

Annual Report SEAC 2014

The Special Education Advisory Committee is pleased to present its Annual Report

Members of the committee have discussed and debated on a wide number of topics this year. Among them; access to curriculum, opportunity, growth areas, data driven instruction, SOL accommodations, transportation and more.

The Committee has come together to clarify and provide awareness of opportunity the Division should consider areas to develop.

Communication between school and family is vital. The communication expectations and experiences between the parents of students with special needs and varies greatly across the school division. Parents are confused, especially at the beginning of the year knowing who to get information from and the chain of command for concerns or communications. The committee recommends that Mr. Kirst, Director of Special Education and Students Services, the development of a “check list” or standard protocol for the special education teacher / case managers to implement upon return to the school year to support them in a consistent process of establishing communication with the parents of the children on their case load. In addition, SEAC requests that a 5 minute Parent/teacher conference be considered that would be facilitated by case managers at the interim point of a 9 week term to further facilitate this working relationship. SEAC feels this is most necessary when students are moving up from Pre-K to Kindergarten, 5th to 6th grade and from 8th to 9th grade. SEAC believes that establishing for students and parents of children with disabilities a familiar contact early with clearly delineated lines of communication would go a long way in developing strong support for students with special needs and their families throughout the year.

SEAC recommends a more diligent utilization of resources when scheduling collaborative classes at the secondary levels. It is recommended that special education resources, namely special education teacher staffing, should be provided when at least 5 students with IEP's or 504's are assigned in a typical general education class.

In these tough fiscally challenging times we recommend a shift from special education teachers as generalists to special education teams that represent “specialists” as defined by their training in evidenced based practices and interventions (i.e. MANDT certification, certification in reading interventions, training in adapting the environment when working with students with Autism). The more tools our teachers have the more outreach and support they can provide to students with disabilities.

SEAC would like to recommend that the School Board be sensitive to requirements for equal access and the right to a free an appropriate public education afforded to students with disabilities.

SEAC shares the concern and want for planning to be safe and expedient, but also asks that the Board balance that with the rights of all children. When we have encountered multiple challenges that are weather related we must bear in mind that the majority of our Roads were not developed with sidewalks or even shoulders on many secondary and side roads. SEAC recommends that the School Board consider the rights of all children if moving forward with a “Plan B” for transportation in the event of weather related closings. SEAC asks that the Board take into account the potential investment for necessary specialized buses or purchasing equipment for buses (i.e. chains) or even to contract with private sources to plow roads that are not the priority of VDOT or working in conjunction with VDOT. The Commonwealth of Virginia has charged us with the duty to educate all students from age 2-21. A plan that would limit access to transportation for some simply is not acceptable. Safety and access are the goal for all our students.

SEAC has reviewed the Albemarle County Special Education Annual Plan / Part B Flow-Through Application completed by Mr. Kirst. SEAC agrees that using the funds for teaching staff is the best utilization of the funds.

This Annual Report was developed by SEAC Chairperson, Catherine Lochner, with collaboration of the committee membership.

Thank You!

Catherine Lochner
Chairperson, Special Education Advisory Committee