

MEMORANDUM

TO: Arlington School Board
FROM: Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee
DATE: November 22, 2015
SUBJECT: Recommending Year Report 2015-2016

Introduction

The Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee (ASEAC) is pleased to present three recommendations to the School Board for improving instructional delivery to all Arlington Public Schools (APS) students, including students with disabilities.¹

- 1) **Formalize a policy commitment to, and increase resources for, the Arlington Tiered System of Supports (ATSS) to ensure its continued successful implementation.**
- 2) **Adopt a policy statement reflecting APS' commitment to providing a well-supported inclusive education for all students, and commit resources to realize this vision through a well-conceptualized and data-driven implementation plan.**
- 3) **Reduce the current staff:student ratio for school psychologists from 1:1,650 to 1:650 and social workers from 1:1,650 to 1:650 to support the implementation of APS' Strategic Plan, Goal Five, "Meet the Needs of the Whole Child" and bringing APS in closer alignment with national recommendations for best practices and enabling APS to significantly improve and increase services for all students.**

Unlike other ACI committees, ASEAC exists pursuant to Virginia law (8 VAC 20-81 230 D), requiring the School Board of each school division to appoint a committee of individuals with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities to advise it on the education of students with disabilities, from preschool to age 21.²

¹ Students with disabilities (SWD) include those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and those eligible but not yet identified to receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), students identified for support under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students who receive support through an Intervention Assistance Team (IAT), and students who have rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

² For more information on the regulatory requirements and remit of Virginia Special Education Advisory Committees, see http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/committees_advisory/special_ed/local_sped_advisory_committees/index.shtml.

Under these state regulations, ASEAC is required to periodically provide recommendations to the School Board, and to “review the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services.” ASEAC is required by law to “participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of students with disabilities,” and to otherwise “advise the local school division of needs in the education of students with disabilities.”

Number of SWDs:

	Number	Percentages (based on Sept 2014 PreK-12 student count of 23,499)
Students with IEPs[2]	3,605	15.3%
Students with 504s	580	2.5%
Totals	4,185	17.8%

The percentage of APS students with disabilities served by an IEP has remained steady at 14-15%, with absolute numbers increasing in proportion with overall student enrollment growth. These students receive special education services, modifications, and accommodations in a variety of settings: general education classrooms in neighborhood or choice schools, segregated special education classrooms in either neighborhood schools or “county-wide” programs, “resource rooms,” homebound instruction, and private placements. Please see Appendix 1 for a breakdown of students by disability.

In developing its recommendations for this reporting year, ASEAC considered many factors. Some of the more important considerations are listed below:

1. Parent input over the past two years, provided directly to ASEAC and through input from a number of parent-led special education-focused groups, including the Special Education PTA, the Dyslexia Task Force, the Mental Health Task Force, the Arlington Inclusion Task Force, and the ADHD Task Force.
2. APS School Board Strategic Planning Goals
3. Final Report: Evaluation of APS Services for Students with Special Needs (Public Consulting Group, January 2013)
4. Reviews of the research and best practices in the education of students with disabilities across the United States
5. School Board FY 2016 Priorities
6. APS Mission and Vision Statement
7. APS Policies

8. APS Work Group on Inclusive Practices (formed September 2015)
9. US Department of Justice, US Department of Education, and US Department of Health and Human Services policy statements, guidance, and initiatives
10. The Americans with Disabilities Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
11. Virginia State Special Education Advisory Committee's Annual Report (July 2014- June 2015)

Throughout the past year ASEAC considered many other topics of concern to parents as well. While all of the topics discussed impact our students, the committee felt that the three recommendations in this report address the needs of as many APS students as possible. Moreover, research has shown that the recommendations in this report, if implemented with fidelity and rigor, will benefit every student within APS – those with disabilities and those without. ASEAC continues to work on additional areas of improvement in the education of students with disabilities raised in our monthly meetings and in correspondence from interested members of the community (see Appendix 2). The third recommendation additionally supports proactive measures as an essential first step to prevent further tragic loss of life and to ensure the overall health and well-being of our community.

Recommendation #1: Formalize a policy commitment to, and increase resources for, the Arlington Tiered System of Supports (ATSS) to ensure its continued successful implementation.

