

Albemarle County Special Education Advisory Committee Second Periodic Report for 2012-2013

April 2013

The Albemarle Special Education Advisory committee (SEAC) is pleased to present 2012-2013 Second Periodic Report to the School Board of Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS). This report was prepared by SEAC chairperson, Catherine Lochner. Discussion was held with SEAC membership at the March 12, 2013 meeting and March 20, 2013 planning meeting.

Overview

The functions of the SEAC, as specified by Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia [8 VAC 20-81], effective January 25, 2010, are provided in the following link.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/regulations/state/regs_speced_disability_va.pdf:

Concern

Budget Impact on Special Education Programs and Staffing.

Section A: Maintenance of Effort

Tier I

CSA

PREP which includes PRC

SpEd Staffing +2.5 FTE to meet the needs of populations with increased significant impairments

\$926,409.00

SEAC recognizes that while the newer programs have been set in place (ie., VAAP at elementary, Core+ at AHS, Full time Autism/Behavior Specialist, increase preschool from half-day to full-day services, set a base standard for early childhood and functional skills classes), going forward there are no new plans or staffing to assist students towards functional independence. There are ongoing concerns that once the students matriculate from the elementary VAAP program they will be funneled towards a Certificate of Completion versus an IEP Diploma. Recommend the Division should at this time start investigating adding work skills/life skills criteria beginning as early as 6th grade versus the traditional 9th grade transition planning.

Concern

Annual Plan and Sequestration

Grant Total: \$2,974,498.00

It is times like this with an unprecedented Sequestration that we must all, Parents, School Board, Board of Supervisors, Tax payers, come to grips with the reality that education for ALL is vital to our divisions growth and stability. The reality is that for too long we have relied on the Federal Government to pay for special education programs if not the entirety of special programs and made nominal funding through local/state budgets to provide for our residents' needs. The

reality as well is that IDEA currently, nor has it ever been funded to the level promised by congress, but does that mean that we are to ignore the fact that students with disabilities need educating?

The Local Special Education Annual Plan/ Part B Flow-Through Application and Report Grant provides 35 FTE's, let me repeat that, 35 FTE's... how can our division not have planned for those estimated 525+ students under those 35 FTE's (paid for by the FEDS) that need and are required under 8 VAC 20- et el to be attending an educational institution between ages 5-18 and up to 21 for students with disabilities. SEAC recommends that the entire Special Education Funding Request not just exist as is, but be increased (albeit incrementally/annually) as to it's actual local needs.

Concern

Credit Accommodations of Standard Diploma for students with disabilities

While SEAC hasn't thoroughly deliberated on the upcoming changes brought about by dropping the Modified Standard Diploma, at this time and coupled with the Maintenance of Effort funding request with no further increase in FTE's this division will not be able to accomplish the new Credit Accommodations for students with disabilities. This particular population (around 300-400) -known in the education trade as "gap kids" are largely struggling readers, organization challenged and while they can learn higher order concepts and perform analytical tasks, they need a longer time to process the lessons as well as reinforcement of lessons. Specifically, and these are but two examples of the use of courses suggested:

- A. Extending an Algebra 1 course to a Two year required course for those that qualify. And another example
- B. Adding English with Support courses. Currently they are full. Owing to the lower level(reduced number) of RTI trained staff in the middle schools for the last three years we will now see this coming year a plethora in Numbers of rising 9th grade students that need reading support at High School.

Maintaining the current courses at High School of Resource Reading known as Wilson Reading Program and Language! Language Arts programs are vital to the students already enrolled. But by not adding more will compromise the division by not providing the basis of all continued learning, that of READING.

For now SEAC recommends: Once the School Board has established it's guidelines for Credit accommodations, a plan/training/funding annually for middle and High school Guidance Department to work directly with Special Education Department Leads, Director of Special Education and Course Content Department Leads. Training as well as a collaborative working relationship regarding Special Education regulations on credit accommodations for the Guidance counselors is a relationship that, if smooth, would add to the quality of disabled students attempting a Standard Diploma. SEAC will continue to explore the accommodations and send it's suggestions before the end of school year.

UNMET NEED

Reading Remediation

Tier 2

Restore +2.8 FTE RTI Staffing

Restoring RTI staffing to previous levels is a necessity we can ill afford to not provide. While funding for RTI hasn't been directly a part of Special Education budget for 3 years now, SEAC felt it was of such necessity as to call this an unmet need.

