

MEMORANDUM

TO: Arlington School Board

FROM: Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee

DATE: March 26, 2019

SUBJECT: Non-Recommendation Year Report to the Advisory Council on Instruction

Update of Previous Recommendations

The Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC) is pleased to provide an update to the Advisory Council on Instruction (ACI) regarding its 2017-18 recommendations for improving instructional delivery to all Arlington Public Schools (APS) students, including students with disabilities (SWD):

- 1. Improve and increase consistency and uniformity of special education services implementation across the county.**
- 2. Require general education teachers and building level administrators to attain core competencies for the education of students with disabilities.**

Past Recommendation #1: Improve and increase consistency and uniformity of special education services implementation across the county.

1 (a) Develop comprehensive written guidance that provides clear direction on policies, procedures and expected practices. Develop, in consult with parents, Standard Operating Procedural Manuals (SOPM) to include policies, procedures and expected practices for special education/related services and the Arlington Tiered System of Supports (ATSS). Manuals should be clearly written, practical and accessible to both school personnel and parents. The APS Section 504 Procedural Manual is an excellent model. Electronic versions should be publicly available.

Status of 1(a): In process. APS is currently in the process of drafting a manual for Special Education and the Arlington Tiered System of Support, which will be combined with the existing Section 504 manual. The manual is expected to be released by September 2019.

1 (b) Standardize School Improvement Plans. Using a common template, have schools include in their school improvement plans goals designed to move aggressively toward the improvement of special education services within an inclusive school model based on district expectations and resources. Establish set protocols for reporting progress based on expected targets and activities for improvement.

Status of 1(b): Partially implemented. APS has developed a common template for School Management Plans (also known as 90 Day Plans). Schools are now required to develop a minimum of three Annual Performance Goals that are tied to a Strategic Plan goal. We are pleased to see that most schools have elected to include performance goals related to SWD.

However, development of performance goals is a school-based decision, and not all schools currently elect to include goals relating to SWD. Most of the goals related to SWD include SWD as a gap group within global academic goals. A few schools address needs such as inclusion or disproportionality in discipline. We would like to see a district-wide expectation for measurable and specific performance goals at all schools related directly to the education of SWD, based on district expectations and priorities. We commend Carlin Springs Elementary for developing a plan with goals to both improve academic performance of SWD and increase the rate of inclusion of SWD during instruction, and W-L for goals that address disproportionality in discipline for SWD (and other gap groups). These types of plans could serve as models for other schools.

1 (c) Personnel Accountability. Hold school level personnel, including building administrators, accountable for expected results through incentives and consequences that encourage the implementation of standards for practice and fidelity. Make clear each principal's role and responsibility for all students in his or her school. Ensure that their evaluations include important areas for the timely and compliant implementation and oversight of differentiated instruction, ATSS, 504 and special education standards.

Status of 1(c): Not implemented. There are seven performance standards for administrators, which are based on state guidelines: (1) Leadership, (2) Climate, (3) Human Resource Management, (4) Organizational Management, (5) Communication and Community Relations, (6) Professionalism, (7) Student Academic Progress or Program Progress.¹ We continue to encourage APS to include metrics for progress in

¹ See VDOE Principal Evaluation Training Materials: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/performance_evaluation/principal/training/index.shtml; see also APS Administrator (P-Scale) Evaluation: <https://www.apsva.us/professional-development/aps-administrator-p-scale-evaluation/>

differentiated instruction, ATSS, 504 and special education standards in performance evaluations. We believe these could fit in the Student Academic Progress standard, among others.²

We appreciated the opportunity to have a conversation with Dr. Murphy and Dr. Natrass about school-level accountability at our December 2018 meeting. We are encouraged by Dr. Murphy's commitment to send a letter to principals and staff following that conversation. We have been advised that the letter is tentatively scheduled to be released in April. We look forward to continued collaboration and progress in this area.

