

**ALEXANDRIA SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2005-2006 SCHOOL YEAR**

June __, 2006

Ms. Mollie Danforth
Chair, Alexandria School Board
Alexandria City Public Schools
2000 North Beauregard Street
Suite 200
Alexandria, VA 22311

Dear Ms. Danforth:

Please find attached a copy of the annual report of the Alexandria Special Education Advisory Committee for the 2005-2006 School Year. We have appreciated the opportunity to serve the School Board on special education issues over this past school year. Feel free to contact us with any questions you might have about the annual report.

Sincerely,

David Cordell,
SEAC Co-Chair

Jonathan Friedman
SEAC Co-Chair

Alexandria Special Education Advisory Committee
2005-2006 Annual Report
June 20, 2006

Alexandria Special Education Advisory Committee
2005-2006 Annual Report
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are substantial challenges facing special education in the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS).

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, schools and school districts in Virginia and throughout the country must meet or exceed 29 benchmarks for testing performance in order to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP applies to the student population as a whole, as well as five student subgroups, including students with disabilities. *ACPS students with disabilities have not made AYP for the last three years.* The testing performance for these students falls well below the state benchmarks in every content area and also lags well behind the performance of students with disabilities in most other school districts in Virginia, including all of those in Northern Virginia. (SEAC has attached as Exhibit A charts prepared by ACPS comparing the SOL pass rates for special needs students in Alexandria as compared to the statewide average, and as Exhibit B a chart comparing ACPS pass rates with those of other school districts in Virginia.) Because ACPS has not made AYP, it is considered to be in “improvement” status under the No Child Left Behind Act and must implement a plan to raise the performance of students with disabilities.

The Alexandria Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) held 10 public meetings over the 2005-2006 school year on a range of issues relating to the performance of special needs students and the adequacy of current special education programs and services in Alexandria (a listing of hearing topics is attached in Exhibit C). SEAC has made numerous recommendations to the ACPS School Board and the ACPS Superintendent based on those public meetings. Those recommendations (copies of which are also attached to this report in Exhibits D through G, along with the associated meeting agenda and meeting minutes) are aimed at focusing attention on the unmet needs of Alexandria’s special needs students and suggesting possible strategies for improving special education programs and services in Alexandria. SEAC members have testified in support of many of those recommendations at School Board meetings (see Exhibit H). Unfortunately, the ACPS School Board has not discussed, let alone acted upon, most of SEAC’s recommendations this past school year.

SEAC has identified six core issue areas that warrant immediate attention by the School Board and the Superintendent. SEAC believes that these issue areas, if adequately addressed, will help provide a foundation for improving special education programs and services in Alexandria.

Independent Audit: SEAC asked the School Board to include funding in its FY 2007 budget for an independent audit of special education programs and services in Alexandria. The purpose of the audit would be to assess what ACPS is doing well with respect to special education, what it is not doing well, and what needs to be changed. An audit would also help give ACPS a clearer picture of what is working in other school systems today and what can work in our school system. SEAC believes that the need for such a comprehensive review is particularly urgent in light of the poor performance of its special needs students on statewide tests. Notwithstanding

these concerns, the School Board declined to include funding for an independent audit in its FY 2007 budget.

Leadership: SEAC has also proposed the creation of an Assistant Superintendent for Student Services. The simple fact is that special education has not been a priority in Alexandria. There have been no School Board working sessions dedicated to special education issues and no concrete measures taken to address the poor academic performance of students with special needs in ACPS. That culture of indifference filters down to individual schools and individual classrooms. There are very low expectations for students in special education; many teachers do not have the skills or know-how to get better results; and there is little interest in rethinking how things are done. SEAC strongly believes that it is time to make special education a priority at the highest levels of ACPS administration. A new commitment to special education could include creating an Assistant Superintendent for special education and students services, as has been done in Fairfax and other neighboring school districts.

Accountability: ACPS must establish clear standards of accountability for principals and Central Office staff in implementing the education plans of students with disabilities. SEAC meetings on a range of topics -- from classroom location to discipline issues to the Life Skills program -- frequently returned to a common question: Who ultimately is responsible for administration of special education programs and services -- the principal or Central Office? All too often, if a problem arises regarding implementation of the student's education plan or in the administration of Life Skills or another citywide program, principals at a particular school tell the parent to talk with Central Office while Central Office tells the parent it is the principal's responsibility. In short, nobody in the school system is willing to take *ownership* of the education of special needs children, and all the while, the needs of the student are not being met. SEAC believes that the School Board and Superintendent must make clear who is responsible for special needs programs and services and how those individuals will be held accountable for meeting those responsibilities.

Transparency: ACPS must provide more and better communication with parents and teachers regarding the range of programs and services made available to special needs students in Alexandria. Time and again, SEAC heard presentations from ACPS staff about programs and services for special needs students that are not well advertised (or advertised at all) and certainly not well understood by parents of students with special needs. For example, at the December 2005 meeting on testing issues and the April 2006 meeting on the Life Skills program, ACPS staff described alternative assessment methods, such as the Virginia Grade Level Alternative Assessment Program and the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program. SEAC members noted that little or no information is provided to parents regarding the differences between and among different assessment methods and the effect of each assessment method on graduation requirements. ACPS needs to do a better job educating parents and teachers about these assessment options -- as well as other programs and services for special needs students. A survey recently published in the Alexandria Gazette noted that approximately 80% of parents of ACPS high school students have internet access, making the ACPS website a critical place to publish information for students and parents. ACPS is a publicly funded organization and has a responsibility to publish its policies and guidelines in an open and transparent manner.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Alexandria is blessed to have many wonderful, compassionate teachers who are committed to helping our special needs students reach their full potential. This May, SEAC held its annual Harry Burke Awards to honor some of our outstanding teachers and also to celebrate the achievements of special educators over the last 20 years (see Exhibit I for program for Harry Burke Awards). The ceremony underscored the importance of recruiting and retaining top-flight teachers to the long-term success of special needs programs and services in Alexandria. Unfortunately, too many of our teachers are leaving ACPS after only a brief period of service. ACPS has taken a number of measures, such as providing special incentive payments, to improve recruitment and retention, but staff attrition continues to be a significant problem. ACPS urges the School Board to consider further measures to tackle this critical issue. For example, ACPS could consider conducting an annual survey of special education teachers to understand better what teachers like and dislike about their work and how special education can be improved in Alexandria.

Teacher Training: ACPS needs to better train general education teachers in how to educate students with disabilities. Most students with special needs in ACPS receive most or all of their instruction in general education classrooms. Providing general education teachers with the necessary training to teach these students effectively is therefore critical to the educational performance of these students. While ACPS makes training available to teachers, such training is offered on a voluntary basis and relatively few general education teachers avail themselves of these training opportunities. ACPS should consider making training mandatory, particularly for general education teachers who will be having special needs students in their classrooms.

SEAC is committed to working with the School Board to address these and other issues and to make special education in this city the model for Northern Virginia and the entire state. Alexandria has the talent and resources to achieve that goal. All we need is the will and desire to get there.

David Cordell & Jonathan Friedman, SEAC Co-Chairs
Fiona McMahan, SEAC Secretary
Beatrice Berman
Ronnie Campbell
Michael Carrasco
Margaret Hagood
Bobbie Jean Norris
Laura Lantzy
Crystal Prall
Sandra Strachan-Vieira

LIST OF EXHIBITS

- Exhibit A: SOL Test Results for ACPS Special Needs Students**
- Exhibit B: SOL Test Results for ACPS and Other School Jurisdictions**
- Exhibit C: SEAC Agenda Topics: 2005-2006 School Year**
- Exhibit D: Classroom Location Issues**
- Exhibit E: Transportation Issues**
- Exhibit F: Testing Issues**
- Exhibit G: Autism Issues**
- Exhibit H: SEAC Budget Recommendations**
- Exhibit I: Harry Burke Awards Program**

EXHIBIT A:

SOL TEST RESULTS FOR ACPS SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

December 13, 2005

MONITORING AND EVALUATION SERVICES

**INFORMATION
FOR**



DECISION-MAKING

ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TABLE SEAC 1
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Comparisons^a of ACPS and VA Disabled Students on AYP Objectives

	ACPS % passing 2004-05	State % passing 2004-05
English Performance	48	56
Math Performance	49	61
Science Performance	54	64

Attendance Rate	92	94
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	ACPS % not tested 2004-05	State % not tested 2004-05
English Participation	3	2
Math Participation	3	2

	2003 % passing		2004 % passing		2005 % passing	
	A	S	A	S	A	S
<u>Grade 3</u>						
Reading/Language Arts	45	54	31	47	39	54
Mathematics	53	64	61	74	58	73
Science	57	68	61	73	59	76
History/Social Science	53	66	55	72	63	76

	2003 % passing		2004 % passing		2005 % passing	
	A	S	A	S	A	S
<u>Grade 5</u>						
Reading/Language Arts	49	63	50	62	62	65
Mathematics	32	50	41	52	51	55
Science	49	62	52	66	58	62
History/Social Science	49	57	72	69	59	66

TABLE SEAC 1 (con't)
 Alexandria City Public Schools
 Comparisons^a of ACPS and VA Disabled Students on AYP Objectives

	2003		2004		2005	
	% passing		% passing		% passing	
	A	S	A	S	A	S
<u>Grade 8</u>						
Reading/Language Arts	26	37	33	36	33	42
Mathematics	28	39	39	45	39	50
Science	49	59	63	66	50	65
History/Social Science	58	54	67	63	100	64

	2003		2004		2005	
	% passing		% passing		% passing	
	A	S	A	S	A	S
<u>Grade: High School</u>						
Reading/Language Arts	70	73	65	68	56	66
Mathematics	49	54	52	59	47	65
Science	50	55	49	56	49	59
History/Social Science	54	56	52	60	52	65

	2004		2005	
	% passing		% passing	
	A	S	A	S
<u>Grade: Content Specific History</u>				
History/Social Science	51	44	48	49

^a Performance data extracted from Virginia Divisional Report Card available at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/src/vasrc-reportcard-intropage.shtml>

EXHIBIT B:

**SOL TEST RESULTS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS
IN ACPS AND OTHER VIRGINIA SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

SOL Pass Rates for Students with Special Needs, 2004-2005
ACPS and Other Virginia School Districts
Source: Virginia Department of Education

School District	SOL Pass Rate	State Pass Rate
<i>Alexandria</i>		
English Performance	48	56
Math Performance	49	61
Science Performance	54	64
Attendance Rate	92	94
<i>Arlington</i>		
English Performance	58	56
Math Performance	60	61
Science Performance	65	64
Attendance Rate	94	94
<i>Falls Church</i>		
English Performance	57	56
Math Performance	70	61
Science Performance	69	64
Attendance Rate	96	94
<i>Fairfax County</i>		
English Performance	65	56
Math Performance	66	61
Science Performance	67	64
Attendance Rate	95	94

School District	SOL Pass Rate	State Pass Rate
<i>Loudon County</i>		
English Performance	58	56
Math Performance	63	61
Science Performance	65	64
Attendance Rate	95	94
<i>Manassas City</i>		
English Performance	69	56
Math Performance	70	61
Science Performance	69	64
Attendance Rate	94	94
<i>Fauquier County</i>		
English Performance	48	56
Math Performance	59	61
Science Performance	62	64
Attendance Rate	95	94
<i>Richmond City</i>		
English Performance	61	56
Math Performance	68	61
Science Performance	74	64
Attendance Rate	90	94

EXHIBIT C:

SEAC AGENDA TOPICS: 2005-2006 SCHOOL YEAR

SEAC MEETING TOPICS (2005-2006)

September 2005: Overview of ACPS special education and IDEA 2004 amendments.

