

Date: September 28, 2016

For ACTION _____

For INFORMATION _____

Board Agenda: Yes _____
No _____

FROM: Jeffrey Zack, Co-Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee
Sandra Strachan-Vieira, Co-Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

THROUGH: Alvin L. Crawley, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

CC: Terri Mazingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer
Theresa Werner, JD., Executive Director of Specialized Instruction

TO: The Honorable Karen Graf, Chair and Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: 2015 -16 SEAC End of Year Report

This year SEAC welcomed Theresa Werner, M.Ed., J.D., as the new Executive Director of Specialized Instruction and our new School Board Liaison Margaret Lorber. We thank our past liaison, Stephanie Kapsis, for her many efforts on our behalf. Additionally, the Office of Special Education was renamed the Office of Specialized Instruction. SEAC welcomes the participation and input from ACPS School Board members, the Superintendent, Central Office staff, principals, related service providers, special and general education teachers as well as other building level staff.

BACKGROUND: At the September 22, 2015 SEAC Meeting, the membership *unanimously* approved the following scope of work, which was then transmitted via the Superintendent to the School Board for approval. On October 1, 2015, the School Board *unanimously* approved the scope work as written. SEAC strived to fulfill the scope of work this year, as it was our commitment to not only the School Board, but to the 1500+ children with disabilities in ACPS. Unfortunately this year, SEAC was not able address many areas in the approved scope. This report outlines where we were successful and where we failed.

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.

Scope of Work Components and Results:

1. **DATA DRIVEN** – *We moved to a more balanced qualitative and quantitative approach to identify the needs in the education of children with disabilities, and to participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities.* The committee wants to ensure the special education programs have defined outcomes that are appropriate and measurable. SEAC looks to work with ACPS administration to become more “data-driven”. To accomplish this, time will be allotted in every SEAC meeting to review and better understand the ACPS Special Education Dashboard. SEAC will work with ACPS to evolve the dashboard into accurate, meaningful information.

Results: NONE - ACPS did not establish a special education dashboard during SY 2015-16 as was communicated to SEAC. SEAC offered to assist with data analysis throughout the year but was unable to obtain the necessary data from ACPS. In particular, we had hoped to gain access to aggregated reading and math data for students with disabilities in order to better assess their progress under ACPS’ MTSS or “Intensive MTSS” tiered model of interventions and supports.

SEAC was able to do an analysis of the 2014-15 SOL test scores for ACPS students with special needs retrieved from the VDOE website. This analysis showed that large, pervasive and multi-year gaps continue to exist between ACPS and Arlington, Fairfax , etc. (slides are attached/ Appendix A). The findings and slides were presented to the ACPS School Board in December of 2016.

2. **RAPID RECOVERY** - *Advise and counsel ACPS on approaches to rapidly improve outcomes for students with disabilities.* The committee recognizes in the last five years the continuous decline of test scores for students with special needs has led to a dire situation for those students in secondary schools. They do not have much more time in ACPS to improve their reading, writing and math abilities. In last year’s recommendations, SEAC emphasized the need for a “Rapid Recovery” program for these students, as there is little remaining time to “fix it”. SEAC looks forward to reviewing and assisting in the tuning of the administration’s “Rapid Recovery” plan.

Results: NONE - In October, 2015, ACPS requested the renaming of this item from “Rapid Recovery” to “Intensive MTSS”. SEAC quickly agreed, because it is the implementation of the plan not the name that is important. SEAC was told that data was being collected and reviewed every 6 weeks (or quarterly) at the Central Office and School-based levels. And, if it was identified that interventions were not working for a student, they would be changed and monitored. Regrettably, SEAC was unable to obtain updates on the status of interventions and their success for students with special needs in secondary schools despite repeated requests. Additionally, it was stated at one of the last meetings of the year that NOT all principals in ACPS were using AIMSweb to collect data on students to help improve their outcomes in reading and math. . SEAC urges ACPS to REQUIRE all principals to collect AIMSweb and use it to help all struggling students (where appropriate) not just those receiving special education services. Also, since AIMSweb data can be aggregated we urge that that ACPS use this function so another tool may used to view how individual schools are progressing. Another progress monitoring data tool we would encourage ACPS to use, is the student growth profile (SGP) data collected and provided by the VDOE to all districts. It is aggregated by school, grade and teacher-level and is available for individual students. Loudon and other Virginia counties use the SGP data as an

additional data tool to measure progress. (Please see attached Appendix B with selected slides from February, 2016 Loudon County presentation as an example.)

