



**2004 – 2005 ANNUAL REPORT OF
THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO
THE ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL BOARD
AND THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT**

June 2005

This Annual Report is submitted on behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee by SEAC Chair, Michael J. Carrasco, and Vice Chair, Ronnie Campbell.

2004-2005 SEAC Officers

Michael J. Carrasco, Chair

Ronnie Campbell, Vice Chair

**Tina Games-Evans,
Secretary**

2004-2005 SEAC Members

David Cordell, parent

Jonathan Freidman, parent

Fiona McMahon, parent

SEAC Consultants

**Art Schmalz, School Board
Liaison**

**Marylou Wall, Director of
Student Services**

**Anne Lipnick, Parent
Resource Center Coordinator**

**Sarah DiGioia, Autism
Resource Specialist**

Contact Us

Any questions about joining SEAC or about special education in general, please contact SEAC Chair, Michael Carrasco at 703-628-8382 or at his e-mail address:

michaeljcarrasco@gmail.com

Overview & Functions

The ACPS Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is established to advise the City of Alexandria School Board and the Superintendent about the priorities and strategies for meeting the needs of children with disabilities.

SEAC's functions include the following:

- Provide advice to the Superintendent and the School Board of the school system's unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities;
- Assist ACPS formulating and developing long-range plans for improving the performance of children with disabilities;
- Submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of children with disabilities to the Superintendent and the School Board;
- Assist ACPS in communicating to the community plans for meeting the needs of children with disabilities for educational services; and
- Review the updated Annual Special Education Plan and the Application for Federal Funds, prior to submission by the Superintendent to the School Board and the Virginia Department of Education.

Membership and Compliance Statement

For the 2004–2005 School Year there were six voting members: Ronnie Campbell, Michael J. Carrasco, David Cordell, Jonathan A. Friedman, Tina Games-Evans and Fiona McMahon. This year's School Board Liaison was Art Schmalz. This year's three permanent consultants were: Ms. Marylou Wall, Director of Student Services, Ms. Anne Lipnick, Parent Resource Center Coordinator; and Ms. Sarah DiGioia, ACPS Autism Resource Specialist.

In accordance with our by-laws, all *voting* members were appointed by the School Board and the majority of *voting* members attended at least 75% of the public meetings. In accordance with our by-laws, the Chair and Vice Chair met on April 19th, 2005 to draft the Annual Report. A first draft was presented for review at the April 19th 2005 public meeting. SEAC considered a second draft at the May 10th, 2005 public meeting. The final version was adopted at the May 31st, 2005 public meeting.

Meetings and Governance

SEAC met on eight occasions during the 2004-2005 school year. Those dates were September 28th, 2004; October 19th, 2004; November 16th, 2004; February 22nd, 2005; March 15th, 2005; April 19th, 2005 and the May 10th, 2005 and May 31, 2005 public meetings.

SEAC revised its by-laws at the October 19th, 2004 public meeting. The revised by-laws were forwarded to the Clerk of the School Board on November 17th, 2004. SEAC further revised its bylaws on May 10th, 2005 and forwarded those revisions to the Clerk of the School Board on May 31st, 2005.

In an effort to better understand all aspects of the special education process, SEAC provided an opportunity for public comment at each public meeting and hosted a series of timely and informative spotlights about special education related topics.

During the 2004-2005 School Year, SEAC explored the following topics:

September 2004: ***"Overview of Alexandria City Public Schools Special Education Services"***

November 2004: ***"What No Child Left Behind Means for Special Education Students"***

March 2005: ***"Nutrition and Health: What Is ACPS Doing?"***

April 2005: ***"A Look At the ACPS School Budget Process"***

Committee Leadership and Goals

At the May 31st, 2005 public meeting, SEAC elected the following Officers for the 2005-2006 School Year:

David Cordell was elected Co-Chair;

Jonathan A. Friedman was elected Co-Chair;

Fiona McMahon was elected Secretary.

In accordance with our bylaws, SEAC considered a Strategic Plan and Annual Calendar to identify goals for the upcoming 2005-2006 School Year.

