

**DECEMBER 14 2020**

**UNOFFICIAL NOTES:**

**12/14/20 MCPS SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE**

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# **12/14/20 MCPS SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

<b>SEAC Welcome Agenda Review</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Q&amp;A: Kevin Lowndes (KL) and Jack Smith (JS)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Q&amp;A with Philip Lynch</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Special Education Phase-in Schedule</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Reentry Plan for Discrete Programs</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Committees Regarding Return For Special Education</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Stable Cohorts of Classrooms</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Additional questions:</b>	<b>10</b>

# SEAC WELCOME AGENDA REVIEW

## SEAC Agenda

Time	Content	Facilitator
7:00–7:10 p.m. (10')	Welcome Agenda Review	Kevin E. Lowndes, Associate Superintendent, Office of Special Education Philip A. Lynch, Director, Department of Special Education Services
7:10–7:30 p.m. (20')	Introductions	Special Education Advisory Committee Co-chairs
7:30–8:00 p.m. (30')	Superintendent's Updates	Dr. Jack R. Smith Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools, Montgomery County Public Schools
8:00–8:30 p.m. (30')	Process of Special Education Phase-in Plan Q and A	All

### DR. SMITH:

- “We want desperately for students to be back in schools,” but not at risk of endangering others and overwhelming hospitals.
- He understands that the school is going to need to provide a lot of services when students start returning. They are working on those plans.
- This year’s budget process is concerning, and he asked for our help. He said that there are 3 threats. The first is that Kerwin provided a huge amount of money for special services and they don’t know what will happen to that bill in June 2021 when it expires. Funding could be at risk for students with special needs. The state aide to special education could be at risk as Hogan proposes a different formula. The formula is based on enrollment, which we have seen a decline of over 3,600. The third threat is the maintenance budget. He asked that we all advocate for a budget that does not include significant cuts, because we don’t want to see programs be cut that would impact our children. He said he’s sharing this everywhere he goes at every meeting.

- He said that it is important that services continue to be provided regardless of the circumstances. Referenced the crisis and emergency closure in the spring and how the numbers are currently not good. He said that they have an obligation to follow health professionals' advice at the state and local level. He said that we need to learn from this experience to avoid similar issues in future times of crises.

## **Q&A: KEVIN LOWNDES (KL) AND JACK SMITH (JS)**

- KL: To support the budget previously, people would attend county council meetings, how can people advocate for the budget now?
  - JS: Email, call, and bring up the budget to every local and state elected officials. Tell them that budget cuts are a real threat to our vulnerable students.
- KL: (From audience member) Larger systems have been able to open their schools during the pandemic. What can we learn from these states and schools that might help us to reopen schools successfully?
  - JS: Learning from history and adapting to challenges. Other states and school systems have had very challenging times reopening, with many resuming virtual learning. 50% of students in US are virtual, and the rest are split between hybrid and fully in person.
- KL: (From audience member) Are there talking points about the budget that we can use to advocate for the budget?
  - JS: They will try to send out notes on how to advocate for the budget.
- KL: (From audience member) With the metrics as high as they are right now, can you really send students back without a vaccine? Teachers are worried.
  - JS: Back in early Nov, the metrics were low and they they wanted to get students back in next semester. The metrics for the return plan were proposed when cases were lower and are in line with the CDC and the state government. The board decided that if we were within this set of metrics, we would try to reopen next semester. As cases started climbing, the board came back and asked if the metrics will be adjusted at the state and local level. He said that no one has yet to change their

recommendations. He said that other places have high daily cases and have schools open, but they have all sort of circumstances that we haven't dealt with. FL has had to enable families the option to return virtually. He said that while children are not at the same risk as adults, they still transmit the disease. They hope that once we get below 15 cases/100,000, that we can accelerate the reopening plan. They are awaiting predictions from epidemiologists and are also preparing for when schools can reopen, to have students return as soon as they are able to.

- KL: (From audience member) How many students will re-enroll after the pandemic is over?
  - JS: They expect between 2,000-3,000 students to reenroll into MCPS
- KL: (From audience member) Will teachers receive priority to have access to the vaccine?
  - JS: They will fall after healthcare workers/retirement groups.
- KL: (From audience member) Can there be any programs that allow any in-person school programs for special education kids to have social emotional learning.
  - JS: They are considering programs that would be appointment only for students to come in one at a time to ensure that safety needs can be met. This would not be a replacement to Special Education but to supplement.
- KL: (from audience member) Will protocol or trainings be changed for restraints and seclusion protocols to keep staff safe?
  - Kevin answered that they are considering that and training is forthcoming. Jack Smith added that they have spent millions of dollars on equipment.

