



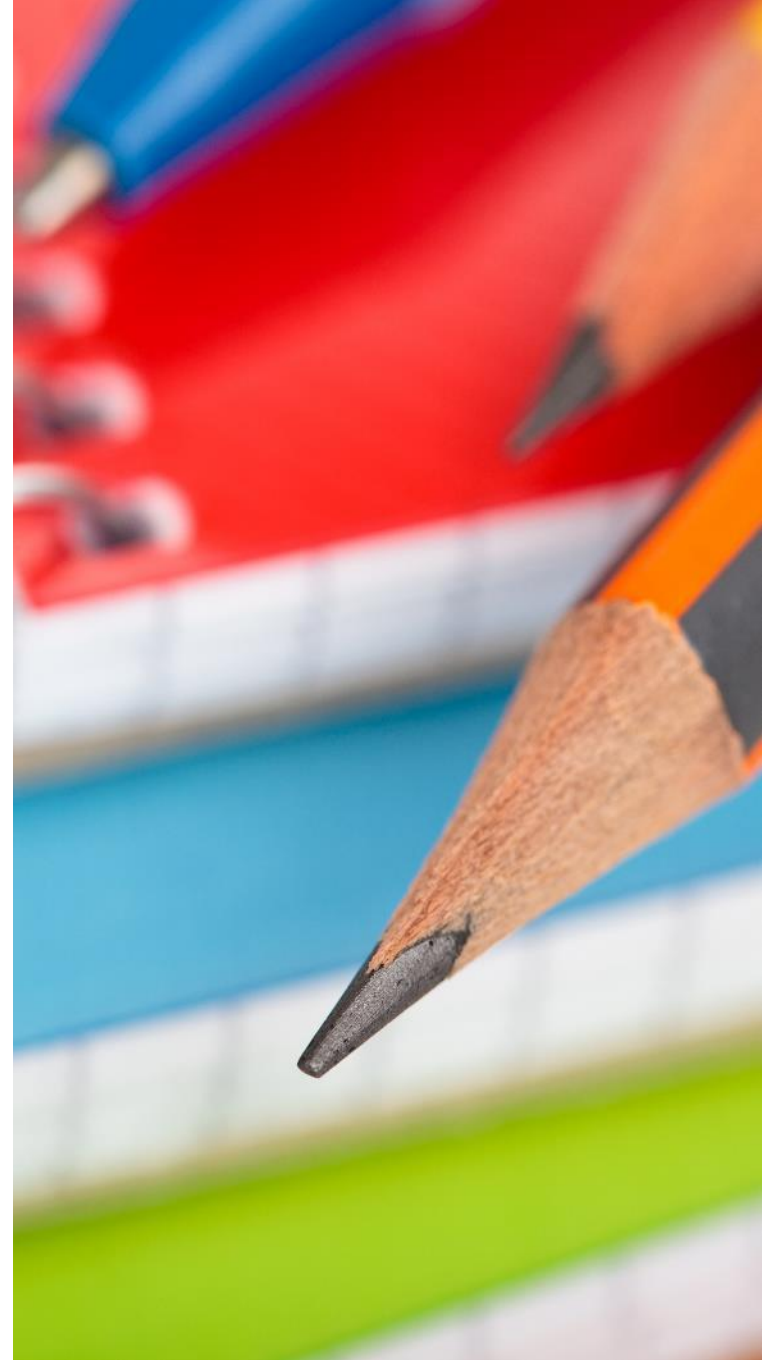
Comprehensive Review of Special Education, Pre- K through Grade 12

Alexandria City Public Schools

October 25, 2018

Essential Questions

1. What is the Project Approach and Timeline?
2. What are the Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement?
3. What are the Recommendations?



PCG Education Team

Dr. Jennifer Meller, Project Director

Will Gordillo, Subject Matter Expert

Anna d'Entremont, Subject Matter Expert

Dr. Christine Donis-Keller, Evaluation Specialist

Matthew Scott, Data Analyst

Triangulated Approach



Outcome Analysis

- *Student Population and Program Placement Trends*
- *Student Achievement Trends*

Organizational & Program Analysis

- *Data, Policy & Practice Review*
- *Program Analysis*
- *Staffing Analysis*
- *Financial Review*

Research & Practice Literature

- *Findings and recommendations grounded in current literature and aligned to evidence-based, industry best practices*

Guiding Questions

The following questions guided our analysis for ACPS:

- To what extent do the **instructional services** ACPS offers meet the needs of students with disabilities within the Division?
- To what extent is ACPS meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families in the area of **compliance with state and federal regulations**?
- To what extent does ACPS utilize its **human capital resources** to provide adequate services for students with disabilities to support student learning outcomes?
- To what extent has ACPS's school and division leadership fostered an instructional program and school/division **culture that supports meeting the unique educational needs of students with disabilities**?
- To what extent do ACPS's **internal and external communication practices** foster collaboration among staff and families in support of students with disabilities?

