

ALEXANDRIA SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The Alexandria Special Education Advisory Committee (“SEAC”) submits this annual report of its activities and recommendations for the 2022-2023 school year. As described in more detail in Section II below, and Attachment A to this report, SEAC hereby provides recommendations to Alexandria City Public Schools (“ACPS”), and the School Board, in the following areas of concern for students of disabilities:

- A. Instructional Environment for Students with Disabilities, including Professional Staff Development, Types of Instruction, Discipline, and Accessibility,
- B. Academic and Social-Emotional Development at Home for Students with Disability, including Communication Generally and Notice To, and Instructions For, Families to Support Their Students with Disabilities,
- C. Extra-Curricular, including Extracurricular Staff Training and Accommodations and Services, and
- D. Other Recommendation That Does Not Fit Within The Other Three Categories.

I. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

A. OVERVIEW OF SEAC

SEAC is an advisory committee on special education issues whose members are appointed by the Alexandria School Board. The Commonwealth of Virginia’s Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia requires each school district to have a SEAC. The primary purpose of SEAC is to provide an opportunity for parents and other school board appointees to have a voice in the way the school division provides services to students with disabilities.

With respect to the focus of SEAC, students with disabilities refer to students who are “adversely affected” by a disability in one of 13 categories identified by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and have an active Individualized Education Program (“IEP”). Based on that definition, it is important to understand that there is a broad range of students with disabilities under IDEA and that students with disabilities needs can vary greatly. Students with disabilities are present throughout General Education classrooms and programming in addition to Special Education, including city-wide classrooms.

For this school year, SEAC’s mandate did not cover disabled students without active IEPs. SEAC recommends that the School Board, in the future, create a platform for family input on services provided to student with disabilities who do not have an active IEP, including

students with plans under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (“504 Plans”), through SEAC or another mechanism.

For this school year, SEAC had 11 appointed members. Eight (8) of the members are a parent or grandparent of an ACPS student with disabilities, one (1) member is an ACPS special education teacher, one (1) member is a student representative, and one (1) member is an Alexandria resident who is a parent of a student with disabilities who received education outside of ACPS this school year. Four (4) of SEAC’s parent/grandparent members were new to SEAC this school year.

School Board Chair Meghan Alderton was the SEAC Board liaison for this school year. Director of Specialized Instruction Theresa Werner was SEAC’s staff liaison, and Dr. Patricia Zissios, was SEAC’s Principal Liaison. Dr. Courtney Davis and Janet Reese of the Parent Resource Center also regularly attended SEAC’s meetings.

B. OVERVIEW OF 2022-2023 SEAC ACTIVITIES

SEAC held four quarterly in-person meetings this school year. SEAC’s Equity and Inclusion Sub-Committee also held four in-person meetings.

Through its full committee meetings, SEAC performed its annual tasks set forth in its By-Laws, including reviewing ACPS’s draft Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) grant application/report to the Virginia Department of Education. SEAC also addressed many of its goals and objectives identified in its 2022-2023 Scope of Work.

Specifically, SEAC discussed the administration of the Anne R. Lipnick Awards for Specialized Instruction which have been on hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SEAC, in consultation, with Director of Specialized Instruction Werner, decided not to solicit nominations for the Lipnick awards for the 2022-2023 school year but will evaluate next year whether to re-institute the awards for future school years.

SEAC primarily worked on its other goals and objectives. set forth in its 2022-2023 Scope of Work, through its Equity and Inclusion Sub-Committee. As described in more detail in Attachment A to this report, the SEAC Equity and Inclusion Sub-Committee, recognizing the breadth of differences with students with disabilities and such students’ needs, undertook a brainstorming exercise to identify areas of concerns for students with disabilities which the subcommittee grouped into four categories: (1) Instructional Environment, (2) Academic and Social-Emotional Development at Home, (3) Extra-curricular, and (4) Other.

Appendices A through D of Attachment A to this report summarizes the areas of concerns with respect to ACPS special education and students with disabilities identified through this brain-storming process. Based of these identified areas of concerns, the SEAC Equity and Inclusion Sub-Committee drafted recommendations to ACPS with respect to special education and students with disabilities described below and at pages 3-7 of Attachment A to this report. SEAC adopts those recommendations for this annual report.

