

**To: Alexandria City Public School Board**

**From: Vickie Cattaneo, SEAC Co-Chair  
Sandra Strachan-Vieira, SEAC Co-Chair**

**Date: October 20, 2009**

**Re: SEAC Scope of Work for 2009 - 2010**

We have identified the meeting topics for SY 2009 - 2010 scope of work. The Virginia Department of Education, Office of Federal Monitoring, Non-Compliance letter, July 30, 2008, the Virginia Department of Education Special Education Performance Plan, Alexandria School Board strategic plan goals and the July 13, 2009 memo from Deputy Superintendent David and Deputy Superintendent Byess informed our current topic choices. The topics identified by SEAC committee vote this year are: (1) Career and transition services (School Board Strategic Plan Goals 1, objective d; Goal 2, objective c); (2) Tutoring access for SOLs and other subject areas for students with disabilities; (3) Space Allocation; (4) Administrator (principal and staff) accountability, (5) Parent Involvement and ACPS Communication Plan (School Board Strategic Planning Goal 1, objectives a, e, and h; Goal 3, objective c); (6) Literacy and Reading Programs; and (7) a comprehensive Autism program. As required by School Board policy, we devote one meeting each year to reviewing the annual ACPS report on special education that is submitted to the State of Virginia. A request was made by the Superintendent for SEAC to add to its meeting topics the subject matter of Inclusion/ Co-Teaching.

SEAC looks forward to working with the School Board, Superintendent Morton Sherman and new Executive Director of Special Education Margaret McLeod on issues related to students with disabilities as well as the strategic plan this coming school year. We invite the Superintendent and School Board to attend SEAC meetings and provide feedback as we plan our agendas or submit our recommendations. As in the past, SEAC will focus on developing and presenting specific, actionable recommendations on the unmet needs of the special education population in ACPS. Such will be submitted to the School Board and the Superintendent.

We have organized all of the aforementioned topics into several general categories for the coming school year.

### ***Emerging Student Needs***

- 1. Inclusion/Co-Teaching** - ACPS this school year is in the process of implementing inclusion and co-teaching across ACPS. SEAC will provide feedback to the School Board on this new process.
- 2. Space Allocation and Class Sizes** - SEAC members in the past expressed their concerns regarding how and where classrooms for students with disabilities are assigned within ACPS school buildings. Recently, this has become an issue again

for SEAC. Class size and related in-classroom student supports will also be part of this topic session.

SEAC's objective for above topics is to present to the ACPS School Board any actionable recommendations or resolutions we feel are warranted.

### *Administrator Accountability*

A long-standing issue for SEAC has been a lack of accountability for principals and staff in ACPS. The VASS Special Education Program Report also reinforced that ACPS needs to hold principals and other staff accountable for the education of students with disabilities. A particular focus will be on how accountability for all can influence a cultural shift away from ACPS's current pervasive culture of low expectations for students with disabilities towards an organizational culture where "the education of every child is everybody's responsibility."<sup>1</sup>

SEAC and or individual members will provide information to the Superintendent throughout the school year, as appropriate. Overall, the committee's objective for the above topic is to present to the ACPS School Board any actionable recommendations or resolutions regarding policies and procedures designed to enhance accountability throughout ACPS.

### *Programs*

1. **Comprehensive Autism Program** - ACPS lacks a comprehensive pre-school-to-22 autism program unlike its surrounding jurisdictions. SEAC will review the current state of an autism program in ACPS and make recommendations based upon effective, evidence-based practices, including ABA.
2. **Career and Transition Services** - SEAC plans to focus on a review of the current career and transition services available for students with disabilities. As per the Strategic Plan, SEAC will provide feedback and recommendations on the needs of students with disabilities to ACPS's Career and Transition Work Group, Superintendent and the School Board.
3. **Tutoring Access for Students with Disabilities** – Lack of access to tutoring and to programs is an issue for students with disabilities in ACPS. SEAC intends to develop recommendations to ensure access for all special needs student who are in need of such programs and tutoring services.
4. **Literacy/Reading Programs** - Reading and Literacy programs have been a long-standing issue for SEAC, particularly given how low Alexandria's scores are in comparison to other jurisdictions. Reading is an essential skill that all students need to be successful academically and we have received many complaints that

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<sup>1</sup> VASS report as quoted in ACPS memo, Task for Board Committees, July 13, 2009. p.4.

students are routinely denied access to reading programs that they need to learn how to read. Several years ago, a secondary Special Education Literacy Coach position was implemented, posted, never filled and then eliminated. An Elementary Special Education Literacy Coach was hired, however, SEAC has received complaints that the literacy coach has not been available for consultations. SEAC will develop appropriate recommendations regarding this issue.

SEAC's objective for above topics is to present to the ACPS School Board any actionable recommendations or resolutions we feel are warranted.

### *Communications*

1. ***Parent Involvement and ACPS Communication Plan*** - SEAC intends to focus on providing feedback to ACPS on its communication plan with parents and make recommendations on how to build positive relationships with parents. At this point in time SEAC has already provided feedback on the structure of Student Services website. Additionally, in its end-of-year report, we provided feedback on the potential strategic utilization of ACPS's cable channel.
2. ***Disability Awareness Professional Development Program*** – SEAC looks forward to providing suggestions prior to development of the plan as well as feedback after it is presented. As per the Superintendent's suggestion, SEAC would like to see a parent panel set-up to that presents to the faculty the human side of special education.

SEAC's objective for above topics is to present to the ACPS School Board any actionable recommendations or resolutions we feel are warranted.