Data Collection Methods

<u>Evaluation Areas</u>	Interviews & Focus Groups (2 days onsite)	Surveys (2 surveys: Staff and Parent)	File Review (2 days)	Data, Policy, and Practices Review	School Observations & Student Shadowing (16 days onsite)
Instructional Services	X	X	X	X	X
State and Federal Requirements	X	X	X	X	
Human Capital	X			X	X
Supporting Culture and Climate	X	X	X	X	X
Communication Efforts	X	X	X	X	

Timeline – Phases of the Project

Phase 1: Project Initiation (June 2017)

- Project kick off
- Project plan and timeline

Phase 2: Customizing the Approach (July-August 2017)

- Agreed upon metrics of success
- Discussion of the PCG protocols, tools, data request, and activities
- Submit formal data request to district

Phase 3: Collecting and Analyzing the Data (September 2017 - March 2018)

- Stakeholder Kick-Off
- Acquisition of Available Data and Artifacts
- Focus Groups and Interviews; Student File Review Focus Group
- School Visits, Classroom Observations, and Student Shadowing

Phase 4: Developing Useful Reports (April – August 2018)

- Conduct analysis
- Provide written report

Phase 5: Committee and Subcommittee and Implementation (June- October 2018)

- Day long work session followed by Steering Committee and Subcommittee work
- Presentations to school board and other stakeholders
- ACPS developing and vetting the action plan in a strategic manner

Phase 6: Check In Support (2018-19 school year)

- PCG review of 3-5 year action plan, gap analysis, implementation guidance

Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Chapter	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
II. Compliance and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusive Settings• Separate Settings• Dropout and Graduation Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs Assistance Determination• Significant Disproportionality• Achievement Gaps
III. Multi-Tiered System of Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACPS MTSS 2015 framework• Cross-Departmental Leadership• Technology Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Variances• Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Chapter	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
IV. Referral and Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent Engagement• English Learner (EL) Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early Intervention/Child Find Outreach• Cultural Diversity Support
V. Teaching, Learning, and Social Emotional Support for Students with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-Teaching• Interventions• City-wide Classes• Assistive Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic Optimism and High Expectations• Co-Teaching• Specially Designed Instruction

Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Chapter	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
VI. Support for Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governance Meetings• Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site-Based Management• Cross-Departmental Collaboration• Staff Retention
VII. Collaboration, Communication, and Parent Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent Participation• Parent Engagement• Parent Resource Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equity• Parent Communication• Progress Updates

Recommendations

Recommendation Categories

1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
2. Special Education Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility Practices
3. Academic Optimism, Rigor, and High Expectations
4. Inclusive Practices
5. Specially Designed Instruction and Targeted Interventions
6. Leadership and Accountability
7. Inter-Departmental Collaboration
8. Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Morale
9. Fiscal
10. Culture, Equity, and Parent Engagement

