

Ascension Special Education Advisory Council

April 24, 2024 - Meeting Minutes

Approved at June 26, 2024 SEAC Meeting

4-24-2024, 12:00pm

In-Person

LeBlanc Special Services Center

Call to Order

(12:02 pm) by Director Lynn Hathaway, chair

Roll Call - (12:03 pm)

Quorum Met:

1. Savannah Veron - Absent
2. Darla Capello - Absent
3. Nathalia Dickson - Present
4. Adrienne Kelly - Present
5. Raven LaBiche- Present
6. Jodi Landry - Absent
7. Kheri Monks - Present
8. Jaqueline Paige - Present
9. Ilesha Sims - Absent
10. Lakeshia Taylor - Present

Chair (Hathaway) Read over the meeting agenda and reviewed the open meeting and public comment procedures. Hathaway discussed SEAC Purpose and Process, what it stands for and what its purpose and responsibility is. LH reviewed the process of meetings, timeline, changes over time (growth in number of members and meetings) and annual report.

Old Business

1.a Approval of minutes from February 21, 2024 SEAC meeting - (Action Require)

Motion to approve minutes - Nathalia Dickson

Second - Lakeisha Taylor

Approved

1.b. Special Education Resource Fair - Feedback Needed (No Action Required)

LHathaway displays the list of agencies who participated in the job fair and thanks the agencies for their support.

Audience Member, Peggy - Will it be in a larger space? It was nice.

LH - We will look for a larger space. We'll look into Lamar Dixon.

LH - We need your feedback, if you can scan this QR code, it will give you a link to a survey to provide feedback. (She showed a QR code for parents to give feedback).

LH - I want to open this discussion to the SEAC members.

R LaBiche - The event was well planned and attended. Large array of resources. It is rare that I've seen that many resources and I have been to a lot of events.

N. Dickson - It was incredible. Asked several parents, and got a lot of amazing feedback. The map and name of agencies was well put together and very helpful (She held up a map of agencies). So many people and children came. The headphones and fidgets were thoughtful and helpful.

LH - Thanks the parent facilitators for their help and support.

LH - Asked about parking, (we will need more accessible space).

Audience Member - It was ok. Some barriers due to the location of the parking and construction.

AK - I was excited as a parent. It was great to help and also to be a parent at the event.

New Business

District Agenda Items:

2a. SEAC report for LDOE (2023-2024) - (Action Required)

LH - Are there any further questions about this annual report?

LH - I will need a motion to approve the Annual Report

Motion to approve - Nathalia Dickson

Second - Adrienne Kelly

Approved

Audience Member, Ellen - Will the report be made public?

LH - Yes, it will be on the website.

(N. Dickson gave copy to Ellen)

2b. SEAC Members for 2024-2025 - (Action Required)

Previously Discussed SEAC Membership (possible revisions)

LH - Goes over the previously discussed SEAC Membership (possible revisions), possibility of Maintaining 50% of the current team, 2 year term for SEAC members, and Member representation, SEAC Applications.

LH - Applications are coming out soon. Will send a poll to the team to determine interest.

Member representation considerations: Want to have Donaldsonville represented, different genders, races, grandparents possibly. Would like to give preference to those who attend meetings regularly.

LH - are there any additional factors?

AK - Can you add something to the effect of if you don't attend meetings regularly, we will move to the next person on the list?

Audience Member, Ellen - Can we ask for commitment?

LH - I like that idea of a commitment statement.

Audience member - Some people are more active than others.

Audience member - How are they chosen?

LH - We try to include feeder schools, recommended by the superintendent. It is kind of random

Peggy - Interview?

LH - That could happen.

LH - The application will be done through a google form. We will also have a paper option. It automatically puts it into a spreadsheet.

LH - Any other factors?

Audience Member - Maybe label it by feeder school.

LH - This will be a recommendation by this team if approved.

LH Review SEAC Membership (Possible Revisions)

- Increasing to a 2 year term. Anyone opposed?
 - No opposes
- 50% rotation of members to overlap from year to year to maintain consistency, any opposition?

ND - How will we determine who will be the 50%?

