

Introduction

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has labeled Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as epidemic in the United States. Roughly one in every 110 children and one in every 93 boys is now diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum. Data collected annually by the Virginia Department of Education reveal that the occurrence of ASD as the primary disability listed on a student's IEP rose approximately 30% between 2007 and 2009. These overwhelming statistics present tremendous challenges to school divisions as they strive to maintain high standards in the provision of appropriate curriculum, interventions and supports to meet the unique needs of students with ASD.

In March 2009 the Alexandria City Public School Board adopted a five year Strategic Plan to guide division initiatives for 2010 – 2015. The following statements of principle are excerpted from the plan:

We Believe In Educational Excellence

- Every child deserves a healthy, safe, engaging, supportive and challenging learning environment.

We Believe In Higher Achievement for All

- Each and every student can learn.
- Educational outcomes are not presumed by income, race, disability, gender, language or family background.

To achieve the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan, a detailed Division Education Plan that includes measurable objectives, metrics and targets, to assess progress at regular Intervals, was developed in 2010. Objective #15 of the Division Education Plan requires the school division to “Ensure that ACPS provides effective services to students with Autism by developing a comprehensive program”.

In December 2010 an Autism Work Group consisting of members of the Special Education Advisory Committee, general education and special education teachers, school-based and central office administrators and division autism resource staff members was created and tasked with the development of a comprehensive plan to increase achievement and improve the educational experience of ACPS students with ASD. The group was co-chaired by Vickie Cattaneo, SEAC Co-Chair, and Cathy David, Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.

The Work Group has met weekly on Wednesdays from January 5, 2011 until the present time.

Members agreed to the following group norms at their initial meeting:

- Stay focused on the children we serve
- Listen with empathy and respect all perspectives
- Think flexibly
- Strive for consensus
- Respect our interdependence
- Think systemically; refrain from responding to individual incidents and anecdotes
- Act from data and evidence
- Focus on issues rather than personalities

The Work Group accessed a variety of resources to inform our work including the following:

- *Guidelines for Educating Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, published by the Virginia Department of Education, October 2010
- *Autism Spectrum Disorders and the Transition to Adulthood*, published by the Virginia Department of Education, October 2010
- *The National Standards Project Findings and Conclusions*, published by the National Autism Center, 2009

Additional information was provided through consultation with Samantha Marsh, VDOE Autism Specialist and Dr. Rosie McGinnis, Autism Coordinator for the Loudoun County Public Schools.

Several members of the Work Group, School Board Vice-Chair Sheryl Gorsuch, and School Board members Blanche Maness and Helen Morris traveled to Montgomery County, Maryland to observe services provided to students with ASD at Ivymount School. Additional site visits to Loudoun County and Fairfax County are planned for the spring.

The result of the Autism Work Group's efforts is the plan that follows.

Background (Current Status)

ACPS currently provides special education services to 93 students with the primary classification of autism across a variety of settings, including general education classrooms with co-teaching models or consultative/facilitative support, citywide classrooms specifically designed for learners with autism, and individualized, targeted services (including 7 students in private placements). Approximately 56% of these learners are provided services in the general education classroom for more than 50% of their school day. All ACPS students with ASD spend a portion of their school day engaged in activities with their general education peers. ACPS has eight dedicated classrooms specifically designed for learners with autism where more specialized services are provided, with a budgeted staff to student ratio of one adult to two students. The citywide autism classrooms include two preschool classrooms (12 students), five elementary classrooms (17 students), and one middle school classroom (8 students).

A tally of students is provided in the table below.

	General Education Classroom Setting	Citywide Classroom Setting	Other*	Totals
Preschool	0	12	0	12
Elementary School	36	17	1	54
Middle School	4	8	4	16
High School	9	0	2	11

*Private school placements

Student Achievement: ASD student achievement is currently measured utilizing Virginia State Assessment Program (VSAP) data. VSAP includes the following state assessments: Standards of Learning (SOL), the Virginia Grade Level Assessment (VGLA), the Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP), and the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP). The IEP team determines which assessments a student with ASD will take. Recent VSAP data are captured in the table below:

Measure	Data Source	2008-2009	2009-2010
English-Reading Pass Rate	VSAP	76.3%	82.9%
Math Pass Rate	VSAP	78%	80%
Science Pass Rate	VSAP	82.6%	73.1%
History Pass Rate	VSAP	82.8%	81.6%
English Writing Pass Rate	VSAP	53.8%	66.7%

Personnel Resources: In addition to special and general education teachers, ACPS employs two full-time Ph.D level Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) and two .5 FTE Autism Specialists. These individuals are responsible for providing consultation services to classroom teachers in the form of modeling, coaching, program monitoring, parent support, data collection and analysis on Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs). In addition, each child is supported by a team of school-based and city-wide staff. The specific members of a student's multidisciplinary team are based on the child's individual needs and may include a behavior specialist, psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech therapist, inclusion specialist, parent resource specialist, and paraprofessional.

Curriculum Resources – ACPS autism classrooms implemented the Strategies for Teaching Based on Autism Research (STAR) curriculum during the 2008-2009 school year. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) forms the theoretical base for the STAR curriculum. Progress monitoring is documented through Student Learning Profiles. During the 2009-2010 school year, Reading Mastery was implemented in classrooms for children with autism. This research-based reading intervention uses a systematic direct instruction framework to develop beginning decoding and basic comprehension skills.

ASD Professional Learning Initiatives: In 2006, ACPS began working to identify and implement research-based best classroom practices for learners with ASD, and to provide professional development opportunities for autism staff, general education teachers, special education teachers and school administrators. In 2006, ACPS supported the participation of 18 staff members in the ABA graduate certificate cohort at George Mason University Graduate School of Education. This program requires 15 credits of ABA coursework: Principles, Procedures, and Philosophy; Empirical Bases; Assessments and Interventions; Applications; and Verbal Behavior. In 2007 twelve members of the ACPS cohort completed the ABA certificate requirements, seven of whom continue to be employed by ACPS. Only one of the seven is currently in a role that requires the use of ABA strategies.

During the summer of 2008, 24 ACPS special education teachers, speech pathologists, paraprofessionals, and central office staff members participated in two days of training in preparation for the implementation of the STAR curriculum in the fall. Follow-up STAR training provided by external consultants has occurred regularly since that time. New staff members are trained each summer and coaching is provided by an Autism Specialist.

