

Date: November 13, 2017

For ACTION _____

For INFORMATION _____

Board Agenda Yes ___ No ___

FROM: Janet Eissenstat, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee
Ellen Taverna, Vice-Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

THROUGH: Theresa Werner, JD., Executive Director of Specialized Instruction
Terri Mazingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer
Lois Berlin, Acting Superintendent of Schools

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

TOPIC: 2017-18 SEAC Plan and Scope of Work

BACKGROUND: The attached plan outlines the proposed scope of work for your Special Education Advisory Committee (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.

To clarify how SEAC members view the many ongoing initiatives under the committee's purview, the initiatives are addressed below in the context of ACPS 2020, the strategic plan for the school division. Specific objectives for the 2017-2018 school year are summarized on the last page.

As always, the SEAC priority will be to identify the areas of greatest need for students with disabilities and work to identify the areas that have the most potential to positively impact the lives of students with disabilities. During the 2017-2018 academic year, the top two priorities for the Special Education Advisory Committee are to:

1. Continue to advocate for a full examination of the current state of special education within the district by focusing attention and resources on the current Special Education Evaluation being conducted by Public Consulting Group, including advocating for the expansion of the on-site evaluations to include every school in the district.

2. Advocate for the implantation of a district wide disability awareness plan.

The SEAC will continue to advocate, as appropriate, on a wide range of issues related to special education students and their families both on an ad hoc basis and as those issues arise as expressed within the context of the following ACPS 2020 strategic goals:

Goal #1

Academic Excellence and Educational Equity:

Every student will be academically successful and prepared for life, work and college.

The SEAC will work closely with staff to ensure that the full value of the Special Education Evaluation currently being conducted by Public Consulting Group is given the level of attention and resources necessary to provide a comprehensive look at the state of specialized instruction within the district.

The SEAC will position itself to advocate effectively for the full implementation of any recommendations contained in the Special Education Evaluation final report.

The SEAC will continue to advocate for effective proactive interventions for special education students who are failing to improve their reading, writing and math abilities. The SEAC will continue to monitor the intervention strategies available to ACPS teachers, will review the implementation of these interventions, make recommendations to administrative staff for improvement of existing interventions, and advise in the development of new interventions with a goal of improving the test scores and outcomes for individual students with special needs.

The SEAC will form a curriculum subcommittee this year for the purposes of understanding and reporting on academic strategies and interventions in use by ACPS.

The SEAC will work with staff to ensure that ACPS Special Education data, especially reading and math scores, are available on the ACPS dashboard so that public accountability will aid in driving performance.

The SEAC will review the quality of Summer School and Enrichment Programs available to students with disabilities.

The SEAC will continue to focus on the long-term success of special education students. Successful transitions and career readiness will always be a priority for the committee. The committee will work to push appropriate career and transition activities and discussions first into middle school and then into the earlier grades so that students and their families can fully benefit from the supports and options available to them.

The SEAC will work to promote an inclusive culture across ACPS so that all may work and learn in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The SEAC interprets the district objectives related to civic engagement, civic responsibility, ethics and behaviors for success in the broadest sense. The SEAC will urge the administration to move beyond the goals of inclusion and acceptance and create instead an organizational culture that promotes human dignity and the presumption of competence.

Goal #2

Family and Community Engagement:

ACPS will partner with families and the community in the education of Alexandria's youth.

Each year members of the SEAC work to increase awareness of disabilities and promote inclusion through PTA and parent initiated programs in the schools, specifically after school programs. Last year SEAC laid the foundation for a district wide disability awareness plan called the Inclusion Project. This Inclusion Project will be piloted at George Washington Middle School in 2017-2018 but SEAC will be seeking to expand to other schools within the next few years. This year, SEAC will work with staff to formalize the implementation plan with a goal of presenting the plan to the school board in the Spring of 2018.

The SEAC will seek to leverage member ties to social service and community organizations on behalf of ACPS by first understanding the existing relationships and by identifying opportunities for collaborative partnerships.

The SEAC will urge the public relations and media specialists within ACPS to highlight students with disabilities with greater frequency.

