

Special Education Advisory Committee Scope of Work for 2023-24

The 2022-23 SEAC Scope of Work is derived from the SEAC End-of-Year Report from 2022-23 and from the recurring concerns noted in SEAC reports over the past several years. In light of the current nationwide teacher shortage, this Scope of Work also addresses staffing concerns. SEAC is aligning its work with the ACPS 2025 Strategic Plan, Equity for All.

Role of 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.

Areas of Focus for 2023-24

Communication with Parents/Guardians of Students with Disabilities (SWD)

Background: The first two core values of Equity for All 2025 are for ACPS to be “welcoming” and “empowering.” For this to happen, strong communication with families is essential. Parents and guardians of SWD need additional information not needed by the average family. Additionally, the State tasks SEAC with assisting the local school division in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of children with disabilities for educational services. Family and Community Engagement is one of the five goals of Equity for ALL 2025, and improving communication with families and the community is a necessary step in meeting this goal.

Goal: SEAC will examine current practices regarding communication with parents and guardians in ACPS related to supports and services provided to SWD. SEAC will aim to answer the essential question: “What do parents and guardians of SWD need to know?” SEAC will also aim to provide specific guidance for how to share this needed information at the district, school, and teacher levels.

Budget impact: minimal

Experience of Students in the City-Wide Classrooms

Background: Two goals of Equity for All 2025 are “Student Accessibility and Support” and “Family and Community Engagement.” Within ACPS there exists a sub-set of students with more significant needs than most, those enrolled in the City-Wide Classrooms for Autism, Intellectual Disability, Emotional Disability, and Multiple Disabilities. The needs of these students and their families are highly unique, making the aforementioned goals particularly difficult to realize.

Goal: SEAC aims to answer the essential question, “How can the experience of students, families, and staff of the city-wide classrooms be improved?” by providing specific suggestions that would benefit each group.

Budget impact: to be determined

Teacher Hiring and Retention

Background: “Instructional Excellence” is one of the five goals of Equity for All 2025. Instructional excellence requires excellent instructors, and the current teacher shortage is particularly acute in the area of special education. Special education teachers, instructional assistants, and related service providers are all in high demand, and ACPS must compete with other local school divisions to hire and retain these professionals.

Goal: SEAC aims to ensure ACPS hiring practices are competitive with neighboring districts by highlighting areas where additional incentive structures and recruitment strategies are needed. SEAC also aims to ensure that staff is aware of this advisory committee so that they can provide feedback relating to education of SWD, which could include staff challenges and needs. SEAC also plans to bring back the Anne R. Lipnick awards program for outstanding educators serving SWD.

Budget Impact: to be determined