

Date: August 31, 2018
For ACTION _____
For INFORMATION X

Board Agenda: Yes _____
No X

FROM: Clinton Page, Chief Accountability Officer
Theresa Werner, Executive Director of Specialized Instruction

THROUGH: Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Superintendent of Schools

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

TOPIC: Students with Disabilities Evaluation Summer Update and Next Steps

BACKGROUND:

In June, external evaluators from the Public Consulting Group (PCG), hired by ACPS to evaluate services to students with disabilities, presented high-level commendations and recommendations as a result of their review over the 2017-2018 school year. While the full report was not scheduled for completion until September, ACPS prioritized beginning discussions of high-level outcomes based on a purposeful urgency in moving this work forward and leveraging the summer months to begin the action planning process. The purpose of this update is to provide the Board with information around the work completed over the summer to finalize the comprehensive evaluation of services to students with disabilities and towards drafting a plan to implement action steps based on the findings of the report.

ACPS values the findings and recommendations presented by PCG in June and acknowledges that the next question, how to best implement meaningful and sustained change in identified areas, is one of the most critical questions of the overall project to date. To begin to answer the question of *'now what'*, a Steering Committee and four subcommittees representing a broad range of stakeholders were convened over the summer months. In order to work across schools, departments, and roles within the division, a stakeholder group of 36 participants representing the roles and departments listed below worked collaboratively in identifying strategies and actions that align to the recommendations in the evaluation report. Stakeholder participants represented the following groups within the division:

- Specialized Instruction Teachers
- General Education Teachers
- Student Support Team Members
- School-Based Administrators
- Specialized Instruction
- Parent Resource Center
- Family and Community Engagement (FACE)
- Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
- Early Childhood Special Education

- English Learners
- Curriculum Design
- Human Resources
- Student Services
- Accountability
- Budget

From June 21 through August, the Subcommittees and Steering Committee met numerous times to develop and refine planning guidance documents based upon draft report sections from PCG to begin to build how the division will respond to the evaluation findings. Currently, the subcommittees have submitted their final draft documents to the Steering Committee for consideration. The Steering Committee is now in the process of reviewing and consolidating the subcommittee work into a single comprehensive draft document.

NEXT STEPS:

Once the Steering Committee puts forth its recommendations, the plan will be reviewed and commented on by the external evaluation team at PCG and the Superintendent’s Senior Leadership Team with comments then considered by the Steering Committee before it is presented to the Board and public in November 2018. The three-year action plan will include steps that can be taken immediately (SY18-19) to improve upon the services provided to students with disabilities and their families as well as an explicit roadmap for the subsequent two years. The plan will also advise on how best to formatively monitor implementation of the plan and continued reporting of progress to internal and external stakeholders.

Once the draft action plan is shared with the Board, ACPS will actively introduce the draft action plan to the community and seek comment through a variety of mechanisms with a wide array of stakeholder groups. Efforts will be made to elicit comment from parent and community groups through a series of publicly announced face-to-face comment forums, an electronic comment form will be made available to all, and staff comment forums will also be held. ACPS will reach out to families of students with disabilities specifically and will also partner with SEAC and other special education groups to ensure engagement of critical stakeholders including culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the public comment period.

Below is a high-level overview of upcoming events with specific Board meeting dates provided. Further details and associated dates will be presented to the Board in the coming weeks.

September to December 2018 Tasks:

- Steering Committee Submits Draft Action Plan for PCG/SLT Comment
- Final Report Presentation to SLT
- *Presentation of Report at Board Work Session (TBD)*
- Steering Committee Submits Action Plan to be Presented to the Board
- *Draft Action Plan Presented to Board (Nov. 8)*
- Draft Action Plan Presentation to SEAC
- Preparation for Comment Forums
 - Invitation letter to families
 - Translation

- Logistics
- Comment Forums
 - Public comment face-to-face forums with External Vendor
 - Online comment forum
 - Staff comment forums
- External Vendor Synthesis of Public Comment
- Steering Committee Submits Final Action Plan to SLT
- Final Action Plan Presented to School Board (Dec. 20)

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the attached materials for possible planning, procedural, programmatic, and/or budgetary changes.

IMPACT:

This update provides the Board with progress made over the summer months and highlights upcoming next steps from the comprehensive evaluation of services for Students with Disabilities within ACPS. This information will be leveraged by the division to chart the course for the future of special education services within ACPS for the next three years including potential additional funding requests to support implementing the recommendations.

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