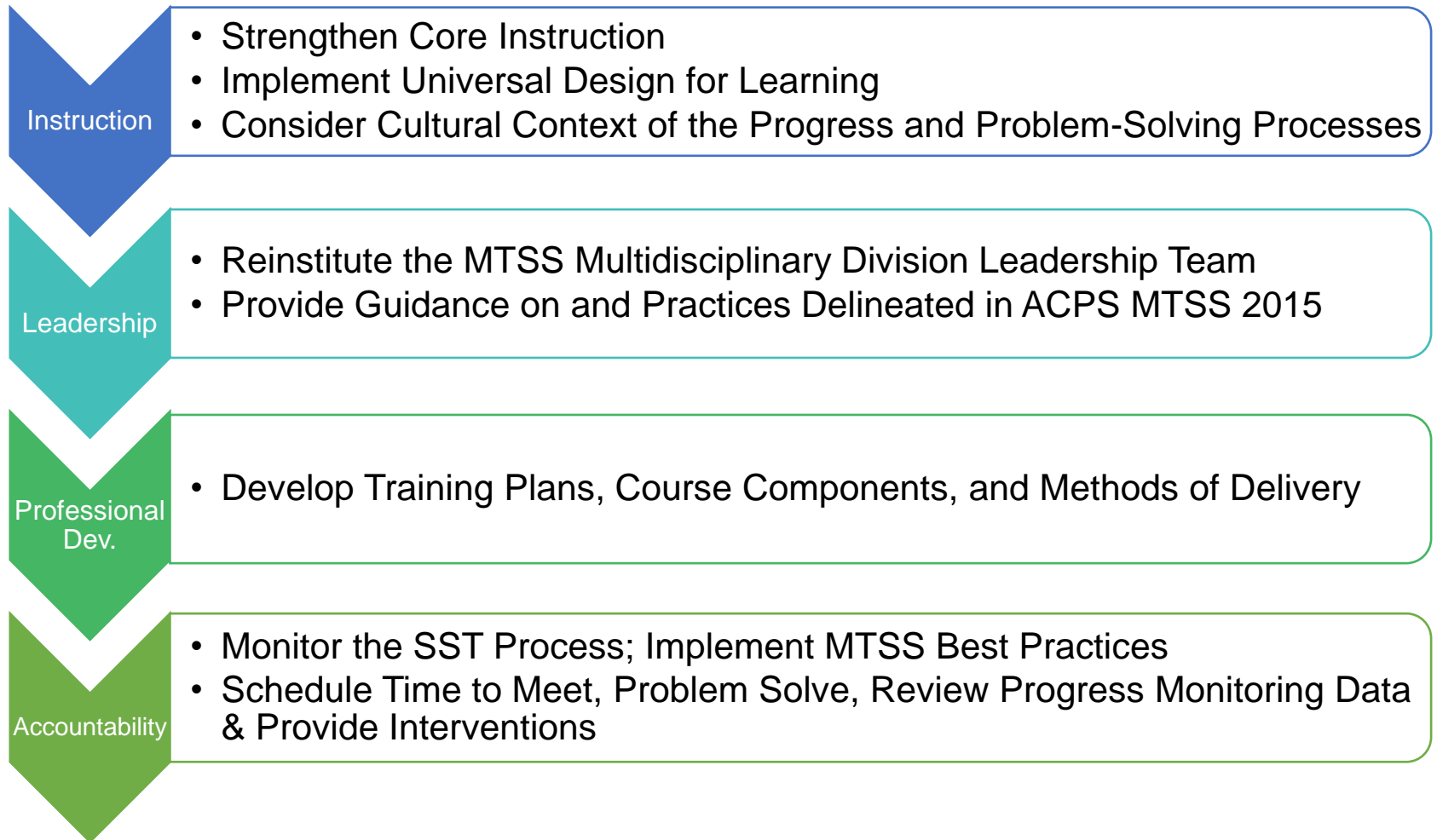
1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Recommendation

- *Build on the MTSS process & curricular frameworks to develop/implement a unified and clear structure for **academic achievement, positive behavior, and social/emotional learning** for ALL students that incorporates a **universal design for learning***
- *Continue to invest in **division-level and school-level training**, and capacity building to scale up and **improve fidelity of implementation***