The full and effective implementation of ATSS is currently at risk given its current resource level. , Not only is ATSS supported by this committee, but the English Language Arts and the Student Services Advisory Committees also include recommendations this year supporting ATSS thereby indicating the importance of this initiative for all students. Listed below are this Committee's specific recommendations regarding ATSS.

- 1 (a). Develop a School Board Policy and Policy Implementation Procedure (PIP) to support ATSS (20-1.230 Prevention, Intervention, Remediation, and Enrichment):** ATSS supports all of the Strategic Plan goals of the School Board. It most strongly addresses numerous components of both Goal One (ensure that every student is challenged and engaged) and Goal Two (eliminate achievement gaps). It also serves to strengthen differentiated instruction, one of the School Board's priorities for FY2016. To be successful, ATSS needs to be fully supported in every school and every content area. In addition, accountability is crucial to guarantee implementation with fidelity. ASEAC recommends that the School Board adopt a Policy supporting ATSS. In addition, we recommend that the ATSS stakeholder group develop a PIP which provides clear guidance as to

the expectations for ATSS implementation across the school district to ensure accountability, fidelity, and consistency in its implementation.

1 (b). A Data/Intervention System Monitor/Trainer/Technical Support Staff Member for the ATSS Monitoring System: The ATSS framework uses the data decision based model in the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to analyze data, identify students who are in need of remediation or extension, and create timely action plans. In order to ensure the interventions are working as prescribed, APS needs to be able aggregate data based on screening test results and then use this data to inform interventions. This data will also serve to assess the effectiveness of interventions. In the next few months, APS will acquire the capability needed to integrate this information into APS' existing student information systems. Once operational, this Data Monitoring System will require input of information at the school level, monitoring of the data, and the administration to manage the data, so that it can be reviewed and adjusted as necessary through the PLC framework for each individual student. Staffing will be necessary to provide monitoring, training, and technical support to all APS schools to ensure that the data per student, per intervention is being properly maintained and analyzed on an ongoing basis to be effective.

1 (c). Two ATSS Coordinators to support the ATSS Supervisor and schools: As ATSS moves through its five year roll-out, addressing the academic and social/emotional and behavioral needs for all students, critical decisions for screeners, interventions, and enrichment, as well as best practices for implementation, need to be made on a timely basis to ensure that ATSS stays on schedule. This requires a significant investment in time to:

- Coordinate with existing Departments, including Instruction, Special Education and Student Services);
- Research specific disabilities or needs;
- Acquire the necessary screeners and interventions; and
- Help schools coordinate the necessary Practice Development and Data Monitoring.

These ATSS Coordinators can also assist with teaching strategies, curriculum materials and assistive technology, as well as PLC teams across the County.

Rationale for Recommendation #1:

ASEAC's Recommending Year Report 2013-2014 recommended the adoption and implementation of a five year plan to deploy ATSS throughout APS. Developing a multi-tiered system of supports was also the number one recommendation of Public Consulting Group (PCG) Education following their evaluation of APS services for students with special needs.

The focus of ATSS is to address the whole child and the supports he or she needs to be successful both academically and social emotionally. The ATSS framework uses the data decision based model in the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to analyze data, identify students who are in need of remediation or extension, and create timely action plans. It is critical that the data be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure adequate student progress is occurring and to assess if the correct screener, intervention, and frequency and duration of the intervention is helping the student progress.

APS is now in year two of the five year implementation plan. Year one of ATSS primarily focused on creating the Five Year Work Plan and the necessary Infrastructure for interventions to be delivered in all schools as well as focusing on Reading, Writing and Math screeners and interventions. Year two is primarily focused on screening and instruction/interventions for Social, Emotional and Behavioral needs.

In 2013, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) published the “Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) - A Guide for School Divisions”, emphasizing that VTSS involves educational reform and systems change and will require patience to implement fully, consistently, and meaningfully at all levels stating: “What division leadership teams are asking of schools crosses the knowledge bases of systems change, school culture and climate, and implementation research.”³The VDOE Guide also emphasized that the VTSS leadership team in a school division should be large enough to effectively coordinate implementation throughout the division, but should also be encouraged to create coordinated work groups to complete the work and to gain buy-in from all stakeholders.