LH - One factor will be participation in meetings, and an interest in continuing, but ultimately up to the superintendent.

Nicole Grimes - Are there term limits for the 50%?

LH - Previously, the superintendent wanted a new council, I will guess term limit to 2.

AK - Don't limit to 50%, don't keep 5 if 5 aren't up to par. Don't want to force them to stay

RL - is 50% negotiable? Is that mandatory or discretionary?

AK - You will be required to keep 50% and it could be people you don't want or they don't want.

ND - Mandatory 50% rotation, but up to 50% discretionary

LH - Need to keep in mind factors (exceptionalities, feeders, genders, etc)

Audience Member - Are you committed to 10 members?

LH - I have concerns about going over 10 due to quorum. Already over state requirements.

That's just my personal concerns. This is your discussion, but I can take it to the superintendent.

RL - If it expands, you give more people opportunities. I get the concerns, but you get more variety of people if you open up

AK - May be easier to meet quorum if you work on the application process.

ND - I don't know because we also filled out applications.

AK - If the people are not coming we have the rotations.

Monks - Can we be more agile with it?

LH - Your recommendation, not mine. What if we go up to 12? That would be 6 for Quorum.

ND - Have we thought of one from each feeder?

LH - That would be 15. Not sure we'd have someone from each. Remember we have to have 50% as well as representation requirements (teacher, community stakeholder, etc). We have 5 feeders, 2 from each feeder, plus teacher, not quite there) We can review year to year.

ND - Can we see how applications go and base numbers off of that?

LH - I think we need this number before submitting applications. We don't want too many members because we may have issues getting things done. Recommendations need to be set before applications. Do we need to try 12?

Jaqueline Paige - It's All about the quality of those who participate. If you have every two years you will only need 6.

LH - I do think the interview idea is certain to make selections.

ND - I suggest cutting people if they don't attend meetings.

KM - Interviews, If we have 50 applicants, are you going to interview everyone?

LH - If we set categories, interview preferences toward meeting attendees; at least 10, perhaps more depending on the interview process.

LH - No opposition?

LH - We need to decide on missing 2 or 3 meetings in a row.

LT - alternate?

LH - If you miss 2 in a row.

KM - After 2 meetings, can we check with them?

LH - There are only 6 meetings.

KM - make it flexible.

ND - or maybe justifiable if missed.

LH - Miss 2 meetings and that's it. Unless an emergency or justifiable.

AK - It's a 2 year process for some.

LH - I will take recommendations to the Superintendent to get approval. Applications will be sent to all SPED parents via school messenger and posted on the website. Deadline is 5/17. Will come out this week or next.

KM - People who may not be able to apply online. Can we also mail?

LH - We can send home through teachers on paper form. A grandparent who is legal guardian can also apply.

Audience Member - I would add to the paper form that there is a google form.

ND - Can put QR code.

LH - Love that

3. Parent Agenda Items:

3.a. Paraprofessional Pay

LH: Para- pay. Last August, the committee made a recommendation to the superintendent about pay, staffing issues. She is working hard to increase para pay, stipend. At this time, it hasn't been official yet. Also presented a proposal for all paras to complete Behavior Challenge class for additional stipend. Will broadcast to all paras - this is another pay increase for paras. The superintendent is also looking at an increase in pay for Sped teachers. You can look for a final answer on that to be approved in the June session. Do we want to make a formal recommendation to the superintendent that the SEAC Team is in approval of an increase in pay?

SEAC Team agrees

Audience Member - Was para in Texas and here. I always wish there was a performance based salary.

LH - This coming year they will be looking at duties, and we're looking to add stipends for added duties (medical procedures, behavior etc) piloting behavior certification first.

N. Dickson - Performance based is a good idea. Responsibility will ultimately fall on the hiring/firing process.

Audience Member- That's what happens in companies.

KM - Getting feedback from teachers in the class, surveys?