1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Action Steps



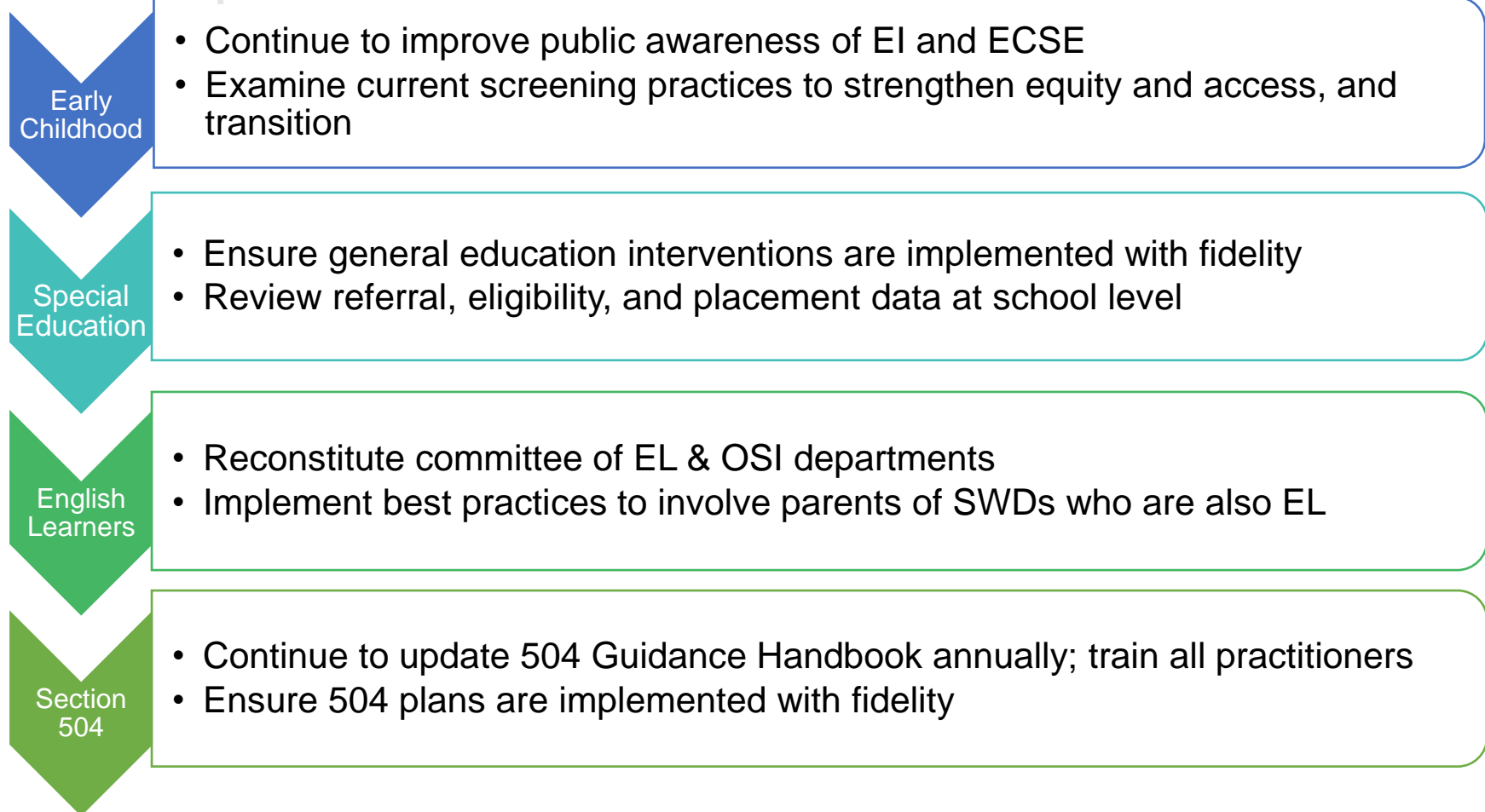
2. Special Education Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility Practices

Recommendation

- Develop a **systematic data analysis process** for analyzing special education referral, assessment, and eligibility practices in order to develop meaningful strategies to affect change
- Monitor **data trends over time** to determine patterns, use these data to: inform improvement strategies and consistency and appropriateness of practices (specifically for students in high-risk areas **to prevent over-identification**)

2. Special Education Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility Practices

Action Steps



3. Academic Optimism, Rigor, and High Expectations

Recommendation

- Build a system-wide culture of **academic optimism and high expectations** for ALL students
- Create an **unrelenting expectation regarding instruction** that clearly communicates to schools, and the broader community that a key focus of the Office of Specialized Instruction is to ensure that students with disabilities make significant progress, to the extent possible, in the general education curriculum, receive rigorous standards-aligned instruction, and experience the high quality delivery of interventions, differentiation, accommodations, modifications and specially designed instruction in every class

3. Academic Optimism, Rigor, and High Expectations

Action Steps



Structures & Processes

- Emphasize importance of academic optimism
- Nurture climate of acceptance, high expectations, and achievement
- Require master schedules supporting teacher collaboration, planning, & PD

Rigor

- Implement evidence-based practices
- Conduct PD on how to motivate learners, set high expectations, address differentiation, and demonstrate mastery of learning

Accountability

- Conduct annual survey to measure teachers' instructional belief; analyze by role
- Set expectations for principals to increase academic optimism, rigor, and high expectations

