

Albemarle Special Education Advisory Committee
3/11/25 Meeting

Attendance:

SEAC Members

Christopher Seaman - Henley Middle School, Chair
Jessica Allen - Ivy Elementary, Vice Chair
Amanda Vogel - Baker Butler Elementary
Kate Gariepy - Community Representative
Nicole Group - Community Lab School
Betsy Soulsby - Community Representative
Alex Silverman - Hollymead Elementary
Kendra Meiklejohn - Lakeside Middle School
Tracy Magee - Ivy Elementary
Tanya Evans - Community Representatives
Caitlin Foley - Mountain View Elementary
Elizabeth Cobb - Western Albemarle High School
Alex Silverman - Hollymead Elementary
Christine Garland - Journey Middle School
Dee Curry - Scottsville Elementary
Sam Peacoe - Burley Middle School

School Board Members, Administrators, and Guests

Ellen Osborne - School Board Member, Scottsville District
Dr. Daphne Keiser - Assistant Superintendent for School Community Engagement
Heidi Gilman Bennett - Family Council Chair
Ramona Martin - Murray, Abuse case manager
Kara de Carvalho - Murray parent

Agenda

1. Call to Order 7:01pm
2. Introductions
3. Approval of Agenda
 - a. Motioned by Christopher Seaman, seconded
 - b. Unanimously approved
4. Amended Minutes from January 14 Approved
 - a. Motioned by Nicole Group, seconded
 - b. Unanimously approved
5. SEAC Leadership Update
 - a. Current Budget Proposal Includes
 - 4.5% salary increase for special education TAs (3.0% for all other staff)
 - Scholars studio allotted 1 FTE for a special education teacher
 - b. Recently-complete survey on special education eligibility issues

- Family Council and UVA Law Center collaborated to create and send the survey.
- One goal was to expand our reach to families outside of those who are already receiving special education services.
- Also to get additional information about the pre-referral process
- An opportunity for families that are concerned about confidentiality.
- UVA Law Center is conducting surveys and will create a report they will share with SEAC.

c. Upcoming Events

- 3/20, 6:30 pm “The Life You’re Given”
- 3/21, Down’s Syndrome Day, many schools are wearing mismatched socks to support
- 3/22, 8:30 am - 1 pm PRC Program “Life After High School” at PVCC (free lunch)
 - Programs for teens and parents
- 4/12, 9 am - 1 pm: Reclaimed Hope Initiative, Hope Fest & 5K (VFW 1827) - registration required
- Adaptive Baseball for blind/visually impaired, Monticello Little League Season starts 4/13
- Bystander Intervention Training Workshop, Sun 4/27. 1:30 pm - 3 pm, Westminster Presbyterian Church

6. Presentation of Annual Plan

a. Current State

- 2018 students in ACPS age 3-22 with IEP as of September 2024 (about 15% of school population)
- 517 students in ACPS with 504 as of December
- Trends show an intensity of need growing over time

b. Annual Plan

- It is required that SEAC reviews the Special Education Annual Plan
- Regional Jail agreement: because the land is in ACPS, we are responsible for all 18-22 year olds with IEPs who are placed in that facility
 - Agreement Provides .50 FTE for an ACPS special education teacher
 - Supports CARJ GED Program
- Part B set aside funds
 - .50 FTE for a special education teacher who consults with private schools located within Albemarle County and has ACPS students with IEPs
 - Conduct Child Find/Special Education Evaluation for students with disabilities
 - 14 students with vouchers for Speech and Language Services and 1 student with a voucher for Occupational Therapy
 - First come, first service for these services, and then individuals are on a waiting list

