

Special Education Advisory Committee Scope of Work for 2020-21

The 2020-21 SEAC Scope of Work focuses on a few key areas. Our current goals were all part of last year's Scope of Work as well, but progress on these goals ceased last winter and spring due to the pandemic.

We are aligning our work with the ACPS 2025 Strategic Plan, Equity for All. Also, cognizant of the budget pressures caused by the pandemic, our goals have minimal budget impact.

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.

Areas of Focus for 2020-21

Communication with Parents/Guardians of Students with Disabilities (SWD)

Background: The first two core values of Equity for All 2025 are for ACPS to be "welcoming" and "empowering." For this to happen, strong communication with families is essential. Parents and guardians of SWD need additional information not needed by the average family, especially in time of pandemic. Additionally, the State tasks SEAC with assisting the local school division in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services. Family and Community Engagement is one of the five goals of Equity for ALL 2025, and improving communication with families and the community is a necessary step in meeting this goal.

Goal: SEAC will examine current practices regarding communication with parents and guardians in ACPS related to supports and services provided to SWD. SEAC will make recommendations to improve communications from the division to families and will determine how to best share the ACPS Students with Disabilities Action Plan with the ACPS community.

Budget impact: minimal to none

Community Awareness of SEAC

Background: Family and community engagement is one of the five goals of Equity for All 2025, and three core values are to be “welcoming,” “empowering,” and “equity-focused.” SEAC is an advisory committee mandated by the State of Virginia to engage and empower families of SWD. Our committee needs input from a diversity of families within ACPS to gain awareness of systemic needs.

Currently many parents and caregivers lack familiarity with SEAC. Data from the 2019 VDOE report noted that almost half of elementary parents and 80% of secondary parents were not aware of SEAC and/or meetings. Rarely does a parent, caregiver, teacher, or community member provide public comment at a meeting. Though reports by Public Consulting Group (completed October, 2018) and Virginia Department of Education (completed August, 2019) detail the needs of students with disabilities in ACPS, we must develop on-going means to learn about parent/caregiver (and staff) concerns. Just as ACPS wants to ensure that all students have equitable access to instruction that meets their needs, SEAC wants to ensure that parents and caregivers of SWD in all ACPS communities know they have a place to share their concerns.

Goal: Increase public comment and create a diversity of membership that reflects the community.

To accomplish this goal, SEAC will work in collaboration with school PTAs, the PRC, and ACPS leaders to raise the awareness of SEAC among parents and caregivers of SWD and of staff serving this population. SEAC will implement practices that develop a sense of community and empower families and staff to share questions and concerns. Building a culture of cross-collaboration and trust will help SEAC fulfill its roll of advising ACPS of needs in the education of children with disabilities.

Budget impact: minimal to none

Literacy

Background: Instructional Excellence is one of the five goals of the ACPS 2025 Strategic Plan. Within this goal, Equity for All 2025 identifies “implementing a consistent, high-impact approach to teaching literacy in all K-2 classrooms across the Division” as a Highlighted Action and gives several strategies for improving K-5 literacy. SEAC wants to ensure that consistent, high-impact approaches for literacy instruction are available to SWD. Data from VDOE shows that the SWD proficiency rate in ACPS for English/reading was 35.99% in 2018-19, which falls below the State target of 48%.

SEAC formed a working group to address literacy concerns for SWD last academic year but the group never reported recommendations back to SEAC due to the pandemic. Including Literacy as an Area of Focus will allow SEAC to share these recommendations and possibly to add to the work done last year.

Goal: Review ACPS plan for K-2 literacy and MTSS implementation and make recommendations accordingly.

Budget Impact: not yet known but unlikely to be major; training will likely be needed

Policies and Procedures

Background: The State of Virginia tasks SEAC with reviewing the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services prior to their submission to the local school board.

Goal: As the School Board reviews policies and procedures, the Director of Policy and Board Initiatives will forward to SEAC any policies and procedures related to students with disabilities; the SEAC School Board Liaison will also note issues of concern and bring them to the attention of SEAC. This year SEAC will focus on the policies and procedures relating to virtual instruction and to return to in-person learning. We will also address other topics of concern if/when they arise.

Budget Impact: not yet known

Budget

Background: Each year SEAC reviews the proposed budget and if warranted provides input to the School Board regarding impacts on children with disabilities.

Goal: Review the budget and provide recommendations on its impact for SWD.

Anne Lipnick Awards

Background: SEAC administers this annual awards program by soliciting nominations and selecting outstanding staff who serve SWD.

Goal: Because of the pandemic, it is not clear if we will conduct this awards program this year but SEAC will proceed if possible.

Budget Impact: minor