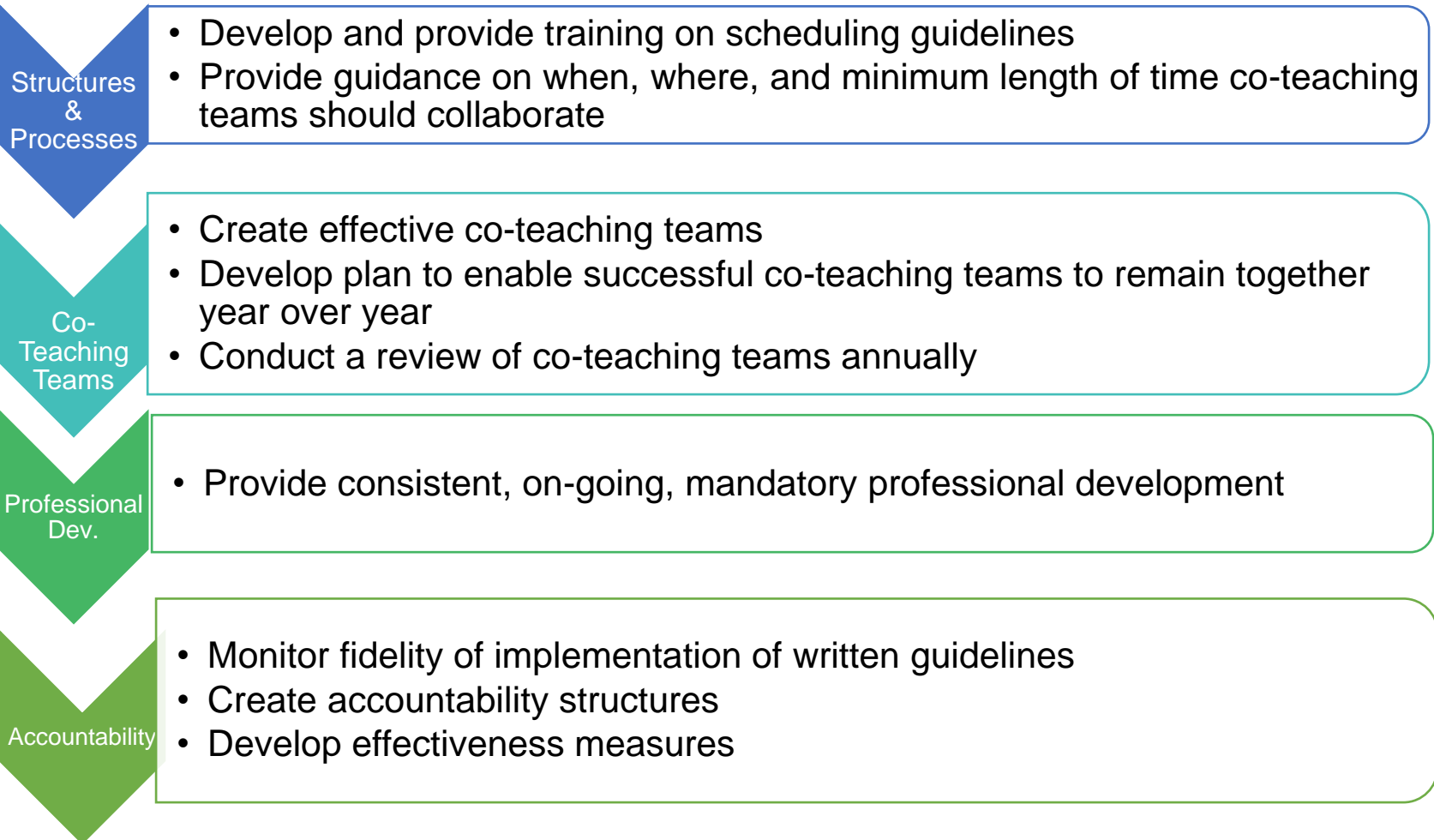
4. Inclusive Practices

Recommendation

- ***Build upon ACPS's commitment to co-teaching*** by continuing to provide professional development and coaching to improve collaboration and implement high yield co-teaching models
- ***Establish policies and procedures*** that clarify school level non-negotiable scheduling strategies, responsibilities for actively supervising and evaluating teaching teams for consistency and high quality practice, and institutionalizing high yield co-teaching expectations

4. Inclusive Practices

Action Steps



5. Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and Targeted Interventions

Recommendation

- Use a variety of **quantitative and qualitative assessment data** to determine if interventions and SDI are being implemented with fidelity and use these data to determine the extent to which students with disabilities division-wide **are increasing** their achievement, social/emotional development, and positive behavior under the current configuration SDI & interventions
- Assess the **fidelity of implementation** and **effectiveness of SDI and targeted interventions for EACH student with a disability** by analyzing data
- Provide teachers and IEP teams with **ongoing training** so that they have the tools necessary to determine progress on IEP goals
- Review guidance and tools currently in use **to establish expectations** regarding regular data collection, problem-solving, and changes to instruction necessary to support student achievement and social/emotional growth

5. Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and Targeted Interventions

Action Steps



- Place stronger emphasis in training, support, and resources guiding the provision of SDI
- Train co-teachers in how to design, plan, implement and assess lessons



- Develop guidance for and communicate SDI progress to parents
- Require IEP teams to conduct progress monitoring



- Elevate importance of SDI in IEP training



- Enhance SDI guidance
- Develop effectiveness measures using SDI and co-teaching walkthrough tools

6. Leadership and Accountability

Recommendation

- *Develop a multifaceted set of actions to specify how ACPS will incorporate **measures of accountability for schools and central office leaders** that are designed to ensure the delivery of a world-class education for all students*
- *Develop measures to drive **key strategies** for positive changes in behavior, processes, and culture, while **encouraging continuous improvement and innovation***


