



Intellectual and Developmental Disability Commission- April Meeting Minutes

Date: April 18th, 2024

Time: 4:25pm-7pm

Location: **Zoom**

Guest Speakers: AJ France

Summary

- The process for officer elections was outlined, including the nomination and self-nomination period, the presentation of nominees' bios and statements in the May meeting, and the vote on the officer slate in June.
- Nominations for leadership positions were made by various members, including Justin Hack, Karla Nabors, and Jake Didinsky. Nominations included Natori Green for secretary and Steve Riley for chair.
- The idea of holding abbreviated meetings once a month during the summer months was proposed to ensure that the commission can continue its work without pausing for three months. This would allow for flexibility in scheduling and would not be mandatory for all members.
- The group is working on engaging with Montgomery County Public Schools to improve their special education program, particularly in response to resource cuts at the Autism Learning Center at Darnestown Elementary.
- The Employment Committee has been advocating for the extension of the EIT program to individuals over the age of 65 and for the exclusion of a spouse's income for eligibility purposes, but the bill has faced challenges and amendments due to concerns about the fiscal impact.
- Kulture City is a leading nonprofit organization that focuses on sensory inclusion for individuals with special needs, offering certification and training for venues, events, and organizations.
- The certification process is in three-year increments, with annual renewal, and includes staff training and the provision of sensory regulation tools for the venue or organization.
- The commission discussed the need for a full-time FTE allocation for a dedicated IDD liaison, with many commissioners expressing strong support for this priority. Concerns were raised about the additional time and work required due to the commission being in its startup phase, as well as the ongoing expense of adding staff to the county budget.
- It was noted that the startup phase of the commission required extra tasks and time from the liaison, and that a single halftime FTE may not be sufficient to handle the workload effectively. There was a discussion among commissioners that a full-time FTE allocation for the IDD liaison is an important priority.

- The subcommittee structure is being developed and there is a need for a full-time liaison to handle the increasing workload and paperwork generated by the subcommittees.
- There is a need to create a centralized resource or website to provide guidance and information for individuals with disabilities and their families, including information on available programs, eligibility, and application processes.
- The commission discussed the need for individual guidance, education, and training for families who are not receiving necessary information from the school system or other sources.
- The commission also considered the idea of creating a dedicated position within the county leadership to focus specifically on disabilities, in response to the projected increase in individuals with developmental disabilities in the community.
- Nominated candidates should contact Amna to self-nominate or nominate someone else for a leadership position and be prepared to speak for a few minutes at the next meeting.
- Nominated candidates can run for multiple positions but can only serve in one position, as per Robert's Rules.

Action Items

- Distribute the list of nominations to all commissioners.
- Review the list and consider nominations for each position.
- Self-nominate or nominate others for positions by the May meeting.
- Prepare a brief bio or resume and be ready to speak for five minutes about their goals and aspirations for the position.
- Consider the idea of having abbreviated meetings once a month during the summer.
- Prioritize sensory-friendly environments for individuals with disabilities.
- Discuss and consider Kulture City's work in their next meeting.
- Contact AJ's team for more information on the partnership with the city of Philadelphia.
- Discussion and consideration of a full-time FTE allocation for a full-time IDD liaison
- Discuss and explore the idea of creating a centralized resource for parents and individuals to access information about programs and resources at different stages of the journey.
- Work on countywide sensory friendly culture and engage with Culture City
- Further discuss and develop employment opportunities and training resources.
- Explore the possibility of a point person for connecting families with resources.
- Explore the possibility of a guidance program for families with unique needs.
- Explore the possibility of a crisis prevention/resolution program for families in need.
- Explore the possibility of a dedicated FTE for disabilities under the chief.
- Individuals nominated to be prepared to talk for five minutes at the next meeting.
- Nominees to send brief resume/bio to be prepared for the May meeting.
- Confirm Robert's Rules regarding multiple nominations and positions.