In the summer of 2009, ACPS sponsored an Autism Institute, providing workshops led by experts in the areas of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Supports (SCERTS) and the Ziggurat Model. Staff participation in the Institute totaled 59 special education teachers and related service providers.

Standardization of Practice: During the 2010-2011 school year, ACPS Autism resource staff members and the Director of Special Education began work on a project to establish criteria for the design of a model autism classroom, with detailed guidelines and expectations regarding classroom set-up, schedules and organization, behavior management practices, staff roles, specific teaching methods, data collection, and transition plans. One component of this effort will be the development of an observational rubric to establish and evaluate exemplary classrooms and instructional practices. The final rubric will include six sections: 1) Environmental Elements, 2) Positive Behavioral Support Strategies, 3) Communication, Social Skills, and Assistive Technology 4) Comprehensive Instructional Practices, 5) Transition Programs, and 6) Data Collection.

Current Challenges: The primary challenge faced by the school division is always student achievement. None of the passing percentages on the VSAP for students with ASD meet AYP requirements. Additionally, our students with ASD are challenged to achieve individualized goals in the areas of communication, social skills, self-help and independent living skills, and post-secondary employment.

ACPS does not systematically utilize an identified set of evidenced-based curricular materials or proven progress monitoring tools, and has not developed or identified a consistent social skills program. The STAR curriculum and the progress monitoring/data collection practices that are essential to the program's effectiveness are not implemented with uniform fidelity across the school division. ACPS is challenged to recruit, and especially to retain, highly-qualified special education teachers and paraprofessionals who are prepared to serve students with ASD. ACPS recognizes the need to build knowledge and leadership capacity among school principals in the area of autism.

Providing staff training in instructional methods and behavioral techniques, as well as addressing program fidelity issues, is a critical need. The specialized methods utilized in an exemplary autism program require extensive and ongoing training with modeling, feedback and regular progress monitoring to ensure best practices are implemented consistently. Specific training topics that would benefit staff include data collection and data-based decision making, errorless teaching, antecedent strategies, reinforcement principles, and natural environment teaching. Additionally, school-based staff members require training in task analysis of long-term goals to better build child capacity. Finally, staff struggle to ensure that learners with ASD in inclusive settings are participating meaningfully in the general education environment through the selection of appropriate modifications and accommodations, without extensive support from division level autism support staff.

Meeting the unique academic, behavior, and social/emotional needs of students with ASD requires intensive levels of support. ACPS is challenged to provide this support to all students and families, given the current level of autism resource staffing. ACPS BCBA's, autism specialists and communication specialists struggle to serve all students with ASD, their teachers, and their families across the range of academic settings. ACPS does not currently have one person on staff that provides overall supervision of the school division's programs and services for students with ASD.

Activities leading up to the development of this plan and the plan itself are indicative of the shared commitment of ACPS staff and parents to ensuring that all learners with ASD have access to the most effective teaching strategies, supports and learning opportunities. The school division does not currently have an on-going relationship with an outside entity that can provide professional consultative services and conduct an independent audit that benchmarks the division's current programs and services for students with ASD against that which is known to be exemplary.

Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Tasks

Vision

All students with Autism Spectrum Disorders will be prepared for post secondary education, employment and independent living in their community.

Goal 1:

ACPS will rigorously implement the special education process to support students with ASD.

Objective 1:

ACPS multidisciplinary teams will develop and implement IEPs that contain measurable goals and objectives with appropriate accommodations for students ages 2 through 21 who are identified with ASD.

Metric: % of IEP's scoring 4 or greater on a 5 point scale on an annual audit of IEPs for students with ASD

Target 1: By July, 2012, 70% of IEPs will score 4 or greater on a 5 point scale rubric

Target 2: By July, 2013, 100% of IEPs will score 4 or greater on a 5 point scale rubric

Task 1: Identify, purchase, and train staff on a set of comprehensive assessment tools for identification of learners with ASD

Completion Date:

Identify and purchase: August, 2011

Train Staff: October, 2011

Persons Responsible: Lead Psychologist

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Provide training to Parent Resource Center staff in the special education process and develop protocols for parent support systems

Completion Date: August, 2011

Persons Responsible: Procedural Coordinator and BCBA's

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 3: Provide training for parents on the special education process and their role in the development of quality IEPs

Completion Date: October, 2011

Persons Responsible: Parent Resource Center Staff

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 4: Train IEP teams on the identification of appropriate accommodations related to IEP goals and objectives for students with ASD

Completion Date: October, 2011
Persons Responsible: Procedural Coordinator
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 5: Create exemplars of a high quality IEP that address all components of the IEP

Completion Date: August, 2011
Persons Responsible: Procedural Coordinator/Autism Resource Staff
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 6: Develop and implement an IEP monitoring rubric

Completion Date:
Develop: August, 2011
Implement: September, 2011
Persons Responsible: Procedural Coordinator/Autism Resource Staff
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 7: Use IEP monitoring rubric to identify IEP team members in need of training in IEP development

Completion Date: September, 2011
Persons Responsible: Procedural Specialists
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 8: Include IEP training in identified teachers' and administrators' Professional Learning Plans

Completion Date: September, 2011
Persons Responsible: Teacher/Administrator Supervisors
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 9: Develop criteria to assist IEP teams in the determination of the most appropriate /least restrictive environments for students with ASD

Completion Date: September, 2011 (aligns with Inclusion Plan)
Persons Responsible: Procedural Coordinator/BCBA/Inclusion Specialists
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: Under this set of tasks, ACPS staff will research evidence-based diagnostic tools to identify a comprehensive set of assessments that will be available to the individuals who are responsible for evaluating students suspected of having ASD. Those assessments which are deemed essential and that are not currently used in ACPS will be purchased and staff will be trained to administer the assessments and evaluate the results.

Through the Parent Resource Center, ACPS will provide training to parents related to the special education process to include the particular role of the parent in the development of the IEP. ACPS will support IEP teams with professional learning opportunities on the topic of writing meaningful and measurable IEP goals and objectives related to academic, social and functional skills, as well as the identification of accommodations and modifications. Beginning at age 14 and every year thereafter, IEPs will document specific Career and Transition goals and objectives, and the Present Level of Performance (PLOP) will reflect the results of transition, educational and behavioral assessments.

ACPS staff will create exemplars of high quality IEPs, an IEP monitoring rubric, and a set of criteria to assist IEP team members in determining the most appropriate/least restrictive learning environment for students. The IEP monitoring rubric will be used in an annual audit of IEPs for students with ASD. The results of the audit will be used to direct IEP team members to additional professional learning to be incorporated into their Professional Learning Plans.