- CCEIS - Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services
 - This provision requires that 15% of the part B Federal Funds is required to be set aside if a division has a disproportionality of identification
 - As of SY25-26, we are no longer in this category
 - Federal Grant - IDEA
 - Funding Abase teachers (roughly 38 FTE)
 - Funding ECSE Teaching Assistant (roughly 2 FTE)
 - Located in Bright Stars programs, a general education setting serving students with IEPs
7. Updates from other ACPs committees
- a. Talent Development committee is interested in collaborating with SEAC to support Twice Exceptions (2E) students. Individuals who are both gifted and have disabilities.
 - b. As noted above, Family Council recently shared a survey requesting information from ACPs families who have requested or gone through the evaluation process. This is a collaboration between UVA Law Clinic.
8. Intensive Support Center - currently part of the budget proposal going in front of the school board
- a. Replacing PREP at Ivy Creek to support additional students with IEPs who cannot be served in home school
 - b. A motion was passed to draft and send a letter to the board of supervisors to advocate for needed funding for this project.
9. Update on School Security SRO - The current budget in front of the school board includes \$252,402 for 3.0 FTEs for School Resource Officers to be placed at Albemarle High School, Western Albemarle High School, and Monticello high school. (This is an increase of 2.0 FTEs compared with last year's budget.)
- a. Research and data to consider
 - ACLU report from July 2020 highlights that "students with disabilities were nearly three times more likely to be arrested and referred than students without disabilities (and this disparity increases up to tenfold in some states), and the risk is multiplied in schools with police."
 - According to Virginia Board for People With Disabilities, 2022 Assessment of the School to Prison Pipeline, "The presence of SROs... in schools have been shown to increase the incidence of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, police referral and arrest for students with disabilities, particularly in high schools....SROs also increase the rate of chronic absenteeism, particularly for students with disabilities."
 - b. Conversation from SEAC about SROs in schools
 - Feedback from middle school families of 8th graders who are already nervous about the transition to high school, now very uncomfortable with the idea there will be an increased police presence

- Families concerned that students with disabilities are often seen as argumentative, defiant, or otherwise "bad" - these behaviors are understood and accounted for in their IEPs and 504s but unless the officer is going to read and commit to memory every one of them then the officer will be likely to target their kids. Even if the officer is aware of the exceptions and expectations, there is strong concern as students with disabilities are 3x more likely to be arrested
- This risk is significantly increased for students of color with a disability
- Concern from immigrant families. ACPS just made a commitment that every child deserves access to education, regardless of documentation. And that they would protect those kids by only allowing officers in with a Judicial warrant. However, the governor just deputized state and local law enforcement to act on immigration enforcement efforts. There is concern that ACPS is now inviting more officers into schools, where they may be able to target students based on perceived immigration and documentation status. Allowing/permitting/accepting immigration enforcement on school grounds. Additional absenteeism for safety.
- immigrant families with students with disabilities who are in need of the services provided at school are now avoiding school and not receiving those services because of increased police presence. Especially in light of the governor's executive order.

c. Questions

- How do we support all students, especially individuals with disabilities, to successfully interact with SROs and police officers?
- What is the current state of SRO training for students with disabilities?
 - According to the Memorandum of understanding between the Albemarle County Public Schools and Albemarle County regarding the school resource officer program requires that SROs be trained which includes disability awareness training. SEAC has requested information about this training (when does it happen, what does it cover, who provides the training), but has not yet been provided any information on the SRO training.

d. Next Steps

- A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted (with one abstention) for SEAC to draft and send a letter to support keeping school safety coaches, and not to support funding additional SRO positions.

10. New Business

- a. Presented the draft resolution of the Albemarle County Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) regarding the US Department of Education.
 - Approved by the committee
- b. Recognition of Dr. Kaiser who has regularly attended SEAC meetings and supported families needing help navigating systems within ACPS and special education.
- c. Future meeting agendas

- April 8: Office of Equity Education
- May 13: SEAC survey, elect officers, approve calendar
- Math Curriculum - TBA
- UVA law presentation - TBA

11. Public Comment

- a. Lara Harrison (submitted via email):

Hi SEAC folks.

Thanks for all you do. I wanted to share some thoughts and info with you all.

The ACPS 25/26 budget is up for approval in a couple of days. This budget removes school safety officer positions and adds SROs (cops).

As a parent of Black children, one currently in elementary, and two who needed accommodations while attending ACPS, I am beyond concerned at the impact of this decision.

Some facts:

“Overall, students with disabilities were nearly three times more likely to be arrested and referred than students without disabilities... and the risk is multiplied in schools with police.” – [ACLU](#), July 2020.

“Com-pared to their white peers, stu-dents of col-or are arrest-ed by SROs at dis-pro-por-tion-ate-ly high-er rates, which expos-es them to the school-to-prison pipeline.” – [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#), Nov 2023.