## Q&A WITH PHILIP LYNCH

Kevin said that Philip would be able to better answer questions about programs.

- For students in the general education setting and speeding up the return for those students. So much of the focus has been on distinct programs. There is a rationale for prioritizing those students as they have the highest needs and barriers with virtual curriculum. They feel that if the phase-in plan rolls out

within a matter of weeks where students would phase in every 2 weeks. He said that some parents have expressed concern about their child having access to support during virtual learning. Parents should make arrangements with the case manager and the teacher to create an environment where the student can be supported in a smaller setting (breakout rooms, one on one with paraeducators, etc.). If you are hitting a roadblock, then contact the special education supervisor for your school.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION PHASE-IN SCHEDULE

### Phase-in Schedule: **Special Education**

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
K-12 Autism Program	Select Pre-K Programs	Asperger's Program
Extensions Program	Learning for Independence	Elementary Learning Centers
School Community-based	Bridge Program	Social Emotional Special Education Services
Special Schools		

Kevin: With metrics at the current levels, they are reevaluating the phase-in plan because if reopening is delayed, they may adjust to bring back MORE of the students across all phases in sooner rather than later. Instead of 3 phases for the special education return plan, the return may be condensed.

## REENTRY PLAN FOR DISCRETE PROGRAMS

# Reentry Plan for Special Education Discrete Programs

## 1. Teaching, Learning, and Related Services

- Guidance for special education staff returning to the school building (Classroom setup, Materials use, Delivery Model, etc...)
- Staff training (De-escalation, PPE, restraint and seclusion...)

## 2. Logistics

- Facilities
- Procurement of PPE and cleaning supplies
- Transportation

Kevin: They are also creating additional trainings to keep them safe and bring back students in a safe manner. They have also been working with transportation for students who are in special programs and figuring out routes based on which students expressed interest in returning in-person. Planning has been happening since early June.

## COMMITTEES REGARDING RETURN FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Philip Lynch has been leading the committees revolving around return for special education. He said that he wanted to reassure parents of students with special needs who are in the general population. When they discuss students returning to in-person settings, they take into consideration all students with special needs. There is representation across the board. Amy Cropp works closely with him.

# Members of the Reentry Committee

## Chairs:

Jodi A. Chesman—Behavior Intervention Specialist, Resolution and Compliance Unit

Kevin E. Lowndes—Associate Superintendent, OSE

William McGrath—Supervisor, Physical Disabilities Programs

Kristin M. Secan—Supervisor, Autism Spectrum Disorders Services (ASDS)

## Committee Members:

Stacy B. Bateman—Psychologist

Deborah N. Felsen—Elementary Program Specialist, ASDS

Christina Hicken—Social Worker, Extensions Program

Jane Juliano—Physical Therapist, Physical Disabilities Programs

Graham M. Lear—Principal, Rock Terrace School

# Members of the ALO Committee

**Chair:** Philip Lynch

## Team Members:

Jennifer M. Benn—Teacher, Special Education, Albert Einstein High School

Kara A. Bonfils—Teacher, Learning for Independence Program, William H. Farquhar Middle School

Cynthia J. Bratten—Occupational Therapist, Physical Disabilities Programs

Luella Y. Brown—Teacher, Special Education, Benjamin Banneker Middle School

Melissa A Brunson—Supervisor, DSES

Louella B.C. Capacillo—Teacher, School-community Based, Lakelands Park Middle School