6. Leadership and Accountability

Action Steps



Structures & Processes

- Be clear about the role of central office in supporting the learning of students receiving special education
- Establish “non-negotiables” for school and detail central office support



Special Education Manual

- Consolidate existing guidance into an interactive, web-based manual
- Make manual user-friendly and transparent, developed in collaboration with stakeholders



Accountability

- Establish special education expectations
- Empower Executive Director of Specialized Instruction with authority to lead the Division’s special education programming

7. Inter-Departmental Collaboration

Recommendation

- *To leverage their collective resources and support to schools, **strengthen the collaboration** between OSI and other departments, specifically: 1) Human Resources, 2) Student Services, Alternative Programs, and Equity, 3) Elementary and Secondary Instruction, and 4) English Language Services.*
- ***Establish standing cross-functional work groups** to meet on a regular schedule to jointly address Division processes and drive success in practices.*


7. Inter-Departmental Collaboration

Action Steps



Joint Initiatives

- Identify joint initiatives between OSI and HR, Student Services, Elementary and Secondary Instruction, and EL Services
- Establish respective responsibilities and collaboration; leverage collective resources



Collaborative Decision Making

- Establish a consistent, collaborative, and integrated approach toward improvement
- Establish schedule for routine, collaborative meetings to share information, problem-solve, and resolve issues



Accountability

- Jointly set goals for all cross-departmental initiatives
- Determine KPIs to measure progress

8. Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Morale

Recommendation

- *Improve the Division's human capital system by:*
 - ***devoting more time and resources to intentional recruitment***, including performance measures in the application and selection processes,
 - *providing new teachers, related service providers, and paraprofessionals with opportunities to build their skills and **gradually assume increased responsibility**,*
 - *offering **new staff opportunities and time to grow**, and,*
 - *implement **professional learning systems** that support continuous growth*

8. Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Morale

Action Steps



Recruitment

- Create incentives to attract special education teachers to neediest schools
- Continue supporting in-division alternative certification programs for critical shortage areas
- Partner with institutions of higher education



Retention

- Develop plan to improve retention rates for special education teachers, related service providers, and paraprofessionals
- Monitor retention/data on a quarterly basis
- Conduct staff focus groups to further understand challenges staff face



Training & Support

- Grow staff by providing ongoing job-embedded PD
- Provide incentives for out of field teachers to take the test to add special education certification
- Place interns in high-needs schools to develop confidence in practice

9. Fiscal

Recommendation

- *Analyze allocation of personnel to ensure staff who support students with disabilities are **employed in sufficient numbers** and that **adequate resources are available** to meet student needs*
- *Continue to ensure that special education funding for schools and central office, takes into consideration:*
 - *the severity of student needs and types of support services needed*
 - *implementation of a full continuum of service delivery models*
 - *coaching support needed for school-based staff, and*
 - *compliance with special education legal requirements*

9. Fiscal

Action Steps



- Conduct an In-Depth Analysis of Staffing Allocations
- Allocation caseloads for related service providers equitably



- Maximize use of the personnel resources available in schools by scheduling, monitoring, and adjusting the caseloads to better utilize existing resources



- Jointly establish a CCEIS funding plan



- Establish standards to monitor all high cost expenditures & trending costs
- Develop standard reports to help track trends in spending