Objective 2:

The progress toward the achievement of IEP goals and objectives of students with ASD will be assessed through the systemic, on-going process of progress monitoring and data collection.

Metric: % of data sheets (taken from a random sample of data notebooks/files for students with ASD) that hat measures the quality of progress monitoring and data collection

Target 1: By June, 2012, 50% of data sheets will score 4 or more on a 5 point scale

Target 2: By January, 2013, 75% of data sheets will score 4 or more on a 5 point scale

Target 3: By June, 2013, 100 % of data sheets will score 4 or more on a 5 point scale

Task 1: Establish systematic process for progress monitoring, data collection and analysis.

Completion Date:

Data Collection and Analysis: October, 2011

Progress Monitoring: May, 2012
Persons Responsible:
Data Collection and Analysis: Autism Resource Staff
Progress Monitoring: Autism Resource Staff
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Select and purchase (as needed) appropriate progress monitoring tools

Completion Date: March, 2012
Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Estimated cost \$3,000

Task 3: Train staff on the use of identified progress monitoring tools and processes

Completion Date: June, 2012
Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Team/vendor contractors
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 4: Train staff on data collection methods and data-based decision making

Completion Date: November, 2011
Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Staff
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 5: Implement process for data collection and analysis across all schools

Completion Date: November, 2011
Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Staff
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 6: Monitor implementation of prescribed system of data collection and progress monitoring

Completion Date:
Data collection: January, 2012
Progress Monitoring: September, 2012
Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Staff
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: Under this set of tasks, ACPS will research and evaluate multiple progress monitoring tools to select and purchase a comprehensive set of tools that can be used to document progress in the areas addressed in each student's IEP. Staff will be trained to use information gained from the specific progress monitoring tools to guide and inform instructional decisions. Additionally, ACPS will identify and train teachers, paraprofessionals and related

service providers in strategies and methods for data collection and analysis to modify instructional practices.

ACPS will establish and implement a systematic process for progress monitoring, data collection and analysis that will include timelines and consistent expectations for application across all schools. The implementation of the data collection process will be monitored through a review of data collection records conducted on an established schedule.

Goal 2:

ACPS will provide a standards-based curriculum and evidence-based interventions and programs, appropriate academic learning supports, modifications and accommodations to enable students to achieve their individual academic goals.

Objective 1:

All students will have access to a standards-based curriculum.

Metric 1: % of teachers scoring exemplary on classroom observation rubric in the area of standards based curriculum

Target 1: By June, 2012, 60% of teachers will score an exemplary rating on the classroom observation rubric

Target 2: By June, 2013, 100% of teachers will score an exemplary rating on the classroom observation rubric

Metric 2: % of students with ASD achieving passing scores in the Virginia State Assessment Program.

Measure	2008-2009	2009-2010	Target: 2010-2011	Target: 2011-2012
English-Reading Pass Rate	76.3%	82.9%	86%	91%
Math Pass Rate	78%	80%	85%	90%
Science Pass Rate	82.6%	73.1%	77%	81%
History Pass Rate	82.8%	81.6%	83%	87%
English Writing Pass Rate	53.8%	66.7%	72%	78%

Metric 3: % of students with ASD who graduate with a standard diploma

Target: TBD

Task 1: Train all teachers of students with ASD in the ACPS curriculum design process and the new VDOE standards of learning

Completion Date: October, 2011
Persons Responsible: John Brown and Curriculum Specialists
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Provide training to teachers of students with ASD in selecting transfer tasks and appropriate accommodations and modifications

Completion Date: December, 2011
Persons Responsible: John Brown and Autism Resource Staff
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 3: Identify, purchase and train teachers on evidence-based alternative programs (with particular emphasis on reading and mathematics curriculum) as needed

Completion Date:
Reading: February, 2012
Mathematics: June, 2012
Other academic areas: October, 2012

Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Staff and Curriculum Specialists
Funding Required: Estimated cost \$15,000

Task 4: Identify, inventory and purchase as needed assistive technology tools to access the standards based curriculum

Completion Date: October, 2011
Persons Responsible: ACAT Team
Funding Required: Estimated cost of \$30,000

Task 5: Train teachers in the integration of general and student-specific assistive technology tools and strategies

Completion Date: January, 2012
Persons Responsible: ACAT Team and Technology Support
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 6: Monitor alternative program implementation by completing a fidelity checklist on an established schedule

Completion Date:
Reading: April, 2012
Mathematics: September, 2012
Other academic areas: November, 2012
Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 7: Develop and implement a classroom observation tool with rubric to confirm student access to a standards based curriculum

Completion Date: October, 2011

Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Team

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: Under this set of tasks, ACPS will show that transfer tasks are structured to support students with ASD in demonstrating mastery of the standard curriculum. Students with ASD will be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate content mastery, and transfer skills and knowledge to novel contexts or situations. ACPS will research and evaluate multiple evidence-based content area teaching programs to select and purchase alternate teaching programs to meet the needs of learners with ASD who require alternatives to the standard curriculum. ACPS will also research, inventory, evaluate and purchase assistive technology as needed. Teachers will be provided training in the integration of technology in their instructional practice.

Objective 2:

All staff serving students with ASD will demonstrate use of evidence-based interventions and programs.

Metric: % of staff scoring exemplary (score of 3) on the interventions and self-help indicators on the classroom observation rubric OR a commensurate rating on treatment integrity checklists in evidence-based programs (when provided)

Target 1: By June, 2012, 50% of staff will score exemplary (score of 3) on the interventions and self-help indicators on the classroom observation rubric OR a commensurate rating on treatment integrity checklists in evidence-based programs (when provided)

Target 2: By June, 2013, 75% of staff will score exemplary (score of 3) on the interventions and self-help indicators on the classroom observation rubric OR a commensurate rating on treatment integrity checklists in evidence-based programs (when provided)

Target 3: By June, 2014, 100% of staff will score exemplary (score of 3) on the interventions and self-help indicators on the classroom observation rubric OR a commensurate rating on treatment integrity checklists in evidence-based programs (when provided)

Task 1: Identify age appropriate interventions to develop academic skills and those functional skills that support academic learning

Completion Date: November, 2011

Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Team and ACPS Curriculum Specialists

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Train staff in the implementation of identified interventions that develop academic and identified functional skills that support academic learning

Completion Date: January, 2012

Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Team and ACPS Curriculum Specialists

