

Date: October 1, 2015

For ACTION  X

For INFORMATION  X

Board Agenda: Yes  X

No      

**FROM:** Theresa A. Werner, M.Ed., J.D., Executive Director of Specialized Instruction

**THROUGH:** Terri H. Mozingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer

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

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

**TOPIC:** SEAC Annual Report Response

**BACKGROUND:**

The School Board has a strong commitment to citizen participation. The Board appoints advisory committees to provide opportunities for citizens to advise the School Board on major issues pertaining to Alexandria schools. Pursuant to School Board Policy BCF-1, an annual report of recommendations is provided to the Board of Education. In response to recommendations made by the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) in their June 2015 report regarding the delivery of services for students with disabilities in ACPS, the information below is submitted for your consideration.

**SUMMARY:**

The following information provides a capsule overview of the recommendations included in the extensive report provided by SEAC in June. This executive summary includes the SEAC recommendation followed by the ACPS response in italics.

**Harry Burke**

SEAC recommends that the Central Office Special Education Leadership staff take advantage of this **easy** opportunity to promote the outstanding work of special educators and inclusion teachers in the system. There is a lack of measurable support from central office personnel over the past three years. A coordinated effort to support SEAC through insistence on nominees from each school should be a priority at Braddock Place. We need their communications in order to discover deserving nominees in each of our schools. SEAC is committed to planning earlier, but will need the credibility that comes from Special Education Leadership to make it a priority from school to school and thus parents and co-workers. *The administration* has budgetary limits on rewards, but letting this *opportunity to promote and* recognize a job well done could make a difference in ACPS educator retention.

SEAC recommends that the Central Office administration, School Board and Principals start to look for teachers who go above and beyond the job description early in the year and be sure that each school identify at least one teacher who is worthy of receiving these awards.

SEAC also recommends an expansion of the biographical information on Harry Burke and Anne Lipnick in the coming year. We hope that our Central Office publicity team can be of assistance in the effort.

**Harry Burke Award:** *The understanding of ACPS staff was that this award was a SEAC award. We sought clarity from the SEAC chairs and were informed historically the office of Special Education took the lead with support from SEAC. If the decision is for ACPS staff to nominate award recipients, then SEAC support must be provided for those nominees identified by the district. We would look to a December time frame to accomplish this nomination process.*

### **Disability Awareness**

**SEAC recommends that Disability Awareness and Acceptance be incorporated into every day of every school.** SEAC recommends that ACPS formally incorporate into its K-12 curriculum, the essential elements of disability awareness and basic principles of disability studies. Highlighting the month with specific activities is beneficial for increased awareness as well.

SEAC recommends that school staff and/or school-based related service providers be appointed as the point person and distributor-of information to staff and students. This makes them the expert in the school and a resource for all. Many parents and children do not know the services and expertise that the school social worker, counselor and psychologist can provide.

**Disability Awareness:** *Dr. Crawley and Dr. Mozingo will discuss Disability Awareness Week with the Director of Elementary Education and Director of Secondary Education to ensure that each school principal has an activity in their building.*

### **PRC**

**SEAC recommends the process for hiring is focused on finding a highly qualified, experienced person as this is a critical role in the relationship between parents and ACPS.** The recruitment process must be competitive and the approach must include wide publication of the vacancy and involvement of the SEAC during the **entire** process. The candidates should have significant strong experience and an advanced degree in counseling and/or a related field that would allow them to successfully form and maintain parent/family support groups for students with a disability. This person should be a liaison in planning and implementing parent training and staff relationship management with parents. This person will also work with other Central Office departments to determine various methods of outreach to parents in different parts of the ACPS community.

SEAC recommends that all PRC contacts have a follow up survey that will be sent to each parent/family contact made by PRC staff. This follow up survey should be sent to an administrator at the central office or human resources for recording and follow up as necessary. The survey results should be incorporated into the Special Education dashboard.

SEAC recommends that the PRC works closely with the FACE Center, the various school based PRC's and the ACPS support staff for training in conjunction with PBIS and other programs.