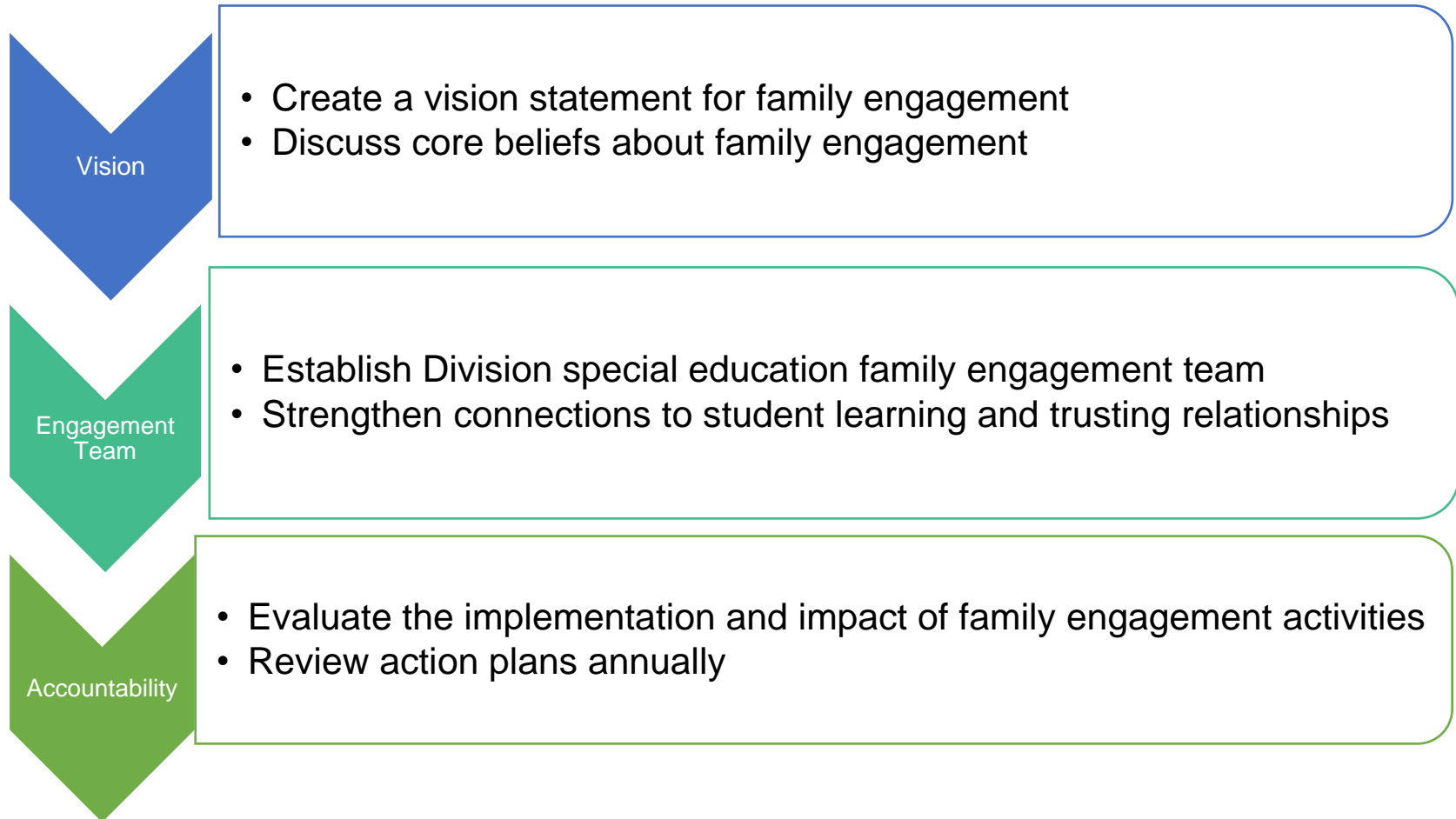
10. Culture, Equity, and Parent Engagement

Recommendation

- *Identify and provide **systemic supports necessary for all students who are struggling in school***
- *Strengthen links between school and home to help **culturally and linguistically diverse parents** help their children learn and gain equal access to all ACPS educational programs and services*
- *Enhance parent and community engagement by creating **warm, respectful and welcoming environments** and be flexible in accommodating spectrum of family needs*
- *Respond to the **strengths in the diversity** to create a culture that promotes the **successful inclusion and integration of students with disabilities** and other underserved, at-risk and economically disadvantaged students*

10. Culture, Equity, and Parent Engagement

Action Steps



Required Division Commitments

- Intentional decision to function a school system, rather than a system of schools
- Develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure success
- Resource commitment (fiscal, human resources)
- Integration of action plan activities into strategic initiatives
- Public accountability, transparency, and involvement
- 3-5 years of commitment to fully enact recommendations

Examples of Measuring Success

- Meets requirements on SPP indicators
- Separate settings lower than state average, especially for African American students
- No significant disproportionality from VDOE. Voluntary (not mandatory) commitment of CCEIS dollars for prevention.
- Accelerated proficiency trend increase for students with disabilities on SOLs, especially at upper grades
- Progress on survey data points for **staff**, for example:
 - Increasing percent who agree that their schools use the MTSS framework with fidelity (baseline 73%)
 - Student progress toward IEP goals is analyzed and discussed regularly (baseline 60%)
- And for **parents**:
 - Increasing percent who believe the teaching staff, including therapists, have high expectations for his/her child (baseline 72% overall)
 - Improving satisfaction with his/her child's overall academic progress in school (61% total)