1. Onesta Duke- Maryland Department of Health.	P	P	P	W	P	P	P						
2. Justin Hack- WorkSource Montgomery	P	P	P	W	A	P	P						
3. Dorne Hill- Department of Health and Human Services	P	P	P	W	P	A	P						
4. Karla Nabors- Montgomery College	P	P	P	W	P	P	P						
5. Sharon Norcio- Montgomery County Recreation	P	P	P	W	P	P	P						
6. Margie Parrott- Montgomery County Public Schools	W	P	P	W	P	P	A						

County Members Present: Kim Mayo, Rosemary DiPietro

Members of the Public Present: Kim, Susan H.

Commissioner Feedback - March Meeting

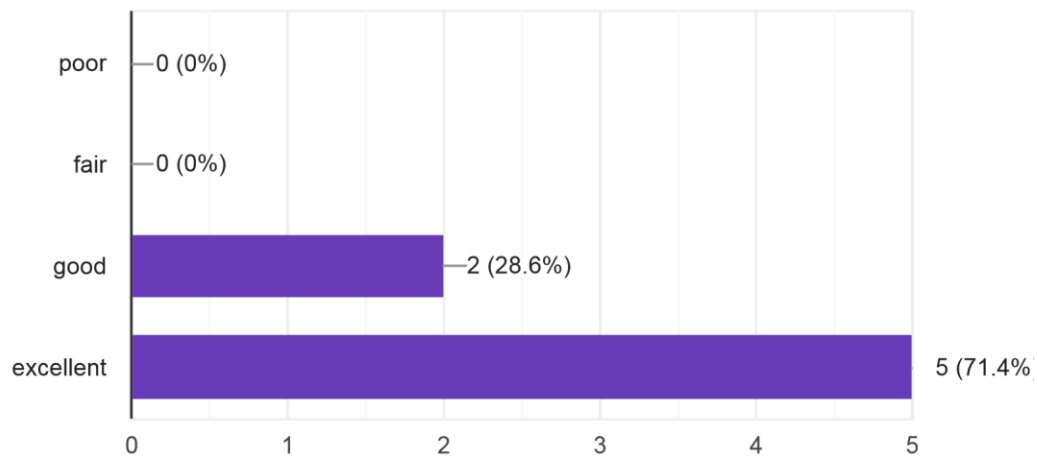
7 responses

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How would you rate the overall quality of yesterday's meeting?

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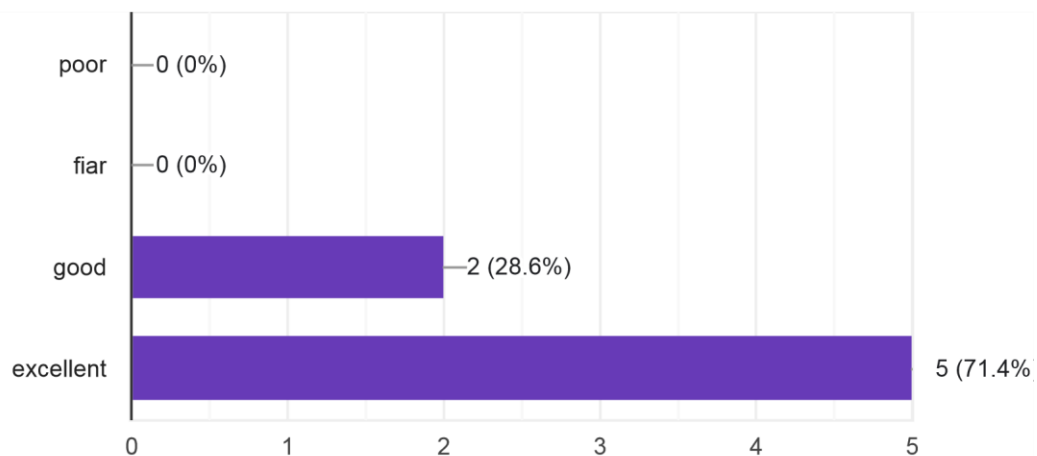
7 responses