3. **BUILD TRUST** - *Work in partnership with the new Special Education leadership and other groups to build a culture of trust and cross-collaboration.* SEAC is encouraged with the experienced leadership the Superintendent has brought in to the special education programs over the 2015 summer. SEAC will work collaboratively with the entire team to assist the local school division in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services.

Results: NONE - The lack of progress on this item is especially troubling to SEAC as it goes well beyond the relationship between SEAC and ACPS and in to the special education community. SEAC exists as a voice for parents of children with special needs. It is very hard for many parents to participate in School Board committees due to work and childcare responsibilities. In addition, parents worry that speaking up about their concerns will bring retaliation on their child. This item was added to our scope of work at the request of the Superintendent in a meeting to review the scope in August, 2015. The cooperation between SEAC and ACPS had grown steadily over the prior two years. During the 2015/2016 school year, as can be seen from the lack of progress on other items in the scope of work, the relationship stagnated. ACPS did not work in partnership with SEAC as they developed plans and-or initiatives focused on the special education community. Examples are: the Office of Specialized Instruction Plan, the Curriculum and Instruction survey of special education parents, the PRC support groups, and the SWOT sessions for parents. On several occasions, had ACPS used SEAC to beta-test some of their approaches perhaps better more reliable data would have been obtainable. Some results were not formally communicated out to SEAC. SEAC will continue to work towards a constructive, collaborative partnership with ACPS during the 2016/2017 school year and we actively encourage ACPS to use the committee as a beta-testing or focus group for their special education initiatives.

4. **MONITORING** – Oversight and monitoring of implementation plans such as Inclusion, Career & Transition, Autism, and other Special Education plans.

Results: Minimal - Special Education plan meetings were held for the Inclusion, Career and Transition, and Autism Plans two times each during the year. The VCU Autism Grant team met three times. Regrettably, there is not much progress to report at this time due to the fact that the number of committee meetings was sporadic and the communication of results insubstantial..

5. **Update the SEAC bylaws.** Due to changes in ACPS, and the evolution of SEAC operations, this year the bylaws will be updated to align with current operating procedures, while being compliant to all Virginia guidelines.

Results: Completed - These were completed, approved by SEAC, and submitted to the School Board in May, 2016.

6. **Review ACPS policies and procedures and provide recommendations to align with the needs of children with disabilities.**
- *Service Animal Policy*

Results: Completed - SEAC reviewed the following policies:

7. *Provide input to the school board on the annual budget and impacts on children with disabilities.*

Results: We would like to thank the School Board for fully funding the 2015 -16 budget for special education in ACPS. The School Board incorporated SEAC's four main budget recommendations:

- a) the School Board commission an independent review of the ACPS special education program. SEAC would like to thank the School Board for its support on this important issue. We believe an independent, comprehensive and evidence-based evaluation will be extremely important for the future of students with disabilities and special education in ACPS. We hope that this evaluation will reveal issues that have yet to be considered,
- b) reinstate the "apartment" at TC Williams used to teach students with disabilities daily life skills,
- c) all elevators in ACPS will be ADA compliant by the end of summer 2016, and
- d) SEAC supported the purchase of nine new school buses for the school system.

SEAC would like to thank the ACPS staff for its multi-year commitment to making sure all elevators are ADA compliant and helping to ensure the "apartment" was rebuilt in TC Williams.