Budgetary Implications for Recommendation #1:

Currently, there is only one APS staff person overseeing the implementation of ATSS, Dr. Kelly Krug. Best practices indicate that other APS Departments should dedicate staff and budget to support ATSS implementation, including the Departments of Instruction, Information Services, Student Services and Special Education. ATSS’s FY2015/16 Budget is \$260,000. In June 2015, the School Board approved additional support through close out funding, designated by the School Board to “accelerate ATSS” by purchasing additional school-based sets of the Leveled Literacy Initiative (LLI) with accompanying training for LLI. LLI is an intervention specifically focused on reading comprehension and Reading Interventions were the focus of ATSS in Year one.

Costs that are expected to be funded through the ATSS Budget are as follows:
- ATSS’s Data/Intervention Monitoring System: approximately \$100,000

³ http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/virginia_tiered_system_supports/resources/vtss_guide.pdf

- Orton Gillingham Training: \$48,000 (\$800 per teacher, for 60 additional teachers)
- Universal Screeners for Math/Literacy: \$30,000 - \$40,000 per year
- Other Intervention Training and Materials: \$50,000 - \$60,000
- Behavioral Screeners (to be addressed this year - approximately \$30,000)
- Training for Social and Emotional Tier 1 and Tier 2 Interventions and frameworks (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Responsive Classrooms, etc.): unknown costs
- Adopting a policy statement [Recommendation #1(a)] has no budgetary implications.
- Assuming a \$90,130 planning factor for each FTE, the recommendation to add one Data Intervention/System Monitor [Recommendation #1(b)] would cost \$90,130.
- Assuming a \$90,130 planning factor for each FTE, the recommendation to add two ATSS coordinators [Recommendation #1(c)] would cost \$180,260.

Committee Vote for Recommendation #1:

- ASEAC Vote: 14 (yes) - 0 (no)

Recommendation #2: Adopt a policy statement reflecting APS' commitment to providing a well-supported inclusive education for all students and commit resources to take steps to actualize this vision through a well-conceptualized and data-driven implementation plan.

2(a). Develop a School Board Policy and Policy Implementation Procedure (PIP) to support inclusion: Draft, approve, and communicate a policy statement that reflects APS' commitment to providing a well-supported inclusive education for all students – students with disabilities, English-language learners, gifted students, preschool students, and others. The policy statement should make clear it is the policy of APS to adhere to best evidence-based educational practices and federal law that all students are educated within the general education setting in their neighborhood school or choice program with all the supports and services they require to achieve academically, socially, and emotionally. The PIP should indicate that the removal of a student from age-appropriate general education classes should be made only as a last resort when every effort to provide a meaningful, inclusive education has been exhausted or when the family requests it. The PIP should also clarify that in the event a student is removed, it is the intent of APS to return the student to the general education environment as soon as and to the maximum extent possible.

2(b). Contract with an Independent Inclusion Subject Matter Expert to provide guidance and support to APS: Allocate one-time funding over two years to engage an external Subject Matter Expert (SME) who has extensive experience successfully coaching school districts with similar characteristics in the process of systems change toward an inclusive educational model. A well-developed, data-driven implementation plan will seek to avoid common pitfalls and to ensure APS undertakes this critically important effort deliberately, with full community buy-in, and with the benefit of lessons learned from other school districts that have undertaken this paradigm shift. An external consultant would guide the School Board and APS leadership on how best to:

- Seek community engagement and buy-in;
- Undertake the necessary structural and administrative changes;
- Correctly assess baselines;
- Develop ongoing assessment indicators to measure success;
- Implement a plan to ensure educators have all the tools, resources, and capacity they need to be successful; and

- Implement or formalize changes to the instructional delivery model in APS (including possibly to more consistently adopt best practices like differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, and co-teaching).

Thus, a SME would help APS avoid the stumbling blocks some districts have experienced when undertaking this shift without the benefit of expert coaching and a data-driven planning model.

Rationale for Recommendation #2:

ASEAC’s second, equally important recommendation is for APS to actualize its vision for inclusive education for all students. This recommendation has two components and is of critical importance to the entire school division as APS seeks to sustain and grow its national reputation for excellence.

Inclusive education is a philosophy that treats all students, regardless of their abilities, as valued and equal members of the school community. Inclusive education rejects all types of segregation as harmful, expensive, discriminatory, and ineffective. It strives to educate all students in age-appropriate general education classrooms with the supports teachers and students need to ensure that every student can be successful. Thirty-five years of research provides the evidence that students with disabilities who are fully and authentically included with appropriate supports have greater academic achievement, greater communicative abilities, fewer behavioral issues, better social and emotional skills, and a far greater likelihood of living productive, independent lives in the long-term. Research has also demonstrated the positive effects of including gifted, ELL, and other students who may traditionally have been separated.