II. 2022-2023 SEAC'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACPS AND THE ALEXANDRIA SCHOOL BOARD

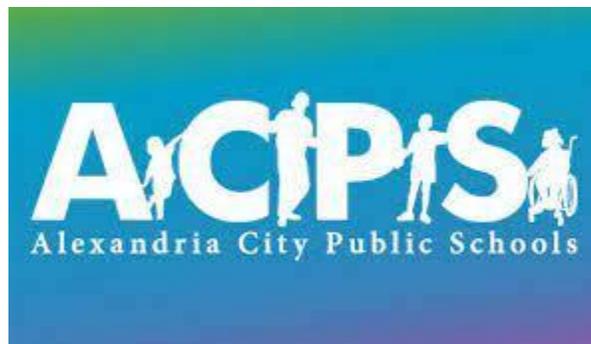
SEAC recommends that ACPS and the School Board consider, and address as appropriate, the issues based on concerns identified through the SEAC Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee's work, described in pages 3-8 of Attachment A to this report.

III. CONCLUSION

SEAC thanks the School Board for the opportunity to provide input on ACPS's provision of services to students with disabilities. SEAC would welcome the opportunity to provide further input on the recommendations as ACPS and School Board evaluates them, and considers whether to take steps to gather additional information, and/or take remedial steps, in response to them. SEAC recommends that ACPS provide feed on these recommendations and any efforts to implement them.

Finally, SEAC offers appreciation to the administrators, educators, parents, staff, students, and the School Board for navigating another challenging school year as the pandemic phase of COVID-19 ended. SEAC particularly recognizes Executive Director of Specialized Instruction Theresa Werner for her years of service as she retires from ACPS at the end of the school year.

ATTACHMENT A



Special Education Advisory Committee
Equity and Inclusion Recommendations
2022-2023

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Background

The 2022-2023 Special Education Advisory Committee's (SEAC) Scope of Work includes numerous goals and objectives. The major purpose of SEAC is to provide an opportunity for families and other school board appointees to have a voice in the way Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) provides services to students with disabilities. As a committee, we are aligning our work with the ACPS 2025 Strategic Plan, Equity for All. Our work encompasses many subcommittees that focused on tasks, deliverables, and other action items to support the committee at large when advocating for students with disabilities within the division.

Role of SEAC

The SEAC role, as mandated by the Commonwealth of Virginia, is to:

1. Advise the local school division of needs in the education of children with disabilities;
2. Participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities;
3. Submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of children with disabilities to the division superintendent for transmission to the local school board;
4. Assist the local school division in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services;
5. Review the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services prior to submission to the local school board; and
6. Participate in the review of the local school division's annual plan.

Purpose

This document will discuss the SEAC Equity and Inclusion sub-committee's prioritized recommendations to the ACPS School Board for students with disabilities. The full list of 2022-2023 recommendations discussed by the SEAC Equity and Inclusion sub-committee can be found in the Appendix. While the sub-committee prioritized and focused recommendations to the ACPS School Board, the full list of recommendations should be considered to advance Equity and Inclusion for the Special Education community.

Sub-Committee Focus Areas

As ACPS continues to recover from the pandemic, it is opportune to reexamine how equity functions for students with disabilities in our district. The SEAC Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee is tasked with understanding equity issues within special education in ACPS and advising the district.

SEAC, in consultation with its School Board Liaison, identified the academic progression of children with disabilities, as measured by testing data, compared with other student populations, as an equity issue for examination by this sub-committee. In looking at this issue, the sub-committee examined, among other things:

- (1) areas of improvement or adjustment with respect to academic instructional environment for students with disabilities;



Figure 1: SEAC Equity and Inclusion Sub-Committee Focus Areas

- (2) areas of improvement or adjustment of communications to parents and guardians of students with disabilities to help families support their children’s academic development outside of school;
- (3) areas of improvement or adjustment with respect to inclusion and support in extracurricular activities for students with disabilities; and
- (4) other areas of improvement or adjustment that do not fall into the above categories.

While these recommendations are the work of the 2022-2023 SEAC, recommendations made in years past may still be valid and should continue to be implemented along with consideration for these new recommendations. Some recommendations have been carried forward from the 2021-2022 SEAC Equity and Inclusion sub-committee’s recommendations.