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 3: Identify, inventory and purchase as needed adaptive behavior scales (Examples: Brigance and Vineland) to identify areas for instruction in self-help and independent living skills

Completion Date: November, 2011

Persons Responsible: ACPS Psychologists and Social Workers

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 4: Develop and implement a training plan that will enable teachers to use the results from adaptive behavior ratings to implement interventions that develop self-help and independent living skills

Completion Date: January, 2012

Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Team and ACPS Psychologists

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 5: Monitor treatment integrity of interventions through the use of a checklist (when provided by purchased programs) OR through the classroom observation rubric

Completion Date: March, 2012

Persons Responsible: BCBAs

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 6: Investigate and develop as appropriate a secondary program to serve students with Asperger's syndrome

Completion Date: September, 2012

Persons Responsible: Director of Special Education, Autism Resource Team

Funding Required: Possible consultant fees (estimated \$5,000)

Task Narrative:

Academic supports: Under the academic section of these tasks, the ACPS Office of Student Services will devise appropriate academic learning supports tailored to the specific needs of each child and according to the guidelines established by the Virginia Department of Education and other nationally published guidelines for

the education of students with ASD. Such supports will include but not be limited to instruction delivered individually and in small group settings, visual schedules, and computer based instruction. Language and communication objectives and organizational skills will be embedded in all areas of curriculum. As appropriate, middle and high school students with ASD will participate in a separate and regularly scheduled class in organization and study skills (executive functioning) as an integral component of their schedule. As much as possible, this class shall be in addition to and not in lieu of other classes needed for college readiness or other post secondary endeavors.

Self-help and independent living skills: Under the self-help and independent living skills section of these tasks, the ACPS Office of Student Services will research and select appropriate adaptive behavior scales such as the Brigance and Vineland that will assist in identifying areas for instruction in the area of independent living skills tailored to the specific needs of each child and according to the guidelines established by the Virginia Department of Education and other nationally published guidelines for educating students with ASD. Such interventions shall include but not be limited to instruction that teaches students how to care for their personal needs, and move successfully and safely throughout the community. Students with ASD will have access to a variety of naturalistic teaching environments in the school and community to learn and practice independent living skills such as the apartment at T.C. Williams and neighborhood shopping centers.

Evidence of completion will be demonstrated by the integration of such supports into the instruction of each student with ASD, in the implementation of a study skills class for students with ASD as needed, and in the implementation of independent living skills assessment and interventions. The completion of this task will be further evidenced in the successful completion of staff training in interventions that support the academic, self-help and independent living skills for students with ASD.

Goal 3:

ACPS will enhance the lives of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders by implementing applied behavior analysis and other evidence-based behavior programs, methodologies and instructional strategies that successfully support the desired behavioral, social, and emotional outcomes of our students across home, school, employment and community settings.

Objective 1:

All students with ASD will have either a behavior strategy guide or a formally documented Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) that will direct staff in their response to student's behavior using evidence-based interventions across school settings.

Metric: % of students with ASD with behavior strategy guide or documented BIP

Target: By June, 2012, 100% of students with ASD will have either a behavior strategy guide or a formally documented Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

Task 1: Create exemplars of behavior strategy guides to guide teachers in helping students maximize independence, self-advocacy and self-management

Completion Date: February, 2012
Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Provide training to all staff responsible for creating behavior strategy guides on the development of behavior strategy guides

Completion Date: March, 2012
Persons Responsible: Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 3: Identify students with ASD who do not have formal BIPs

Completion Date: April, 2012
Persons Responsible: Director of Special Education and ACPS Principals
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 4: Create behavior strategy guides for identified students

Completion Date: May, 2012
Persons Responsible: Autism Teachers and Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 5: Monitor number of behavior strategy guides created

Completion Date: June, 2012
Persons Responsible: Director of Special Education and ACPS Principals
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: Under this set of tasks, ACPS Office of Student Services will survey the records of all students with ASD to identify those without formal BIPs. Identified students will receive a behavior strategy guide that will outline best practices for responding to behaviors in the school, community, and employment settings. These guides can be summaries of all the behavioral interventions, instructional strategies and positive reinforcers or “things that work” for the student, emphasizing expected and unexpected behaviors in response to social and employment situations. The behavior guides will be updated on a regular basis based upon student performance data. Additionally, current ACPS Behavior

Intervention Plan forms will be revised to include space for a follow up date to be documented.

Objective 2:

All ACPS staff serving students with ASD will be fully prepared to support the unique social, behavioral, and emotional needs of students with ASD across all school settings

Metric 1: % of exemplary scores on the “Instruction and Interaction” and “Communication and Social/Emotional Development” sections of the Observation Instrument and Rubric

Target 1: By June, 2012, 60 % of teachers observed using the Observation Instrument and Rubric will be rated as exemplary in the areas of “Instruction and Interaction” and “Communication and Social/Emotional Development”

Target 2: By June, 2013, 85 % of teachers observed using the Observation Instrument and Rubric will be rated as exemplary in the areas of “Instruction and Interaction” and “Communication and Social/Emotional Development”

Target 3: By June, 2014, 100 % of teachers observed using the Observation Instrument and Rubric will be rated as exemplary in the areas of “Instruction and Interaction” and “Communication and Social/Emotional Development”

Metric 2: % of staff participating in training in each identified employee group

Target 1: By July, 2012, 70% of employees in each identified employee group will have participated in training

Target 2: By July, 2013, 100% of employees in each identified employee group will be participated in training

Task 1: Develop a master training plan that incorporates all identified employee groups, aligns with school calendars to maximize staff availability, provides appropriate incentives for participants, and details training processes, delivery methodologies and procedures

Completion Date: July, 2011

Persons Responsible: Director of Special Education

Funding Required: Outside consultant fees (Estimated \$4,000)

Task 2: Develop and implement a training series for autism teachers, special education teachers and related service providers of students with ASD that will address all evidence-based interventions for improving behavior

Completion Date: August, 2012 (training series completion date)

Persons Responsible: ACPS BCBA's, outside consultants

Funding Required: Outside consultant fees (Estimated \$15,000)

Task 3: Develop and provide training for general education, “Encore” teachers, and support personnel (custodians, lunch monitors, office personnel and bus drivers) that teach or otherwise interact with students with ASD in the use of behavioral interventions across school settings

Completion Date: February, 2012

Persons Responsible: Director of Special Education, Exec Dir of ALL, Autism Resource Team, possible outside trainers

Funding Required: Trainer fees (Estimated \$3,000)