How would you rate the quality, informational contents, and usefulness of the invited speaker(s)

[Copy](#)

7 responses



Any general comments on invited speakers

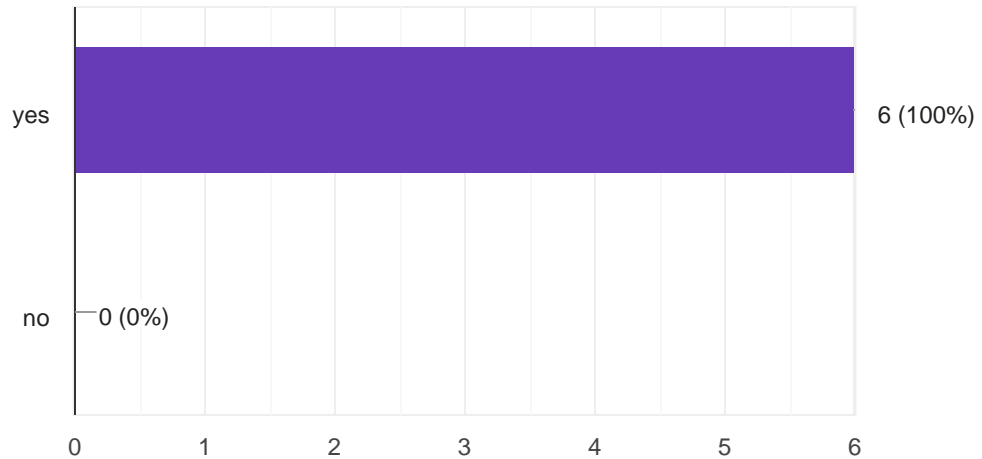
1 response

Dr. McGhee's presentation was very informative and provided insight for her initiatives within the department.

Did you feel you had ample opportunity to provide input?



6 responses



Do you have any suggestions for improvements we could make to the meeting structure, format, conduct or agenda?

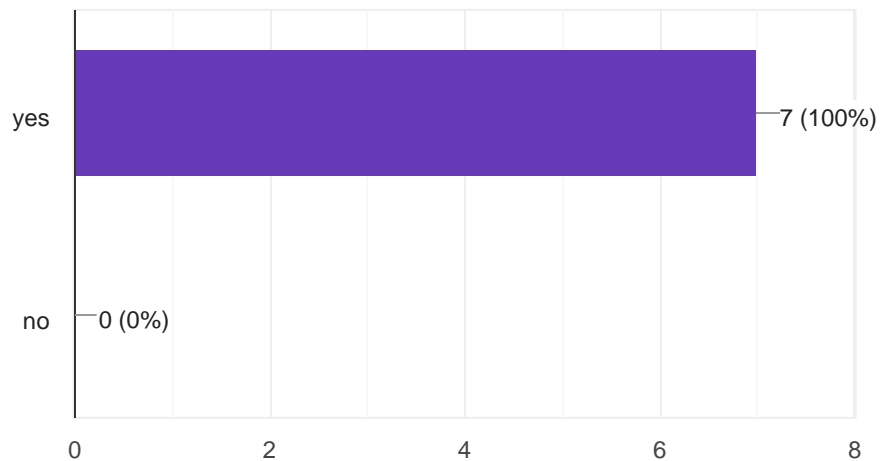
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It may be helpful for other commissioners as well as save time, if the subcommittee's provided a brief written summary of the initiatives of the group and progress made.

Did you feel the meeting was conducted in a respectful, professional and inclusive manner?