October 2005: Presentation on the physical location and set-up of special education classrooms.

November 2005: Presentations on transportation issues affecting special needs students and reading programs for special needs students.

December 2005: Presentation on testing issues relating to special needs students.

January 2006: Presentation on autism-related issues in ACPS.

February 2006: Discussion of ACPS Special Education Plan and Report.

March 2006: Presentation on the new T.C. Williams High School.

April 2006: Presentation on discipline issues affecting special needs students.

May 2006: Presentation on Life Skills programs in ACPS.

June 2006: Discussion of special education issues with Deputy Superintendent.

EXHIBIT D:

CLASSROOM LOCATION ISSUES

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

Adopted November 22, 2005

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) provides advice to the Alexandria City School Board regarding the unmet needs of students with disabilities in Alexandria City Public Schools; *and*

Whereas, SEAC assists the Alexandria City Public Schools in the development and implementation of long-range plans for improving the education of children with disabilities; *and*

Whereas, on October 18, 2005, SEAC held a meeting to discuss where special education classrooms are located in ACPS schools and how decisions are made relating to such locations. ACPS staff provided detailed floor plans of every ACPS school indicating the location of special education classrooms. ACPS staff also explained that the principals of each school determine where classrooms are located; *and*

Whereas, on November 10, 2005, SEAC members toured T.C. Williams, Maury, and John Adams with school principals or assistant principals to look at special education classrooms in those schools; *and*

Whereas, SEAC commends the principals at Maury and John Adams for the steps they have taken to integrate students with special needs into the school community. For example, classrooms for special needs students are now located near the classrooms of their general education peers, and are similar in size to general education classrooms; *and*

Whereas, SEAC also commends T.C. Williams for taking measures to integrate special education students into the larger school community.

Whereas, SEAC hopes to tour other ACPS schools over the course of the school year and will coordinate with the Superintendent to arrange such visits.

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that SEAC recommends that the Alexandria City Public Schools School Board consider the following recommendations regarding the physical location of special education classrooms in ACPS schools:

1. *That*, the School Board and Superintendent should urge principals at all ACPS schools to place a high priority on providing adequate facilities for special needs students and integrating those students into the general school community.
2. *That*, the School Board and Superintendent should encourage ACPS principals to consider the following criteria in assigning classroom space for special education:

- Classrooms for special needs students should be located in close proximity to the classrooms of their peers in general education. Special education classrooms should not be located in remote areas of the school, isolated from the rest of the school community.
 - Special education classrooms should be comparable in size to general education classrooms, particularly since students with special needs may receive physical therapy, occupational therapy, and other services that require students to move around the classroom.
 - Special education classrooms should include amenities similar to those of general education classrooms. For example, special education classrooms should have windows and should be equipped in a manner similar to general education classrooms.
 - Special education classrooms should be fully and easily accessible to students with special needs. In general, these classrooms should be located off main hallways, not in basements or up narrow stairwells. Likewise, playgrounds should be fully and easily accessible to students with special needs.
3. ***That***, the School Board and Superintendent urge principals to involve the special needs community -- including parents, students, and teachers -- in decisions about the location of classrooms and other facilities for special needs students.
 4. ***That***, the School Board and Superintendent work with the special needs community to ensure that special education classrooms for the new T.C. Williams are fully integrated into the school community and are comparable in all respects to the classrooms provided for their general education peers.

Submitted by:

David Cordell
SEAC Co-Chair 2005-06

Jonathan Friedman
SEAC Co-Chair 2005-2006

AGENDA FOR SEAC MEETING
October 18, 2005
Minnie Howard Media Center
7:00-9:00 pm

- 1) **Introductions for new SEAC members (5 minutes)**
- 2) **Public Comment period (5 minutes)**
- 3) **Approval of minutes from 9/27/05 SEAC meeting**
- 4) **Update from ACPS Staff**
 - **Ms. Marylou Wall, Student Services (5 minutes)**
 - **Replies to last month's committee questions:**
 - **(1) How many MR students are in mainstream classes versus self-contained classes?**
 - **(2) How much money has ACPS spent on special education-related legal fees?**
 - **Ms. Anne Lipnick, Parent Resource Center (5 minutes)**
 - **Ms. Gwen Lewis, School Board Liaison (5 minutes)**
 - **Dr. Jay Grymes, Assistant Superintendent (5 minutes)**
- 5) **Spotlight: Presentation on physical location and set up of special education classrooms within ACPS schools by Dr. Grymes, Mary Lou Wall and ACPS staff (20 minutes for presentation and 25 minutes for discussion and development of recommendations to the ACPS School Board).**
- 6) **Questions for November Meeting Spotlight on Reading: SEAC requests that ACPS provide answers to the following reading-related questions at our November meeting:**
 - **What are the names of the special education reading programs currently utilized by ACPS?**
 - **For which grades or special education classifications (e.g., LD, MR, autism, and so forth) is each reading program targeted?**
 - **How long has each reading program been used by ACPS?**
 - **How does ACPS select reading programs?**
 - **How does ACPS ensure that reading programs are research-based?**
 - **Is there a state or federal clearinghouse for recommended reading programs for students with special needs?**
 - **How does ACPS ensure that reading programs are properly implemented in the classroom?**
 - **How does ACPS measure the effectiveness of reading programs in educating students with special needs?**
- 7) **Any Other Business**

Adjourn: 9:00pm

Minutes for SEAC Meeting 10/18/05

Call to Order:

- David Cordell, Committee Co-Chair called meeting to order at 7.10pm.

Agenda:

- Agenda for tonight's meeting was circulated

Attendance:

- Beatrice Berman, Ronnie Campbell, David Cordell, Jonathan Friedman, Tina Games-Evans, Margaret Hagood, Fiona Mc Mahon, BJ Norris, Crystal Prall, Jeanette Lightfoot (Visitor), Annice Hirt (Visitor), Sandra Strachan-Vieira (Visitor), Gwen Lewis (School Board Liaison), Anne Lipnick (Parent Resource Center representative), Jay Grymes (Executive staff liaison: Assistant Superintendent ACPS), Marylou Wall (Staff Liaison: Director of Student Services in ACPS).

Introductions:

- SEAC members introduced themselves.

Minutes:

- Minutes from SEAC meeting 9/27/05 were reviewed
- Edits to the minutes were accepted from MaryLou Wall and Anne Lipnick.
- Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Jonathan Friedman and seconded by Tina Games-Evans.

Public Comment Period:

- David Cordell (Co-Chair) *opened the floor* for any comments from guests and committee members.
- David Cordell *proposed to temporarily suspend a SEAC bylaw* in order to allow parents whose applications were pending school board approval, to participate in the SEAC. This was seconded by Jonathan Friedman and it was passed without objection.
- David Cordell made a statement regarding SEAC committee membership issues:
 - David Cordell and Jonathan Friedman spoke with Molly Danforth regarding the issue of SEAC membership
 - The school board would like minorities, parent(s) of child(ren) with special needs attending private school and person(s) with special needs represented on SEAC
 - Currently 10 members approved
 - 2 more applications pending; To be submitted at the 10/20/05 board meeting
 - David Cordell and Jonathan Friedman to follow up via email with Molly Danforth to confirm this decision
 - David Cordell thanked Gwen Lewis for her support and assistance with helping to investigate and problem solve this issue

Minutes for SEAC Meeting 10/18/05

Updates from ACPS Staff:

Marylou Wall, Student Services

- Lots of IDEA 2004 training at secondary level completed
- VAPT training done
- Ran some Highly Qualified Institutes for special education teachers in October 2005
- Two speech therapists resigned and ACPS has contracted with agencies to fulfill requirements
- Circulated the SEAC contact sheet and asked that it be updated by members present

Response to Question on Legal Fees

How much money was spent on special education legal fees (including legal consultations) for the past year?

- MaryLou provided a spreadsheet which outlined the legal costs for the Division of Student Services for 2004-2005
- It provided separate legal costs for each of the following areas; general advice, state compliant issues, Due Process, Court Cases
- Total legal costs were \$78,594.00 which equated to 0.03% of the total Student Services budget
- MaryLou pointed out that these costs were unusually high as they had been to due process three times

Response to Question on statistics of special needs population in ASCPS

How many students have the MR label? How many MR kids are mainstreamed? How many MR kids are taught in self contained classrooms?

Marylou provided the following data on students with the MR label:

- 110 students with MR label
- 29 of the 110 receive education services in Fairfax County
- 9 of the 110 receive education services through private placements
- 77 of the 110 receive education services from ACPS
- Statistics were provided on the numbers in general education 0-20% of the time, 20-60% of the time and 60-80% of the time
- Information was provided on the average (46%) and the mean (50%)

Group discussion on this data followed and the following issues were raised:

- SEAC members expressed some confusion with the data on MR students.
- SEAC members wanted to know, of the 77 children receiving education services from ACPS, how many are in Life Skills program?
- Marylou acknowledged that it was difficult to provide exact statistics because of the mixture of services. For example a child can receive special education services 80% of the time but receive them in a general education classroom.
- Terminology such as general education, special education, Level I services, Level II services, Life Skills program, self contained classrooms were

Minutes for SEAC Meeting 10/18/05

referenced. SEAC members expressed some confusion about what precisely these various categories and definitions meant (*i.e.*, parents' understanding of this terminology and ACPS' understanding differed) and suggested there be followup discussion on these issues at future SEAC meetings.

