



Special Education Advisory Committee

Draft Policy 5320: Procedures for Location of Self-Contained Special Education Classes

Recommendations Summary

October 6, 2021

Prepared For:
SEAC Membership
Special Education Community
Loudoun County School Board

Overview: Policy 5-58, Procedures for Location of Self-Contained Special Education Classes

This policy was created to address community concerns about the lack of transparency and collaboration in the process of making changes to the location of self-contained programs.

Summary of Concerns

Concern 1: LCPS is not following existing Policy 5-58. Parents receive letters during the summer informing them that administration moved their child to a different school. Parents/guardians are not participants in the process.

Concern 2: Notifications are received at different times throughout the summer, often in mid-to-late August. This is not enough time to prepare for success.

Concern 3: Transitions have been a perennial area of concern. Students are transitioned between schools and school teams without appropriate transition steps. Students often lose about a year of progress because staff are missing previous knowledge and relationships and because informal / implementation successes aren't documented and carried over to the new school.

Concern 4: Staff and the School Board publicly claim their intent is to increase transparency and openness and build trust and collaboration. Staff propose changes to diminish transparency, remove parents' participation, and weaken protection of parents' rights.

Recommendations and Concerns

Recommendation 1: SEAC supports the current language requiring consideration of parent input.

- See community concerns 1 and 4. Staff following the existing policy requirements would also help with community concerns 2 and 3.
- Previous School Boards created this policy to bring transparency, openness, and collaboration to an issue that significantly impacts affected families and children.
- All of these ideals are what the staff and school board claim to be their intention.
- Staff propose to remove parent input and consideration from the policy.
- No good reason has been provided for why the staff propose that the School Board undo this progress.

Recommendation 2: Improve the parent notification and public input provisions:

2a. Add specific deadlines / timelines

2b. Require staff to publicly post a matrix of all public input and staff responses

- See community concerns 1 and 2.
- Adding specific deadlines and/or timelines gives everyone a common understanding of what to expect and when
- The deadlines should be set to provide everyone sufficient advance notice to prepare for success
- Publicly posting a matrix of input and responses is consistent with the School Board's current practice for general public input on policies and is a practice that was used by the staff well before that.
- Publicly posting this information shows everyone that parents were provided the opportunity for input and staff did consider and respond to that input and provides transparency regarding the staff's consideration and responses.

Recommendation 3: Add: An IEP meeting shall be provided, prior to any change in location and prior to the first day of school, for the purposes of transitioning the IEP case to the new school and considering whether any changes to the IEP are necessary, unless the parents waive the meeting in writing.

- See community concern 3.
- Whenever a student transition occurs, an IEP meeting needs to be held where the old and new staff can share knowledge and lessons learned in the student's case.
- Parents who request IEP meetings for transitions find that school staff are unavailable during the summer and in the days before the first day of school. If the policy does not mandate the transition IEP meeting, they will not happen.
- The transition meeting needs to happen before the change in location and before the first day of school. This is a severely impactful change. Planning for the student's needs should happen before the change is made.
- Different schools have different programs and resources and have different ways of implementing certain things. The IEP might not be implementable at the new location, or there might be different way to meet the student's needs that the team should consider.
- The student's needs might have changed, requiring a change in services. This might impact the resource planning of the proposed location change and might cause the student to be assigned to a different location than originally anticipated.

Recommendation 4: SEAC supports the current language requiring that LCPS not interfere with civil rights.

- See community concern 4.
- Staff propose to weaken the policy's statement protecting the civil rights of students and parents/guardians.
- No reason has been provided by the staff to propose that the School Board undo these civil rights protections.

SEAC Membership Vote

SEAC Membership Vote on Recommendations

Membership Quorum: 15 members, 13 members present

Vote Summary: Vote was unanimous