

Public Comments

November 7, 2019 School Board Meeting

My name is Cindy Hart and I am this year's chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee, or SEAC.

Tonight our Executive Director of Specialized Instruction Terry Werner will present the revised draft Action Plan for educating Students with Disabilities in ACPS. As action begins, I first want to say how pleased I am that Ms. Werner's position has been added to the Superintendent's Senior Leadership Team. This is a move that SEAC strongly supports. Successful implementation will require ongoing monitoring and accountability, and it is important that the Executive Director of Specialized Instruction have sufficient authority to ensure progress. Meanwhile, SEAC is working to determine what public reporting of progress would assist with accountability and to determine which areas of the plan require extra focus from our committee. This analysis will guide our Scope of Work, which we will present to you next month.

The initial phases of the Action Plan will focus on structures that support effective education of students with disabilities. There will be clear guidelines provided to schools regarding the MTSS framework. MTSS, or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, provides social-emotional supports and positive behavior incentives and supports so that the child is able to benefit from academic instruction and interventions. Our schools are at many different levels of implementation, and the Action Plan addresses building this necessary foundation at each school. I believe SEAC can assist by helping parents understand the MTSS framework and by providing insights and feedback on how implementation is affecting our child's school day, from literacy instruction to art class.

This all takes a lot of work, from Central Office to Principals to teachers and other school staff, but **the very good news is that best practices for students with disabilities is good for all students.** While students with disabilities facing academic challenges can rarely succeed without a strong program of specially designed instructional supports, every student benefits from them. We can't even begin to tackle issues of equity without a strong MTSS approach in place. Therefore, this Action Plan will help our district ensure that children from many different backgrounds and cultures have the supports in place to succeed, whether they have a disability or not.

We view this Action Plan as a living document, and SEAC has a subcommittee in place to evaluate it closely and to provide specific feedback to the Department of Specialized Instruction. We know there is no quick fix, but it is our hope and expectation that this plan will initiate a long-term, results-driven approach that will improve outcomes for our children.