A first draft was submitted at the February 22nd, 2005 public meeting for review. SEAC considered a 2nd draft at the May 10th, 2005 public meeting. The final version was adopted at May 31st, 2005 public meeting (***The approved Strategic Plan and Annual Calendar accompany this report.***)

Communications, Outreach and Advocacy

SEAC works hard to raise the awareness of all stakeholders in the special education process through (1) partnerships, (2) outreach efforts, (3) advocacy and (4) communication updates.

Partnerships:

SEAC, again, partnered with the ACPS Parents Resource Center to host a forum between School Board Chair Mark Wilkoff and parents

of children receiving special education services on April 25th 2005. Local Alexandria City business, St. Elmo's Coffeehouse, hosted the event where parents could talk with Chairman Wilkoff in a relaxed atmosphere away from school grounds. Many parents present expressed thoughtful feedback to Chairman Wilkoff, including the idea that ACPS needs to be a leader in special education and the need for accountable executive leadership. ***SEAC strongly believes that since special education is an essential service, and to help remedy the many challenges the current administration of special education programs face, the Superintendent and the School Board need to establish a Assistant Superintendent position (similar to other school districts in the greater Washington, DC area) who is part of the Superintendent's executive management team. At the May 19th, 2005 School Board public meeting, SEAC member, David Cordell brought up the topic for discussion before the School Board.***

Outreach Efforts:

Staff liaison Mary Lou Wall gave a presentation to the PTA Council on April 13, 2005. SEAC always encourages this kind of educational outreach in hopes of informing many parents about the importance of interaction between regular education students and students with disabilities is both inside and outside the classroom. ***SEAC strongly encourages all School Board members when they meet with their local PTA's to encourage all PTA Presidents to invite SEAC members or Ms. Wall, the Director of Students Services, to talk to them about SEAC's role and about the importance of understanding of including children with special needs as a part of the schools they represent.***

Advocacy:

On October 21, 2004, Vice Chair Ronnie Campbell testified before School Board regarding SEAC's recommendations to the Superintendent's Budget for FY06 and SEAC's recommendations.

At the February 22nd, 2005 public meeting, SEAC reviewed the Annual Special Education Plan and Application for Federal Flow-Through Funds. Members asked questions and clarifications regarding services for children with special needs. SEAC unanimously approved the Plan and sent the Plan to the Superintendent for her signature and approval by the School Board.

On May 19th, 2005, SEAC member David Cordell testified before the School Board regarding SEAC's recommendation to the School Board and the Superintendent regarding an Assistant Superintendent for Special Education position.

Communications:

Throughout the school year, SEAC received public comment and updates on special education services:

Health and Nutrition:

- SEAC heard from Becky Bays, Director of ACPS Food and Nutrition Services. Ms. Bays explained the services her office provides the general student population and to students with

special needs or students who have individualized education programs. She explained that (1) a prescription by a licensed physician is required with respect to handling any special dietary meals and (2) if a child has a special diet order, that that particular diet order must be written into a child's individualized education program, and the school nutritionist needs to be included at the individualized education meeting.

Community Outreach:

- SEAC heard from Marylou Wall, the Director of Student Services, that she would like to send some parents to attend the Annual Autism Conference during the first week of August. Several members did express interest. ***SEAC strongly encourages such outreach on behalf of ACPS. This further reinforces the belief that there is a partnership between the school district and the parents.***
- Throughout the school year, Anne Lipnick, the Parent Resource Center Coordinator, updated the committee about various workshops, support groups, and other events in relation to the activities of the Parent Resource Center.

Pre-School and Transitional Issues:

- SEAC heard from parents throughout the year regarding transitional procedures for students leaving preschool services and entering kindergarten. One parent cited her own experience and asked if SEAC could consider a smoother transition process. Another parent at the February 22nd public meeting shared her ideas and thoughts about a transitional pre-school class for special education children not prepared for kindergarten, which SEAC discussed. ***SEAC strongly encourages the Superintendent and the School Board to consider developing a program for children attending ACPS pre-school transitioning into kindergarten.***

Technological Assistance and Innovations:

- SEAC heard about the success of the IEP on-line system, and how there is now an IEP on-line coach at every ACPS elementary school and two coaches at every ACPS secondary school. ***SEAC strongly encourages the use of technology to lessen the administrative burdens of special education teachers, and strongly urges the Superintendent to continue pursuing a technology strategy focused on making documents easily available on line for parents and teachers who have access to the Internet.***

Special Education Personnel:

- SEAC heard from Art Schmalz, the School Board Liaison about the school budget providing for additional healthcare options for teachers, including a no-cost health care option. ***SEAC appreciates this step. One of the biggest challenges is the recruitment and retention of teachers who work with children with special needs. These health care options***

will help promote ACPS as a teacher-friendly workplace and SEAC appreciates those efforts.