- Gwen Lewis referenced a statistical report prepared by and provided to her by ACPS in order to provide more clarity on the matter. MaryLou Wall is to obtain the report and provide feedback and clarification on the report at next month's SEAC meeting.

Anne Lipnick, Parent Resource Center

- Announced an upcoming seminar "Future Quest 2005: A free career and college forum for students with disabilities, parents and professionals"; Scheduled for 11/19/05 from 8.30am-2.30pm at George Mason University Johnson Center.
- St. Elmo's meeting held on 10/10/05; Topic "Lessons from the First Month of School: Tips to Make the School Year Go More Smoothly."
- Working on Children Together- Early literacy and storytelling strategies.
- Planning a March 2006 event.

Gwen Lewis, School Board Liaison

- Has been working on the issue of SEAC member composition.
- Agenda for the upcoming school board meeting includes voting on the submitted SEAC priorities for focus for this year.

Dr. Jay Grymes, Assistant Superintendent

- Plans on attending a conference in November where he could obtain current information on reading programs.
- Requested that questions regarding reading programs be submitted to him prior to the conference so that he could address them with the experts who would be presenting at the conference.
- Members were asked to submit their questions/comments to Jonathan or David so that they could provide a summary of the concerns to Dr. Grymes in time for the conference.

Spotlight #1: Presentation on Transportation by Mr. David Rose, Director of ACPS Transportation

Postponed and rescheduled for November 2005 as Mr. Rose was sick

Minutes for SEAC Meeting 10/18/05

Spotlight #2: Presentation on physical location and set up of special education classrooms within ACSP schools, by Dr. Grymes and MaryLou Wall

- Hand out which contained floor plans for each school with special education classrooms highlighted was distributed to the committee.
- Marylou Wall expressed gratitude to Larry Gilbertson and Mark Krauss (ACPS staff) for their assistance in getting the handout prepared.
- Marylou Wall outlined how the floor plan was designed by reviewing the John Adams ES diagram with the SEAC members.
- Marylou Wall answered questions from members regarding schools with which they were familiar.

Group discussion:

- SEAC members raised the following questions and issues:
 - How many classrooms have windows?
 - Are special education classrooms close to their peer classrooms? Are they isolated?
 - Is there a law for comparable space for persons with disabilities? If so is ACPS compliant?
 - What is the role for Student Services in deciding physical location? Do they have any input in decision making regarding physical location?
 - Are special education experts involved in designing TC Williams HS? If so has the affect of special education staff turnover on decision making been considered? It is important to plan for special education physical location at the early stages in TC Williams design.
 - Concern were raised that there was no home base or office for the therapists who traveled between schools.
 - Question was asked about whether the therapists are satisfied with their physical location.
- Based on comments and recent first hand knowledge from some SEAC members, it seemed that there were some inaccuracies in the diagrams presented.
- Marylou Wall responded that each principal was responsible for deciding the physical location of special education classrooms and therapy areas.
- Dr. Grymes responded that special education teachers were involved in the TC Williams project.
- Marylou Wall reported that the therapists did communicate their needs to her and that they were usually accommodated.

Plan for follow up:

- Visit some schools and evaluate the physical location of special education areas.
- Highlight the findings.
- Present findings to the ACPS school board.
- A survey will be developed so that each evaluation can be consistent.

Minutes for SEAC Meeting 10/18/05

- SEAC members should email their suggestions for items to be included on the survey to David Cordell and Jonathan Friedman.
- Members interested in conducting school visits should communicate with David Cordell and Jonathan Friedman.

New Business:

Group discussion indicated the following concerns regarding services provided by therapists (OT, PT, SLP):

- Accountability of therapists.
- Who supervises and evaluates the therapists?
- Who is responsible for ensuring that therapy services are provided according to IEP?
- Who monitors that therapy services are provided?
- What happens when therapists are sick or on leave? Is there a substitute provided? Is the therapy session made up at a later date?
- How can parents find out when the therapy has been provided?
- How is the mode of therapy decided (group versus individual services)?

Plan for follow up:

- Dr. Grymes responded by acknowledging that there seemed to be boundary issues regarding responsibility for monitoring the therapists and monitoring that services were provided according to IEPs.
- He reported that he would review the policies and procedures in place at this time and consult with the ACPS Superintendent.

Future Meetings:

- Reading Programs and Transportation will be the spotlights at the November 2005 meeting.
- Will await feedback regarding priorities from the ACPS school board before planning the remaining SEAC meetings.
- SEAC meeting calendar reviewed and SEAC members were provided with 11/15/05 as November date, 12/13/05 as December date, 1/17/06 as January date and 2/21/06 as February date.

Meeting Adjourned:

- The meeting was adjourned at 9.00pm.
- Next meeting scheduled for 11/15/05 at 7.00pm in the Minnie Howard Media Center.

Minutes Submitted by: Fiona Mc Mahon (SEAC Secretary)

EXHIBIT E:
TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

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

Adopted December 13, 2005

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) provides advice to the Alexandria City School Board regarding the unmet needs of students with disabilities in Alexandria City Public Schools; *and*

Whereas, SEAC assists the Alexandria City Public Schools in the development and implementation of long-range plans for improving the education of children with disabilities; *and*

Whereas, on November 15, 2005, SEAC held a meeting to discuss transportation issues in ACPS. ACPS staff provided detailed responses to questions SEAC had on issues regarding transportation of students with disabilities; *and*

Whereas, SEAC commends Mr. David Rose, Director of Transportation, for specifically addressing the issues raised by SEAC members, including: (1) dedicating a specific member of his staff to handle issues related to students with disabilities; (2) ensuring that speakers of other languages are available in the Transportation Office to respond to phone calls from parents during the school day; and (3) improving customer service expectations within the Transportation Office.

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that SEAC recommends that the Alexandria City Public Schools School Board consider the following recommendations regarding the transportation of students with disabilities within the ACPS school system:

1. *That*, the School Board and Superintendent should ensure that the budgeted request for cameras to be placed on all school buses be fully funded in the upcoming budget cycle. SEAC strongly believes such cameras are essential to ensuring the needs of students with disabilities are fully met.
2. *That*, the School Board and Superintendent should ensure that more school buses are dedicated to routes serving the special needs population so that no elementary bus route should take longer than 30 minutes.
3. *That*, all bus drivers and monitors of buses dedicated to students with disabilities be chosen for their willingness to work with such students.
4. *That*, ACPS provide adequate training to all bus drivers, including those on both special education and general education bus routes, in working with students with special needs.
5. *That*, the School Board and Superintendent establish policies that require staff in the Transportation Office as well as ACPS Central Office generally to respond to parent e-mails within 24 hours of receipt of such e-mails. The

School Board and Superintendent should also consider the procurement of technical devices, such as Blackberries, for certain ACPS staff so that such staff can respond to e-mails even when out of the office.

Submitted by:

David Cordell
SEAC Co-Chair 2005-06

Jonathan Friedman
SEAC Co-Chair 2005-2006

AGENDA FOR SEAC MEETING
November 15, 2005
Minnie Howard Media Center
7:00-9:00 pm

- 1) **Public Comment period (5 minutes)**
- 2) **Approval of minutes from 10/18/05 SEAC meeting**
- 3) **Review of proposed SEAC meeting topics for the rest of the school year (see attached) (5 minutes).**
- 4) **Update from ACPS Staff**
 - **Ms. Marylou Wall, Student Services (5 minutes)**
 - **Ms. Anne Lipnick, Parent Resource Center (5 minutes)**
 - **Ms. Gwen Lewis, School Board Liaison (5 minutes)**
 - **Dr. Jay Grymes, Assistant Superintendent (5 minutes)**
- 5) ***Spotlight #1: Presentation on transportation issues by Mr. David Rose (20 minutes for presentation and 20 minutes for discussion and development of recommendations to the ACPS School Board).***
- 6) ***Spotlight #2: Presentation on reading-related issues by Ms. Ann Anderson (30 minutes for presentation and 20 minutes for discussion) (NOTE: We expect the discussion may carry over to our December meeting).***
- 7) **Questions for December Meeting Spotlight on Testing: SEAC requests that ACPS provide answers to the following testing-related questions at our December meeting:**
 - **Please describe the different types of standardized tests ACPS gives to students with disabilities (e.g., SOL, VAAP, anything else).**
 - **How does ACPS decide which tests are administered to which students?**
 - **Are those testing decisions reflected in IEPs and discussed with members of the IEP team?**
 - **How are test results for students with disabilities calculated for purposes of meeting No Child Left Behind benchmarks?**
 - **Why is there a gap between the test results for students with disabilities in ACPS as compared to other school jurisdictions in Northern Virginia and the statewide average for students with disabilities?**
 - **What is the "slope of learning" and how does that relate to ACPS test results?**
 - **Does ACPS have to demonstrate adequate yearly progress for students with disabilities under the No Child Left Behind Act?**
 - **Has ACPS been making such progress since the No Child Left Behind Act went into effect? If not, why not and what are the consequences for ACPS?**
 - **What steps is ACPS taking to improve the test results for students with disabilities?**
 - **What strategies to improve test scores for students with disabilities are working?**
- 8) **Any Other Business**

Adjourn: 9:00pm

SEAC MEETING MINUTES: 11/15/05

Call to Order:

- David Cordell, Committee Co-Chair called meeting to order at 7.00pm.

Agenda:

- Agenda for tonight's meeting was circulated.

Attendance:

- Ronnie Campbell, David Cordell, Jonathan Friedman, Tina Games-Evans, Margaret Hagood, Fiona Mc Mahon, BJ Norris, Crystal Prall, Annice Hirt (Visitor), Sandra Strachan-Vieira, Anne Lipnick (Parent Resource Center representative), Jay Grymes (Executive staff liaison: Assistant Superintendent ACPS), Marylou Wall (Staff Liaison: Director of Student Services in ACPS).