8. *Sponsor the Harry Burke and Anne Lipnick Special Education Awards.*

Results: Mixed - The goal of the Harry Burke and Anne Lipnick Awards is to recognize the exceptional teachers who serve our student population in ACPS. As was stated in our 2014/2015 end of year report, we believe that this is an opportunity for families, staff, school-based building administrators and Central Office staff to recognize the teachers who go above and beyond in each school.

As part of the Harry Burke awards process this year, the Executive Director of Specialized Instruction Terry Werner met with all primary and secondary building principals, Gerald Mann, Executive Director of Secondary Instruction and Secondary Principal Administrator and Dr. Lisa Piehota, Executive Director of Elementary Instruction. The goal presented to each principal and re-enforced by the Administrators, was that each school would nominate at least 3 teachers – one for each category that was eligible: special education teacher, special education para-professional and general education teacher exemplifying inclusion for all.

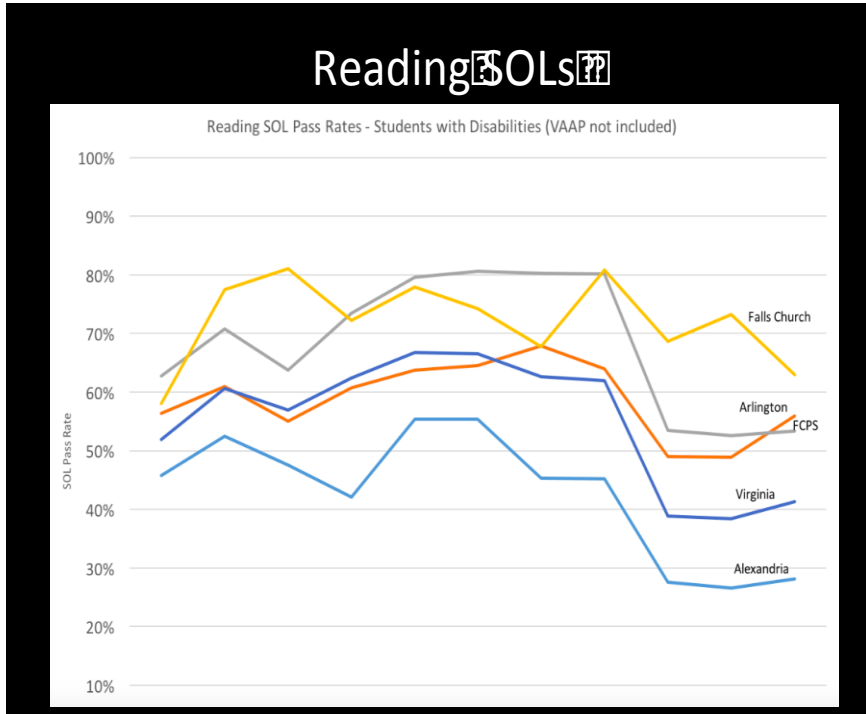
The elementary schools provided the highest number of nominees in years in all categories. SEAC would like to see more nominees from the middle schools and TC Williams.