Summary

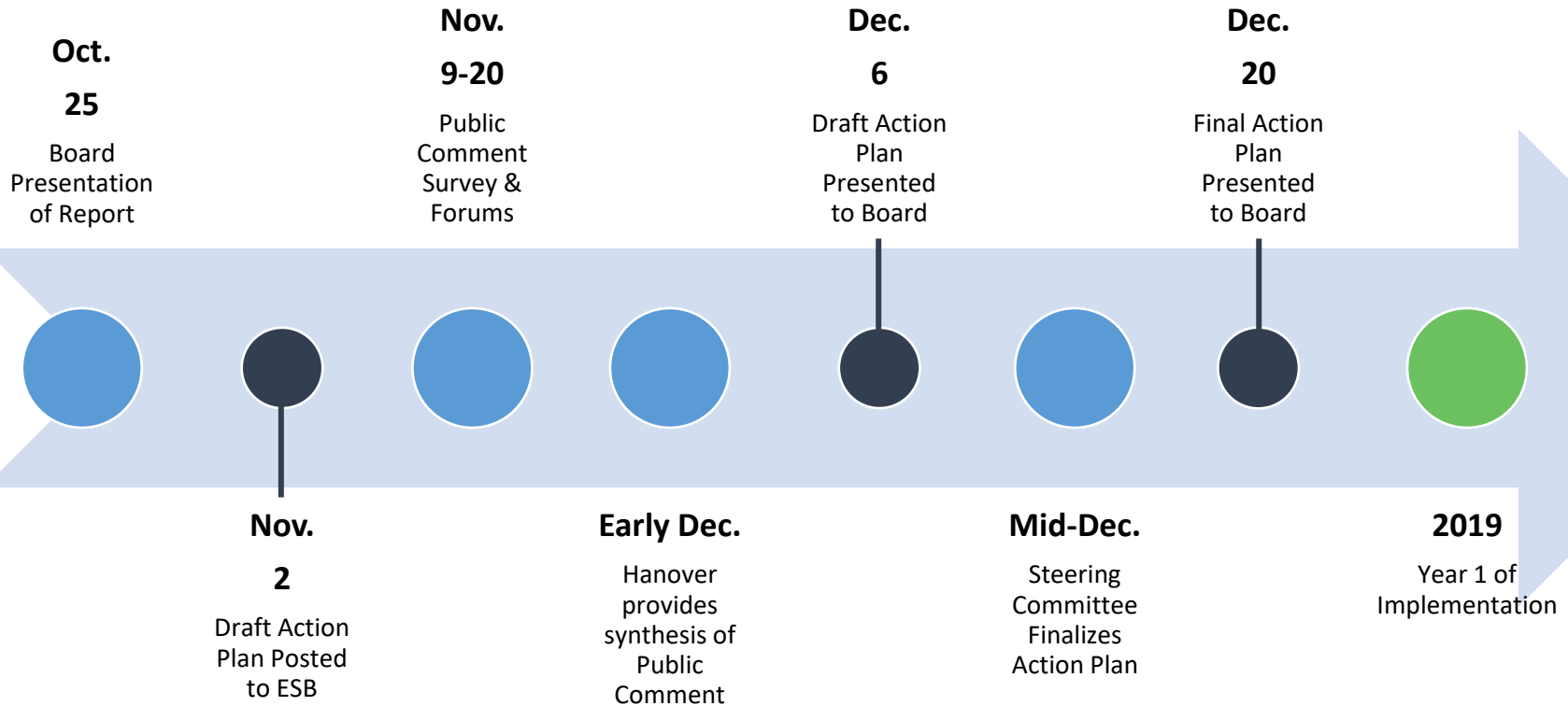
- Ample evidence that ACPS has a **solid foundation** on which to build
- However, without a **sense of urgency** and an **unrelenting commitment** to implementing the recommendations in this report with fidelity, the Division will stagnate.
- Enacting change requires **focus**, a **strong vision** from the superintendent and enacted by senior leadership staff, an **appropriate allocation of resources**, **mandated professional development**, and clear, non-negotiable, **division-wide accountability measures**.
- Reform requires the involvement and **commitment of every staff person** and a willingness to establish high expectations for students with disabilities.

Moving Forward

Update on the next steps

- **OBJECTIVE**: Develop and present a three-year action plan by bringing together internal and external stakeholders in this work with differing perspectives across the organization to provide guidance on how to implement the recommendations from the evaluation.
- Group of 36 Stakeholders, of which 9 served as Steering Committee Members, worked since June 2018 to refine a draft action plan to move ACPS forward implementing the recommendations
- Presented draft action plan to the Superintendent and Senior Leadership Team to obtain feedback
- Draft action plan sent to PCG for gap analysis and feedback
- Report posted publicly through ESB, *ACPS Express* , and *ACPS Insider*

Timeline moving forward





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