

**TO:** ACI

**FROM:** Early Childhood Advisory Committee

**DATE:** December 4, 2019

**SUBJECT:** ECAC Non-Recommendation Year Report

The Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC) comprises Arlington parents and staff who identify, discuss and research issues related to the educational experience and instruction of Arlington Public Schools' (APS) youngest students, Pre-K through second grade. ECAC seeks to ensure that every child in APS during these foundational years experiences a high-quality instructional setting that allows him or her to thrive academically and socially, to foster a love of learning.

As of September 30, 2019, there were 7,933 Pre-K through second grade students in APS and it is projected to grow to 9,123 students by 2025. ( <https://www.apsva.us/statistics/monthly-enrollment/> and <https://www.apsva.us/statistics/enrollment-projections/> ).

Specifically, APS currently has four Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) programs:

- The Primary Montessori Program has 18 classrooms serving approximately 352 students (3, 4 and 5-year olds)
  - The Virginia Preschool Initiative Program (VPI) has 35 classrooms serving approximately 522 students (4-year olds)
  - The Early Childhood Special Education Program has 46 Early Childhood Special Education classrooms serving approximately 225 students (2, 3 and 4 year olds). Included in these are our combined Community Peer Program (CPP), co-taught programs with VPI and Primary Montessori and our programs at Integration Station with the Children's School and Little Beginnings Child Development Center.
    - The Early Childhood Special Education Program also includes a community-based resource programs serving students in private Arlington preschools and child care centers. This program serves approximately 48 students currently.
  - The Community Peer Program (CPP), which falls within the Preschool Special Education Program, is comprised of students with and without disabilities. Students with IEPs are placed in CPP classrooms via the IEP process. Students without disabilities are enrolled via the lottery system, using a similar enrollment process as families interested in APS Montessori preschool openings. There are currently 13 CPP classrooms serving 79 students with disabilities and 77 students without disabilities.
- Children of lower income who benefit most from Pre-K make up a significant portion of APS Pre-K enrollment. Two-thirds of the slots in the Montessori program are reserved for families who make less than \$97, 040 (80% of the median income for a family of four in Arlington County) and all of the slots in the VPI program are for families whose income does not exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty guideline currently at \$51,500 for a family of four in Arlington County.

Providing early childhood education opportunities is an investment that reaps significant returns not only to the students attending Arlington Public Schools, but also to our community. Young children between the ages of 3-8 think and learn in ways which differ from those of older children and adults, based on their stage of development. The foundation laid during these years can profoundly shape

what happens in later life<sup>1</sup>; a strong early childhood education program based on research and knowledge of how young children think is therefore crucial for later academic success. Studies prove that children who have rich early learning experiences are better prepared to thrive in kindergarten and beyond.

**Current Year Activities:**

The ECAC began our year by reviewing recommendations from last year’s Recommending Year Report from November 2018.

ECAC members have developed a tentative list of topics and activities to be discussed this year at our meetings.

	TOPIC	DISCUSSION
1.	Joint Meeting with Equity and Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review activities, recommendations and bridging discussion of our work.</li> </ul>
2.	Bridging Discussion of ECAC with other committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Care Initiative (CCI), Early Childhood Subcommittee of Partnership for Youth, Family and Children, Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)</li> </ul>
3.	Developmentally Appropriate Practices with Academic and Social- Emotional Learning PK-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion around the value of play and social-emotional learning in early childhood classrooms as well as academic expectations.</li> </ul>
4.	Joint Meeting with English Language Arts Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore overlaps between achievement gap and reading approaches in early childhood.</li> </ul>
5.	Inclusive Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of ECSE/VPI/Montessori co-taught models is continuing for SY 20-21 as well as continuing with the Community Peer Program.</li> <li>Continued partnerships with The Children’s School, Little Beginnings Child Development Center and Head Start.</li> </ul>

**Update of Previous Recommendations:**

**Recommendation #1: APS should develop a Strategic Plan for Equitable Developmental Opportunities to address the opportunity gaps present before kindergarten**

- Develop a Strategic Plan for Equitable Developmental Opportunities to address the opportunity gaps present before kindergarten*

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, F., Conti, G., Heckman, J., Moon, S., Pinto, R., Pungello, E., and Pan, Y. (2014). Early childhood investments substantially boost adult health. *Science*, 343 (6178); 1478-1485.

*2. Provide outreach materials to all families with young children in Arlington, focusing on the building blocks of school and life readiness.*

*3. Provide developmentally appropriate activity ideas for families to be empowered to be their child's first teacher.*

*4. Start communication with future APS families well before children start school in order to best build a bridge between home and school success.*

ECAC recognizes the positive work of multiple community agencies and committees and looks forward to partnering with those groups within APS as well as in the broader community (as listed above) who may be able to collaborate with us and further the efforts in their own work.

**Recommendation #2: Expand and align the continuum of educational models in early childhood education to meet the needs of all Pre-Kindergarten-2 learners.**

*1. Expand the co-taught models with VPI and Montessori and peer model programs in Pre-K with technical assistance and professional learning provided by the Offices of Early Childhood and Special Education.*

This year we expanded the Community Peer Programs from 5 classes to 13 classes to include 2 toddler classes and 11 three to five-year-old classes. New this year, families of students without disabilities pay tuition for the program based on the same sliding fee scale as Primary Montessori programming for three and four-year olds. Current enrollment of students without disabilities is 77 students with wait lists in some locations. Discussions have been ongoing with other sites through the regular meetings and collaborative learning team meetings with teachers and administrators to expand this program for the following year or to increase co-taught programming particularly with Primary Montessori classes.

*2. Align K-2 service delivery models at the elementary level with Pre-K co-taught models and other inclusive models to strengthen and increase consistency of the continuum of services at each school.*

Ensuring that a continuum of services is available at every school continues to be a challenge due to planning factors for general and special education staffing. Special education staffing varies by school and is based on projected students requiring special education staffing at each school. The committee welcomes further dialogue with administrators about overcoming the obstacles to expanding the continuum of educational models to meet the needs of all pre-k -2 learners.

*3. Provide additional professional development for LEA Representatives and IEP team members to support innovative and flexible educational programming to support a robust continuum of services to meet the individual and unique needs of all learners.*

Professional learning has been offered for LEA representatives and a significant amount of professional learning was provided to Student Support Coordinators and teams regarding the new Student Support

Team and processes. Continued professional learning regarding ATSS and appropriate reading and math interventions are supported and recommended by ECAC.

**Committee Members:**

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