This research also tells us that an inclusive education model benefits students *without* disabilities or other unique learning needs. When students with diverse backgrounds and learning needs are included in general education classrooms, test scores and graduation rates for the entire school district rise. Teachers and staff engage in more differentiated instruction and have the opportunity to foster positive connections among diverse groups of students. Students learn how to communicate, socialize, accommodate, and cooperate with classmates who have a diverse range of abilities and strengths—and in the process develop “whole child” leadership skills that will be valuable throughout life.

The many reasons supporting this recommendation include the following:

Alignment with Existing APS Policy

Inclusion directly aligns with the following:

1. APS Mission, Vision, and Core Values.
2. Four of the five APS Strategic Goals.
3. All four of the FY2016 APS School Board Priorities.

4. APS's instructional goals in Board Policy No. 20.
5. The top two recommendations of the January 2013 external evaluation of APS's special education programs endorsed by the School Board.

Alignment with State and Local Priorities

Inclusion directly aligns with the following:

1. ASEAC's Recommendation #1 (ATSS).
2. A top priority for members of Arlington's special education community, with well over 100 APS parents and students actively engaged in this issue.
3. A top recommendation of the Virginia Special Education Advisory Committee in 2015.
4. The deeply-held values of our progressive community.

Alignment with Federal Law and Policy

1. Inclusion is supported and endorsed by laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
2. Inclusion is otherwise supported and endorsed by the federal government with recent policy statements, findings letters, guidance, and grants supporting inclusion by the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Alignment with Evidence-Based Best Practice

1. Inclusion is research-based educational best practice, reflected in 35 years of consistent and overwhelming evidence. A segregated educational model for students with disabilities is not evidence-based.
2. Inclusion has been shown to narrow achievement gaps.
3. Inclusion will benefit all students in APS, both academically and socially.
4. Inclusion will not cost more in the long run and may save APS money, as other school districts have found.
5. Inclusion will ensure segregated settings are phased out.
6. Inclusion promotes civil rights and social justice.

Budgetary Implications for Recommendation #2:

Adopting a policy statement and policy implementation procedure [Recommendation #2(a)] has no budgetary implications.

Recommendation #2(b) involves a one-time, two-year commitment of funds to engage an external SME to work with APS on developing an implementation plan

to actualize the policy statement and PIP. Well-qualified inclusion SMEs charge between \$1,500 and \$3,000/day plus expenses. Engaging an SME for three to five days a month over two years will require an allocation of \$50,000 to \$150,000/year (\$100,000/year to \$300,000 over two years). A well-qualified SME (or small team) could coach the leadership team on lessons learned from other school districts on: (a) the most-effective community outreach and engagement process; (b) identifying any structural and policy barriers to inclusion; (c) developing data-driven assessment indicators to measure success over time; and (d) developing an implementation plan. The SME could also: (e) provide professional development for administrative leadership and teaching staff, including summer institutes; (f) work with Professional Learning Communities in each school to strengthen building-level capacity; (g) help build up an accessible library of instructional materials; and (h) develop and help execute an information dissemination plan to the Board, schools, and the broader community (e.g., through a blog championing successes along the way).

Committee Vote for Recommendation #2:

ASEAC Vote: 14 (yes) - 0 (no)

Recommendation #3: Reduce the current staff:student ratio for school psychologists from 1:1,650 to 1:650 and social workers from 1:1,650 to 1:650 to support the implementation of APS' Strategic Plan, Goal Five, "Meet the Needs of the Whole Child" and bringing APS in closer alignment with national recommendations for best practices and enabling APS to significantly improve/increase services for all students.

Rationale for Recommendation #3:

The focus of ATSS is to address the whole child and the supports he or she needs to be successful both academically and social emotionally. The initial year of ATSS has concentrated on academics, while year two focuses on social emotional skills. In addition, this report includes a recommendation for clear policy guidance and data monitoring through adequate staffing that will support ATSS implementation with fidelity – at both the Central Office and school-base level.