Instructional Environment



Figure 2: Instructional Approaches Focus Area

The first area that the SEAC sub-committee examined was the instructional environment within the school and classroom. There were many recommendations within the eight major themes identified.

ACPS should continue to identify and employ competitive methods to attract and retain teachers, instructional assistants, support staff, and related services providers. Students with disabilities require additional support and are most adversely affected due to staffing shortages.

The four areas that the sub-committee recommends that ACPS School Board and Administration focus on, in addition to staffing shortages, within the instructional environment are:

- 1) **Professional Staff Development:** There is a general concern amongst parents and stakeholders that there is not enough consistent professional development for both special education and general education teachers, as well as other staff like bus drivers and aides who work with students with disabilities. There is also concern about the large inconsistencies in policies, training, services, and implementation, across different campuses within ACPS. Recommendations include:
 - a) Increase the training for Special Education teachers on evidence-based instruction
 - b) Enhance the instruction to teachers on developing strong Individualized Education Plans (IEP) to minimize misinformation to families
 - c) Implement professional development for general education teachers on special education instruction, including differentiation of instruction
 - d) Educate support staff (i.e., bus drivers, monitors, instructional aides, front office staff, janitorial staff, etc.) on special education needs including how to safely support unexpected behaviors
 - e) Develop a bank of inclusion-related materials for Special Education teachers
 - f) Research whether ACPS is too restrictive on IEP eligibility in order to provide the appropriate support for student needs
- 2) **Types of Instruction:** Stakeholders had wide-arching concerns regarding specialized instruction for students in Special Education. These concerns included the quality of instruction in both mainstreamed and self-contained classes. And a general concern that areas of need were not being remediated effectively and enough progress was not being seen from year to year. Recommendations include:

- a) Implement peer mentors for targeted academic skills in order to include special education students in the school community
 - b) Implement phonics instruction with fidelity across the school district
 - c) Investigate the self-contained class gap in grade level versus developmental level
 - d) Increase Occupational Therapy (OT) focus on handwriting and composition
 - e) Increase the focus on encoding and decoding for students, including spelling
 - f) Document where/when/how inclusion will be implemented within IEPs
- 3) **Discipline:** There is a lack of transparency about discipline practices for special education students as well as concern about the wide variability in discipline issues across different campuses within ACPS. There is a need for consistent training, practices, and initiatives across all campuses to ensure discipline responses are fair and equitable. Recommendations include:
- a) Investigate, communicate, and publish what is perceived to be increased rates of sending students with disabilities home before the day is over (“quiet suspensions”)
 - b) Research meeting the needs of students with disabilities versus just implementing additional security, proactive strategies instead of reactive policies
 - c) Advertise reporting system for discriminatory discipline experiences and publish findings
 - d) Implement corrective actions to address on-going concern over black males being identified and suspended at a higher rate
 - e) Properly implement and document restraint/seclusion policies
 - f) Deploy guidance and empathy training for staff and administration; expedite and finish the roll out of restorative practices across all grade levels
 - g) Investigate the use of video recordings in Special Education settings
- 4) **Accessibility:** Ongoing systemic accessibility concerns persist despite advocacy by parents, students, and SEAC. These should be taken seriously and updated prior to the 2023-2024 school year and/or included into the facilities short and long-term planning. Recommendations include:
- a) Retrofit playgrounds and facilities to be accessible for students with mobility concerns, including wheelchair accessible
 - b) Retrofit facilities for push buttons to be more widely present and for classrooms to be spaced for students using mobility aids (i.e., space desks further apart)
 - c) Investigate use of Electric Vehicle buses for Special Education community, especially for students with respiratory illnesses
 - d) Divide city-wide classrooms up at school concerts and cafeteria so students can get to know neurotypical peers, assure these facilities are accessible for the special populations; Provide support for students with disabilities to eat lunch with their grade level peers (i.e., ensure proper amount of aids, self-contained classes and scheduling, etc.)
 - e) Ensure appropriate facility spaces, supervision and accommodations in unstructured school settings (i.e., lunch/recess, hallways, extracurriculars, sports, etc.)

Academic Development at Home

The second area that the SEAC sub-committee examined was the continued academic development of students at home. The sub-committee acknowledges that students need to continue the strategies and learning at home and families need to reinforce what is being taught at school. There were many recommendations within the five major themes identified.