Introductions:

- SEAC members and visitors introduced themselves.

Minutes:

- Minutes from SEAC meeting 10/18/05 were reviewed.
- SEAC then adopted the minutes.

Public Comment Period:

- David Cordell (Co-Chair) opened the floor for any comments from guests and committee members.
- David Cordell proposed to temporarily suspend a SEAC bylaw in order to allow parents whose applications were pending school board approval to participate in the SEAC meeting. This was seconded by Jonathan Friedman and it was passed without objection.

Updates from ACPS Staff:

Marylou Wall, Student Services

- Noted ongoing recruitment efforts for special education teachers at Penn State.
- Noted recent staff training events including programs on Asperger's Syndrome and high functioning autism.
- Noted recent staff training on early literacy.

Anne Lipnick, Parent Resource Center

- Provided a recap of the "Future Quest 2005: A free career and college forum for students with disabilities, parents and professionals" conference.
- Announced a IDEA 2004 workshop scheduled for 12/1/05 in conjunction with Marylou Wall.
- Announced a workshop that Sarah DiGioia will present on 12/14/05 on helping

children with autism learn to be independent at home.

- The next St. Elmo's meeting will focus on the role organization can play in stress reduction.

Gwen Lewis, School Board Liaison

- Ms. Lewis did not attend.

Dr. Jay Grymes, Assistant Superintendent

- Noted that he was unable to attend the reading conference in November.

Spotlight #1: Presentation on Transportation by Mr. David Rose, Director of ACPS Transportation

- Circulated a binder of information on transportation services, including services for students with special needs.
- Provided a report which answered the questions posed by SEAC.
- Noted that bus routes are developed with the aid of a computer program in conjunction with feedback from drivers.
- The computer routing system has been updated to carryover information from the previous year, which should help in organization.
- Changes have been made in the transportation department so that one person (Michelle Chapman) will be responsible for special education issues. She has been provided with a cell phone so that she can be accessible to parents before and after school hours. The cell phone number is 571-220-1047.
- Parents can also communicate with the transportation department via email. Michelle's cell phone number and the transportation department email address will be published on literature that is sent to parents from the transportation office.
- Mr. Rose will also include a question regarding primary language spoken in the home on the transportation registration form.
- He is aware of "bad drivers" and has taken disciplinary action as indicated.
- A meeting was held with all special education transportation staff to review policies and job expectations.
- There should be an additional bus available next year due to the anticipated relocation of St. Coletta's school.
- Mr. Rose has assigned a driver to work in the office to help answer questions and concerns from Spanish-speaking parents. He also noted that other transportation staff speak other foreign languages.
- Mr. Rose informed the SEAC committee that a budget request for \$100,000 was pending at the School Board to place cameras on all ACPS school buses. There was general consensus among SEAC members that this was a good idea and should be adopted by the Board.
- Mr. Rose mentioned that he will be sending out a customer service survey at the end of the year. He also indicated that he has tried to emphasize the importance of customer service and treating parents and students alike with respect.

Group discussion on transportation issues:

- SEAC members raised concerns about the amount of time certain routes take. Mr. Rose responded that routes can take anywhere from 20 to 50 minutes, but traffic congestion in the City of Alexandria can sometimes make those trips longer. SEAC members suggested the possibility of adding more buses as a way to shorten route times.
- SEAC members really liked the suggestion for cameras on buses.
- SEAC members also urged Mr. Rose to place drivers on special education bus routes who are genuinely committed to working with students with special needs. Mr. Rose noted that he generally has little staff/monitor turnover on these routes, but said he was committed to ensuring that staff and monitors on these routes are adequately trained and treat students with respect and care.
- David Cordell thanked Mr. Rose and Michelle Chapman for their attitude and reorganization of the transportation department and their commitment to special needs children. He noted that SEAC may follow up with Mr. Rose if additional issues arise over the course of the school year.

Spotlight #2: Presentation on reading-related issues by Ann Anderson (Specialist in Reading in ACPS) and Nancy Shannon (Executive Director of Elementary Program in ACPS)

- Hand out which provided the following information was distributed to the committee:
 - Florida Center for Reading Research
 - Standards of Learning and Pacing Guides
 - The Balanced Literacy Framework
 - The Elementary Core Reading Program
 - Correlating the 5 Components of Reading with the ACPS Balanced Literacy Framework
 - Intervention Programs
 - K-12 Reading Support
- Ann Anderson reviewed the handouts and provided more detailed explanations of the ACPS programs:
 - Division-wide focus to embed reading strategies in the Middle School and High School curricula.
 - Intervention reading programs based on IEP recommendations and test data.
 - Pacing guide helps teachers know which skill to focus on at the appropriate timeline
 - Important to expose kids to grade level information.
 - The number of words children read daily helps determine their reading level.
 - Separate reading programs for ESL.
 - Reading programs are aligned with the SOLs.
 - Reading programs are needs-based for both special education students and general education students.
- Ann Anderson, Nancy Shannon, Jay Grymes and Marylou Wall fielded questions from the SEAC members:
 - All teachers are trained in the core programs.
 - Extensive training required for some programs.

- Assessments of reading are conducted by a variety of staff including reading specialists, special education teachers, psychologists and teachers.
- Walk throughs in classrooms are conducted to monitor that the programs are being followed
- There is some work to do by ACPS to ensure that reading programs are being appropriately matched to reading assessments.
- Administrators and principals to start monitoring reading programs; Monitoring frequency will increase.
- Teachers will be trained on how to tailor the reading program to the assessment of needs.
- No reading specialists at High School level; SEAC members expressed the view that reading needs to be taught throughout K-12.
- Dr. Grymes noted that ACPS is reviewing its reading programs for special needs students.

Group discussion on reading issues:

- SEAC members raised the following questions and issues:
 - Need to assess whether reading programs are being properly implemented in the classroom. Reading programs are designed to be taught to a particular number of students with particular reading disabilities in a particular way by a teacher with particular training. SEAC questions whether this is in fact occurring. ACPS staff acknowledged there was some variability in how reading programs were implemented in the schools. For example, ACPS staff noted that one of the middle schools does a good job with its reading programs while the other has a more uneven track record.
 - Need to review whether the reading programs used actually meet the individualized needs of special needs students. SEAC members raised concerns that some reading programs are used that do not match the needs of students (i.e., reading programs are based on the disability rather than the individual needs assessments).
 - Need to look at overcrowding. SEAC members expressed concern that research-based reading programs designed for small groups of students were being taught in classes with larger groups of students. Implementation of programs in a manner that is inconsistent with research-based methods compromises the effectiveness of such reading programs.
 - Need to work with, and train, the principals to improve effectiveness of reading programs, particularly since principals play a critical role in ensuring that reading programs are properly implemented. Principals often are not fully aware of the criteria on which research-based reading programs are developed and should be implemented. They also often defer to Central Office when issues or questions are raised about reading programs.

Plan for follow up on reading issues:

- SEAC wants ACPS to focus on improving the reading programs for all special needs

students.

- ACPS should consider a survey of reading specialists and other staff trained in research-based reading programs to determine if reading programs are being taught as intended. Among other things, the survey could find out what reading programs are being taught in individual classrooms, how many students in individual classrooms are being taught using a particular reading program, and the amount of time students in individual classrooms are being taught using a particular reading program. The goal would be for ACPS to use the survey results to assess what reading programs are working or not working and why.
- ACPS to continue with staff training and monitoring.
- SEAC will revisit the reading issue later in the school year so that we can get an update on the status of the ACPS review of its programs.

New Business:

- David Cordell proposed a committee to investigate a charter school. Members should email David if they are interested in volunteering.

Meeting Adjoined:

- The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.
- Next meeting scheduled for 12/13/05 at 7.00pm in the Minnie Howard Media Center.

Minutes Submitted by: Fiona McMahon (SEAC Secretary).

EXHIBIT F:
TESTING ISSUES

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

Adopted January 17, 2006

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) provides advice to the Alexandria City School Board regarding the unmet needs of students with disabilities in Alexandria City Public Schools; *and*

Whereas, SEAC assists the Alexandria City Public Schools in the development and implementation of long-range plans for improving the education of children with disabilities; *and*

Whereas, on December 13, 2005, SEAC held a meeting to discuss testing in ACPS with respect to students with disabilities. ACPS staff provided detailed responses to questions SEAC had on issues regarding testing of students with disabilities; *and*

Whereas, SEAC commends Mr. Monte Dawson, Executive Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, for discussing the issues raised by SEAC members, including, among other things, the reasons for the gap between the test results for students with disabilities in ACPS as compared to other school jurisdictions in Northern Virginia and the statewide average for students with disabilities.

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that SEAC recommends that the Alexandria City Public Schools School Board consider the following recommendations regarding the testing of students with disabilities within the ACPS school system:

1. ***That***, the School Board and Superintendent make it an **urgent and immediate priority to identify** the reasons why test scores for students with disabilities lag significantly behind the state average of students with disabilities as well as the average scores of neighboring jurisdictions. SEAC understands that ACPS has failed to make adequate yearly progress with respect to students with disabilities and is now in “improvement” status under the No Child Left Behind Act. SEAC finds it unacceptable that ACPS has not addressed these failing scores and calls on the School Board to make this matter an immediate priority.
2. ***That***, the School Board and Superintendent should ensure that parents and SEAC members be part of any discussion on how test scores for students with disabilities can be improved. SEAC understands that an ACPS committee has been formed to discuss this and other issues related to special education. SEAC urges the School Board to ensure SEAC participation in such discussions as well as the development of recommendations to improve the educational and testing performance of students with disabilities.
3. ***That***, the School Board and the Superintendent find ways for students with disabilities to have full access to technological adaptations that are available for test

taking. For example, where appropriate, SEAC believes students with disabilities should be able to take the SOL tests on a computer, including, among other options, the ability to use a touch screen to see and respond to questions as well as headphones to hear the questions. SEAC understands that some computerized testing is made available to high school students, but there is no similar option for students in grades three through eight. SEAC believes making computerized testing more universally available would likely improve test scores.

4. *That*, ACPS ensure that parents of students with disabilities are provided more information on alternative assessment methods. For example, ACPS should consider developing handouts, in English and Spanish, for parents detailing alternative assessment options, such as the Virginia Grade Level Alternative Assessment Program (“VGLA”) or the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (“VAAP”). Likewise, ACPS should provide adequate training to Central Office staff, teachers, and other members of IEP teams in explaining to parents the differences between and among different assessment methods and the effect of each assessment method on graduation requirements (*e.g.*, types of diplomas granted).