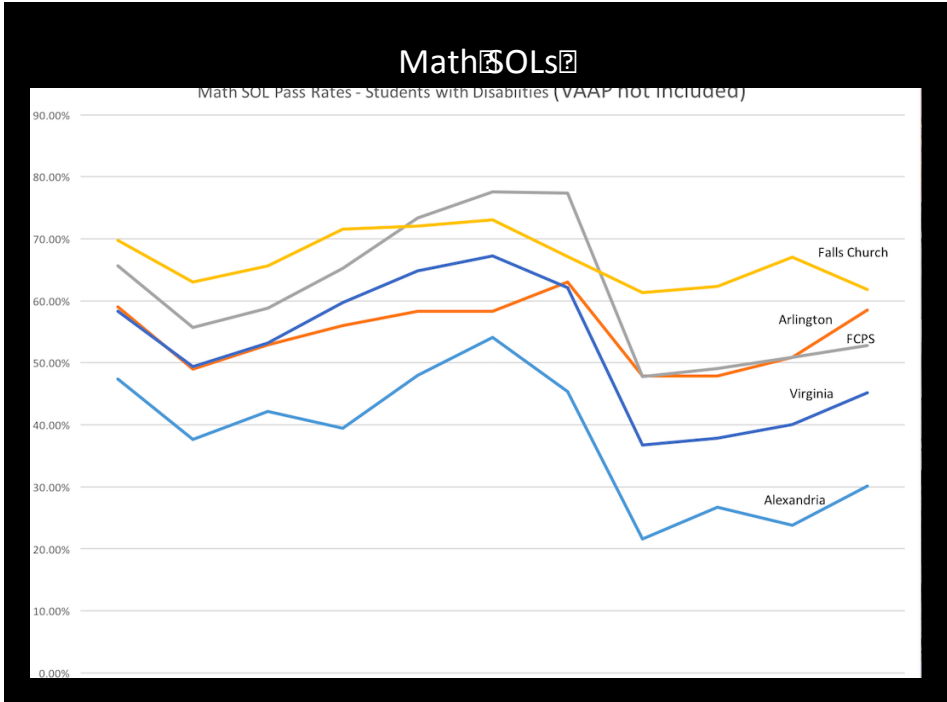
Over the past few years, SEAC had taken over all the organizing and awareness activities for the awards. This was a large task to manage as an all volunteer organization and many SEAC members contributed both time and personal funds for the event. ACPS staff took over logistical responsibility in the 2015 -16 year. Terry Werner worked with Helen Lloyd to provide a catered meal for the event complete with flower arrangements and ACPS logo table covers. Due to the hard work of both SEAC and Central Office staff, we had the best attendance in years. There were approximately 110 people in attendance. SEAC would like to thank the ACPS administration for working collaboratively on the ceremony and logistics.

Recommendations:

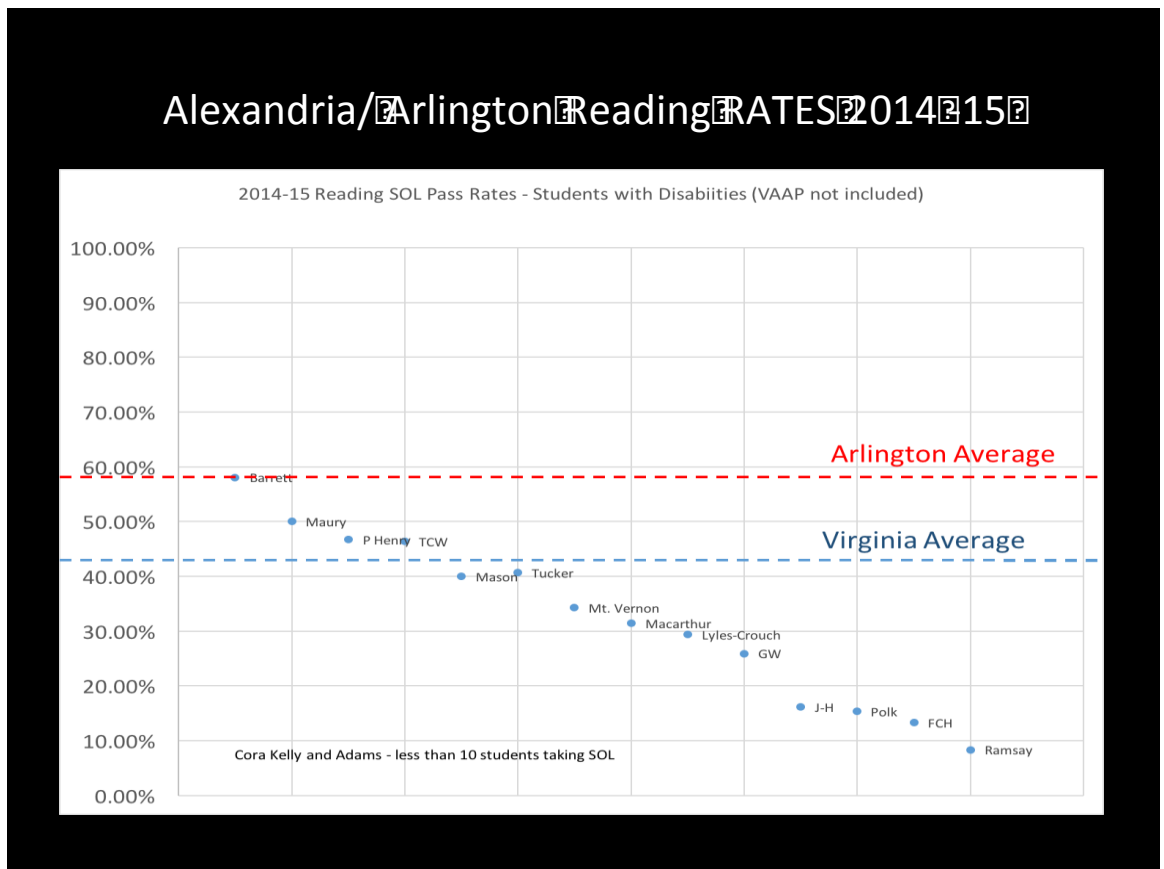
- 1) Implement AIMSweb in ALL schools
- 2) Conduct an independent evaluation of special education in ACPS - we recommend that SEAC be involved in the RFP from the start so we can give input but also help coordinate input from other special education parents on the development and components of the RFP
- 3) Consistent meeting of the Inclusion, Autism and Career and Transition committees and monitoring implementation of the plans
- 4) Continue with “Intensive MTSS” for the students that are multiple grade-levels behind in reading and math but implement consistent data collection strategies and dissemination of the results to parents at multiple points during the year
- 5) Review of goals and purpose of the Harry Burke Awards
- 6) Reporting by ACPS of aggregated reading and math data schools to SEAC (and the students’ parents) on a quarterly basis – *yearly data after students have fallen behind are not enough!*
- 7) SEAC feels it would be best practices for ACPS to use the committee as a beta-testing/ focus group, for surveys, etc. for their special education initiatives