Figure 3: Academic Development at Home Focus Area

However, most recommendations were contained within the “Communication” theme. Families struggled with getting timely responses to inquiries, especially through email inquiries. An ACPS standard should be implemented for acknowledging and responding to emails.

The two main areas that the sub-committee recommends that ACPS School Board and Administration focus on within the academic development at home are:

- 1) **Communication:** One of the most persistent concerns across multiple years of SEAC advocacy is a lack of transparency and open communication with special education students and parents. While the Parent Resource Center is a gem of resources and is always accessible by phone call or email, the same level of communication should be provided by the Office of Specialized Instruction and each campus special education team. Parents feel disconnected and frustrated with the lack of clear and timely communication, especially those parents whose students have high needs and are unable to communicate for themselves, especially students in city-wide and self-contained classrooms. Recommendations include:
 - a) Increase communication to families regarding reading interventions, behavior, timelines, IEPs, successes, etc.
 - b) Increase communication and collaboration on what is happening in the Special Education classroom
 - c) Develop weekly logs of student learnings and strategies
 - d) Implement additional family-teacher conferences, especially for students with communication challenges (can be informal to understand student progress and needs)
 - e) Spend additional ACPS resources to provide families information (i.e., update websites, make resources easier to find, translate resources in multiple languages, hire family peer advocates)
 - f) Share pictures and videos of activities between school and home
 - g) Ensure that captions, ASL interpretation, and audio description are readily available at school Zoom presentations in the same manner as Spanish, Arabic, and Amharic interpretations
 - h) Create transparency and communication when related services/special educational instruction are missed and how the hours are made up
 - i) Implement accessible information and communication, particularly in regards to sensory disabilities (i.e. screen-reader compatible PDFs, etc.)
 - j) Develop an ACPS-wide standard for acknowledging and responding to family email
- 2) **Instruction for Families:** Many families with students in special education want to be more involved and want to have consistency of approaches across home and school. They want additional instructional opportunities so that they can increase their understanding of their child’s needs and how to best support them at home. Recommendations include:
 - a) Create classes for families on the IEP process to understand the procedures, in different languages, and with culturally relevant outreach
 - b) Notify all families that students with disabilities are entitled to appropriate accommodations (504 plans and IEP awareness)
 - c) Ensure that specialized transportation needs are discussed at all IEP meetings across all campuses
 - d) Communicate the science of reading approaches to families
 - e) Provide guidance for families in math and reading
 - f) Share school-based strategies with families as families cannot rely on outside services
 - g) Provide behavior management guidance for families (PBIS)

- h) Provide support to families to continue services and learning at home (e.g., provide strategy reports at least monthly)
- i) Issue access for families to the Progress Monitoring Tool

Extracurricular



Figure 4: Extracurricular Focus Area

The third area that the SEAC sub-committee examined was extracurriculars. While there were only three themes identified, the sub-committee recommends that two of these themes should be closely examined and implemented. Extracurricular activities enrich the student experience, allow students to build strong bonds, and enable academic progress. Students with disabilities deserve equitable access and support to successfully participate in extracurricular activities.

The two areas that the sub-committee recommends that ACPS School Board and Administration focus on within extracurriculars are:

- 1) **Extracurricular Staff Training:** There is an inequity in participation in extracurricular activities that needs to be addressed on multiple levels. Many families do not feel that their students with disabilities can safely participate in before or after school programming due to lack of staff understanding of disabilities and an absence of training related to supporting students with disabilities. Recommendations include:
 - a) Provide community partners that run extracurriculars training on disabilities
 - b) Support and implement professional development for after-school staff
 - c) Educate staff on inclusionary principles
 - d) Encourage event holders to make more accessible choices by providing a guide to implementing common requests and a template to post alongside activity announcements for requesting individual accommodations
- 2) **Accommodations and Services:** In order for students with disabilities to safely and fully participate in sports and extracurriculars, their IEP services/accommodations need to be recognized and implemented in non-academic environments. Recommendations include:
 - a) Ensure accommodations at extracurriculars and sporting events for Special Education / 504 students (i.e., sensory, allergy, accessibility)
 - b) Provide instructional support for after-school programs, including behavioral support
 - c) Enable all students to participate in after-school activities; encourage all students to participate in at least one extracurricular activity
 - d) Validate that there is specialized transportation for after-school events
 - e) Match services made available by ACPS for abled-students outside of school hours (i.e., accessible buses)