7 responses



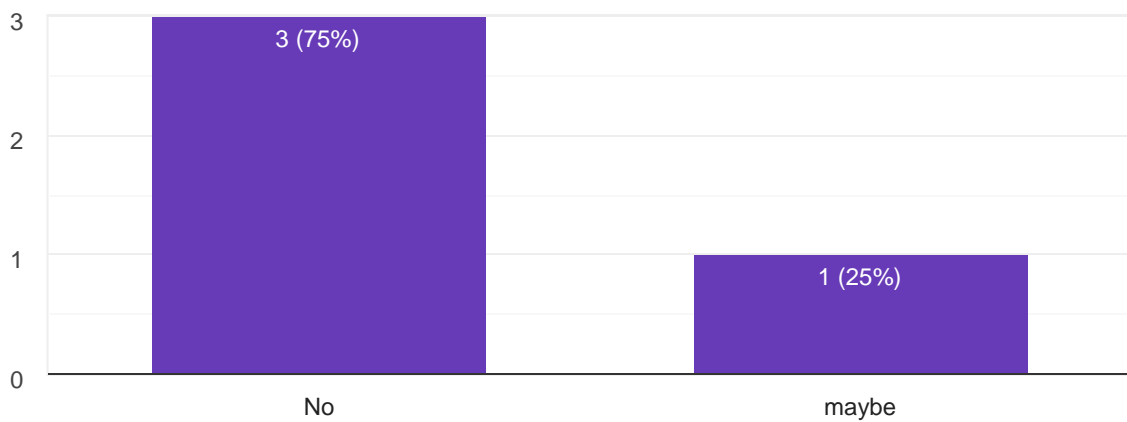
Please provide any general comments you would like?

1 response

Thank you for the efforts Michael.

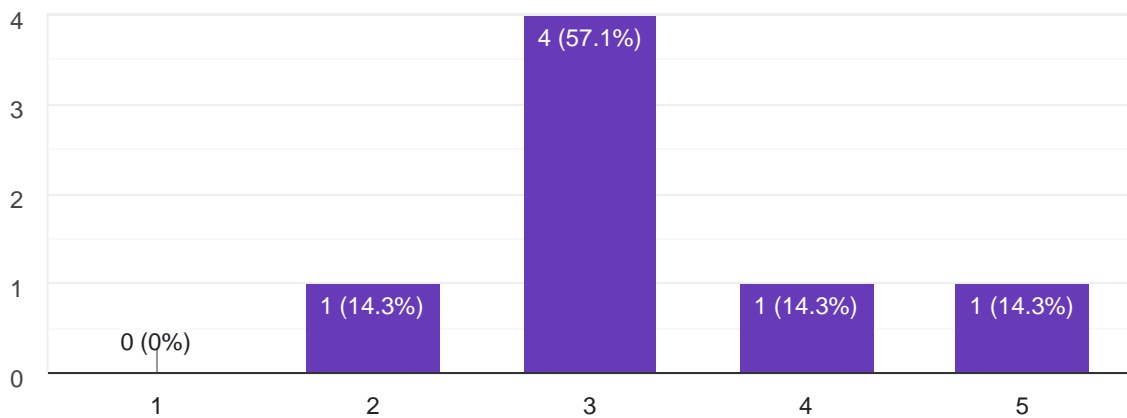
Are you interested in taking part in the guided tour of Brookside Gardens to help with providing input. [Copy](#)

4 responses



On the topic of creating a SENSORY FRIENDLY county for those with IDD how would you rate the importance of this as a priority for the Commission. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest priority) [Copy](#)