Submitted by:

David Cordell
SEAC Co-Chair 2005-06

Jonathan Friedman
SEAC Co-Chair 2005-2006

AGENDA FOR SEAC MEETING

December 13, 2005

Minnie Howard Media Center

7:00-9:00 pm

- 1) **Public Comment period (5 minutes)**
- 2) **Approval of minutes from 11/15/05 SEAC meeting (attached)**
- 3) **Update from ACPS Staff**
 - **Ms. Marylou Wall, Student Services (5 minutes)**
 - **Ms. Anne Lipnick, Parent Resource Center (5 minutes)**
 - **Ms. Gwen Lewis, School Board Liaison (5 minutes)**
 - **Dr. Jay Grymes, Assistant Superintendent (5 minutes)**
- 4) ***Spotlight: Presentation on testing issues by Mr. Monte Dawson (45 minutes for presentation and 45 minutes for discussion and development of recommendations to the ACPS School Board).***
- 5) **Consideration of draft resolution on transportation issues (attached) (10 minutes).**
- 6) **Questions for January 2006 Meeting Spotlight on Autism: SEAC requests that ACPS provide answers to the attached list of questions at our January meeting.**
- 7) **Any Other Business**

Adjourn: 9:00pm

SEAC MEETING MINUTES: 12/13/05

Call to Order:

- Jonathan Friedman, Committee Co-Chair called meeting to order at 7.00pm.

Agenda:

- Agenda for tonight's meeting was circulated and reviewed.

Attendance:

- Ronnie Campbell, David Cordell, Jonathan Friedman, Margaret Hagood, BJ Norris, Crystal Prall, Beatrice Berman, Sandra Strachan-Vieira, Anne Lipnick (Parent Resource Center representative), Jay Grymes (Executive staff liaison: Assistant Superintendent ACPS), Marylou Wall (Staff Liaison: Director of Student Services in ACPS).

Public Comment Period:

- David Cordell (Co-Chair) opened the floor for any comments from guests and committee members. There were none.

Updates from ACPS Staff:

Marylou Wall, Student Services

- Noted ongoing recruitment efforts for special education teachers at Penn State to fill positions at TC Williams and Jefferson-Houston.
- Noted staff training on early literacy skills as well as other staff development efforts.
- Noted recent staff training on the Virginia Grade Level Assessment for students with disabilities.

Anne Lipnick, Parent Resource Center

- Noted that over 30 people attended the workshop with Marylou Wall on IDEA 2004 on 12/1/05 in conjunction with Marylou Wall. Also mentioned that another workshop may be hosted in 2006.
- Mentioned that there was much parent interest at the IDEA 2004 workshop in having a separate training program for parents on writing IEPs.
- Noted upcoming St. Elmo's meeting for January and February 2006.
- Announced a workshop that Sarah DiGioia will present on 12/14/05 on helping children with autism learn to be independent at home.

Gwen Lewis, School Board Liaison

- Ms. Lewis did not attend.

Dr. Jay Grymes, Assistant Superintendent

- Noted that Maury made AYP and that ACPS was very proud of the achievement. He also mentioned that ACPS is still awaiting word on John Adams but is hopeful that school make AYP as well.
- Noted that ACPS has formed a committee to look at reading programs for ESL students and students with disabilities. The committee will include, among others, Dr. Grymes, Cathy David, Marylou Wall and reading specialists. ACPS has received a \$200,000 grant for this initiative. The aim of the initiative will be to improve staff training for reading programs as well as implementation of programs in the classroom.
- David Cordell asked whether ACPS will invite parents to participate in the initiative, particularly given the perspective parents can give on how reading programs are being implemented in the classroom. Dr. Grymes indicated that there are no current plans to do so, but he will consider the proposal. He also noted that since the initiative was funded under Title 1, any parental involvement would likely be limited to parents of Title 1 students.

Spotlight: Presentation on Testing Issues by Mr. Monte Dawson, ACPS

- Circulated a presentation handout on testing issues.
- Provided a general overview of testing in ACPS, including the various types of tests given to students throughout the system, how ACPS utilizes test results, and how the testing regime has changed over time. Noted that tests can, among other things, help teachers and administrators identify the educational needs of particular students and develop an appropriate educational program for the student.
- Described the Standards of Learning (“SOL”) Assessments. Mr. Dawson noted that the general expectation is that all students will participate in the SOL Assessments, but flexibility has been built into how the tests are administered.
 - *SOLs*: Students on grade level in grades 3 through 8 will take the SOLs in the four core academic content areas (English, math, science, and history/social science). The tests used to be limited to grades 3, 5, and 8, but now will be administered in grades 3 through 8.
 - *Virginia Grade Level Alternative Assessment Program (“VGLA”)*: VGLA is a new program designed to provide students on grade level who meet VGLA participation criteria with an alternative method for participation in the SOL program. The VGLA uses a collection of evidence (a so-called “portfolio”), rather than a test, to demonstrate individual achievement on grade level for a particular content area. Mr. Dawson noted that a student might qualify to take the standard SOL tests in certain content areas, but qualify for the VGLA assessment method in other areas. He also noted that decisions on whether a student qualifies for VGLA are made at the IEP meeting the year before the alternative assessment method is to be used (e.g., if student is to be assessed using VGLA in third grade, the IEP team would make that determination while the student is in second grade). Because VGLA is a new program, ACPS has no data yet on how many students participated in this assessment program, how many passed or failed, and so forth.

- *Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (“VAAP”)*: VAAP is designed to evaluate the performance of students with disabilities who are not on grade level and cannot participate in the SOL or VGLA programs. Students participating in this program must have an IEP. The VAAP assessment method has been available for the last 3-4 years.
 - Like the VGLA, VAAP is an assessment method based on a portfolio of student work (it is not a standardized test), but unlike VGLA, the assessment can be conducted over a period of years. The VAAP measures progress with respect to 40 essential objectives.
 - The IEP team makes the determination as to whether a student takes the VAAP every year using specific guidelines. Last year, approximately 25 students took VAAP.
 - The No Child Left Behind Act places a 1% cap (i.e. 1% of all tested students at that grade level for that subject) on the number of students who can take VAAP. ACPS is well below the 1% cap.
 - It appears that there is a very high pass rate for students taking VAAP. (VAAP measures performance on a scale of 1 to 4, and students receiving scores of 3s or 4s are deemed to pass the assessment.) These pass rates can be aggregated into the overall pass rate for the relevant school and for the school division as a whole.
- SEAC member urged ACPS to discuss more fully alternative assessment options with parents of students with disabilities.
- Noted that ACPS has revised its remediation/recovery programs so that students do not have to re-take SOL tests from the prior school year. So, for example, if a student failed the reading SOL in third grade, he or she can take the reading SOL in the fourth grade, rather than having to re-take the third grade test.
- Noted that failing an SOL test does not in and of itself affect the promotion of a student to the next grade. Generally, that determination will be based on a number of different factors.
- Noted that ACPS has started using computerized SOL testing at the high school level. The initial goal was to provide for computerized testing at the elementary and middle school levels by the 2008-2009 school year, but the costs associated with switching to computerized testing have delayed those plans.
 - SEAC members noted that computerized testing (including using a touch screen to see and respond to questions as well as headphones to hear the questions) could benefit students with disabilities.
 - SEAC members urged ACPS to take a closer look at enabling students with disabilities to use computerized testing in grades 3-8.
 - Also, members urged that ACPS allow students with disabilities to use computerized testing and/or have questions read to the student for the SOLs, even if they don’t rely on such testing accommodations for all other tests. (Marylou and Dr. Grymes suggested that accommodations cannot be made on a selective basis, i.e., either the accommodation is used in all testing settings, or not at all.)
- Explained how the No Child Left Behind Act requires schools, school divisions, and states to meet annual objectives for Adequate Yearly Progress (“AYP”) for student performance on statewide tests in reading and math. For a school, school division or

state to make AYP, it must meet or exceed 29 benchmarks for testing performance, participation, and so forth. AYP applies to all students as well as five subgroups, including students with disabilities, ESL students, and economically disadvantaged students, among others. The No Child Left Behind Act also requires the identification of states, schools, and school divisions making and not making AYP.

- Reviewed AYP data for ACPS students with disabilities for the last three school years. ACPS students with disabilities are not making AYP. The data indicate that the testing performance for these students falls well below the state benchmarks in every content area. (Mr. Dawson noted that there is a “safe harbor” under the No Child Left Behind Act such that a school or school division can make AYP if the failure rate for student subgroups is reduced by at least 10% in any given year. ACPS does not qualify for this safe harbor.)
 - SEAC members asked why this was the case. ACPS staff indicated that they had theories as to why the test results were so poor but did not have any concrete answers. For example, Marylou noted that ACPS has a higher percentage of students with disabilities than the statewide average (17-18% versus 12-13%). SEAC members questioned whether that fact would in fact explain why performance within the disabilities subgroup was far below the statewide average.
 - Marylou also speculated that students with disabilities from middle-income backgrounds typically pass the SOLs, while students with disabilities from underprivileged backgrounds struggle with the tests (Marylou acknowledged that she did not have data to support that theory). SEAC members observed that the testing results for ACPS students with disabilities nonetheless lagged behind school districts with large student populations from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as Richmond.
- Because students with disabilities and ESL students have not made AYP, ACPS is considered to be in “improvement” under the No Child Left Behind Act. As a result, ACPS must implement an improvement plan aimed at raising the performance of these subgroups. To that end, ACPS has received a \$200,000 grant under the Title 1 program. This is the grant Dr. Grymes referenced at the beginning of the meeting that focuses on improving reading instruction for students with disabilities.
 - SEAC members asked, once again, about the possibility of including parents in this program.
 - SEAC members also urged ACPS to provide, as part of this initiative, a written report setting forth the reasons ACPS believes students with disabilities are testing so poorly on the SOLs and including a strategic plan for addressing the problem.
- Dr. Grymes also noted that Jefferson-Houston has not made AYP for several years now and that the school must take certain corrective actions under the Act, such as offering Title 1 students school choice and offering supplemental educational services. (Maury had been in a similar situation in previous years, but as noted made AYP last school year.) If Jefferson-Houston does not make AYP for another year, ACPS must initiate restructuring plans for the school, which might include reopening the school as a charter school or turning the school over to a private company.
- Mr. Dawson concluded his presentation. David thanked him for attending.