Special Education Programs:

- SEAC heard about the success of the ACPS summer school program at the September 2005 public meeting. It was reported that the summer school program was fully staffed and over 300 students attended. ***SEAC encourages the Superintendent and the School Board to strongly consider how important the benefit of year round school services are to children with special needs. For students with special needs the summer break can mean a breakdown in educational development. SEAC strongly feels that children with disabilities are more than likely to lose critical skills during such a long break which results in a large learning curve when the school year begins again in September. SEAC strongly encourages the Superintendent and the School Board to begin a dialogue with SEAC about the importance of year round school services for children with disabilities.***

ACPS Operations & Governance:

- SEAC heard from Jay Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Financial and Administrative Services, who explained to SEAC the budget process, outlining a timeline for the process.
- SEAC heard from David Rose, the Director of Transportation, who gave a presentation on transportation services for special needs students, highlighting bus route and transportation issues, training provided bus drivers and monitors and answering SEAC member questions.

Community Issues:

- SEAC heard from Art Schmalz, who spoke about the smaller learning communities proposal at the new T.C. Williams High school. The concept is to break down the large school into 5 separate houses of approximately 400-500 students with each house having its own administrative support staff. ***SEAC's concern is how the houses will be organized and what will be the criteria for student selection in each house. SEAC encourages the School Board and the Superintendent to solicit the advice of SEAC and the views of students with special needs and their parents.***

Recommendations

On October 21st, 2004, the Special Education Advisory Committee communicated to the Superintendent and the ACPS School Board four budgetary recommendations for their consideration. Those budgetary recommendations focused on school leadership training, summer school and additional personnel and resources for students who receive special education services. On February 2005, SEAC received a response from the Office of Superintendent addressing the recommendations (***Copies of the***

recommendations and responses accompany this report).

On May 18th, 2005, the Special Education Advisory Committee communicated to the Superintendent and the ACPS School Board one recommendation for their consideration. That recommendation focused on the need for a special education leadership position as part of the Superintendent's executive management team. On May 31st, 2005, Superintendent Perry attended our public meeting to explain her response addressing our recommendation (***Copies of the recommendations and response accompany this report***).

Commentary

Accountability and Leadership. One of the most common frustrations SEAC has received feedback upon and has repeatedly heard is the need for more accountable leadership by building administrators. Special Education is an essential service provided by ACPS, with approximately one in five ACPS students receiving special education services and ACPS dedicating approximately one-quarter of its annual budget to delivering special education related services.

Presently, the administration of special education programs faces many challenges, including the implementation of individualized education programs by school principals for special education students, the turnover of special education professionals and support staff, and the relocation of special education programs from one school to another.

At the June 6th, 2004 public hearing on the Superintendent's Budget, SEAC strongly urged the Superintendent and School Board "to reinforce to school principals" the need to understand their special education communities and SEAC further testified that there should be funding for special education training for school principals so that they better understand those needs and responsibilities. ***SEAC appreciates the Superintendent's commitment to this need as communicated to SEAC in her response, dated March 8, 2005. Additionally, SEAC strongly believes that the challenges in delivering special education services arise in part from the fact there is no leadership position that is currently part of the Superintendent's executive management team. SEAC communicated to the Superintendent and the School Board on May 19th, 2005, the priority to establish a Assistant Superintendent for Special Education position, who would be part of the executive management team.***

Excellence in Special Education Ceremony

On May 2005, SEAC hosted the 20th Annual Harry Burke Award, honoring excellence in Special Education. There were 5 nominees.

This year, SEAC honored two winners – Cynthia Dunn Kearly, for excellence in special education at the elementary grade level and Alexandra Willson, for excellence in special education at the secondary grade level.