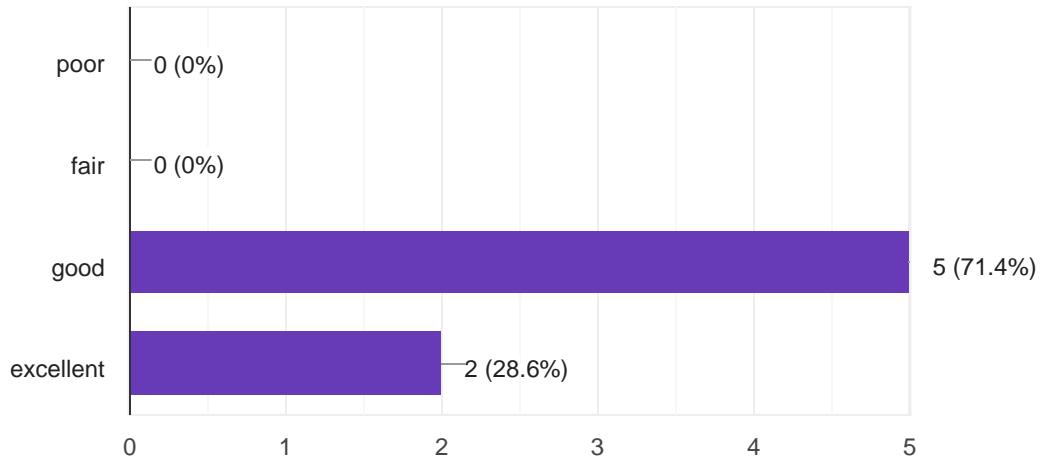
7 responses



How did you find the presentation and dialogue on "Commissioner Priorities"



7 responses



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KultureCity[®] Summary (Who)

KultureCity[®] is a non-profit that is currently celebrating its 10th year of certifying a variety of different venues, events, organizations and communities as Sensory Inclusive. With a footprint in over 1,800+ organizations in 6 countries, we are helping to make the “nevers” possible for the estimated 1 in 4 of us who have a sensory need.

Our team of neurodiverse professionals, self-advocates, and allies combined with our certified organizations work hard to extend inclusion for all.

What are sensory needs? (What)

Our sensory processing system (composed of our 8 senses) is our nervous system’s way of organizing and processing sensory input from our environments and our bodies.

For individuals with sensory needs (or sensory processing impairments), this function is either limited, dysfunctional or non-existent. **This impairment is what may lead someone to experience a sensory overload.**

Some common diagnoses often associated to sensory processing impairment:

- Autism, ADHD, anxiety, PTSD, Down’s Syndrome, Parkinson’s, dementia, traumatic brain injuries and many more - People of all ages and cognitive abilities can experience sensory processing impairments.

Why does this matter? (Why)

To many people with sensory needs certain environments are difficult to access or are completely inaccessible. Environments with varying sensory inputs (like bright lights, loud sounds, crowded areas, strong smells, etc.) can be overwhelming and trigger a sensory overload.

Our certification allows organizations to open their doors to more people who may otherwise struggle to visit.



How does our certification work? (How)

- With quick but efficient and heavy-hitting training, staff becomes more knowledgeable on sensory needs and learns how to offer real help to someone in need.
- We provide a variety of sensory regulation tools (like sensory bags, signage and social stories) to help guests maintain or return to a state of regulation.

These small efforts and minor adjustments have real long lasting impacts on people's lives.

When is Sensory Inclusion available? (When)

- Venues can apply to start the certification process at any point in the year!
- Through our Sensory Inclusive™ Certification, organizations can offer a variety of tools along with assistance from trained staff to their guests on a year-round, daily basis.
- This allows folks to have more control over their busy schedules as they can choose to visit a certified location based on when it is convenient for them (as opposed to working around a limited date and/or location)

sensoryteam@kulturecity.org | www.kulturecity.org

April 2, 2024

The Honorable Montgomery County Councilmembers
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Councilmembers:

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission. The Commission supports fully funding the DD-Supplement for FY25. The InterACC/DD requested a 4.5% increase to the supplement. The FY25 County Executive Operational budget is proposing a 3% increase to the supplement. The 4.5% increase consists of two factors: 3.2% of the 4.5% factor is a COLA increase to maintain pace with the increase in the Montgomery County minimum wage. The remaining 1.3% increase is to address program growth. The program growth is defined as the number of people with disabilities receiving services and an increase in support hours by Direct Support Professionals.

With support from the County Council, the FY24 DD-Supplement was \$21,062,172. The request for FY25 is \$22,009,972. The FY25 County Executive operation budget has proposed \$21,694,037. In order for the DD-Supplement to be fully funded, additional funding in the amount of \$315,933 would be needed.

