

Special Education Advisory Committee

October 19, 2021

6:00 pm at School Board Office

Meeting Minutes

6:07 pm Ashley opened the in-person meeting, held at the YCSD School Board Office

SEAC Members in attendance: Ashley Smith, Janelle Brown, Rebecca Breedlove Berry, Melissa Sadler

Others in Attendance: Sekou Billings, Dr. Elaine Gould, Laurel Garrelts

Chair Ashley Smith briefly explained what SEAC is and how we advise the school board: year end summary report, give recommendations on systemic issues we've heard from public comments and from parents we encounter in the YCSD special education program.

Ashley introduced the SEAC members in attendance. Noted that the SEAC Secretary could not attend, Melissa Sadler took notes in her place.

Ashley introduced Dr. Gould, Director of Student Services for YCSD. Dr. Gould noted that she was in her 6th year as Director of Student Services. The department is currently 45 people strong, including 6 coordinators, a behavior support specialist (actively trying to hire a 2nd one), pre-K, 13 SLPs, 1 ½ PTs, ? OTs, and 10 school psychologists (one as Lead). The department also has vision and hearing specialists. They are actively offering trainings to do what's right by the children, all teams are trained on how to handle the changing demands during virtual and hybrid learning.

Laurel Garrelts was introduced. She's one of our School Board Representatives. Her children and stepchildren went through YCSD. She's here to support us and is happy to have us contact her if we need to reach out.

6:24 pm Public Comment Opened.

Janelle Brown spoke about the challenges regarding students with a BIP (Behavioral Intervention Plan). She's concerned about the lack of communication, PE being taken away as a disciplinary consequence, and staff commitment to following a BIP with fidelity.

6:28 pm Public Comment Closed.

Melissa Sadler noted that there weren't as many attendees for the in person meeting as there had been for Zoom meetings. She asked if it was possible to hold hybrid meetings. Dr. Gould and Laurel Garrelts explained that it wasn't possible. There is a policy in place, which was confirmed by the deputy county attorney, that the meetings need to take place in-person and cannot be hybrid for the safety and confidentiality of the students.

One option brought up to offer other forums for discussion and support for those who can't make in-person meetings was to hold coffee chats – they could be in-person, Zoom, or hybrid, but no SEAC business could be discussed.

Janelle Brown asked about a survey – could we send one out to find out what prevents parents from attending the in-person meetings.

Ashley Smith suggested that Dr. Gould could send a survey in the newsletter.

A discussion was held re: a teacher representative. It was unclear if Dr. Gould was looking for the teacher rep or if SEAC should. Dr. Gould said that SEAC could find the teacher rep.

Ashley introduced the minutes from the last meeting. Melissa Sadler moved to approve the minutes. Janelle Brown seconded the motion. No objections.

Inclusion initiatives were discussed. Inclusion shouldn't just be the classroom but should also work on friendships. The state doesn't have an inclusion policy for education inclusion. Ashley Smith noted that the middle school has some inclusion policies in place. Dr. Gould said that schools do engage in inclusion programs. A question was asked about whether there were any active key performance indicators, or was it not measured. Dr. Gould said it was not measured but encouraged. Special Olympics is offered at the high school level. They were hoping to try a Little Feet Meet for younger students but that was put off due to the pandemic.

A question was raised about para-educator training – are teachers and paras specially trained for working with students with Autism? Dr. Gould said they are and that every newly hired paraeducator receives Autism Training. It was suggested that there could be an opportunity made for students with Autism to play with typical students, or a way to build more social engagement and understanding between neuro-typical and neuro-diverse students.

Parent Sekou Billings asked if we'd heard back from the School Board on the annual report that SEAC submitted at the end of last school year. Dr. Gould had not yet submitted that to the School Board and would get back to us on the annual report process.

Ashley Smith asked attendees who weren't on SEAC to consider applying to become committee members. She also mentioned that email input is welcome as we begin to put together the next annual report.

The next SEAC meeting will take place on December 7 in the School Board office.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 pm.