**PRC Position:** *Courtney Davis, Ph.D. was hired to fill the position. She will begin work September 21, 2015. ACPS will request she attend state-wide PRC training conference September 20-22. The scope of work will be developed in consultation with VDOE PRC consultants.*

### **Budget**

SEAC recommends the budget be tied to the strategic plan, the Special Education plan, and the supporting metrics for each plan. While the budget clearly showed where the money is being spent, it does not show why. The budget should be linked to initiatives and outcomes.

***Budget:*** *There will be budget line items reflecting initiatives as the budget process moves forward.*

### **IEP Development**

SEAC recommends an audit of the IEP Quality and Implementation report be done. SEAC is concerned that the data shown in this report is the same data that was provided by the Autism Plan team in a meeting on April 29. Our concern is that either the data used for purposes of the Autism IEP review was not only that of children with Autism or that the IEP Quality and Implementation numbers came only from children with Autism. Either way, SEAC recommends the trained teachers provide evaluative feedback on training and coaching to assess its quality, and follow-up reviews of IEPs take place early in the next school year. SEAC recommends that IEP goals be tracked to determine goal mastery and goals that are continued into the next year's IEP. At this time, we are questioning how many goals that are not mastered are exchanged for new goals on the next IEP.

***IEP Development:*** *The Executive Director and Director of Compliance will undertake a review of the IEP monitoring process to determine soundness of teacher feedback as well as a system to track mastery of goals. There will be specific training for staff regarding IEP development and implementation throughout the school year. These tasks will be included in the Office of Specialized Instruction Project Plan.*

### **Executive Functioning**

SEAC recommends ACPS provide objective data to demonstrate the adoption of Executive Function in the curriculum as input to the next SEAC work plan. This data should be available on the Dashboard.

SEAC recommends that mandatory Executive Function training be included in the professional learning program for teachers.

***Executive Functioning:*** *This focus area has been incorporated as a component of curriculum planning as outlined in the Curriculum and Instruction documents provided to teachers. Additionally, in all SOL-tested content areas, Executive Function skills are clearly addressed in every curriculum guide.*

### **Career and Transition**

SEAC recommends ACPS expand the survey to include the first 3-5 years of transition to improve the accuracy of the outcome measurement.

SEAC recommends the Career & Transition measurements be integrated and incorporated into the overall Special Education performance metrics being developed as part of the ACPS Strategic Plan.

SEAC recommends that Transition goals be started much earlier than in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Transition goals should be started in elementary (e.g. transportation, handling money) to identify what aptitudes should be explored for students with disabilities and functional and educational skills should be focused on in the IEP allowing the student to gain experience earlier on in his/her educational career.

**Career and Transition:** VDOE requires a survey one year post graduation. ACPS cannot undertake an extension of this requirement. Career and Transition components are included in the Specialized Instruction Project Plan. The Career and Transition Plan Goal 5 includes career exploration transition tasks and activities for elementary and middle school students.

### **Autism**

SEAC recommends that the training completed that is done with the general education staff, school support staff and administration be tracked. The results of the training, teacher participation, follow up, and evaluation metrics of the training need to be posted on the Special Education Dashboard school-by-school. This way, stand-out schools can provide best practices to all schools to learn from and be recognized for the focus and dedication to inclusion practices for all children.

SEAC recommends that the completion dates for tasks and objectives be changed only after reviewing the plan with the parents, central office administration, and autism staff; and where applicable, related service providers, and instructional coaches to determine what has changed to make the original goal unobtainable.

SEAC recommends that the plan be updated at least twice yearly on the website for access by the public.

SEAC recommends changing the times of the meetings. Many of the meetings take place at times that are inconvenient for parents. In the past, meeting times were alternated between 7pm and 4:00pm-ish to accommodate both staff and parent schedules.

### **VCU Grant**

SEAC recommends that the strategies, supported by data, are found to be effective in the pilot classroom at Charles Barrett be shared with all ACPS staff to utilize via the teaching website with videos and lesson plan outlines. We realize that the ideal plan will not be able to be duplicated at each school due to each school having a unique culture and staff, but a format that allows for adjustment would be helpful.