2011- 2017 Strategic Plan Alignment: This recommendation aligns with every Strategic Plan goal, ensuring that the needs of all students are met, no matter which school they attend: Goal One: Ensure That Every Student is Challenged and Engaged; Goal Two: Eliminate Achievement Gaps; Goal Three: Recruit, Retain and Develop High-Quality Staff; Goal Four: Provide Optimal Learning Environments; Goal Five: Meet the Needs of the Whole Child.³

2018 - 2024 Strategic Plan Alignment: This recommendation also aligns with the new Strategic Plan by ensuring that the needs of all students are met, no matter which school they attend. In particular, it aligns with:

- The Mission: To ensure all students learn and thrive in safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments;
- The Vision: To be an inclusive community that empowers all students to foster their dreams, explore their possibilities, and create their futures;
- The Core Value of Excellence: Ensure all students receive an exemplary education that is academically challenging and meets their social and emotional needs.
- The Core Value of Equity: Eliminate opportunity gaps and achieve excellence by providing access to schools, resources, and learning opportunities according to each student's unique needs;
- The Core Value of Inclusivity: Strengthen our community by valuing people for who they are, nurturing our diversity, and embracing the contributions of all students, families, and staff;
- The Core Value of Collaboration: Foster partnerships with families, community, and staff to support the success of our students;

² The Code of Virginia requires that school boards' procedures for evaluating principals address student academic progress; how this requirement is met is the responsibility of local school boards.

³ These recommendations were made in 2017-18 while the 2011 - 2017 Strategic Plan was in place.

- The Goal of Student Success: Multiple Pathways to Student Success: Ensure that every student is challenged and engaged while providing multiple pathways for student success by broadening opportunities, building support systems and eliminating barriers. APS will eliminate opportunity gaps so all students achieve excellence;
- The Goal of Student Well-Being: Healthy, Safe, and Supported Students: Create an environment that fosters the growth of the whole child. APS will nurture all students' intellectual, physical, mental, and social-emotional growth in healthy, safe, and supportive learning environments; and
- The Goal of Partnerships: Strong and Mutually Supportive Partnerships: Develop and support strong connections among schools, families, and the community to broaden opportunities for student learning, development, and growth.⁴

Budgetary Implications: Recommendation #1(a) may involve a one-time commitment of staffing funds for APS to develop effective SOPMs for special education and ATSS, depending on whether APS chooses to develop these manuals internally or not. Notably, countless manuals exist in other school districts that could presumably be used for reference. Recommendation #1(b) does not have a significant staff funding implication; once a common template is developed, the individual schools would simply need to include it in their school improvement plans. Recommendation #1(c) has no budgetary implications.

Past Recommendation #2: Require general education teachers and building level administrators to attain core competencies for the education of students with disabilities.

2(a). Develop a set of core competencies (i.e. knowledge, skills, and attributes) for general education teachers regarding the education of students with disabilities.

Status of 2(a): In Process. APS has developed a professional learning framework. The framework is in the initial stage of development and continued evolution is anticipated. The Framework identifies competencies for teachers in the areas of: Inclusion, Whole Child, Professional Learning Communities, Curriculum, Personalized Learning, Profile of a Graduate, and Authentic and Engaging Learning Experiences. Identified competencies relating to the instruction of SWD include the delivery of specially designed instruction, co-teaching, ATSS, Implementing IEPs, Inclusive Practices, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Student Support Processes.⁵

⁴ See 2018-24 APS Strategic Plan: <https://www.apsva.us/strategic-plan/>

⁵ See Arlington Public Schools Professional Learning Framework: <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/PL-Framework-2.pdf>

2(b). Develop a set of core competencies (i.e. knowledge, skills, and attributes) for building level administrators regarding the education of students with disabilities.

Status of 2(b): In Process. We have been told that the professional development opportunities identified in the Professional Learning Framework are available to Administrators. ASEAC encourages APS to articulate how the Framework is utilized for administrators and what the expectations are for administrators.

2(c). Implement a framework to ensure that general education teachers and school administrators attain the required competencies.

Status of 2(c): Partially implemented. We are pleased to see the development of the Professional Learning Framework which identifies competencies for educators. However, the framework does not require teachers or administrators to attain the identified competencies at this time. We encourage APS to develop a smaller set of key competences for the education of SWD, and require teachers and administrators to attain those competencies within a specified timeframe.

2(d). Ensure that competencies in differentiated learning and the education of students with disabilities are included in annual teacher and school administrator assessments.