The committee wishes to extend congratulations to all the nominees:

1. Claudette Sims
2. Corbin Alan Younger
3. Cindy Johnson

Commendations

Volunteerism is SEAC's lifeblood and SEAC membership comes from parents who are involved. SEAC wishes to thank all its members for their positive contributions, and would like to extend that gratitude to the consultants, who attend each of the meetings. None of our efforts are possible nor any of our discussions insightful, without the frank counsel of these individuals:

As Director of Student Services, Marylou Wall's skill in walking SEAC members through the special education process and providing clarification to areas of concern benefit SEAC and are extremely appreciated.

As Parent Resource Coordinator, Anne Lipnick spends a tremendous amount of time and effort reaching out to the parents and bringing a "real world perspective" to SEAC that helps us bridge the knowledge gap between parents, school officials and others involved in the special education process.

As Autism Resource Specialist, Sarah DiGioia was very pro-active in becoming involved with SEAC. Although brand new to Alexandria City Public Schools, Sarah was a former member of the SEAC with Montgomery County, Maryland.

As School Board Liaison, Art Schmalz was a great resource in understanding the dynamics of the ACPS School Board. His insight and advice and desire to be an open channel between SEAC and the School Board were greatly appreciated.

Statement by the Chair and Vice Chair

SEAC has spent the last two years working on (1) building its membership, (2) better educating its membership and (3) focusing on specific goal oriented recommendations that have a positive impact. SEAC intends to follow up with the Superintendent and the School Board regarding the issue of special education services leadership and school official training, because SEAC strongly feels that inclusion of the special education communities in the general school population begins with leadership at the top, and therefore, principals and administrators need to lead by example.

The Chair and Vice Chair also note that during the early part of 2005, news sources focused on the growing epidemic of Autism, including most recently, on May 22, 2005, the presentation of the documentary "Autism is A World," by CNN. We believe determining how to provide educational services for children on the Autism spectrum will be the next big challenge to schools around the Commonwealth, and both the Chair and Vice Chair feel that the Superintendent and the School Board should begin thinking about how to prepare for that challenge.

On a personal note, both the Chair and Vice Chair thank the School Board for the opportunity to serve on SEAC.

Our vision of SEAC was to live up to the idea that SEAC is a partnership between parents and Alexandria City's school system. Our focus was to create an environment where parents felt their participation could shape policy that affects students' city-wide, and we both feel SEAC has reached that point.

We both know from personal experience that instruction about the philosophy of inclusiveness benefits the entire school population. Embracing children with disabilities reinforces the views that so many civil rights leaders preached: that understanding our differences helps us become better citizens and better people; that tolerance shapes our knowledge of the world, which benefits the community at large.

On behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee,

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Carrasco
Chairman

Ronnie Campbell
Vice Chair

**Alexandria City Public Schools
Special Education Advisory Committee
Strategic Plan & Calendar, 2005-2006**

Adopted May 31st, 2005

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee provides advice, through the Director of Student Services, to the Superintendent for transmission to the Alexandria City School Board of the school's unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities; *and*

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee assists the Alexandria City Public Schools in the formulation and development of long-range plans for improving the performance of children with disabilities; *and*

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee participates in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities; *and*

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee assists the Alexandria City Public Schools in interpreting to the community plans for meeting the needs of children with disabilities for educational services:

Now therefore be it resolved, that pursuant to committee bylaws, the Special Education Advisory Committee does adopt the following Strategic Plan and Annual Calendar for the **2005-2006** School Year:

Strategic Goal: Special Education Community Long-Range Plans.

Strategy:

1. SEAC should advocate for and promote the need and strategies for a long-term vision for special education issues within ACPS.
2. SEAC should promote discussion on how Alexandria can develop a "world class" special education program that improves upon the minimum legal standards set down in federal law.

Strategic Goal: Development and Growth.

Strategy:

3. SEAC should spotlight specific aspects of the special education process, and educate and encourage discussion in an effort to raise awareness to the special education concerns and needs in the wider community; *and*

Strategic Goal: Community Awareness.

Strategy:

4. SEAC membership should participate in other parental support group meetings, including developing another "St. Elmo's Coffee Night,"; and in developing a school board candidates forum that will be dedicated solely to special education issues.
5. SEAC should develop and work on strategies in outreach to various stakeholders involved in the special education process.