Sabrina Carey—Teacher, ASDS, Earle B. Wood Middle School

Elizabeth J. Chung—Teacher, Special Education, Seneca Valley High School

Gisel J. Diaz—Teacher, ASDS, Roscoe R. Nix Elementary School

Domenick M. Fabii—Elementary Program Specialist, ASDS

Faith K. Fischel—Supervisor, Child Find/Early Childhood Disabilities Unit



# ALO Recovery Team Members

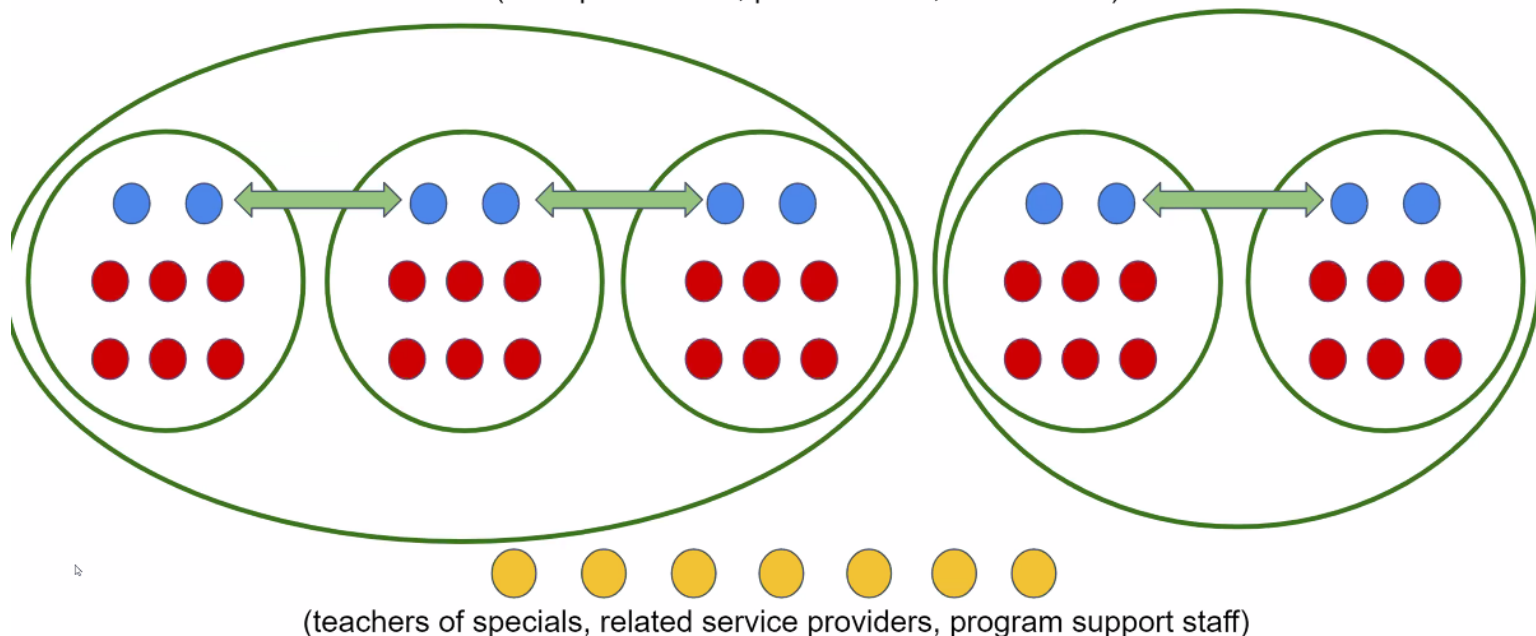
- ALO teachers across programs and levels
  - Extensions
  - Autism
  - SCB/LFI
- Principals of schools with ALO programs
  - Special schools
  - Comprehensive schools (ES and Secondary)
- Central office staff members
  - Supervisors
  - Program/instructional specialists
  - Curriculum representative (Adaptive P.E.)
  - Pre-K/PEP

## STABLE COHORTS OF CLASSROOMS

Kevin: When evaluating return of students with special needs, they want to ensure that everyone is aware of these principles. Essentially, the cohort needs to limit the number of staff coming in and out of the cohort. They want to minimize transference of the virus to avoid widespread school closures. Students may receive specials virtually.

# Stable Cohorts of Classrooms

(example: teacher, paraeducator, six students)



## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

There are some questions about resource classes at the middle and secondary level. Some parents writing that their child is having a poor experience. He said that the program was designed to help students get support services during the day and if there are individual concerns, emails can be sent.

**How are they evaluating virtual learning's impact on special education students?**

He said that MCPS is doing its best under virtual learning without taxing staff/ students to monitor how students are doing. That data was shared with the BOE at the last meeting.

**Will other families be informed if a student with a disability can't wear a mask in their classroom?**

If there is a student can't wear a mask consistently, then efforts would be made to increase distance and enhance ventilation. The student would be placed in an area with maximum ventilation. Whether other parents would be notified, he is unsure.

### **Will summer school programs be expanded?**

Discussions are happening with the curriculum team to help children who need to catch up. They know that there will need to be additional programming.