The SEAC will make recommendations, as needed, to improve the reach and efficacy of the Parent Resource Center.

Goal #3

An Exemplary Staff:

ACPS will recruit, develop, support, and retain a staff that meets the needs of every student.

The SEAC will advocate for the resources necessary to fully understand underlying issues related to recruitment and retention rates of special education teachers, para professionals, therapists and other support personnel who work directly with students with disabilities.

The SEAC will continue to advocate, especially during budget planning, for training, resources and supports necessary to ensure that special education teachers, in particular, have the tools they need to provide appropriate and effective differentiated education.

The SEAC will seek to highlight and celebrate instructional excellence and inclusive practices by working with staff to honor ACPS special education professionals and staff who demonstrate the best instructional and inclusive practices.

Goal #4

Facilities and Learning Environment:

ACPS will provide optimal and equitable learning environments.

To understand the current state of special education learning environments, SEAC members will survey at least three existing facilities, including off site training facilities, and make recommendations, based upon the best principles of universal design, for board consideration as ACPS implements its Redistricting and Capital Improvement Plans and takes action on the Grade Level Configuration Study.

Safe and secure facilities are of particular importance for vulnerable populations. The SEAC will continue to report any compliance issues to ACPS staff when students with disabilities face challenges related to access, transportation, and basic human dignity.

Goal #5
Health and Wellness:
ACPS will promote efforts to enable students to be healthy and ready to learn.

This year the SEAC will follow the implementation of the new Family Life Curriculum closely and will provide comment and make recommendations based upon parent feedback.

Recognizing that physical, social and emotional health are priority issues for students with disabilities and that this population also needs to have the experience, relationships and access to physical fitness, recreation and play that all students need, the SEAC will continue to advocate for additional support for adaptive PE and for increased collaboration with programs providing opportunities for social and psychological success. Programs like Best Buddies, adaptive and inclusive sports teams, opportunities for social engagement with typical peers, and an environment that presumes competence are all important components in the life of a healthy student.

Goal #6
Effective and Efficient Operations:
ACPS will be efficient, effective and transparent in its business operations.

Special Education students benefit exponentially from the efficient and timely implementation of academic interventions and accommodations, therefore the SEAC supports all efforts to make delivery of services more efficient and effective. The committee will continue to monitor and make recommendations as needed on all Special Education plans, programs and the implementation of those plans and programs.

The SEAC will provide input to the school board on the annual budget and its impact on children with disabilities.

The SEAC will make recommendations to the ACPS staff related to improving communication with all parents of children with special needs and students who are identified as possibly qualifying for an IEP.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

IMPACT: Proposed objectives for the 2017-18 year.



vision

All students with disabilities achieve their potential and actively contribute to our local and global communities.



mission

The purpose of this committee, in accordance with and subject to guidelines and regulations of the authorities of the Commonwealth of Virginia Administrative Code, Virginia Department of Education, Alexandria City School Board, and the SEAC Bylaws; shall be to provide advice and policy guidance concerning students with disabilities to members of the Alexandria City School Board.



objectives

SEAC will advocate for a full examination of the current state of special education within the district by focusing attention and resources on the current Special Education Evaluation being conducted by Public Consulting Group, including advocating for the expansion of the on-site evaluations to include every school in the district.

SEAC will actively engage in the Specialized Education Evaluation process to ensure that the parental voice is heard.

SEAC will work with staff to present a project plan for the implement a district wide disability awareness program.

SEAC will work with ACPS staff to identify by the end of the year a set of appropriate, accurate and meaningful data, especially data related to reading and math progress, to publicly share and track.

SEAC will advocate for training, resources, and supports necessary to ensure that special education teachers have the tools they need to provide appropriate and effective differentiated education.

SEAC will urge the public relations and media specialists within ACPS to highlight students with disabilities with greater frequency.

SEAC will honor special education professionals and staff.

SEAC will monitor the Family Life Curriculum.

SEAC will advocate for career transition planning in the lower grades.

SEAC will provide input to the school board on the annual budget and its impact on children with disabilities.

SEAC will make recommendations to the ACPS staff related to improving communication with parents of children with special needs and students who are identified as possibly qualifying for an IEP.