Special Education Advisory Committee Calendar for 2005- 2006 School Year

September 2005

First Meeting of the Committee @ Minnie Howard

Suggested Item: Discussion of any organizational matters.

Suggested Item: Discussion of budgetary recommendations.

Suggested Item: Adoption of recommendations to the School Board.

October 2005

Committee Meeting @ Minnie Howard

1ST SPOTLIGHT: An Overview of IDEA 2004 Changes

Suggested Item: Review of Superintendent's CIP & Operating Budget for 2006-2007

November 2005

Committee Meeting @ Minnie Howard: *Discussion with Cathy David and Executive Directors for Elementary and Secondary Education re: School Principle's Implementation of Special Education Services.*

December 2005

OFF

January 2006

Committee Meeting @ Minnie Howard: Discussion with Superintendent Perry re: Strategic Plan and Vision for Special Education in Alexandria.

February 2006

By-Law Item: Annual Plan Review Committee Meeting @ Minnie Howard

Suggested Item: Harry Burke Award Ceremony Planning & Organizational Meeting

March 2006

Committee Meeting @ Minnie Howard: ***School Board Candidate's Forum (NEEDS TO BE IN AN AUDITORIUM).***

April 2006

Committee Meeting @ Minnie Howard: *Minority Outreach and Concerns*

By-law Item: Submission to SEAC 1st Draft of 2005-2006 Annual Report for review.

Suggested Item: Submit Draft 2006-2007 Strategic Plan and Calendar for review.

May 2006

Committee Meeting @ Minnie Howard.

Annual Harry Burke Award Gala: Location TBA

Suggested Item: Submit final draft of 2005-2006 Annual Report for final edits.

Suggested item: Discussion of Election procedures.

Suggested Item: Submit final draft of 2006-2007 Strategic Plan and Calendar for review.

June 2006

Committee Meeting @ Minnie Howard

By-law Item: Approval of Annual Report and Strategic Plan and Annual Calendar.

By-law Item: Election of 2006-2007 SEAC Officers.

October 21, 2004

Mr. Mark O. Wilkoff
Chairman
Alexandria City Public Schools School Board
2000 N. Beauregard St.
Alexandria, Virginia 22311

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Attached to this letter are four recommendations that the ACPS Special Education Advisory Committee unanimously adopted at our October 19th, 2004 public meeting.

These recommendations fulfill the Committee's role in providing advice and policy guidance to the Alexandria City School Board of the school's unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities.

We appreciate the School Boards' consideration of each recommendation, and look forward to your continued support of the ACPS special education community.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Carrasco
Chairman
ACPS Special Education Advisory Committee, 2004-2005

cc:

Rebecca Perry, Superintendent of Schools
Marylou Wall, Director, Student Services

**Alexandria City Public Schools
Special Education Advisory Committee
Recommendations to the School Board**

Adopted October 19th, 2004

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee provides advice to the Alexandria City School Board of the school's unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities; *and*

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee assists the Alexandria City Public Schools in the formulation and development of long-range plans for improving the performance of children with disabilities:

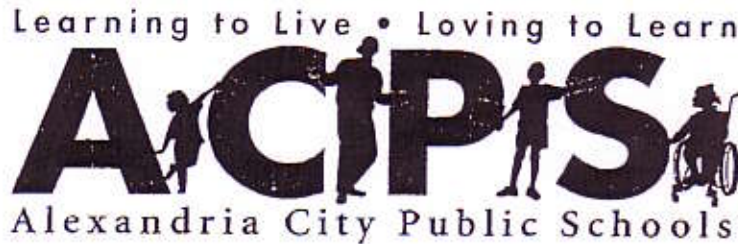
Now therefore be it resolved, that the Special Education Advisory Committee communicates to the Alexandria City Public Schools School Board the following recommendations to consider:

1. **That**, in order to assist all school principals and administrators in becoming more knowledgeable about the special education communities in their schools, the School Board direct the School Board Attorney, to develop and implement, mandatory training for all school principals and other school administrators about special education topics, special education law and policy; *and*
2. **That**, the School Board fully fund the summer school program such that (a) those students who are recommended by either a parent or a teacher can attend the summer school program, and (b) that each class in the summer school program is limited to no more than 10 students and includes a teacher and two paraprofessionals; *and*
3. **That**, the School Board fund the following additional full-time special education personnel positions: 1 additional Autism Resource Specialist position, 2 additional special education teacher positions, and 2 additional paraprofessional positions, due to an increased enrollment of students with special needs; *and*
4. **That**, the School Board fund a part-time bilingual assistant for the Parent Resource Center, who can provide assistance and outreach to the Spanish speaking community in the City of Alexandria;