Task 4: Develop and implement a training series for paraprofessionals of students with ASD that will address all evidence-based interventions for improving behaviors

Completion Date: August, 2012

Persons Responsible: ACPS BCBAs

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 5: Develop Observation Instrument and Rubric for classrooms in which students with ASD are served

Completion Date: June, 2011

Persons Responsible: Autism Cross-Functional Team

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 6: Train building-based and appropriate central office administrators on the Observation Instrument and Rubric

Completion Date: October, 2011

Persons Responsible: ACPS BCBAs

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 7: Monitor treatment integrity through utilization of classroom Observation Instrument and Rubric on an established schedule

Completion Date: December, 2011

Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 8: Identify and implement strategies that enable students to develop independence, self-regulation and advocacy skills

Completion Date: December, 2011

Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 9: Train teachers to complete behavioral observations, analyze and use data-based decision making to modify student's behavioral interventions

Completion Date: June, 2012
Person Responsible: ACPS BCBA's
Funding: Current level of funding

Task narrative: Under this set of tasks, ACPS will develop a comprehensive training program in behavioral interventions for all licensed professionals and support staff members working with students with ASD. Multiple training modules will be developed to meet the different needs of the educators and employees serving students with ASD.

The training for autism, special education and general education teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals will address the following topics at a level commensurate with their job-specific responsibilities:

- Identifying the function of behavior and matching interventions to function
- Correctly identifying antecedents and consequences that impact behavior
- Antecedent interventions
- Consequence strategies
- Reinforcement principles
- Pivotal Response Training
- Verbal Behavior
- Behavioral definitions, observational data collection and analysis.

All training will include steps to guide staff in moving students to generalization of skills across all settings, self-management and independence. The expectation is that training will translate into observed classroom practice. The priority of training participation is demonstrated by the identification of scheduling practices that enables staff to have availability for training, without compromising services to students, for staff training scheduled during the workday and financial incentives are provided for training after the school day.

Objective 3:

ACPS Interdisciplinary teams will implement evidence-based social skills programs/interventions with treatment integrity to address individual student's social skills goals to include but not be limited to those goals that are identified in the IEP.

Metric: % of staff scoring exemplary (score of 3) on the "Instruction and Interaction" and the "Communication and Social/Emotional Development" indicators on the classroom Observation Instrument and Rubric OR a commensurate rating on treatment integrity checklists in evidence-based social skills programs (when provided)

Target 1: By June, 2012, 60 % of teachers observed using the Observation Instrument and Rubric will be rated as exemplary in the areas of “Instruction and Interaction” and “Communication and Social/Emotional Development”

Target 2: By June, 2013, 85 % of teachers observed using the Observation Instrument and Rubric will be rated as exemplary in the areas of “Instruction and Interaction” and “Communication and Social/Emotional Development”

Target 3: By June, 2014, 100 % of teachers observed using the Observation Instrument and Rubric will be rated as exemplary in the areas of “Instruction and Interaction” and “Communication and Social/Emotional Development”

Task 1: Develop and implement a training plan to enable staff to identify individual student’s critical social skill needs

Completion Date: February, 2012
Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Identify, purchase and train staff on evidence-based social skills programs and/or interventions that serve students with ASD

Completion Date: September, 2011
Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Estimated \$10,000

Task 3: Implement pilot Teach Town social skills program at one elementary school

Completion date: Summer 2011
Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team, Building Principal, vendor
Funding Required: Free pilot program provided by Vendor

Task 4: Implement selected social skills interventions based on consultation with Autism Resource staff

Completion Date: October, 2011
Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 5: Identify and implement programs for meeting social skill goals for extended school breaks

Completion Date: July, 2011
Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 6: Monitor social skills implementation through the use of treatment integrity checklists and-or rubrics

Completion Date: December, 2011
Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 7: Collect data as the basis for decision-making regarding the modification of a student's social skill interventions

Completion Date: March, 2012
Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team and Autism Teachers
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 8: Create and offer a stand alone social skills class for secondary students with ASD

Completion Date: January, 2012
Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team, John Brown, possible consultants
Funding Required: Possible fees for outside consultants to assist in program design and professional learning and implementation (Estimated fees: \$3,000)

Task Narrative: Under this set of tasks, ACPS will develop a comprehensive training program to ensure teachers and related service providers will individually assess student's social abilities. All licensed staff and paraprofessionals who serve students with autism will collaborate in teaching critical social skills throughout the day. Teachers, school support team members and paraprofessionals will provide social interaction opportunities in age-appropriate settings using evidence-based interventions as outlined in the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and other national research-based guidelines for learners with ASD. ACPS staff will investigate ways to schedule the secondary stand alone social skills class in a manner that maximizes student participation without sacrificing other elective opportunities. Important areas for student self-awareness that extend beyond typical social skill commercial products to be included are:

- Bullying identification and prevention
- Personal safety in the areas of – interpersonal relationships and body awareness (including private touch), “stranger danger,” community traveling
- Navigating personal relationships, friendships including personal space and identifying and responding to subtle nuances of social communication to distinguish between friends and “those who are not your friends”. “Hidden social curriculum in classrooms

- Understanding how one's behavior impacts how others think about and respond to that person in both social and academic settings (social cognition)
- Training typical peer-models and peer-mediators to assist in generalizing.

Goal 4:

All students with Autism Spectrum Disorders will be supported by a multidisciplinary team of highly qualified teachers, related service providers, administrators and staff who engage in on-going collaboration with families to maximize student success.

Objective 1:

All students with ASD will be taught by highly effective professionals and paraprofessionals.

Metric 1: # of special education teachers hired who received training in university programs recognized as exemplary in the education of children with ASD

Target: To be determined in consultation with the Chief Human Resources Officer

Metric 2: % of professional staff rated as proficient in skill gap analysis against competencies required for educating children with ASD

Target 1: By June, 2012, a baseline number of professional staff rated as proficient in skill gap analysis against identified competencies will be established.

Target 2: By June, 2013, 80% of professional staff serving students with ASD will be rated as proficient in the identified competencies

Target 3: By June, 2014, 100% of professional staff serving students with ASD will be rated as proficient in the identified competencies

Metric 3: % of paraprofessional staff rated as proficient in skill gap analysis against competencies required for educating children with ASD

Target 1: By June, 2012, a baseline number of paraprofessional staff rated as proficient in skill gap analysis against identified competencies will be established.