After all, the top priorities of any public school are to 1) provide safety at the school, 2) provide for the teaching of reading. To not teach reading to ALL students, neuro-typically developing or the struggling reader is to negate the entire purpose of education in public schools. Please without delay move this request to Restore RTI staffing levels to the Tier I Maintenance of Effort immediately.

Reference: The Mathew Effect

A term coined by Keith Stanovich, a psychologist who has done extensive research on reading and language disabilities. The "Mathew Effect" refers to the idea that in reading (as with other areas of life), the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. When children fail at early reading and writing, they Begin to dislike reading. They read less than their classmates. They read less they learn less from reading then non-disabled children.

As a consequence, they do not gain vocabulary, background knowledge, and information about how reading material is structured. In Short, the word-rich get richer while the word-poor get poorer. This is "The Mathew Effect". Because some IQ sub tests measure information learned from reading, poor readers will score lower on these sub tests. Over the years, the "gap" between poor readers and good readers grows.

< <http://www.wrightslaw.com> > Under Assessments and Testing

SEAC recommends Fidelity to the already used programs such as Read 180 and Wilson Reading that goes beyond an every other day kind of intervention and commit to actual 18 week or even whole year long implementation of these programs to meet needed level for the number of students documented to still be not on grade level reading skill.

UNMET NEED

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Currently, there isn't enough space for another ECSE program in the Western Feeder Pattern. 2 SEAC members have been approached regarding the lack of a class there and the current suggested solution of busing 2 and 3 year olds to Hollymead is unacceptable to these parents. Some SEAC members view the over capacity at these Western Feeder schools as a major block to adding another ECSE class as these impaired children and their need for LRE at a "closer to home" base requires a larger than average classroom space.

SEAC recommends that upon completion of this springs IEP Annual Reviews the Director of Special Education, Superintendent and School Board determine if the number of students needing an ECSE placement in the West outweighs the cost of busing such young children across the county.

SEAC Chair Note: The SEAC Pre-school Representative(Rachel Chidester) is currently engaged in soliciting parent interest/concern for a 'closer to home " program. SEAC hopes to submit letters from the community regarding their concerns by end of school year.

RECOGNITION

Training and funding for Teaching Assistants (TA's)

At the March 12, meeting, SEAC was informed of the new mandate/with funding for the training of teaching assistants that directly work with Autistic children and their Classroom teacher. This training will be vital for all in the program as well as for T.A.'s that are pulled to classes on an as needed basis. This will be of great benefit to all students and help provide support of the classroom teachers. Training will be open to all special education teaching assistants.

RECOGNITION

Parent Resource Center

Continued funding of the Parent Resource Center (PRC)!! Outstanding!! SEAC wishes to thank the Director of Special Education , Superintendent and the School Board for recognizing such a valuable tool this service is to our community. The PREP/PRC as part of a consortium of services provides valuable training for parents over multiple counties, Albemarle being the largest. We would like, humbly, to request that the PRC remain as an on-going Service funded annually without debate. Because parent counseling and training leads to improved out comes for challenged students. The PRC outreach assists the parent in understanding the special needs of their child, providing parents with information about child development, and helping parents to acquire necessary skills that will allow them to support the implementation of the Individual Education Plan (the IEP).

It would be extremely helpful if the DART or School Communications System could assist with the advertising of the two largest conferences each year, The Live Learn Conference in Fall and the Life After High School Transition Conference in Spring. Sending out a Division Wide announcement of these two events similar to the Division Wide announcement for the Strategic Plan Town Hall Schools of the Future will help ensure ALL parents have the opportunity to participate.

Thanks and Thank you to Mr. Kevin Kirst, Director of Special Education and Student Services for giving of his time to the Special Education Advisory Committee.

Formally Submitted,
Catherine Lochner

SEAC Membership 2012-2013

Pre School	Rachel Chidester	
Baker-Butler	Jennifer Burman	* Vice Chairman
Cale	Angela Burroughs	* Recording Secretary
Greer	Jennifer Schaeffer	
Hollymead	Cate Hudtloff	
Meriwether-Lewis	Maureen Strazzullo John Wilson	
V. L. Murray	Alyson Gorman Bill Davis	
Red Hill	Melinda Whitehurst	* Licensed Teacher
Scottsville	Jim Assink	
Stone-Robinson	Cathy Campell-Pasquel	
Ivy Creek	Ann Latham-Anderson	
Henley	Lisa Stokes	
Sutherland	Jamie Hedman	* Licensed Teacher
Walton	Elizabeth Launer	
Albemarle High	Catherine Lochner	* Chairperson
Western Albemarle High	Jenny Buzan	
Murray Charter	Dr. Beth Cantrell	
CSA	Tom Cooke	