LH - Every para gets evaluated by the principal

Audience member - Teachers should give the main feedback.
ND - More people will apply. Great incentive to get better people.
LH - Hopefully our board will push forward in June. Do we have a motion?
Motion for SEAC Recommendations to Superintendent for Increase in Para Pay
Motion to Approve - Kheri Monks
Second - Lakeshia Taylor
Approved

3.b. Complaint Process

LH gave an overview of Leblanc Special Services and explained that approximately 100 people are housed in the building, but are out in schools. LSSC is their home base. She showed a slide of Levels of Support. Described role of Director, Supervisors, Coordinators, Facilitators, then school level support. Where to start when you have a question/complaint/concern? Ask yourself, Is my concern school-related or SPED? LH then reviewed times to contact SPED vs school. If SPED, ideally contact sped teacher, then either school administrator or Lead teacher, LeBlanc support staff, or Director. She explained that there are 3,000 special education students which is why there are so many levels of support. The numbers are growing, at 2 ½ times the rate of general ed.

There are formal and informal complaints. The Yellow Rights booklet has this information and it is also in the Parent Toolkits. Formal complaints can go all the way through due process. The State Department has a Dispute Resolution. The State Department provides state facilitated IEP meetings. These can last days. Parents have rights to these processes. LH then showed the state website and how to navigate.

LH - I want to make sure that you all know that it goes beyond that booklet.
Audience Member - Is there anything written about how timely the parish gets back to parents
Audience Member - When we have a complaint and reach out to the Director, how many days/hours should I expect before I hear back?

(At this point, there were technical issues with virtual audience and LH reviewed info again)

Audience member - Can you reach out to the state if it's not related to an IEP?
LH - That would be the superintendent.
Audience member - In a situation, what is the quickest way to file a complaint?
LH - In the student handbook, there is a parent pursuit.
Audience member, Ellen - Okay, thank you.
LH - Summer 2024 - Special Education Proposed Legislation. This summer there are many bills that will expand the LDOE Dispute Resolution Process in a parent - forward way. There is a bill in the legislature now that provides assistance with complaint processes and longer due process time. There is also a Special Education Ombudsperson.
Audience member - How do you track complaints?
LH - Through emails.
Audience member - There is no database, no sorting.?

LH - No.

Audience member - Things can fall through the cracks.

LH - We try not to.

3.c. Transition for 2024-2025

LH - The next thing on our agenda is the Transition Item. LH Introduced Monique Moore, SWSD Coordinator

M. Moore discuss school to school transition guidelines

MM - We want to assure you that we are making efforts to be consistent across the district and one thing we suggest is starting conversations early to discuss your concerns . In

January-February, we begin contact with parents. We now create social narratives, we were able to show parents at the Resource Fair. (She passed out samples)

We have Teacher-to-Teacher collaborations. Example: Bullion Primary to Bluff Middle, teachers, related services, and teachers from both campuses meet virtually to discuss and share information about each student. The team makes a solid transition plan together. The students are also allowed the opportunity to tour the new schools and meet their new teachers. As a district we have been transitioning students, but we want to make a greater effort to make sure our parents are knowledgeable of transition services as well. Forms, meetings with teachers, collaborations, lots of work happening behind the scenes, bringing to forefront.

Gros - I appreciate that. Any parents feedback?

LT- Daughter transitioned from Primary to Middle. It was awesome to visit the school and meet the teachers, got many questions answered.

LH - A google survey where parents can share and discuss their concerns with the teachers will be shared soon.

Audience member - My daughter has a field trip to the school.

LT - we went twice.

Audience member - I don't know if it has been scheduled.

MM - looking at dates now. Planning currently

Audience member - Will they have their own prep day?

MM -Yes there will be a prep day. Can't confirm SWSD specific prep day, some schools have both.

C. Grace - Most schools do two separate days. One altogether, one with parents.

LH - If students will be transitioning please look for that survey next week in May. Those teachers appreciate that information and it is really insightful.

Upcoming Events:

Don Robert Trail Ride - Friday April 26, 2024

APS Election - Renew Tax to Vote On

Last Days for Students - May 23, 2024

APS Graduations

2024-2025 SEAC Applications Coming Soon

SEAC Meeting June 26, 2024 @ 6pm - Last official meeting of this term

Motion to Adjourn Meeting

Motion to adjourn - Kheri Monks
Second - Jaqueline Paige
Approved