

Special Education Advisory Committee Scope of Work for 2019-20

This report outlines the proposed Scope of Work for the ACPS Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) for the academic year 2019-2020. The primary focus of our activity this year is the ACPS Action Plan addressing the needs of students with disabilities in our district. In addition to evaluating the plan and monitoring implementation, SEAC is placing extra focus on certain parts of the plan, either to support implementation or to further evaluate needs. We are also planning to put into place means of continuing to gather information about the needs of students with disabilities in our district. Finally, in addition to addressing By-laws, Budget, and Policies and Procedures, as we do every year, SEAC has become aware of concerns in the area of Transportation, which we plan to address.

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 2019-2020

Review of two recent evaluative reports and resulting Action Plan

Assist ACPS in setting priorities to address reports from the PCG evaluation and VDOE audit. Review reports from Public Consulting Group (completed October, 2018) and Virginia Department of Education (completed August, 2019) regarding students with disabilities in ACPS. Review of the ACPS Action Plan (draft released early 2019; updated version released Oct. 2019) developed by the Department of Specialized Instruction to determine if it sufficiently addresses identified needs. Review the Department of Specialized Instruction's Working Plan in areas of concern to complete this analysis. Advise the ACPS School Board on the Action Plan and assist with ideas for communicating the plan to the broader ACPS community.

Monitor Implementation of Action Plan and Working Plans

Assist ACPS in implementation of Action Plan and Working Plans prepared by the Department of Specialized Instruction to address the PCG and VDOE evaluations regarding students with disabilities in ACPS. Review monthly updates from the Department of Specialized Instruction regarding implementation and provide feedback to the School Board and Superintendent on implementation progress.

SEAC has determined that the following three areas of focus will improve implementation of the Action Plan:

Mandatory Training

Professional Development is a key focus of the Action Plan. Because it is so essential, SEAC advises that training in certain areas be mandatory. SEAC will work with the Director of Specialized Instruction to determine which trainings are essential. SEAC will advise the School Board to ensure that this action is supported in the budget.

Parent Communication

Examine current ACPS practices regarding communication with and dissemination of information to parents related to supports and services provided to students with disabilities. Make recommendations designed to improve and strengthen the relationship between parents of students with disabilities and ACPS school staff and central office staff.

***Anne Lipnick Awards**

In addition to awarding outstanding staff members as in the past, determine school-wide awards to honor excellent implementation of best practices. Consider awards for excellent implementation of MTSS, PBIS, Co-Teaching and Inclusion so that these successes can serve as models for other schools at different levels of implementation.

In addition, the VDOE report and parent comments at SEAC meetings indicate that SEAC should further evaluate the needs of students with disabilities in the following areas:

Literacy

Evaluate resources available at each school to determine areas of need. Evaluate interventions and numbers of certified reading specialists at each school. Use findings to determine where additional support is needed in areas of training, coaching, AT resources, texts or other materials.

Behavior

Students with disabilities often need significant support in the area of behavior. Determine where more supports are needed, including in the area of Professional Development.

Career and Transition

The Action Plan provides minimal focus in the area of transitioning to career. Evaluate the Career and Transition Program to determine areas of need.

As noted above, the Commonwealth of Virginia tasks each SEAC with advising the local school division on needs in the education of children with disabilities. To do this, SEAC must have methods in place to identify student needs. The following two areas of focus will help identify needs of children with disabilities:

Review of Data to Prioritize Student Needs

Move to a more balanced qualitative and quantitative approach to identify 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. Ensure that 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 at SEAC meetings to review and understand ACPS special education metrics. SEAC will work with ACPS to evolve the metrics into accurate, meaningful information.

Visibility of SEAC

SEAC will work in collaboration with parent constituents, the School Board, the PRC, and ACPS leaders to give parents a strong voice and build a culture of cross-collaboration and trust.

Currently many parents lack familiarity with SEAC. Data from the VDOE report noted that almost half of elementary parents and 80% of secondary parents were not aware of SEAC and/or meetings. Rarely does a parent provide public comment at a meeting. While we currently have lengthy reports detailing the needs of students with disabilities in ACPS, we need to develop additional means to learn about parent (and staff) concerns and also to collaborate with the PRC, the School Board and ACPS leadership so that needs continue to be identified and addressed.

Transportation

Concerns over transportation have been expressed by parents of students with disabilities, the Office of Specialized Instruction, and School Board members. Gather information to determine the current concerns. Provide recommendations to the School Board regarding improvements in transportation.

Finally, each year the ACPS SEAC addresses the following:

***By-laws**

Review the By-laws, as mandated by our current By-laws. Form a sub-committee to review and propose changes. Ensure By-laws comply with School Board policy.

***Budget**

Provide input to the School Board on the annual budget and impacts on children with disabilities.

***Policies and Procedures**

Review policies and procedures pertinent to special education and offer recommendations as needed. As the School Board reviews policies and procedures, the Director of Policy and Board Initiatives will forward to SEAC any policies and procedures related to students with disabilities; the SEAC School Board Liaison will also note issues of concern and bring them to the attention of SEAC.

*Refers to items addressed by SEAC each year. Though the Anne Lipnick Awards are provided each year, SEAC is proposing additions (as noted) this year.