SEAC recommended adding a SLP Speech and Language Therapist to the Autism team to provide professional guidance in this area. It is unclear if the requested SLP has been approved and will be added to the VCU Grant team. If approved, we hope to see this new SLP as part of the team by start of school, Fall 2015. We also hope that this person is allowed to assist the Autism Team in providing training and guidance to specifically work with children on social and communication skills that are being developed and implemented in the plan overseen by VCU.

**Autism and VCU Grant:** Autism training is scheduled to be conducted at multiple levels this year. Grant mandated trainings will be finalized by October, 2015. Information will be shared with SEAC once calendar is finalized. Meeting times will be discussed.

### **Inclusion Plan**

SEAC recommends that ALL students have access to the general education classroom, and are provided with appropriate support and accommodations by trained educators.

SEAC recommends that mandatory inclusion and co-teaching training be part of the professional learning program for teachers, including Encore, elective, and substitute teachers. SEAC recommends that the ACPS website be updated with an updated Inclusion plan that will allow all schools to be on the same page and families to be involved and understand the plan. This Inclusion plan needs to be easy to read and understand, have measurable, achievable goals with projected dates of completion.

**Inclusion Plan:** Inclusion Goal in ACPS is 80% of students included for 80% of the instructional day. This goal is a priority for the Executive Director this academic year. She will undertake the

necessary steps to meet system needs in this area and details are outlined in the Specialized Instruction Project Plan.

### **Special Education 101 for School Board**

SEAC recommends it presents this session to the newly elected Board in January, 2016.

***Special ED 101 for School Board:*** Dr. Crawley will determine this agenda item in consultation with the School Board.

### **SEAC Membership**

SEAC recommends the screening process be adopted by other School Board committees to better manage the expectations of members to committees.

***SEAC Membership:*** Dr. Crawley will determine this agenda item in consultation with the School Board.

### **Strategic Plan**

SEAC recommends the School Board carefully review the current plan as we are concerned that the current version of the plan still does not adequately represent children with special needs.

SEAC recommends the plan be modified to specify priorities for ACPS; how will this plan be used to make decision on what gets funded, and what doesn't get funding as the out-year budget situation continues to be uncertain.

***Strategic Plan:*** Dr. Crawley will determine this agenda item in consultation with the School Board.

### **Policy Review**

SEAC recommends the School Board finalize all policies pertaining to sub-committees so the work can continue on establishing the SEAC concepts of operations (CONOPS).

SEAC recommends the School Board establish a recurring process that set the expectations for committees on their role in reviewing policies.

***School Board Complete Policy Review:*** Dr. Crawley will determine this agenda item in consultation with the School Board.

### **Psychological Testing**

SEAC recommends a similar presentation be made available to all parents, possibly through the PRC.

***Psychological Testing:*** Presentation request will be forwarded to the PRC.

### **Special Education Plan**

Present the missing components of the plan:

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses)

Present the analysis, goals, strategies, and objectives focused on cultural change

Provide additional details on the realignment and how it is solving the issues in point #1 above.

A detailed, comprehensive implementation plan must be developed by July 30, 2015.

The implementation plan should include at a minimum the following components for the School Board to assess its probability of success.

- schedule with roles, resources, and responsibilities,
- Intense areas for remediation or focus (such as reading /math) for AY 15-16
- budget plan,
- risk identification and mitigation plan,
- communications plan including parent outreach

A Rapid Recovery plan needs to be implemented for students already behind.

***Special Education Plan:*** *The Project Plan will be shared with SEAC once it is finalized. This presentation is planned for the September 22, 2015 meeting.*

#### **ADA Compliant Elevators**

SEAC recommends the plan to bring all elevators, in all schools, into ADA compliance be created and monitored throughout next year.

***ADA Compliant Elevators:*** *This is a facilities issue and is under review.*

#### **Special Education Dashboard**

SEAC requests a separate dashboard for special education data and results.

***Special Education Dashboard:*** *There will be no separate dashboard for Specialized Instruction. All relevant data will be included on the division level dashboard.*

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Superintendent recommends approval of the ACPS responses to the SEAC Annual Report.

**ATTACHMENT(S):** 151001\_SEAC\_Annual\_Report\_v1

**CONTACTS:** Theresa A. Werner, M.Ed., J.D., Executive Director of Specialized Instruction, (703) 619-8020