ACPS has not included the community, parents, experts, or students in any kind of meaningful way for a discussion on SROs. ACPS has not been collecting data to show how the SRO program is impacting safety in our schools. How could they want to expand if we don't even know how it's working?

ACPS has made no assurances that officers in our schools would be trauma informed, culturally competent, or understand disability and child development. That alone should give us all pause. Adults working with our most precious kiddos, who have no training in these things, and carry around weapons no less.

Safety officers, therapists, nurses, psychologists, etc., are the answer here. Restorative justice practices. Our kids deserve it. Not more carceral approaches.

I'm linking a relevant article from the Michigan journal for race and law:

<https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1053&context=mjrl>

Additionally you can find more information and statistics about the harmful effects of policing in schools at www.policefreeschools.org

I am asking that you advocate with the school board to put a halt to expanding the SRO program.

Thank you for your time.

b. Amanda Moxham (via email):

Hello SEAC -

I understand that there is an attempt to put School Resource Officers (SROs) back into the budget and I wanted to share the problematic nature of this situation. Not only has the presence of SROs in schools been widely documented as a contributing factor to the **school-to-prison pipeline**, disproportionately harming **students of color, students with disabilities, and especially those who belong to both groups**. While proponents argue that SROs create safer school environments, the data shows that their presence **escalates minor disciplinary issues into criminal justice involvement** and disproportionately impacts marginalized students. Below is some interesting information to help understand the documented disparate impact of SROs on disabled students as well as to provide some alternatives that support healthy and safe schools for our children:

- **Higher Rates of Restraint and Seclusion:**
 - **80% of students subjected to physical restraint in schools have disabilities**, even though they make up **only 12% of the student population**. (U.S. Government Accountability Office)
 - Many disabled students experience **traumatic interactions with SROs**, including the use of **handcuffs, tasers, and physical force**. (National Disability Rights Network)
- **Overuse of Law Enforcement for Disability-Related Behaviors:**
 - **Disabled students are twice as likely to be arrested as their non-disabled peers**. (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights)
 - In **Chicago**, an investigation found that nearly **40% of school-based arrests involved students with disabilities**, despite them making up only 14% of the student body. (WBEZ Chicago)
- **Exclusion from Education:**
 - A single **school suspension doubles the likelihood of a student dropping out**. (Council of State Governments Justice Center)

- **Students who drop out of school are 63% more likely to be incarcerated** than those who graduate. (Annie E. Casey Foundation)

The Compounded Harm for Disabled Students of Color

- **Higher Rates of Suspension and Expulsion:**
 - **Black disabled students are suspended at rates 3 to 5 times higher than their white disabled peers.** (UCLA Civil Rights Project)
- **Harsh Punishment Instead of Support:**
 - **Students with autism and ADHD are often misinterpreted as “defiant” or “disruptive” by SROs, leading to unnecessary force or arrests.** ([Teen Vogue](#))
- **Increased Risk of Arrest:**
 - **In a Los Angeles study, disabled students of color were five times more likely to be referred to law enforcement than white students without disabilities.** (National Center for Youth Law)

Alternative Solutions to SROs

Instead of relying on police in schools, evidence-based alternatives provide greater safety and equity:

- **Invest in School Counselors & Mental Health Support**
 - The **National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of 1 school psychologist per 500 students**, but most U.S. schools exceed 1,400 students per psychologist. (NASP)
- **Implement Restorative Justice Practices**
 - Schools using **restorative justice models** see a **40-70% reduction in suspensions and improved school climate.** (International Institute for Restorative Practices)
- **Expand Disability Training for School Staff**
 - **Providing training in de-escalation and trauma-informed care** can reduce incidents leading to law enforcement involvement. (National Education Association)

The overwhelming data demonstrates that **SROs harm, rather than help, school communities**, disproportionately affecting **students of color, disabled students, and particularly those at the intersection of both identities**. Schools that prioritize **mental health professionals, restorative justice, and well-trained educators—rather than policing—create safer, more equitable**

environments for all students. Please make every effort to ensure that SROs are not used as a means to create more harm within our school system.

Sincerely,

Amanda Moxham (a mother of 3 children - 2 who have graduated from and 1 still attending ACPS)

12. Adjournment - 9:04pm