

Harrisburg School District

Act 141 Advisory Committee Meeting

December 12, 2024
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Autumn Anderson, Dr. Sieta Achampong, Melanie Cook, Dr. Marisol Craig, Laura Harding, Dr. Ben Henry, Beth Light, Dr. Marcia Stokes, Dr. Lori Suski, Doug Thompson Leader

Staff Members: Dr. Ben Henry, Krystal Palmer

- Dr. Suski opened the meeting at 5:02 p.m. She announced that Mrs. Hollins had a prior commitment so Dr. Suski would chair the meeting.
- A moment of silence was observed in memory of dedicated School Board member/Act 141 Advisory Committee member Jim Thompson who passed away on November 19, 2024.
- Dr. Suski introduced Mrs. Autumn Anderson as the School Board member appointed to replace Mr. Thompson on the Act 141 Advisory Committee. The group welcomed Mrs. Anderson.
- Dr. Suski introduced Director of Special Education, Mrs. Krystal Palmer, who provided an update on the following initiative of the Amended Recovery Plan: AP13: Review special education costs and placements (see PDF of the power point presentation). The following is a summary of the discussion that ensued:
 - Ms. Cook asked if there is a process to refer students to the Cougar Paws program. Dr. Craig explained the process and checklist that exists.
 - Ms. Harding asked if paraprofessionals are used in special education classrooms. Ms. Cook commented that paraprofessionals are not given the respect or appropriate compensation they deserve so it is hard to keep them long enough to develop relationships with students.

- Mrs. Palmer indicated that there are 99 students coming into the District from early intervention in 2025-26 and 75 of them will require autistic support services. Dr. Henry said that the District will need to invest in a center by collaborating with CAIU. Dr. Henry also shared that it will be important to align priorities around certain “buckets” because resources (human capital and space) are limited. Mrs. Palmer shared that the cost of one (1) Autistic Support classroom is \$472,658. There are currently 27 classrooms in the District.
- Dr. Stokes responded to a question from the committee about state and federal funding to support these additional rooms that the District did not receive additional funds for this purpose. Ms. Harding said that she would like to lobby. Dr. Achampong said that it is important to communicate “the why” to the community when we can’t do certain things because of these costs. Ms. Light recommended pushing the agenda with ARC.
- Before adjourning the meeting, Dr. Suski announced that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. and that a mid-year review of evidence collected toward accomplishing the initiatives of the Amended Recovery Plan would be provided. She wished everyone a happy holiday season and thanked them for their commitment to attending monthly committee meetings.
- The meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m.