Target 2: By June, 2013, 70% of paraprofessional staff serving students with ASD will be rated as proficient in the identified competencies

Target 3: By June, 2014, 100% of professional staff serving students with ASD will be rated as proficient in the identified competencies

Task 1: Identify and establish professional relationships with universities known for outstanding teacher preparation programs specializing in ASD

Completion Date: October, 2012

Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and Chief Human Resources Officer
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Target recruitment efforts to identified universities

Completion Date: December, 2012
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and Chief Human Resources Officer
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 3: Adopt from existing competency models or develop an ACPS specific competency model for professionals and paraprofessionals serving students with ASD

Completion Date: June, 2011
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 4: Develop specialized job descriptions based upon competency models for professionals and paraprofessionals serving students with ASD

Completion Date: October, 2011
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 5: Incorporate identified desired professional and paraprofessional competencies into the interview/selection process

Completion Date: December, 2012
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and Chief Human Resources Officer
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 6: Identify incentives to recruit and retain highly effective teachers, related service providers and paraprofessionals who serve students with ASD

Completion Date: March, 2012
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and Chief Human Resources Officer
Funding Required: Estimated \$30,000

Task 7: Embed teacher professional development through coaching and mentoring services to support teachers and paraprofessionals

Completion Date: May, 2011

Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 8: Build time into teachers' schedules to allow for collaboration with general education teachers, related service providers, paraprofessionals, BCBA's, and autism specialists

Completion Date: September, 2011
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and building principals
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 9: Investigate feasibility of implementing a paraprofessional hiring model whereby candidates are paid at a "training rate" for a trial period of time before they are actually hired (Ivymount model).

Completion Date: July, 2012
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and Chief Human Resources Officer
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 10: Utilize competency models to assess professional and paraprofessional skill level in implementation of programs and methodologies used to educate students with ASD

Completion Date: December, 2011
Person Responsible: Autism Resource Team, Director of Special Education, and Building Administrators
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 11: Use data collected through competency assessment to inform professional learning plans and formative/summative evaluations

Completion Date: June, 2012
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and building administrators
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: Under this set of tasks, ACPS will develop and implement a series of cross-functional processes and practices that will support the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers and paraprofessionals to educate students with ASD. Specifically, the Office of Human Resources will collaborate with the Office of Student Services to develop a prescribed set of competencies that will detail the knowledge and skills required at both the professional and paraprofessional levels to implement with fidelity those programs selected by ACPS for use in the education of students with ASD. Creation of the competency models will be based on a thorough review of the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) *Guidelines for Educating Students with Autism*

Spectrum Disorders and other nationally published competency guidelines. The competency models will be the basis for the creation of unique job descriptions for autism teachers and paraprofessionals, teacher and paraprofessional hiring decisions, professional development offerings, and baseline data to support Professional Learning Plans and formative/summative performance evaluation assessments.

Additionally, ACPS Human Resources and Special Education staff members will work together to identify colleges and universities with highly effective teacher education programs in the area of ASD and will target recruitment efforts at identified schools. Staff will examine and implement as appropriate and possible strategies to support, reward, and retain excellent autism teachers and paraprofessionals. Strategies to be considered include but are not limited to:

- Quality step pay increases for teachers who complete a prescribed body of professional development and who demonstrate the transfer of training into quality classroom practice similar to the National Board Certification program.
- Tuition assistance granted to teachers who successfully complete (grade of A or B) graduate level coursework in an area directly related to autism
- Scheduling practices that provide sufficient time for autism teachers, related service providers and autism resource staff members to collaboratively plan instruction and analyze student performance data
- On-going professional development, coaching, and mentoring
- Scheduling and providing professional development in a manner that enables teachers and paraprofessionals to access the training

Objective 2:

All students with ASD will have an agreed upon, individualized Home/School collaboration plan to facilitate the use of consistent vocabulary and evidence-based strategies that complement each other to ensure treatment integrity and strengthen student success.

Metric 1: # of completed Home/School collaboration plans signed by both school and parent/guardian

Target 1: By June, 2012, 40 Home/School collaboration plans will be signed by both school and parent/guardian

Target 2: By June, 2013, all students with ASD will have Home/School collaboration plans signed by school staff and parents/guardians

Metric 2: % of favorable responses on a Quality Assurance Survey of parents/guardians of students with ASD

Target: TBD

Task 1: Establish a formal structure for a Home/School collaboration plan

Completion Date: December, 2011
Person Responsible: Parent Resource Specialists and Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Develop and implement a parent workshop series to teach parents/guardians and family members the vocabulary, behavioral interventions, strategies and techniques that can be used at home to complement that which is used in school

Completion Date: January, 2012
Person Responsible: Parent Resource Specialists and Autism Resource Team
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 3: Implement individualized Home/School collaboration plan

Completion Date: January, 2012
Person Responsible: Parent Resource Specialists
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 4: Monitor implementation and effectiveness of Home/School Collaboration Plan through the use of a quality assurance survey

Completion Date: June, 2012
Person Responsible: Director of Accountability and Director of Special Education
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 5: Investigate strategies for providing family support services in the home through university partnerships, community organizations and public/private partnerships

Completion Date: April, 2012
Person Responsible: Exec. Director of Strategic Initiatives and Community Outreach and Director of Special Education
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: ACPS Office of Student Services will examine existing Home/School collaboration models used by other public school divisions and private schools serving students with ASD to develop or adopt an

ACPS model. Through the Parent Resource Center, ACPS will reach out to families and facilitate a series of workshops that will help with behavior management, social skills, functional behavior, homework, and other issues. These tasks are completed when:

- The ACPS Home/School Collaboration model is developed
- ACPS has established a series of workshops for families, including siblings, of students with ASD
- A list is vetted and compiled of university, community organizations, non-profit organizations, and public/private partnership candidates who are able and willing to work with ACPS and families of students with ASD

Goal 5:

All students with Autism Spectrum Disorders will be provided with the skills, tools, and strategies that are necessary for effective communication across home, school, employment and community settings.

Objective 1:

All students with ASD will have an individualized written profile of communicative strengths and needs as part of the Present Level of Performance section of the IEP.