Attested to and submitted by:



Michael J. Carrasco, SEAC Chairman 2004-2005



March 8, 2005

2000 N. Beauregard Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22311

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Mr. Michael J. Carrasco, Chairman
Special Education Advisory Committee
119 Normandy Hill Drive
Alexandria, VA 22304

Re: Response to Special Education Advisory Committee SY 06 Budget Requests

Dear Mr. Carrasco:

Thank you for the recommendations to the Alexandria City School Board of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) that were submitted in October 2004. I appreciate the hard work of the committee and your commitment to meeting the needs in education of children with disabilities. I am pleased to provide the following response to the four recommendations.

1. SEAC recommended mandatory training for principals and administrators on special education (SE) topics including special education law to be developed by the School Board attorney. Technical assistance in SE issues is provided to administrators on a routine (weekly) basis. Nevertheless, administrators could benefit from reinforcement on SE law and policy. One full day of in-service instruction by the School Board attorney would cost \$3,000.

2. SEAC recommended that each elementary student with a disability who needs educational assistance should have the option to attend summer school. Further, SEAC recommends that each class be limited to ten students with a teacher and two paraprofessionals.

One-third of our elementary students with disabilities (approximately 340) attended SY 05 summer school. It is unclear whether open summer school enrollment would result in a majority of elementary students attending summer school. There are many factors that influence a parent's decision to enroll a child in summer school.

3. SEAC recommended that the School Board fund five new full-time positions: one additional Autism Resource Specialist, two additional special education teachers, and two additional paraprofessionals.

Superintendent of Schools
Rebecca L. Perry

School Board
Chairman
Mark O. Wilkoff
Vice Chairman
Gwendolyn H. Lewis

Members
Sally Ann Baynard
Mary M. Danforth
Mark R. Eaton
Kenneth L. Foran
Melissa W. Luby
Arthur E. Schmalz
Charles H. Wilson

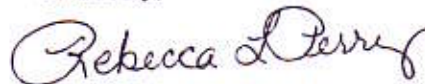
The professional and paraprofessional staff is required to maintain Virginia staffing mandates. An autism resource teacher specialist is also required. There is an increase in the number of students with autism who are currently taught in regular education classrooms with minimal SE resource services.

The FY 2005-06 operating budget included funds for staffing reserves to guard against unanticipated enrollment. These reserves included 4.0 full-time SE teachers and 2.0 full-time paraprofessionals at a cost of just under \$293,000 should those reserve positions be needed.

4. SEAC recommended a part-time bilingual assistant for the Parent Resource Center. Currently, the SE Parent Resource Center uses school and/or community bilingual assistants for teaching workshops and for providing parent support groups. The FY 2005-06 operating budget recognized the need for enhanced outreach to the Hispanic community and includes \$74,128 for a new full-time district-wide bi-lingual parent liaison. Also, two schools will have their parent liaison staffs increased.

Thank you again for your careful consideration of the budgetary needs of the SE community.

Sincerely,



Rebecca L. Perry
Superintendent

**Alexandria City Public Schools
Special Education Advisory Committee
Recommendations to the School Board**

May 17th, 2005

WHEREAS, THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROVIDES ADVICE TO THE ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD REGARDING THE UNMET NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS; *and*