Minutes:

- Minutes from SEAC meeting 11/15/05 were reviewed.
- SEAC then adopted the minutes.

Transportation Resolution:

- SEAC considered and approved the draft resolution on transportation issues.
- Members also discussed the importance of improving e-mail and other communication between parents and ACPS staff. David and Jonathan pointed out that Fairfax and other school jurisdictions have adopted e-mail policy guidelines, including requirements that e-mail be responded to within a fixed period of time, and urged ACPS to adopt similar guidelines for ACPS staff.

Meeting Adjoined:

- The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.
- Next meeting scheduled for 1/17/06 at 7.00pm in the Minnie Howard Media Center.

Minutes Submitted by: Jonathan Friedman (SEAC Co-Chair).

EXHIBIT G:
AUTISM ISSUES

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

Adopted June 13th, 2006

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) provides advice to the Alexandria City School Board regarding the unmet needs of students with Disabilities in Alexandria City Public Schools;

Whereas, SEAC assists the Alexandria City Public Schools in the development and Implementation of long-range plans for improving the education of children with disabilities;

Whereas, on January 17, 2006, SEAC held a meeting to discuss ACPS's educational services and policies for autistic children. SEAC commends Ms. Mary Lou Wall, Director of Student Services, and Ms. Carrie Stoltz, Director, Child Find, for their presentation as well as their detailed responses to our questions; *and*

Whereas, SEAC made the following Findings of Fact regarding ACPS's educational services and policies for autistic students:

1. According to ACPS data, the number of students classified with autism in ACPS has increased by 38% over the last school year (from 42 students to 58 students). That figure does not include students that ACPS classifies with developmental delay, emotional disturbance, or in other disabilities categories.
2. According to ACPS data, the total number of students classified with autism in ACPS now equals 3% of the total ACPS special needs student population. ACPS understands that Fairfax and Prince William counties have the same percentage of students classified as autistic.
3. ACPS has citywide self-contained classes for students with autism at John Adams Elementary School. There are no similar classes for students in higher grades.
4. ACPS runs a preschool for developmentally-delayed children at Jefferson-Houston Elementary School. That preschool does not utilize educational methods geared specifically for autistic children in the preschool program, such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Relationship Development Intervention (RDI), or floortime-based methods, nor does ACPS have preschool teachers or staff specifically trained in these educational methods.
5. ACPS offers autism-related training to ACPS administrators, teachers, and staff. Those training programs are voluntary. ACPS could not provide

specific data on what percentage of staff and teachers attend those training sessions.

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved, that SEAC recommends that ACPS consider the following recommendations regarding the education of students with autism:

1. ***That,*** ACPS should develop a strategic plan to address the growing number of autistic students in the Alexandria public school system. School systems with an equivalent percentage of autistic children, such as Fairfax and Prince William counties, have developed system-wide plans for accommodating the growing number of autistic students. ACPS should take a similar approach.
2. ***That,*** ACPS should consider hiring a professional autism specialist with in-the-field educational experience to conduct a top-to-bottom review and evaluation of current services for students with autism and help develop a strategic plan for ACPS. Among other things, such plan would: (i) determine which research-based instructional and behavioral methodologies ACPS should adopt; (ii) develop a continuum of service levels that addresses the functionality of each child; (iii) establish short-term and long-term quantifiable programmatic benchmarks; (iv) develop clear program protocols for teachers, administrators, and parents; and (v) establish ACPS personnel qualifications and organizational structures necessary to deliver services to students with autism.
3. ***That,*** consistent with such strategic plan, ACPS should consider developing a citywide program that provides services to students with autism from preschool through high school. As noted, ACPS currently offers citywide programs through grade 5.
4. ***That,*** until such strategic plan is developed, ACPS should consider implementing in the 2006-2007 school year a pilot ABA program, modeled on the program adopted in Fairfax County, for students with autism in the preschool programs.
5. ***That,*** as part of any strategic plan, ACPS consider developing regional programs for autistic students with neighboring school districts, such as Arlington and Falls Church, and also explore partnerships with private groups skilled in delivering services to students with autism.
6. ***That,*** consistent with such strategic plan, ACPS take additional steps to encourage administrators, teachers, and staff to participate in autism-related training. For example, ACPS might consider requiring certain research-based training for administrators, teachers, and staff who will have autistic children in their classrooms and schools. Likewise, ACPS might also require that education professionals in daily contact with students with autism renew their training on an annual basis.

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Submitted by:

David Cordell
SEAC Co-Chair 2005 – 6

Jonathan Friedman
SEAC Co-Chair 2005 – 6

Sandra Strachan-Vieira
SEAC Committee Member

AGENDA FOR SEAC MEETING

January 17, 2006

Minnie Howard Media Center

7:00-9:00 pm

- 1) Public Comment period (5 minutes)**
- 2) Approval of minutes from 12/13/05 SEAC meeting (attached)**
- 3) Update from ACPS Staff**
 - **Ms. Marylou Wall, Student Services (5 minutes)**
 - **Ms. Anne Lipnick, Parent Resource Center (5 minutes)**
 - **Ms. Gwen Lewis, School Board Liaison (5 minutes)**
 - **Dr. Jay Grymes, Assistant Superintendent (5 minutes)**
- 4) *Spotlight: Presentation on autism issues by Ms. Marylou Wall (45 minutes for presentation and 45 minutes for discussion and development of recommendations to the ACPS School Board).***
- 5) Consideration of draft resolution on testing issues (attached) (10 minutes).**
- 6) Questions for February 2006 Meeting on ACPS Special Education Plan and Application for Federal Funds. SEAC requests that ACPS provide answers to the following questions at our February meeting:**
 - **What is the purpose of the Special Education Plan?**
 - **Is it essentially a compliance statement for purposes of receiving state and federal funding?**
 - **With respect to the Personnel Development section of the Plan, does ACPS track how many teachers and other staff attended workshops and other training events?**
 - **What role does SEAC play in the review of the Plan?**
 - **Can SEAC provide comments on the Plan?**
 - **Is SEAC's role mandated by state and/or federal law? If so, what is the mandate? Please provide a copy of the relevant statute(s) and/or regulation(s).**
 - **What happens to the Plan after SEAC review? Does the School Board review the Plan before it is transmitted to the Virginia Department of Education?**
 - **What does the Virginia Department of Education do with the Plan?**
- 7) Any Other Business**

Adjourn: 9:00pm

QUESTIONS FOR JANUARY 2006 MEETING ON AUTISM

- How many students are classified as autistic in ACPS?
- How have those numbers changed over the last five years?
- ML's presentation in September indicated that only 42 students are now classified as autistic (out of an ACPS student population of 11,000). This number seems low. How many students does ACPS believe are on the spectrum, whether they have the autism classification or not?
- How many students on the autism spectrum are classified as DD, LD, ED, or some other category?
- Given the growing number of students on the autism spectrum, has ACPS developed a long-term strategic plan for working with these students?
- Does ACPS have a separate classification for students with Asperger's Syndrome?
- How many students are placed for a majority of the school day in self-contained classes? At which schools are the self-contained classrooms located? How are decisions made as to where these classrooms are located (*i.e.*, why is one school chosen over another)?
- Has ACPS hired a second autism resource specialist?
- How are school placement decisions made for students on the spectrum? Are certain schools considered preferred locations for students on the spectrum (*e.g.*, John Adams)?
- With respect to students in self-contained classrooms:
 - Please describe the curriculum that is used in those classrooms.
 - Who develops the curriculum and is it research-based?
 - How much focus is there on reading and other cognitive skills versus vocational skills? What research-based programs are being used to ensure that all students on the spectrum learn to read?
 - How does ACPS provide students on the spectrum with the opportunity to receive further education and lead a life of independent living?
 - What instructional methods are effective in educating students with autism and how does ACPS make those determinations?
 - Please explain why ACPS does not use ABA, RDI, or floortime-based models. Has ACPS considered establishing such programs, either on its own or jointly with adjoining school jurisdictions, such as Arlington or Falls Church?
 - To what extent does ACPS use alternative therapies for students with autism, such as music and art therapy?
 - Why does ACPS not have sensory rooms to aid students on the spectrum (*e.g.*, rooms with weighted rollers, bubble machines, and the like)?
 - How much training do teachers in self-contained classrooms have in working with students with autism? Are there state or federal rules with respect to teacher qualification and what are they? Who provides the training? Are teachers required to receive continuing training each year to order to keep up with the most current teaching methods?
 - How does ACPS monitor the teaching in self-contained classrooms? How does ACPS know if instruction plans are being properly implemented in these classrooms?

- With respect to students on the autism spectrum who receive some or all of their instruction in general education classrooms:
 - Please describe the types of physical, instructional, testing, and other accommodations that are made in the classroom for these students. What types of assistive technologies are used?
 - How does ACPS decide what accommodations are appropriate for students on the autism spectrum and are these decisions research-based?
 - Who decides what accommodations are appropriate for a particular student? How often are those decisions reviewed?
 - What accommodations has ACPS found to be effective and how does it make those determinations?
 - Who is responsible for ensuring that accommodations are properly implemented in the classroom? What steps are taken if the accommodations are not being properly implemented? What role does Central Office play in such situations?
 - What type of training do general education teachers, principals and other school personnel receive in working with children on the autism spectrum? Is that training mandatory? If not, what percentage of teachers and administrators actually receive the training?
 - Are there schools that have been particularly successful at working with students on the spectrum? What makes them successful and how can that success be replicated at other schools?
 - Does ACPS need to consider establishing an Asperger's program at one or more of its elementary schools?
- How are behavior plans developed for students on the autism spectrum? What do such plans typically include? How are such plans implemented? What behavior strategies work? What behavior strategies do not work?
- To what extent are students on the autism spectrum placed in ED programs, particularly if those students have behavior problems? Are school placement decisions for such students based, in part, on whether the school has an ED/LAB program?

1/17/06 SEAC MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order:

- Jonathan Friedman, Committee Co-Chair called meeting to order at 7.00pm.

Agenda:

- Agenda for tonight's meeting was circulated.