Metric 1: % of students with ASD with a written profile of communicative strengths and needs in their IEP

Target: By June 2012 100% of students with ASD will have a written profile of communicative strengths and needs

Task 1: Identify and purchase a variety of assessment tools which will assess communication skills across environments and communication partners

Completion Date: August, 2011
Person Responsible: Speech/Language Coordinator
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Develop and implement a training plan for multidisciplinary teams in the use of identified assessment tools and strategies

Completion Date: October, 2011
Person Responsible: Speech/Language Coordinator
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: Under this task, ACPS will identify and purchase a variety of assessment instruments to assess and monitor the communication skills of

students with autism spectrum disorders and train individuals and teams in their use. Due to the complexity of this disorder, multidisciplinary teams should identify a variety of tools and strategies for gathering information about a student's communicative strengths and challenges. These should include identification of tools for direct standardized assessment, as well as naturalistic observation of verbal and non-verbal communication across contexts. Tools for examining receptive and expressive language, speech, and overall functional communication skills, including the spontaneous use of verbal and non-verbal communication and language should be considered. Social and communicative competence necessitates evaluation across a range of social settings and partners and therefore students should be assessed not only in one-to-one structured, formal testing sessions, but in a variety of contexts. Parents should be included as active participants and informants in the assessment process through the use of instruments such as interviews or questionnaires. Included in these tasks is a training component for multidisciplinary teams. After specific tools and strategies have been identified, a training plan will be developed, which will include identification of specific training content and participants. These tasks will be complete when a list of assessment tools and strategies has been identified and required trainings have been developed and implemented.

Objective 2:

All students with ASD will have goals and strategies in the IEP that support the achievement of social communicative competence across functional social contexts (home, school, employment and community).

Metric 1: % of students with ASD who have IEP goals and strategies related to social communicative competence across functional social contexts (home, school, employment and community)

Target: By June 2012 100% of students with ASD will have IEP goals and strategies related to social communicative competence across functional social contexts

Task 1: Develop and implement a training plan for staff and families on developmental aspects of speech and language development and the core features and challenges of ASD that affect communication

Completion Date: November, 2011
Person Responsible: Speech/Language Coordinator
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Develop and implement a training module for staff for writing goals to address communication needs

Completion Date: October, 2011
Person Responsible: Speech/Language Coordinator

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: Under these tasks, ACPS will provide training for families and staff on developmental aspects of speech and language development and the core communication challenges of students with ASD. All individuals with ASD have core challenges in the area of social communication. As such, IEPs must include goals and objectives that support the achievement of social communicative competence and that result in effective communication across authentic contexts and communication partners. Multidisciplinary teams will receive training in both the selection and development of functional goals, which are based upon the identified language stage of the student. Tasks will be complete when:

1. A training plan has been implemented for families and staff on developmental aspects of speech and language and the core communication challenges of students with ASD
2. A training module has been implemented for teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers that includes information on the development of communication goals that are individualized to the student's communication and language needs

Objective 3:

ACPS will implement evidence-based interventions and strategies for enhancing the communication skills of students with ASD.

Metric: % of professionals scoring exemplary on the classroom observation rubric indicators related to the application of communication interventions

Target 1: By June, 2012, 50% of staff will score exemplary (score of 3) on the classroom observation rubric indicators related to the application of communication interventions

Target 2: By June, 2013, 75% of staff will score exemplary (score of 3) on the classroom observation rubric indicators related to the application of communication interventions

Target 3: By June, 2014, 100% of staff will score exemplary (score of 3) on the classroom observation rubric indicators related to the application of communication interventions

Task 1: Review evidence-based practice guidelines and identify interventions and strategies to be used for enhancing communication outcomes for students with ASD

Completion Date: February, 2012

Person Responsible: Speech/Language Coordinator

Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Develop and implement a training plan on identified interventions that enhance communication outcomes for students with ASD

Completion Date: March, 2012

Person Responsible: Speech/Language Coordinator

Funding Required: Possible consultant fees (\$5,000)

Task Narrative: Under these tasks, ACPS will review and identify a variety of communication intervention methods and strategies for students with ASD, drawing from evidence-based practices and rooted in varying conceptual models. Communication interventions should focus not only on factors intrinsic to the individual, but also on modification of the learning environment and the interaction styles of the communication partners. When making decisions about communication intervention methods and strategies, teams should determine which strategies and interventions are effective with students presenting varying developmental levels, social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, learning styles, behavior repertoires, as well as communication needs. These tasks will be complete when a list of interventions, strategies, interpersonal supports and learning supports has been developed and a training plan, which identifies specific content and participants, has been implemented.

Objective 4:

All students with alternative/augmentative communication (AAC) needs will have the necessary technology tools and strategies to enhance communication.

Metric: % of students with ASD having multi-model communication systems that are individualized according to their specific capabilities and contexts of communication

Target: By June, 2012, 100% of students with ASD will have individualized multi-model communication systems that align with their specific capabilities and contexts of communication

Task 1: Research, inventory and purchase as needed a variety of low and high-technology alternative/augmentative communication tools

Completion Date: October, 2011

Person Responsible: Speech/Language Coordinator

Funding Required: Estimated \$10,000

Task 2: Develop and implement a training plan for staff on alternative/augmentative communication methods, tools, and implementation

Completion Date: January, 2012

Person Responsible: Speech/Language Coordinator

Funding Required: current level of resources

Task 3: Develop and implement a training plan for families in the use of technology tools and strategies

Completion Date: March, 2012

Person Responsible: Speech/Language Coordinator

Funding Required: current level of resources

Task Narrative: The use of AAC has been associated with improvements in behavior and emotional regulation, improvements in speech, expressive language and social communication and improvements in receptive language development and comprehension. Under these tasks, ACPS will research evidence-based practices in the field of AAC. ACPS will train licensed staff and paraprofessionals in identifying and using a variety of low and high technology AAC tools and strategies. As available literature does not yet predict which forms of AAC will be most effective for a specific individual with ASD, decisions should be made on an individual basis with consideration given to a student's learning strengths and weaknesses, his or her developmental level of social communication skills and his or her motor abilities.

All communication partners, including staff, families, and peers, when appropriate, should be trained in the use of specific tools which have been identified for individual students. AAC assessment is a dynamic and ongoing process that evolves and changes with the student. As the student's skills and abilities change and the demands of the curriculum increase, the appropriateness of various AAC tools will need to be re-evaluated. Therefore, training for staff should include procedures for data collection to monitor progress with identified tools.

These tasks will be completed when a training plan has been developed and implemented for teachers, Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists and paraprofessionals that identifies AAC methods, tools, and strategies; a training plan has been developed and implemented for families in the use of AAC; and a variety of low and high-technology alternative/augmentative communication tools has been purchased and made available to students.

Goal 6:

ACPS will provide comprehensive career and transition programs for students with ASD that result in a high degree of student engagement and post-secondary education and employment.