Appendix A
Alexandria City Public Schools
2014 -15 Reading and Math Scores





Appendix A (continued)



Appendix B
Student Growth Rates (SGP data) from Loudon County
February, 2016 presentation

Importance of Growth Scores

- Research shows that teachers are the **MOST IMPORTANT** factor in student achievement
- As a parent, I prefer a “*highly effective*” teacher (top 25% SGP score) **MORE THAN:**
 - Newest and most advanced school facilities
 - Smaller class sizes
 - Schools with high SOL scores
- Evaluations should include growth measures as **one of many** factors (US Dept of Ed, Gates Foundation)
 - Objective growth measures (20-40%; VDOE says SGP @ 20%)
 - In-class evaluations
 - Student surveys

Importance of Growth Scores

- Research shows that teachers 1 Std Dev above the median increase **lifetime earnings of her class by \$250K every year**
 - Prof Chetty/Rockoff/Friedman
- Research shows that teachers in the top 5% of rankings increase **lifetime earnings of each child in her class by \$50K every year**
 - Prof Chetty/Rockoff/Friedman
- Research shows that 1 Std Dev increase in numeracy skills -> **28% increase in earnings**
 - Prof Hanushek
- Advanced proficiency rates in math on international tests rank the US in **28% place in the OECD out of 34 countries**
 - Prof Hanushek

Appendix B (continued)

Districts SOL vs SGP Scores

<u>Division</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>SOL</u>	<u>SOL Rank</u>	<u>SGP</u>	<u>SGP Rank</u>	<u>SOL - SGP Ranks</u>	<u>SGP Ratio</u>
Fairfax County	Reading	451	2	50	1	1	2.000
Prince William County	Reading	441	14	48	2	12	1.961
Roanoke County	Reading	452	1	47	6	-5	1.950
Arlington County	Reading	449	5	48	2	3	1.975
Manassas City	Reading	419	41	46	8	33	1.939
Roanoke City	Reading	430	30	47	6	24	1.945
Hampton City	Reading	424	34	45	13	21	1.913
York County	Reading	444	8	39	37	-29	1.801