephanie Whitley

Guest: Leslie Schiefer, Valerie West, Amanda Plotner, Ann Dunn, Callie Koelling, Danielle Scarborough, David Lawson, Jennifer McCullough, Jessica Joyner, Marisol Moore, Justin Larivee, Melissa Gomes, Tammy Carrington, “Christine”/“Top Dog” (no last name given), Tyron Riddick

Absent: Angela Bickerton

## **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Mrs. Charles welcomed everyone. Attendance was taken.

## **II. Announcements and Correspondence**

A. The Endependence Center is now open to the public. Access to the office is by scheduled appointment only. Some activities and resources require you to be a registered participant. ([www.endependence.org](http://www.endependence.org))

B. Tidewater Autism Society - The Superheroes vs. Villains 5k run is November 14th at Chesapeake City Park. See [chapter.tidewaterasa.org](http://chapter.tidewaterasa.org) for more details.

## **III. Public Comment**

Sarah Bailey - The Endependence Center is concerned about the health concerns of students with special education needs and does not think that having these students in school four days a week is the way to go. She would like to see virtual learning made more equitable for these students, as virtual learning is not currently providing FAPE.

## **IV. Special Education Department - S. Whitley (Powerpoint Presentation)**

Ms. Whitley was unable to give the powerpoint presentation this evening due to technical difficulties. She introduced her new team members and stated their capacities.

## **V. Old Business**

A. Approval of July minutes - The July minutes were approved as written.

B. Approval of August minutes - The August minutes were approved as written.

C. Approval of revised current goals - The current goals were approved as written.

D. Committee Transparency

Information has been received that SEAC members who have been appointed by school board members are expected to report back to their respective school board member. This is not believed to be correct by the school board liaison, and it is also in conflict with the SEAC by-laws, which allow only the chair to speak on behalf of SEAC unless the chair delegates that function for a specific event.

## VI. **New Business**

A. New voting members - Tammy Carrington, Amanda Plotner, Danielle Gucwa, and Jennifer McCullough

B. 2020 - 2021 Subcommittees

1. Disability Awareness Subcommittee - Saul Godinez (chair), Amanda Plotner, Danielle Gucwa, Tammy Carrington, Holly Boyce, Jessica Joyner
2. Policies and Budget Subcommittee - Saul Godinez and Kirstyn O'Neill (co-chairs), Stephanie Whitley, Melissa Gomes
3. Services Subcommittee - Katie Morse (chair), Holly Boyce, Pamela Charles, Kelly MacPherson, Tammy Carrington, Jessica Joyner, Valerie West
4. Communication Subcommittee - Kirstyn O'Neill (chair), Leslie Schiefer, Danielle Gucwa, Stephanie Whitley, David Lawson
5. Transition Subcommittee - Anitra Simmons (chair), David Mitnick, Pamela Charles, Kelly MacPherson, Ann Dunn
6. Transportation Subcommittee - It was determined that there is no real need for a transportation subcommittee as the present.

## VII. **Public Comment Review**

The SEAC appreciates Sarah Bailey's comments and feels that she makes many valid points. Making virtual school more equitable is an important goal, as is ensuring that the school system is compliant with FAPE when kids are attending virtually. Perhaps the best way to address this is through making suggestions to the special education department, rather than through the school board. The SEAC declines to bring this comment before the school board at this time, as it doesn't feel that it is an actionable item at this time.

## VIII. **Open Discussion**

Open discussion for this evening revolved primarily around the lack of services having started for children who should be receiving them virtually, as well as confusion on the part of many kids with disabilities in navigating the several electronic systems that are needed in order to succeed in school.

Additionally, while not every SEAC committee member feels ready to send his or her children back to school in person at present, the committee feels that the special education students currently attending school in person two days a week would benefit greatly from having the option to attend school four days a week so that they can benefit from a more consistent schedule and more consistent access to their classrooms and peers. The SEAC committee intends to submit a letter to this effect to the school board prior to its next meeting on October 8th.

IX. **Adjournment** - The next meeting will be November 18, 2020.