Objective 1:

ACPS will form partnerships and alliances with businesses, city agencies and community organizations to maximize employment opportunities for students with ASD.

Metric 1: # of ACPS students with ASD between the ages of 16 and 22 who are employed

Target: To be determined after review of IEPs of student with ASD between the ages of 16 and 22

Metric 2: # of ACPS students with ASD who are engaged in job placements and/or internships

Target: To be determined after review of IEPs of student with ASD between the ages of 16 and 22

Task 1: Recruit businesses and organizations within the community willing to partner with ACPS for the express purpose of employing students and postgraduates with ASD

Completion Date: September, 2012
Person Responsible: Special Education Special Projects Officer
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Develop and implement a training module for business and organizational partners

Completion Date: December, 2012
Person Responsible: Special Education Special Projects Officer
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 3: Develop and implement a formal job coach program to ensure that students with ASD have the necessary supports to be successful in their employment

Completion Date: September, 2012
Person Responsible: Special Education Special Projects Officer
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 4: Expand post secondary opportunities for students with ASD through partnerships with appropriate city agencies

Completion Date: September, 2012
Person Responsible: Special Education Special Projects Officer
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: Under this set of tasks, ACPS Office of Student Services will compile a list of local businesses and community service organizations that could potentially provide employment for students with ASD. Part of this process should be to reach out to the local Chamber of Commerce and to ACPS parents with a potential to provide or identify job opportunities. Staff will contact each of these organizations to determine the willingness of each to serve as a partner. ACPS will develop a job coach program for school system professionals who will serve as a liaison between the school system and business to provide support to the students with ASD. Part of this program will be to develop and implement a training program for business and community partners so that they are adequately prepared to assist students with issues that may arise in the workplace.

Objective 2:

Students with ASD will have access to the full range of Career and Technical courses offered through ACPS.

Metric: % of parents of ACPS high school students with ASD who respond affirmatively to phone survey regarding knowledge of available Career and Technical courses

Target 1: By June 2012 80% of parents surveyed will respond affirmatively

Target 2: By June 2013 100% of parents survey will respond affirmatively

Task 1: Educate parents and students with ASD about the full range of Career and Technical courses documented in the middle school and high school *Programs of Study*

Completion Date: June, 2011
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and CTE Director
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task 2: Provide parents and students with ASD with multiple scenarios for completing high school coursework and graduation requirements over 4 or more years

Completion Date: September, 2011
Person Responsible: Director of Special Education and Secondary Director of Counseling
Funding Required: Current level of funding

Task Narrative: Under this set of tasks, ACPS counseling staff will implement a process, during course selection time, to notify parents of the wide variety of career and technical classes offered at the high school. Counselors will offer

recommendations for scheduling that will enable students with ASD to take the greatest advantage of these courses without sacrificing other necessary electives.

Critical Success Factors

Factors critical to the success of this plan to serve students with ASD in the ACPS school division are the following:

1. Acknowledgment of the scope of the challenge.
2. A willingness on the part of the School Board and Superintendent to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to implement the plan; short-term and long-term commitment to the allocation of resources including, but not limited to extensive and ongoing training of all ACPS staff and administrators and the attracting, hiring and retaining qualified and committed staff.
3. Availability of staff to participate in critical professional development.
4. Scheduling practices that provide sufficient time at regular intervals for autism teachers, general education teachers, related service providers and autism resource staff members to collaboratively plan instruction and analyze student performance data.
5. Administrative (school-based and central office) buy-in and accountability for the implementation of the plan.
6. Staffing based upon the needs of each individual child and not based upon existing state and division-wide ratios.
7. ACPS special education service delivery model will support adequate time for BCBA staff to support both special education and general education teachers.
8. Appropriate oversight will be demonstrated throughout the implementation of the Autism plan.
9. ACPS will demonstrate a willingness to implement creative scheduling related to training for staff and establishment of critical classes for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) related to the social, behavioral, executive functioning and independent living components of the Autism plan.
10. ACPS will implement the Autism plan with fidelity.

11. ACPS will recognize that the plan is a living document and will demonstrate a willingness to make adjustments as implementation occurs and lessons are learned.
12. ACPS administration must demonstrate an appreciation of those teachers and staff willing to participate in training and acquire the necessary skills to teach children with ASD.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the implementation of this plan for educating students with ASD in the ACPS school division are the following:

1. Contract with an outside, independent organization to complete a benchmark audit of current services to ACPS students with ASD; use results of the audit to validate the Autism Plan, modify the plan as warranted and provide implementation support.
2. Hire three additional FTE positions for FY 2012: one Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), 1 Autism Resource Specialist, and 1 Augmentative Communication Specialist; additional FTEs may be required in future years.
3. Charge one of the three BCBA's with responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Autism Plan and ACPS Autism Program to include oversight of activities related to career and transition for students with ASD. This individual must have a commensurate reduction in case management responsibilities to allow time for appropriate supervision and oversight.
4. Examine and implement, as appropriate and possible, strategies to support, reward, and retain excellent autism teachers and paraprofessionals. Strategies to be considered include but are not limited to:
 - a. Quality step pay increases for licensed professionals and paraprofessionals who complete a prescribed body of professional development and who demonstrate the transferal of training into quality classroom practice
 - b. Provide Tuition Assistance reimbursement to licensed professionals who successfully (grade of A or B) complete graduate level coursework that is directly related to autism
 - c. Implement a training model similar to the previous Math Specialist training program for Autism teachers
 - d. Other monetary incentives especially to support paraprofessionals
5. Reinstate the summer social skills program for students with ASD during the summer of 2011.

6. Maintain sufficient numbers of staff trained in educating students with ASD to serve as substitutes during teacher absences. Having untrained substitute teachers in the Autism classrooms, jeopardizes the academic success of those students and can be potentially dangerous.
7. Provide incentives to teachers and paraprofessionals who receive specialized training in ASD to continue to support students with Autism and not be reassigned or transferred to other division assignments

PROGRESS MONITORING

The following progress monitoring tools will be used to keep all stakeholders apprised of the progress of implementation.

- Quarterly reports to the Special Education Advisory Committee
- Monthly progress monitoring reviews and updates on the implementation of the Autism Plan to the Autism Workgroup who will serve as an oversight committee
- Monthly progress reports from the Director of Special Education to the Chief Academic Officer
- Semi-annual monitoring of school administrators using the *School Expectations Rubric* to document accountability in serving students with ASD
- Information and progress updates to be provided at least 2 times during the year at PTA meetings