Attendance:

- Ronnie Campbell, David Cordell, Jonathan Friedman, Margaret Hargood, Fiona McMahon, BJ Norris, Crystal Prall, Annice Hirt (Visitor), Sandra Strachan-Vieira, Anne Lipnick (Parent Resource Center representative), Jay Grymes (Executive staff liaison: Assistant Superintendent ACPS), Marylou Wall (Staff Liaison: Director of Student Services in ACPS), Gwen Lewis (School Board Liaison), Ken Foran (School Board), Laura Lantzy.

Public Comment Period:

- David Cordell (Co-Chair) announced that Tina Games-Evans has resigned from SEAC.
- New member Laura Lantzy was welcomed.
- Start times at Jefferson-Houston ES preschool was raised as an issue. A request was made for ACPS to change the start times of the preschool so that kids could attend both the Jefferson-Houston preschool as well as private preschools in the community. Discussion about why the start times were changed. Transportation was mentioned as one factor. Marylou Wall will speak with the principal and transportation. SEAC will submit a resolution on this issue.
- Decision to review last month's minutes and approve them at the end of the meeting.

Updates from ACPS Staff:

Marylou Wall, Student Services

- A speech therapist has resigned. ACPS is working with agency staff, redeploying some speech therapists and interviewing for the speech therapist position.
- The second autism specialist has been hired and is seeking release from a school system.
- Memo from Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education to division superintendents regarding the Special Education Annual Plan was distributed to SEAC members.
- Distributed criteria worksheet for Virginia Grade Level Alternative assessment.
- Distributed guidelines for participation in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program.

Anne Lipnick, Parent Resource Center

- Workshop presented by Sarah DiGioia on visual strategies and visual scheduled for spectrum students.
- Planning workshops on Boardmaker software program.
- St. Elmo's Group will meet 1/23/06; Topic "Visualize Success in School and Home" by Laurie Chester(Academic Coach) and Kim Smith (Life Coach)
- St. Elmo's group rescheduled the snow out December meeting to 2/13/06; Topic "More Order = Less Stress" by Denise Gallagher (Professional Co-active Coach)
- "Reach for the Stars"; Free College and SAT Workshop for parents of students with SLD and ADHD on 2/16/06 at 7-8pm.
- Arc of Northern Virginia has a Special Needs Investment Program Introduction Reception at The Tower Club of Tysons on 1/25/06 from 6pm-8pm.
- "Engaging ALL Children in Story Reading" presentation at the Special Education Parent Resource Center on 2/9/06 from 4.30-6.30pm.
- A "Life Planning Tools" workshop will be held on April 1 at Patrick Henry Elementary School

Gwen Lewis, School Board Liaison

- Impressed with the work accomplished.
- Budget process is moving fast and SEAC should make sure that Gwen has the budget recommendations.
- SEAC members urged the School Board to approve the SEAC-requested items included in the budget, including summer school for special education and the \$3,000 hiring stipend for speech therapists, among other things. SEAC also urged ACPS to fill the second autism resource specialist position funded in last year's budget.

Ken Foran, School Board Member

- Recommended contacting the School Health Advisory Committee (comprising of nurses, physicians, public health community) to help get the word out about the preschool "role model" program.

Dr. Jay Grymes, Assistant Superintendent

- Cautioned about the budget recommendations as the budget has already been set.
- Anticipates a Title I preschool program at Jefferson Houston ES.
- David Cordell raised the test score report from Monte Dawson and asked about the effect of the modified calendar on scores amongst the special education kids. Gwen Lewis advised that these results were based on 1 year and that the data needs to be evaluated further and monitored.

Spotlight: Presentation on autism issues by Marylou Wall, Director of Student Services in ACPS; Carri Coggins-Stolz, Child Find Specialist.

- Marylou reported that there had been a team approach to developing the presentation but unfortunately two of the persons involved could not attend due to family crisis. Any questions that could not be answered tonight would be brought back to the team for answers.
- SEAC asked about the status of the autism specialist positions; Marylou reported that Sarah DiGioia was out on maternity leave at this time and that ACPS had offered a position to another specialist who is seeking release from a school system.

Numbers

- Upward trend over past sixteen years in identification of students on the autism spectrum disorder in the ACPS system: 3 cases in 1989 to 58 cases in 2005 which represents 3% of special education students.
- The 3 % percent is consistent with Fairfax County and Prince William County when comparison is made based on the percentage of total special education students.
 - **SEAC Comment:** According to ACPS data, the number of students classified with autism in ACPS has increased by 38% over the last school year (from 42 students to 58 students).
 - **SEAC Comment:** There are students on the spectrum who are currently classified as DD or other disabilities category. Marylou responded that if anyone believes that the child's disability category needs further assessment, the team comes together to discuss and make a decision if further assessments are warranted.
- Currently this number of students with autism spectrum disorder does not constitute a critical mass for studies etc. Cannot release test scores for spectrum students as "n" is too small and not a critical mass.
 - **SEAC Comment:** In light of the continuing growth in the student population on the autism spectrum, ACPS should develop a strategic plan to address the issue. Other school districts in the area have developed comprehensive plans for accommodating students on the spectrum, and ACPS should do likewise.

Handouts

- Handouts were distributed to SEAC members and Marylou reviewed their content:
 - Table of Contents for the presentation
 - Operational Criteria Guide for Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Table which evaluated interventions and treatment for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders
 - Pamphlet issued by ACPS titled "Services for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder"
 - Short article on Applied Behavioral Therapy

ACPS Resources

- ACPS has a relationship with University of North Carolina since 1998 and has formal training workshops, classroom observations and parent workshop from the university team.

- ACPS has received input from Dr. Greenspan via FloorTime approach and has sent a group of teachers/therapist each year to the Greenspan annual conference in Tyson's Corner.
- ACPS funded ten teachers to attend the Penn State Autism conference over the past two years.
- ACPS has provided extensive in-services on autism spectrum disorder programming, behavior management and social skills training using Carol Gray's video.

SEAC Questions

- ***Q : How many students on the spectrum are in self-contained classrooms?*** – Marylou replied that it was hard to answer as students could be in general education classroom for some subjects and self-contained for others. There is a classroom specific to autism for grades 1-2 and 3-5 at John Adams ES.
- ***Q : Why are there not more “autism only classrooms”?*** - Marylou replied that specialty classrooms are dependent on student services deemed required by the IEP team. All students whose IEP team found that the students requiring more than 50% special education services receive them, some students receive them in a special education classroom and others in a general education classroom. Special education is about services not location. Therefore, some students received more than 50% services in a general education classroom. In some preschool classrooms, the adult ratio is smaller with the addition of additional paraprofessionals.
 - ***SEAC Comment:*** By this logic, ACPS wouldn't have to have any specialty classrooms if services could be delivered in general education classrooms. In establishing specialty classrooms, ACPS has clearly made the determination that such classrooms are the best placements for some students. If that is the case for students on the spectrum in K-5 (i.e., there are specialty classrooms at John Adams), it is also necessarily the case for students in higher grades.
- ***Q : Is there a highly functioning autism class at middle school level?*** – Marylou replied not at this time. The IEP teams for students who have highly functioning autism have determined that the students could be served by other programs in ACPS. Plans are being considered for one for the upcoming school year.
- ***Q : Is ACPS training voluntary?*** – Marylou replied that staff development in ACPS is voluntary. ACPS is working with Old Dominion and George Mason University to develop a summer autism conference similar to the Penn State conference.
- ***Q : What happens to a student with autism who needs self contained classroom but not life skills?*** – Marylou replied that the IEP team would consider special education services in a variety of schools. ACPS serves students with other disabilities who require more than 50% services, other than students who require life skills, and provides services within the school system. If ACPS cannot meet the needs of a student, then, the IEP team would consider private day school.
- ***Q : Can we work with Arlington/Fairfax County to consolidate efforts ?*** – Marylou replied that these districts declined in other educational ventures because Alexandria has a 0.8 index.

- **SEAC Comment:** ACPS should consider the NAS report recommending that students on the spectrum receive 25 hours per week of intensive instruction on a year-round basis.
- **SEAC Comment:** Some therapists are better working with students with autism. If programs move from school-to-school, then continuity of working with the same therapists is lost.
- **SEAC Comment:** The more services provided to students on the spectrum at any early age, the better the chances students can be included in general ed classrooms.
- **Q : Who monitors the programs? Are general education teachers who anticipate having a student with autism in their class mandated to complete the training? –** Marylou replied staff development in ACPS is voluntary and general and special education teachers are invited to attend trainings. Some principals require staff to attend training. ACPS monitors instruction in the autism program in several ways: administrator observations; walkthroughs conducted by the autism specialist; content specific curriculum specialists, special education coordinators, professional education performance specialists and peer coaches.
 - **SEAC Comment:** ACPS should look at making training mandatory for teachers, principals, and other school staff.
- **Q : Is sensory integration available?** Yes; several occupational therapists and teachers have sensory integration certificates. OTs routinely use sensory equipment, activities and strategies, when appropriate for the student.
 - **SEAC Comment:** Sensory equipment is available in some classrooms, but not others. ACPS should consider measures to provide such equipment as broadly as possible in the school system.
- **Q : What about ABA training?** At the present time, ABA training is not offered through an ACPS staff development class. Some teachers have ABA certificates acquired through a university or other means. Many teachers employ the principles of ABA in their classrooms.
 - **SEAC Comment:** ACPS should explore establishing a pilot ABA program in ACPS.
- **Q: Why the discrepancy between why Fairfax County use ABA and not ACPS?** This question will be addressed when the autism specialist returns to continue the autism presentation.
- **Q : Are there teachers with ABA training in preK?** Marylou said that several PK teachers have training in ABA. Many teachers receive training in the principles of ABA in their Master's degree program.
 - **SEAC Comment:** Nonetheless, there is currently no ABA program and ACPS should consider establishing one.

David Cordell thanked Marylou Wall and the team for the presentation and requested a follow up spotlight with Sarah DiGioia in May 2006.

Minutes:

- Minutes from SEAC meeting 12/13/05 were reviewed
- Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Margaret Hargood and seconded by Crystal Prall.

Draft Resolution on testing issues:

- Proposed testing resolution passed unanimously. It was proposed by Margaret Hargood and seconded by Crystal Prall.
- SEAC urged ACPS and School Board to get word out to parents, teachers, and administrators on alternative assessment methods.