Other

The recommendations that did not fit into the first three categories were characterized as other. While this report will not cover the recommendations and discussion points in detail, the full-list of discussion points are listed within Appendix D. The discussion focused around three themes:



Figure 5: Other Focus Area

- 1) Providing clarity when communicating and on standard definitions for “students with disabilities”, including students with 504 plans in the definition and SEAC’s scope
- 2) Implementing a culture of inclusiveness and setting a tone-at-the-top emphasizing the betterment for students with disabilities
- 3) Ensuring that ACPS remains compliant with laws, including paying for private placement when appropriate

Conclusion and Next Steps

While the report focused on key improvement areas, there are - and will be - additional areas that can be improved to provide students with disabilities a free and appropriate public education. The Equity and Inclusion sub-committee implores the ACPS School Board and Administration to dedicate the resources needed to remediate the concerns and implement the discussed recommendations. A single project manager/coordinator should be assigned that analyzes and implements these recommendations across ACPS. The project manager/coordinator should develop and share the schedule, the list of activities, and progress and status to the ACPS School Board, Administration, and Special Education Advisory Committee on a regular basis, and at least quarterly. As recommendations are considered and implemented, the ACPS Special Education Advisory Committee is available as a resource and sounding board.

Appendix A: Full List of Instructional Environment Concerns and Recommendations

Grouping	Description	Considerations
Professional Staff Development	There is a general concern amongst parents and stakeholders that there is not enough consistent professional development for both special education and general education teachers, as well as other staff like bus drivers and aides who work with students with disabilities. There is also concern about the large inconsistencies in policies, training, and services, and implementation, across different campuses within ACPS.	<p>Increase the training for Special Education teachers on evidence-based instruction</p> <p>Enhance the instruction to teachers on Individualized Education Program (IEP) to minimize misinformation to families</p> <p>Implement professional development for general education teachers on special education instruction</p> <p>Educate support staff (i.e., bus drivers, monitors, janitorial staff, etc.) on special education needs</p> <p>Develop a bank of inclusion-related materials for Special Education teachers</p> <p>Research whether ACPS is too restrictive on IEP eligibility in order to provide the appropriate support to students' needs</p>
Staffing Shortages	When positions go unfilled for a school year, student goals are not met, services are not provided, and student IEPs are not legally followed. While shortages in special education is a National issue, there is concern that not enough is being done to attract highly qualified special education staff to ACPS schools.	<p>Address the high turnover of Special Education teachers and staff, especially in city-wide programs</p> <p>Investigate specialist shortages and hire specialists</p> <p>Hire additional related services providers, as current staff is spread thin across multiple schools</p> <p>Tackle the huge number of Special Education teachers and aide positions are unfilled at the middle school</p> <p>Increase the percent of teachers with current professional license</p>

		<p>Confront the availability and need for increased Instructional Assistant support</p> <p>Address the teacher retention issue</p>
Discipline	<p>There is a lack of transparency about discipline practices for special education students as well as concern about the wide variability in discipline issues across different campuses within ACPS. There is a need for consistent training, practices, and initiatives across all campuses to ensure discipline responses are fair and equitable.</p>	<p>Investigate, communicate, and publish rates of sending students with disabilities home (“quiet suspensions”)</p>
		<p>Research meeting the needs of students with disabilities versus just implementing additional security</p>
		<p>Advertise reporting system for discriminatory experiences and publish findings</p>
		<p>Implement corrective actions to address concern over black males being identified and suspended at a higher rate</p>
		<p>Deploy guidance and empathy training for staff and administration</p>
		<p>Properly document and implement restraint/seclusion policies</p>
		<p>Investigate the use of video recordings in Special Education settings</p>
Types of Instruction	<p>Stakeholders had wide-arching concerns regarding specialized instruction for students in Special Education. These concerns included the quality of instruction in both mainstreamed and self-contained classes. And a general concern that areas of need were not being remediated effectively.</p>	<p>Implement peer mentors for targeted academic skills in order to include special education students in the school community</p>
		<p>Implement phonics instruction with fidelity across the school district</p>
		<p>Investigate self-contained classes gap in grade level versus developmental level</p>