Status of 2(d): Not implemented. There are seven performance standards for administrators, which are based on state guidelines: (1) Leadership, (2) Climate, (3) Human Resource Management, (4) Organizational Management, (5) Communication and Community Relations, (6) Professionalism, (7) Student Academic Progress or Program Progress.⁶ There are seven performance standards for teachers, which are also based on state guidelines: (1) Professional Knowledge; (2) Instructional Planning; (3) Instructional Delivery; (4) Assessment of and for Student Learning; (5) Learning Environment; (6) Professionalism; and (7) Student Academic Progress.⁷

We continue to encourage APS to include metrics for progress in differentiated instruction, ATSS, 504 and special education in performance evaluations for teachers and administrators. We believe these items could fit within the Student Academic

⁶ See VDOE Principal Evaluation Training Materials: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/performance_evaluation/principal/training/index.shtml; see also APS Administrator (P-Scale) Evaluation: <https://www.apsva.us/professional-development/aps-administrator-p-scale-evaluation/>

⁷ See VDOE Board of Education Teacher Performance Standards & Evaluation Criteria: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/performance_evaluation/teacher/index.shtml

Progress standard among others.⁸ We appreciated the opportunity to have a conversation with Dr. Murphy and Dr. Natrass about accountability at our December 2018 meeting, which included discussion on performance evaluations, and we look forward to continued collaboration and progress in this area.

2011 – 2017 Strategic Plan Alignment: This goal aligns with every Strategic Plan goal, ensuring that general education teachers and building level administrators are equipped to meet the needs of all students: Goal One: Ensure That Every Student is Challenged and Engaged; Goal Two: Eliminate Achievement Gaps; Goal Three: Recruit, Retain and Develop High-Quality Staff; Goal Four: Provide Optimal Learning Environments; Goal Five: Meet the Needs of the Whole Child.⁹

2018 - 2024 Strategic Plan Alignment: This recommendation also aligns with the new Strategic Plan by ensuring that general education teachers and building level administrators have the tools they need to bring the mission, vision, core values and goals to fruition for all students. In particular, it aligns with:

- The Mission: To ensure all students learn and thrive in safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments;
- The Vision: To be an inclusive community that empowers all students to foster their dreams, explore their possibilities, and create their futures;
- The Core Value of Excellence: Ensure all students receive an exemplary education that is academically challenging and meets their social and emotional needs;
- The Core Value of Equity: Eliminate opportunity gaps and achieve excellence by providing access to schools, resources, and learning opportunities according to each student's unique needs;
- The Core Value of Inclusivity: Strengthen our community by valuing people for who they are, nurturing our diversity, and embracing the contributions of all students, families, and staff;
- The Core Value of Collaboration: Foster partnerships with families, community, and staff to support the success of our students;
- The Goal of Student Success: Multiple Pathways to Student Success: Ensure that every student is challenged and engaged while providing multiple pathways for student success by broadening opportunities, building support systems and eliminating barriers. APS will eliminate opportunity gaps so all students achieve excellence;

⁸ The Code of Virginia requires that school boards' procedures for evaluating principals address student academic progress; how this requirement is met is the responsibility of local school boards.

⁹ These recommendations were made in 2017-18, while the 2011 - 2017 Strategic Plan was in place.

- The Goal of Student Well-Being: Healthy, Safe, and Supported Students: Create an environment that fosters the growth of the whole child. APS will nurture all students' intellectual, physical, mental, and social-emotional growth in healthy, safe, and supportive learning environments;
- The Goal of Engaged Workforce: Recruit, hire, and invest in a high-quality and diverse workforce to ensure APS is the place where talented individuals choose to work; and
- The Goal of Partnerships: Strong and Mutually Supportive Partnerships: Develop and support strong connections among schools, families, and the community to broaden opportunities for student learning, development, and growth.¹⁰

Budgetary Implications: Budgetary impact would vary depending on the method of implementation.

ASEAC appreciates the opportunity to work with the Arlington School Board, APS Staff, the Advisory Council on Instruction, parents and community members. We are grateful for the support of APS staff, especially our Director of Special Education, Paul Jamelske. We recognize the heavy workload that staff carried this past year managing the program evaluation and the needs of SWD.

The Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee:

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Wendy Pizer (Chair)

Nadia Facey (Vice Chair)

Nick Walkosak and Margy Dunn (Co-Secretaries)

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Staff Liaison: Paul Jamelske, Director of Special Education

¹⁰ See 2018-24 APS Strategic Plan: <https://www.apsva.us/strategic-plan/>