New Business:

- David Cordell requested that ACPS get the contact information for Michelle Chapman and the transportation department out to the parents.
- Save the date for Harry Burke Award (5/11/06)

Meeting Adjourned:

- The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.
- Next meeting scheduled for 02/21/06 at 7.00pm in the Minnie Howard Media Center.

Minutes Submitted by: Fiona Mc Mahon (SEAC Secretary)

EXHIBIT H:

SEAC BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Adopted September 22, 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.

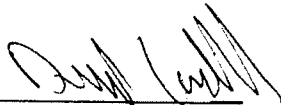
Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Special Education Advisory Committee recommends that the Alexandria City Public Schools School Board include the following proposals in the Fiscal Year 2007 School Budget:

1. *Assistant Superintendent for Student Services.* SEAC adopted a resolution on May 17, 2005 urging the School Board to create an Assistant Superintendent for Student Services by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year (a copy of which is attached). SEAC now asks that the School Board fund such a position in the FY 2007 School Budget. SEAC believes that the creation of an Assistant Superintendent position as part of the Superintendent's executive management team will help provide greater leadership, vision, and direction for special education in ACPS.
2. *Assessment of Special Education Programs.* SEAC also requests that the School Board hire an independent consultant to conduct a top-to-bottom review of special education programs in ACPS. SEAC urges the School Board to work with SEAC in identifying the scope of the review. SEAC proposes that the consultant transmit its report and recommendation to the School Board, Superintendent, and SEAC within six months. SEAC believes that such an assessment would assist ACPS in identifying current best practices in the education of children with special needs and recommending specific areas for improvement.
3. *Preschool Program.* SEAC asks the School Board to provide funding for a full-day Early Childhood Special Education program for students on the autism spectrum or with other development delays. The Government Accountability Office and others have underscored the value of such preschool programs for children with developmental delays. SEAC would like to see the current half-day preschool program expanded to a full-day for such children.
4. *Summer School.* SEAC recommends that the School Board provide funding for secondary summer school for students who are participating in the Life Skills program and/or the Virginia Alternative Assessment Program ("VAAP"). A similar program exists at the elementary school level, and

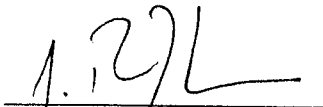
SEAC believes that students at the secondary school level would benefit from a summer school program as well.

5. *Preschool Teachers.* SEAC asks that the School Board provide fund two additional preschool teachers and one additional related service provider. SEAC understands that changes in IDEA 2004 require ACPS to provide special education services to students who reside outside Alexandria but attend private school within the city. This budget request is aimed at helping ACPS meet these new requirements.
6. *Special Education Teachers.* SEAC also requests that the School Board fund one additional ED/LD teacher and two additional paraprofessionals in its FY 2007 Budget. This request is prompted by the projected addition of 99 students in the 2007 School Year as well as the changes referenced above in the IDEA 2004.
7. *Speech Language Pathologists.* SEAC recommends that the School Board provide funding for a \$3,000 stipend for recruiting and retaining Speech Language Pathologists. SEAC understands that this item is needed to help fill current vacancies.

Attested to and submitted by:



David Cordell
SEAC Co-Chair 2005-06



Jonathan Friedman
SEAC Co-Chair 2005-2006

Statement of Jonathan Friedman
Co-Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
FY 2007 School Budget Recommendations
to the ACPS School Board
September 22, 2005

Madam Chair. Members of the School Board. Madam Superintendent. My name is Jonathan Friedman. I am co-chair, along with David Cordell, of the Special Education Advisory Committee, or SEAC, for the 2005-2006 school year.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak tonight in support of seven recommendations for the FY 2007 School Budget. SEAC has adopted a resolution regarding these budget items. I ask that the resolution be made part of the record of this proceeding.

First, SEAC is requesting funding for an Assistant Superintendent for Student Services. As you may recall, SEAC adopted a resolution on May 17, 2005 urging the School Board to create such a position. A copy of that resolution is attached to my statement. As David noted in his statement to the School Board earlier this month, ACPS lags far behind other school districts in Northern Virginia as well as most other school systems in the state in educating children with special needs. This is not acceptable. Our school system must make special education a priority. That starts with strong leadership at the very highest levels of ACPS administration. Neighboring school districts in Northern Virginia have assistant superintendents for student services. This School Board should take the same approach.

Second, SEAC is asking the School Board to hire an independent consultant to conduct a top-to-bottom review of special education programs in ACPS. We read every day about new curricula, new teaching methods, and new strategies for educating students with special needs. I read an article this summer, for example, that George Mason University had graduated its first student with autism. Such educational opportunities did not exist five or ten years ago.

Our budget proposal asks a very basic question: Is this school system doing everything it can to give our special needs students the state-of-the-art education they need and deserve? SEAC believes that a top-to-bottom independent review would help us answer that question. It

would help provide our school system with a better understanding of what we are doing well, what we are not doing well, and what needs to be changed. It would give us a clearer picture of what is working in other school systems today and what can work in our school system. SEAC is prepared to work with the School Board and Superintendent to develop a scope of work for this six-month study and to implement an action plan once the consultant's report and recommendations have been made.

Third, SEAC asks the School Board to provide funding for *full-day* preschool programs for children on the autism spectrum or with other developmental delays. SEAC appreciates the outstanding work done by teachers and staff in our preschool programs today. Numerous government and academic studies have underscored what many of us have experienced first hand: preschool programs can have a tremendous, positive impact on the development of children with special needs. In light of these clear benefits, SEAC urges the School Board to expand our current preschool programs from half-day to full-day programs.

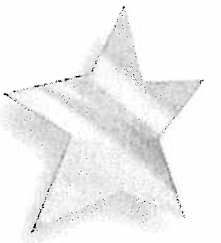
Fourth, SEAC recommends that the School Board establish a secondary summer school for students who are participating in the Life Skills Program and/or the Virginia Alternative Assessment Program, or VAAP. Students with disabilities are most in need of opportunities for continual education. Summer school provides a critical opportunity for students to retain existing skills and build new skills for the coming school year. SEAC has heard from numerous parents of students in the Life Skills and VAAP programs about the benefits of the current elementary summer school program. They have also expressed concerns that there is no similar program at the secondary level. SEAC understands that the Superintendent is considering recommending funding for such a program in her budget proposal. SEAC strongly endorses this item, and urges the Superintendent and School Board to support it as well.

The remaining budget proposals -- recommendations five through seven in the SEAC resolution -- focus on meeting projected staffing needs in the coming fiscal year. SEAC understands that IDEA 2004 -- the newly revised federal special education law -- requires ACPS to provide special education services to students who reside outside Alexandria but attend private school within the City. Two of the budget requests aim, in whole or in part, at helping ACPS satisfy these new requirements. Likewise, the final budget item is intended to help ACPS recruit and retain Speech Language Pathologists. SEAC supports these various proposals and asks that they be included in the budget.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present SEAC's budget recommendations. David and I -- and the other members of SEAC -- look forward to working with you and the Superintendent to make this a successful and productive year.

EXHIBIT I:

2005-2006 HARRY BURKE AWARDS



HARRY BURKE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT
IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AWARD RECIPIENTS
1986-2005

- Harry Burke (1986)
Kathleen Kaleta (1987)
Sandy Thompson (1988)
Linda Sims (1989)
Mary Copley (1990)
Thereda Cobb (1991)
Loretta Kuhn (1992)
Susie Sullivan (1993)
Marialyce Kosmaceski (1994)
Paula Swanson (1995)
Marilyn Clute (1996)
Cindy Wymne (1997)
Robert Authouse (1998)
Carolyn Sorg & Donna Marsh (1999)
Janice Cheeseman & Phyllis Walker (2000)
Joan Wheeler-Kump (2001)
Cathy Chamberlain & Laura Sanders (2002)
Juanita Illera (2003)
Ed Slavinskis (2004)
Alexandra Willson & Cynthia Dunn Kearly (2005)

2006
Harry Burke
Outstanding
Achievement
in Special
Education
Awards



20th
Anniversary
Program

Minnie Howard School
May 11, 2006

Dear Guests

The members of the Alexandria Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) welcome you to the 20th anniversary of the Harry Burke Awards.

This annual ceremony honors Alexandria's outstanding special educators. Each spring SEAC invites nominations from schools, parents and professionals of those who educate our students with disabilities. Teaching students with disabilities is both challenging and rewarding, and SEAC appreciates the hard work of all those who have been nominated this year.

We are also taking the opportunity this year to honor our previous winners. We are delighted that so many of our previous winners have agreed to be here today.

Special thanks to all the members of SEAC for their hard work this year in striving to make educating students with disabilities a priority in ACPs.

We would also like to acknowledge Fiona McMahon for arranging the refreshments for today's celebration; Margaret Haggood, Sandra Strachan-Vieira, Jonathan Friedman, and David Cordell for serving on the awards committee; Del Ray Chiropractic & Massage for providing the prizes for today's winners; Brian Marquis for designing today's program; and Anne Lipnick, Marylou Wall, and Lillian Fennell for all their help in organizing this event.

Thank you for coming.

David Cordell and Jonathan Friedman, SEAC Co-Chairs, 2005-2006
Fiona McMahon, SEAC Secretary

Beatrice Berman	Crystal Pall
Ronnie Campbell	Sandra Strachan-Vieira
Michael Carrasco	Jay Grymes, Staff Liaison
Margaret Haggood	Anne Lipnick, Staff Liaison
Bobbie Jean Norris	Marylou Wall, Staff Liaison
Laura Lantzy	Gwen Lewis, School Board Liaison

2006 Harry Burke Awards Program

Minnie Howard School

May 11, 2006

4:00-5:00 PM

WELCOME

Jonathan Friedman, SEAC Co-Chair

RECOGNITION OF 2006 HARRY BURKE NOMINEES

Elementary Division

* Stacey Broderick

* Kerri Buonamico

* Susan Doyle

* Beverly Harris

* Karen Reekie

* Jill Taylor

Secondary Division

* Amy Cable

* Theresa Foley

* Team 6-3 (Hammond MS)

ANNOUNCEMENT OF 2006 HARRY BURKE AWARD WINNERS

20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION COMMEMORATION

CLOSING REMARKS

David Cordell, SEAC Co-Chair