



**Fauquier County Public Schools
Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)**

**May 4, 2023
FCPS Central Office Complex, Bldg. A**

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm, with a round of introductions. Members in attendance were Megan Burnham, Amy Hunter, Marilyn McCombe, Ryan Perry, and Mandi Wooten. Amanda Hazlehurst and Heidi Van Voorhis were absent.

The March meeting minutes were approved unanimously on a motion by Ms. McCombe and seconded by Ms. Burnham.

There was no public comment.

During Chairman's Time, Mrs. Hunter thanked the SEAC members, Mr. Corpening, and the FCPS staff for their contributions this year. She also thanked Ms. Burnham and Mr. Perry for attending the FCPS Disability and Transitions Fair on behalf of the SEAC. Applications for next year's SEAC are due now. There are several open positions, and anyone interested in joining the SEAC should email seac@fcps1.org for more information. Membership applications will be submitted to the School Board along with the SEAC Annual Report. Mrs. Hunter will be reaching out over the summer for assistance in compiling information resources for October Disability Awareness Month.

Mr. Corpening shared that Dr. Haley Schlecta will be the new Parent Resource Center coordinator, in addition to her other responsibilities. Mr. Corpening also gave a rundown of the personnel cuts due to the budget situation, including 69 instructional positions (teachers and IAs). He assured the SEAC that all special education teacher caseloads are currently within the state-mandated limits.

In Old Business, the Committee reviewed the 2023-24 meeting schedule. These meetings will be livestreamed on the FCPS1.org website. Members are asked to arrive by 5:50 if possible, so that the livestreamed meetings can begin on-time. Meetings will be held September 7, October 5, November 2, January 4, February 1,

March 14 (2nd Thursday), and May 2. Meetings will not be held in December or April.

Ms. Hazlehurst is working with Ms. Yonkey, the Family Engagement Coordinator, on preparations for the 2023 October Disability Awareness Month. Preparations will continue over the summer.

The Committee discussed the draft Annual Report to the School Board. Ms. Burnham moved that the SEAC adopt the report with the amendment below as Recommendation #1 and that the other recommendations be renumbered accordingly. Ms. McCombe seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously by the members present. Following is the text of the adopted amendment:

1. "Special Education Staffing":

In light of the recent cuts in the FCPS budget, the SEAC urges the School Board to remain cognizant of its unique legal and ethical obligation to students with disabilities. It is vital that FCPS always employ a sufficient number of special education teachers to remain at or below Virginia's mandated caseload limits. This is especially important for special education case managers working in the general education setting, where caseloads are not as obvious as they are in self-contained special education classrooms.

With the elimination of many instructional and support positions throughout the county, the SEAC urges the School Board to recognize the vital importance of funding special education instructional assistant (IA) positions in our county. As class sizes grow and schools continue to replace departing veterans with less experienced and often provisionally licensed general education teachers, IA's help ensure that students with disabilities receive the instruction, accommodations, and support that they require. Without this necessary support, students will be set up to fail academically, as well as in their interactions with their teachers and peers. Although IAs are only required to have a high school diploma, many of them have years of experience supporting students and are integral members of their school communities.

Recommendation 1.1: Closely monitor special education teacher caseloads to ensure compliance with Virginia's mandated caseload limits. Ensure that any open special education teaching positions are filled as quickly as possible, and consider options to ensure that outcome, including

establishment of a separate pay scale and/or employing other incentives to recruit and retain special education teachers.

Recommendation 1.2: Recognize the important role that instructional assistants play in our schools and prioritize those positions for future hiring.

Under New Business, members discussed the possibility of adding a rewards program next year to recognize individuals in FCPS who are leaders in the inclusion of students with disabilities. Ms. Burnham shared her experience with Loudon County's awards program. The SEAC agreed to discuss the proposal further next Fall.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50.

Prepared by:
Marilyn McCombe
Vice Chair (Acting Secretary)