

Date: October 5, 2018

For ACTION \_\_\_\_\_

For INFORMATION  X

Board Agenda: Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No  X

**FROM:** Clinton Page, Ed.S., Chief Accountability Officer  
Terri Mazingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer  
Theresa Werner, Executive Director of Specialized Instruction

**THROUGH:** Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** The Honorable Ramee A. Gentry, Chair, and Members of the Alexandria City School Board

**TOPIC:** Students with Disabilities Evaluation Report

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) has made a commitment to every student, parent, and community member that “*Every Student Succeeds.*” A critical component of ensuring that ACPS is offering the highest quality services to each student is through structured reviews of essential programs.

The rationale for the evaluation of services to students with disabilities was to provide a comprehensive review of the current state of programs and services for students with disabilities, and their families, to inform the division and relevant stakeholders in areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement. Key stakeholder groups have been represented throughout the process ranging from the development of the guiding research questions and Request for Proposals (RFP) process to the ongoing work of developing an action plan in response to the findings of the report.

Evaluation work began during the summer of 2017 in collaboration with a competitively selected external evaluator, Public Consulting Group, Inc. (PCG), and was guided by the following key research questions:

1. *To what extent do the instructional services ACPS offers meet the needs of students with disabilities within the Division?*
2. *To what extent is ACPS meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families in the area of compliance with state and federal regulations?*
3. *To what extent does ACPS utilize its **human capital resources** to provide adequate services for students with disabilities to support student learning outcomes?*
4. *To what extent has ACPS’s school and division leadership fostered an instructional program and school/division **culture that supports meeting the unique educational needs of students with disabilities**?*
5. *To what extent do ACPS’s **internal and external communication practices** foster collaboration among staff and families in support of students with disabilities?*

These research questions were thoroughly examined over the course of the 2017-18 school year through:

- reviews of population trends, programs, and achievement and outcomes analysis;
- staffing analysis comparing ACPS to 70 school districts nationwide;
- document review including information related to division and school structures, programs, policies, and practices;
- surveys of parents and staff;
- focus groups and interviews with parents, Board Members, and staff;
- student file review focus groups with case managers;
- interviews with ACPS and program leadership;
- classroom observations at 16 school sites;
- student shadowing at 16 school sites;

All data collected were then analyzed, synthesized across sources and research questions, and ultimately incorporated into the attached comprehensive report. The executive summary, attached to this memorandum, includes study methods employed and data sources, a summary of strengths and opportunities for improvement, and a detailed summary of recommendations.

PCG will present the report findings at the October 25<sup>th</sup> School Board Meeting. In the weeks that follow, ACPS will present the draft action plan crafted collaboratively by 36 stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, division administrators, and parent/SEAC representative) in response to the report's findings and recommendations. ACPS will receive public comment in face-to-face forums November 13 & 14. An online survey to receive public comment will open November 9 and will remain open until November 20. A final action plan is expected to be presented to the Board at the December 20 meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Superintendent recommends the Board review the SWD Evaluation Executive Summary and Report for future discussion regarding possible planning, programmatic, and/or budgetary changes.

**IMPACT:**

The SWD Evaluation Report provides ACPS with critical insights into areas of ACPS programming and services for students with disabilities. The report finds that "ACPS has a solid foundation on which to build"; however, without "...focus, a strong vision from the superintendent and enacted by the senior leadership staff, an appropriate allocation of resources, mandated professional development, and clear, non-negotiable, accountability measures..." the division's services for students with disabilities will stagnate. The information within the report will be utilized by the division to chart a purposeful course over the next three years for realizing success for students with disabilities and meeting the call of *every student succeeds*.

**ATTACHMENTS:**     (1) *SWD Evaluation Executive Summary*  
                              (2) *SWD Evaluation Report*

**CONTACT PERSON:**

Clinton Page, Chief Accountability Officer