

May 2025

Re: SEAC Recommendations to the Albemarle County School Board

Dear SEAC Members,

On behalf of the Albemarle County School Board, I would like to thank you for your continued dedication to our students and for the thoughtful recommendations you submitted this year. We are deeply grateful for your advocacy and for your commitment to creating a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive learning environment for students with disabilities across our division.

Below, I offer the School Board's responses to each of the five recommendations outlined in your report:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Increase Support for Meaningful Inclusion

Request: Add a second Learning Specialist and a second Behavior Specialist position.

→ **Response:** This request has been part of the School Board's budget priorities for the past four years, and I personally support the addition of both positions. Unfortunately, due to the current budget climate, funding for these roles was not possible in the FY26 budget. That said, we remain committed to finding opportunities to increase support for inclusive practices across the division as future resources allow.

Request: Include special education teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) in Professional Learning Community (PLC) time.

→ **Response:** Special education teachers are already included in PLC time. However, it is not always feasible for TAs to participate in these meetings, as many PLCs take place during the school day when TAs are actively supporting students. We recognize the value of their input and will continue to explore opportunities for deeper collaboration where possible.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Increase Support and Retention for Special Education Teaching Assistants

Request: Include TAs in shared planning time with general and/or special education teachers.

→ **Response:**
We acknowledge that this would be beneficial for collaboration and student support. However, due to the essential role many SPED TAs play during specials, recess, and lunch periods, shared planning time is difficult to schedule during the school day. That said, special education teachers do meet with their TA teams outside of school hours, and we recognize this as a productive and valued practice. We will continue to examine ways to support shared planning moving forward.

Request: Increase the number of paid professional development (PD) days for SPED TAs.

→ **Response:**
This year, ACPs revised the work calendar for classified staff to better distribute professional development throughout the school year. We believe this new calendar

structure will help meet the need for more consistent, embedded training opportunities for TAs.

Request: Conduct a compensation comparison and Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ) for SPED TAs.

→ **Response:**

The Human Resources Department has conducted a market comparison and has already implemented an increased pay rate for SPED TAs. In addition, the job description for this role has been updated to more accurately reflect their duties. These efforts are part of a broader commitment to ensuring fair compensation and support for these essential staff members.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Special Education Services for Specialized Schools

Request: Evaluate staffing needs for special education at Center I.

→ **Response:** This evaluation has already been completed. Center I has a full-time special education teacher, and a full-time special education teacher has also been assigned to support Scholars Studio students in their home high schools for the 2025–26 school year. This same position will support Center II students beginning in 2026–27.

Request: Conduct further research to improve outcomes for Post High students.

→ **Response:** ACPS remains committed to preparing Post High students for community participation and independent living. This year, we expanded our offerings through a partnership with *Project Life*, which provides life skills education and authentic work experiences. We will continue this partnership in the coming year. Additionally, beginning in 2025–26, Post High will be housed within the new Intensive Support Center to provide greater supervision, support, and community for students and families.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Increased Support for Mathematics Education

Request: Increase support for math education resources for students with disabilities.

→ **Response:** We appreciate this recommendation and are actively exploring division-wide math curriculum adoption to ensure more consistent support, including for students with disabilities. This is a priority area for ACPS, and further updates will be shared as the process continues.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Accessibility

Request: Conduct an accessibility and inclusion audit at all schools and school grounds.

→ **Response:** This audit process began last year, and four schools have already been reviewed. We plan to evaluate four additional schools this year. However, due to budget limitations, the implementation of audit recommendations may be delayed.

Request: Conduct evacuation audits to ensure all students, staff, and visitors can safely exit school buildings.

→ **Response:** ACPS already conducts evacuation planning and has prioritized schools with multiple floors. This includes ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, can exit buildings safely even when elevators are inaccessible.

Thank you again for your work on behalf of the students and families we serve. Your recommendations help us move closer to our vision of a school division where every student belongs and thrives.

Sincerely,
Kate Acuff, JD, PhD
Chair, Albemarle County School Board