		Increase Occupational Therapy (OT) focus on handwriting and composition
		Increase the focus on encoding and decoding for students, including spelling
		Document where/when/how inclusion will be implemented within IEPs
		Implement evidence-based instruction to students with disabilities
		Determine points of access to educational concepts, including access to specific technologies
		Ensure consistent instruction on IEP and how it is monitored at the school and centrally
Data	The need to improve measured performance for students in special education continues to be an area of growth. And the transparent sharing of data with families could be improved.	Investigate and communicate the forces driving the lower test scores for the Special Education population
		Seek to understand and correct the disparities in academic performance for students with disabilities
Consistent Services	Some of the larger concerns in the community revolve around a sense that special education services are not being provided consistently or effectively. There is an appearance of a lack of transparency, lack of communication with parents, and lack of available providers.	Increase the equivalent services at Minnie Howard campus (e.g., no SEL self-contained at Minnie Howard)
		Ensure that instruction is provided to students in least restrictive settings
		Add transparency and consistency in implementing compensatory educational hours and additional intervention related to pandemic
		Provide services required per IEP, including accounting of services provided and missed

<p>Increasing Special Education Attention</p>	<p>Equity work among students does not appear to be focused on neurodiversity and increasing the understanding that we all have gifts and all have needs. Providing disabled role models in the curriculum should be a priority.</p>	<p>Understand the extra attention required to Special Education students</p> <p>Facilitate interactions among students with and without disabilities outside of ‘charitable’ framework (i.e., include disabled figures in classroom materials)</p>
<p>Accessibility</p>	<p>Ongoing systemic accessibility concerns persist despite advocacy by parents, students, and SEAC. These should be taken seriously and updated prior to the 2023-2024 school year.</p>	<p>Retrofit playgrounds and facilities to be wheelchair and Special Needs accessible</p> <p>Investigate use of Electric Vehicle buses for Special Education community, especially for students with respiratory illnesses</p> <p>Retrofit facilities for push buttons to be more widely present and for classrooms to be spaced for students using mobility aids (i.e., space desks further apart)</p> <p>Distribute city-wide classrooms up at school concerts and cafeteria so students can get to know neurotypical peers</p> <p>Ensure supervision and accommodations in unstructured school settings (i.e., lunch/recess, hallways)</p> <p>Support students during lunch with their grade level peers (i.e., ensure proper amount of aids, self-contained classes and scheduling, etc.)</p>

Appendix B: Full List of Academic Development at Home Concerns and Recommendations

Grouping	Description	Considerations
Social Activities	There needs to be active efforts at each campus designed to get special education families engaged at school.	<p>Implement a Special Education-only Back to School night</p> <p>Expand Special Education family fairs across ACPS</p>
Communication	One of the most persistent concerns across multiple years of SEAC advocacy is a lack of transparency and open communication with special education students and parents. While the Parent Resource Center is a gem of resources and is always accessible by phone call or email, the same level of communication should be provided by the Office of Specialized Instruction and each campus team. Parents feel disconnected and frustrated with the lack of clear and timely communication, especially those parents whose students have high needs and are unable to communicate themselves (city-wide and self-contained).	<p>Increase communication to families regarding reading interventions, communications, timelines, IEPs, successes</p> <p>Implement additional family-teacher conferences, especially for students with communication challenges (can be informal to understand student progress and needs)</p> <p>Increase communication and collaboration on what is happening in the Special Education classroom</p> <p>Spend additional ACPS resources to provide families information (i.e., update websites, make resources easier to find, translate resources in multiple languages, hire family advocates)</p> <p>Ensure that captions, ASL interpretation, and audio description are readily available at school Zoom presentations in the same manner as Spanish, Arabic, and Amharic interpretations</p> <p>Implement a sharing mechanism (i.e., Google Docs) for teachers, support staff, and families to communicate, especially for non-verbal children</p>