Thank you for your years of support for the much-needed supplement, and we urge a positive response to our recommendation.

Sincerely,

Michael Greenberg

Chair
Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission

IDD Commission

Officer Nomination and Election Process

The selection of a new slate of officer for the IDDC next year will be coordinate through our Liason Ms. Khan. Below is a brief summary and timeline

April 2024 Meeting

- discussion of election process
- nominations for officer slate

May 2024 Meeting

- nominated officers speak to Commission

June 2024 Meeting

- voting on nominated officers

The IDD Commission opposes MCPS current plan to dismantle the Darnestown Elementary School Autism Education program. Following are some key questions we hope can be addressed in upcoming meetings with MCPS.

1) Both Kristin Mink and Will Jawando stated they were in disbelief about the decision to reduce the paraeducators by half with only five students leaving the Darnestown Elementary School Autism Learning Center (DES ALC) program. The FY 2025 proposed MCPS budget sent to the Board of Education (BOE) did not cite the reduction of paraeducators at DES LC or the conversion of the DES ALC to a traditional Learning Center (LC). Instead, the budget for Elementary Learning Centers showed an \$101,771 budget increase for 2.5 full-time employees (FTEs), classified as Special Education Paraeducators. The budget narrative went on to state that, “instruction to students with autism at Darnestown ALC continues to be provided in alignment with evidence-based practices that have proven to be highly effective for student with autism” (Appendix D-12 page 472 I).

Diana Wyles stated that the DES Autism Learning Center was a well-run program, and that she reviewed student progress and conducted assessments to determine that support staff could be reduced.

- What type of analysis, assessment, and/or study has been conducted to support the decision to reduce or eliminate paraprofessionals as cited by Diana Wyles and can those findings be made public?
- What staff, teachers, and specialists were consulted to make the determination that services for individual students could be implemented with fidelity (ex. the Autism Learning Center teachers, paraeducators, Central Office, etc.)? This is important since Diana Wyles stated that student need drove this decision, which implies that BOE has made the determination that these children—collectively—were receiving too much support.

2) Gabe Albornoz acknowledged that the Darnestown Elementary School Autism Learning Center has been a lifeline for many families, and posed the key question that went unanswered by Dr. Felder, Diana Wyles, and Karla Silvestre: *“How do we raise all boats here and create more Darnestown programs and what does that look like?”* Kristin Mink also underscored the importance of this question. The BOE representatives only stated that there were communication issues with relaying the decision to end the DES Autism Learning Program but failed to answer the question directly and address the expressed need.

- Can MCPS please provide a detailed response to the question posed by CM Albornoz and elaborated on by CM Mink regarding creating more vs. eliminating Darnestown programs and what current and/or future program expansion efforts are being considered.
- Are the same best practices from DES Autism Learning Center in place at the other centers? If not, why aren't changes being made to put these best practices in place?

3) In developing the DES Autism Learning Center model, MCPS has already demonstrated that they believe this model provides Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to a designated subset of students.

- Now that they are weakening the support, how can they contend that the new program still complies with their legal obligation to provide an appropriate education for this subset?
- FAPE is a concept that is not specifically written into any student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), how can they ensure that every student's IEP will be met even when the support needed to meet the goals are being removed?

4) Diana Wyles stated that they have begun developing professional learning that will begin over the summer. As stated in Question 1, the FY 2025 MCPS budget sent to BOE for approval stated, "The instruction to students with autism at Darnestown ALC continues to be provided in alignment with evidence-based practices that have proven to be highly effective for student with autism."

- Is the BOE initiating a non-evidence based program?
- What evidence-based practices are part of the professional learning and who is developing them?
- What is the length of the 2024 professional learning and who is receiving the professional learning training?
- Why are the changes at DES ALC being made before a finalized curriculum or training program in place?

5) In addition to changes slated for the DES Autism Learning Center, paraeducators from two other autism programs—secondary Autism Resource Services (ARS) and Autism Connections (formerly known as the "Asperger's program")—were also involuntarily transferred and placed in new locations prior to spring break of this year.