WHEREAS, THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE ASSISTS THE ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LONG-RANGE PLANS FOR IMPROVING THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMUNICATES TO THE ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL BOARD AND THE SUPERINTENDENT THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **That,** special education is an essential service provided by ACPS. Approximately, one in five ACPS students receive special education services and ACPS has a relatively higher percentage of special needs students than Arlington County, Fairfax County, or Prince William County. Moreover, ACPS dedicates approximately one-quarter of its annual budget to delivering special-education-related services; *and*
2. **That,** the current administration of special education programs faces many challenges, including, but not limited to: guidance to and evaluation of school principals, teachers, and staff in implementing individualized education programs for special education students; turnover of special education teachers and support staff; relocation of certain special education programs from one school to another school; counseling and support for parents seeking to find the appropriate school placement for their children; and public access to ACPS guidelines and policies on special education programs and services; *and*
3. **That,** SEAC strongly believes that these challenges arise in part from the fact that special education and student services are not currently part of the Superintendent's executive management team and that special education is not given the priority it deserves within ACPS; *and*
4. **That,** other school districts in the greater Washington, D.C. area, including Arlington County Public Schools and Fairfax County Public Schools, have assistant superintendents for student services who are part of the executive management team of the superintendent and that within such offices are separate divisions for student services and special education; *and*
5. **That, to help remedy these and other special education-related challenges in ACPS, SEAC recommends that the School Board create an Assistant Superintendent for Student Services by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year.** SEAC notes the Board recently created the position of Assistant Superintendent for Public Information and Outreach and that a similar position to serve those children with special needs is warranted; *and*
6. **That,** the responsibilities of the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services include the development of an annual strategic plan for special education in ACPS that identifies, among other things, specific goals to: improve the delivery of special education services, enhance recruitment and retention of special education teachers and support staff, establish a guidance program to assist parents in identifying appropriate school placement for their children, and make available on the ACPS web site guidelines, handbooks, and other materials relating to special education programs and services; *and*
7. **That,** the responsibilities of the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services also include providing guidance to principals and other school officials regarding the administration of special education programs and services in the schools. SEAC believes that such efforts should include annual, full-day training by the School Board attorney on special education policy and law (along the lines of what is planned for this coming school year); *and*
8. **That,** the responsibilities of the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services also include direct participation in and responsibility for the evaluation of principals with respect to how special education programs are implemented. SEAC believes such participation and responsibility in the evaluation process are essential and that principals should not be favorably rated if they are not fulfilling their responsibilities to children with disabilities; *and*

9. **That**, SEAC asks the School Board Liaison and the SEAC chairman (or his designee) to raise these recommendations at an upcoming School Board meeting and urges the School Board and Superintendent to provide SEAC with their respective views, in writing, on these recommendations as soon as possible. SEAC is prepared to meet with the School Board and the Superintendent to discuss these recommendations in more detail.

Attested to and submitted by:

Michael J. Carrasco, SEAC Chairman, 2004-2005

Learning to Live • Loving to Learn
ACPS
Alexandria City Public Schools

June 1, 2005

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Mr. Michael J. Carrasco, Chairman
Members, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
119 Normandy Hill Drive
Alexandria, VA 22304

Dear Members of the Special Education Advisory Committee:

Thank you for serving as members of the Special Advisory Council. Your time and efforts are appreciated. I received your recommendations to the School Board dated May 17, 2005.

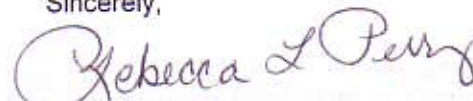
Assistant Superintendent Dr. J. Grymes is directly responsible for all federal programs including the administration of Special Education. Dr. Grymes is a member of my senior staff. He works closely with the Director of Student Services and is her supervising administrator. Nevertheless, your request for an Assistant Superintendent for Student Services will be considered. I will also review the current organizational structure to see if there are other ways of providing additional higher level administrative support to Student Services.

Your request that additional information related to special education programs and services be available on the ACPS website is an excellent recommendation and I have asked our public information office to work with Student Services to develop a plan for implementing this recommendation.

Currently, our school administrators are evaluated by Cathy David, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Dr. Margee Walsh, Executive Director for Secondary Programs, using our Performance Evaluation Program (PEP) for Administrators. All aspects of school effectiveness are evaluated including the implementation of special education. In addition, surveys of parents and staff are conducted periodically and these results are discussed and considered as a part of the evaluation.

Thank you again for submitting your recommendation and for your work on behalf of Alexandria City Public Schools and SEAC.

Sincerely,



Rebecca L. Perry
Superintendent

Superintendent of Schools
Rebecca L. Perry

School Board

Chairman
Mark O. Wilkoff

Vice Chairman
Mary M. Danforth

Members
Sally Ann Baynard

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Kenneth L. Foran

Gwendolyn H. Lewis

Melissa W. Luby

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