		Develop weekly logs of student learnings and strategies
		Create transparency and communication when related services/special educational instruction are missed and how the hours are made up
		Implement accessible information and communication, particularly in regards to sensory disabilities (i.e., screen-reader compatible PDFs, etc.)
		Share pictures and videos of activities between school and home
		Develop an ACPS-wide standard for acknowledging and responding to family email
Culturally Responsive	There is concern that parents who are not native speakers of English are not being properly involved in the IEP process.	Prepare for IEP and triennial scheduling in advance, respecting families' schedule and not dictating when the meeting is
		Develop language specific communities for special education families
Instruction for Families	Many families with students in special education want to be more involved and want to have consistency of approaches across home and school. They want additional instructional opportunities so that they can increase their understanding of their child's needs and how to best support them at home.	Create classes for families on the IEP process to understand the process, in different languages, and culturally relevant outreach
		Notify all families that students with disabilities are entitled to appropriate accommodations (504 plans and IEP awareness)
		Normalize that specialized transportation is discussed as a possibility at all IEP meetings, not just at some schools or some populations

		Communicate the science of reading approaches to families
		Provide guidance for families in math and reading
		Share school-based strategies with families, as families cannot rely on outside services
		Provide behavior management guidance for families (PBIS)
		Provide support to families to continue services and learning at home (e.g., provide strategy reports at least monthly)
		Issue access for families to the Progress Monitoring Tool
Encourage Classroom Visits	Post-pandemic most families still feel unwelcome at schools and some have been actively kept from observing classrooms and participating in activities. This needs to be addressed.	Encourage family visits to classroom and other activities

Appendix C: Full List of Extracurricular Concerns and Recommendations

Grouping	Description	Considerations
<p>Extracurricular Staff Training</p>	<p>Training for after school staff, partners, tutors, mentors, coaches etc. needs to be a priority so students with IEPs and BIPs are fully included in the school day, including sports and extracurriculars.</p>	<p>Train community partners that run extracurriculars on disabilities</p>
		<p>Support and implement professional development for after-school staff</p>
		<p>Encourage event holders to make more accessible choices by providing a guide to implementing common requests and a template to post alongside activity announcements for requesting individual accommodations</p>
		<p>Educate staff on inclusionary principles</p>
<p>Accommodations and Services</p>	<p>In order for students with disabilities to safely and fully participate in sports and extracurriculars, their IEP services/accommodations need to be recognized and implemented in the non-academic environment.</p>	<p>Ensure accommodations at extracurriculars and sporting events for Special Education / 504 students (i.e., sensory, allergy, accessibility)</p>
		<p>Enable students to participate in after-school activities</p>
		<p>Provide instructional support for after-school programs</p>
		<p>Provide behavioral support after school</p>
		<p>Encourage all students to participate in at least one extracurricular activity</p>
		<p>Validate that there is specialized transportation for after-school events</p>
		<p>Match services made available by ACPS for abled-students outside of school hours (i.e., accessible buses)</p>

<p>Activities</p>	<p>Non-traditional activities and programming can help better support students with disabilities and encourage equitable participation outside of school hours.</p>	<p>Explore implementing a program where high school students learn how to help children with special needs in after-school activity</p>
		<p>Implement after-school activities that focus on social skills</p>
		<p>Consider strategies to develop friendships through activities, as circle of friends are developed when children are young (typical and atypical kids)</p>
		<p>Implement before school activities that focus on aerobic movement</p>

Appendix D: Full List of Other Concerns and Recommendations

Grouping	Description	Considerations
Culture	A shift in the culture of inclusion needs to occur at every level of leadership and instruction in ACPS. This would take a move beyond compliance-based culture and into a true culture of inclusion.	<p>Create a tone-at-the-top from administration and ACPS School Board emphasizing everything is for the betterment of the student with disabilities</p> <p>Value general inclusiveness for all types of people – place high value on acceptance of a variety of differences</p>
Definitions and Clarity	There is some general confusion about the definition of a student with a disability and how families with students with 504 plans fit into the overall culture of inclusion.	<p>Expand definition of disability and SEAC’s scope to include students with 504 plans</p> <p>Clarify “students with disabilities” to include all students receiving formal disability accommodations, including 504 plans</p> <p>Be clear on intended audience when communicating</p> <p>Reflect the IEP-focus of communications in writing</p>
Compliance	Through lawsuits, there has been increased transparency and communication in neighboring districts. ACPS should do this preemptively.	<p>Examine and communicate ACPS’s payment for private placement as appropriate</p> <p>Audit and communicate ACPS’s compliance with the law during the pandemic</p>