- Can you share any correspondence sent to staff and impacted families in advance of this decision?
- Were assessments of data and need also conducted for these programs to justify the reduction in paraeducators?


6) MCPS has clearly outlined in its own presentations the key features that distinguish the DES Autism Learning Center model from the traditional learning centers. These are shown below .

- Can MCPS outline if each of these key best practices are currently in place and provide details to the public of how they have been implemented?
- Has MCPS considered replicating the identical DES Autism Learning Center model at several other centers instead of an overall reduction of services, offering less intensive services at all centers?

Traditional LC Staffing: (Page 3-6)

1 teacher : 1 Para : 13-16 students

Elementary Learning Centers



Student Characteristics

- All students have IEPs
- Students are likely to pursue a high school diploma
- Students take the same assessments as general education peers
- Students are typically two grade levels below
- Require instruction in a smaller setting

Elementary Learning Centers Service Locations:

• Brooke Grove	• Mill Creek Towne
• Burning Tree	• Little Bennett
• Clearspring	• Rock View
• Cresthaven	• Flora M. Singer
• Dufief	• Sally K. Ride
• Darnestown	• Watkins Mill
• Galway	


Program Features

- A 1:1-13 Teacher: Paraeducator: Student ratio
- All sites have a program coordinator
- Special education services are provided in the self contained & general education environments, based on IEP team decisions
- Classrooms follow a predictable routine and structure to support academic and behavioral needs
- Instruction occurs in both large and small group
- Students work independently in centers
- 4th and 5th grade increases opportunities for inclusion

Darnestown Autism LC Staffing: (Page 7-10)

1 teacher: 2 Para : 9 students

Darnestown Elementary School Learning Center



Program Features

- A 1:2-9 teacher: paraeducator: student ratio
- The special educator & paraeducators provide instruction to students in self-contained, K-5 classroom.
- The classroom is highly structured, language enriched setting with familiar routines, clearly defined rules & expectations, structured teaching & motivational systems to support academic, social, and behavioral needs.
- Students are instructed in small & large groups, centers & will learn to work independently with faded adult support

Student Characteristics

- Designed to serve students diagnosed with autism who are likely to pursue a high school diploma & take the same assessments as their general education peers.
- The students are likely to meet the criteria for a SBLC in general.
- Candidates may have needs that exceed the services and supports provided in the traditional learning center (e.g. transition support, attention & task engagement, use of spontaneous language, and application of learned skills).

Autism Specific Supports

- Students need high degree of structured ongoing systematic behavioral intervention during transitions, large & small group, and independent work.
- Students require a high degree of reinforcement for compliance and escape behaviors.
- Require structured teaching for transitions, following routines, attention to task, and increased independence.
- Students have social needs in the area of pragmatics and sometimes in the area of reducing interfering behaviors.
- System of communication for each student
- Visual cues are used in conjunction with oral instruction

7.IDDC recommends this approach, which could potentially ensure identical services, work towards ensuring equity, and likely is more budget friendly and practical then working with all the other learning centers.

Jamie Doyle-

Nominated for the following positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary

Nominated by: Lisa Lorraine, Carmen Zahra

Karla Nabors

Nominated for the following position(s): Vice Chair, Chair

Nominated by: Lisa Lorraine

Michael Greenberg:

Nominated for the following position(s): Chair

Nominated by: Justin Hack and Karla Nabors and Carmen Zahra

John Whittle:

Nominated for the following position(s): Vice Chair

Nominated by: Justin Hack and Karla Nabors

Jake Didinsky

Nominated for the following position(s): Secretary

Nominated by: Justin Hack

Natori Green

Nominated for the following position(s): Secretary

Nominated by: Najla Wortham, Michael greenberg

Nominating for leadership to remain the same:

Rick Callahan, Justin Hack.

Steve Riley:

Nominated by Michael Greenberg