Mental health problems are characterized by the extent to which they disrupt an individual's ability to function. The consequences of mental illness and poor mental health can be reduced or even eliminated by reaching students early and connecting them with appropriate supports and treatment. Mental health problems or chronic mental illness can prevent students from accessing academic content. Similarly, learning disabilities or other disabilities which impact a student's ability to access academic content can lead to mental health difficulties which would not normally arise. Students with poor mental health are likely to

experience diminished quality of life, which can impact their physical health. Researchers have found that negative emotional states can lower the body's ability to fight disease and as a result students may be sicker and use more health care services and experience increase school absences. The most serious consequence of poor mental health is when a student goes as far as attempting or committing suicide.

Mental illness or mental health problems are known to directly impact academic performance in many areas including school avoidance, limited attention, reduced grades, suspension, expulsion, and drop-out rates. Individuals with mental illness or mental health problems are at a significantly increased risk to engage in risky behaviors including drug and alcohol abuse, early and unsafe sexual activity, and petty crimes which may lead to incarceration. For too many children, the interrelationship between mental health problems and poor academic outcomes is reflected in limited educational progress from their entry into school through their secondary years.

According to a national study conducted by the Yale Study Center, over 70% of students diagnosed with mental illness and behavioral health problems by middle school exhibited warning signs by second grade. Almost 25% exhibited red flags during pre-kindergarten years, including developmental and health issues, adverse social factors and exposure to trauma. Among the recommendations suggested were: improve referral to early intervention services; improve collaboration between service providers; improve community and parent education about risk factors and support available; and improve training and accountability for school staff and other providers.

(washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/09/19/study-impact-of-unaddressed-mental-health-issues-on-students-is-severe/)

Tragically, misunderstanding and lack of support of students with mental illness and mental health problems also feeds the school to prison pipeline. To this end, Virginia tops the nation in referring students to law enforcement. US Department of Education data shows that in most states black, Hispanic and students with disabilities get referred to police and courts disproportionately. The Center for Public Integrity ranked states by their referral for every 1,000 students. In Virginia, 33.4% of referred students were students with disabilities of which 25.3% were black, 12.1% Hispanic, and 13.1% white). One of the main reasons students with disabilities are jailed more often than their peers is because teachers are not trained in how to manage kids who are insubordinate or disruptive.

(publicintegrity.org/2015/04/10/17089/virginia-tops-nation-sending-students-cops-courts-where-does-your-state-rank)

There are thousands of children caught in the juvenile justice system each year. At least one in three arrested has a disability, ranging from emotional disability (mental illness) to learning disabilities, like dyslexia. Some researchers estimate the figure may be as high as 70% of those in the juvenile justice system. Across

the country, students with emotional disabilities are three times more likely to be arrested before leaving high school than the general population. The vast majority of adults in US prisons have a disability, according to a 1997 Bureau of Justice Statistics survey (data not since updated). Experts attribute the high percentage of individuals with disabilities in prisons in part to deep problems in the education of students with special needs. (hechingerreport.org/pipeline-prison-special-education-often-leads-jail-thousands-american-children/)

Although APS has taken a multi-faceted approach to meeting the mental health needs of its students implementing mental health prevention and intervention strategies at the student, staff and community levels the current staffing levels seriously impact APS's ability use this comprehensive approach . In addition to increasing APS staffing levels, ASEAC strongly urges APS and Arlington County Department of Human Services to collaborate more effectively in order to provide all at risk students and their families with the support and services necessary to enable them to access all available resources. To this end, school staffing levels are not meeting demands.

Currently, each school has counseling staff, an assigned school psychologist, and school social worker that work with school staff to support students who require more individualized interventions. All high schools also have attendance counselors, substance abuse counselors, school nurses and school resource officers. School-based therapists from the Department of Mental Health support several schools.

Presently, psychologists and social workers engage in many of the activities outlined above; however, at a significantly reduced rate. In many instances, the psychologist is in one elementary school two days per week, while the social worker is in the building 1.5 days per week. High schools typically have a psychologist on staff four-five days per week. High school psychologists may also have special assignments such as jail, contract services, Special Education Review Committee (SERC), and Multicultural Assessment Team (MAT). Middle schools typically have a psychologist on staff three-four days per week, and those psychologists have an additional elementary school assignment.

High schools typically have a social worker on staff four-five days per week, and those social workers have similar additional special assignments such as contract services, SERC (Special Education Review Committee), or the Arlington jail and Northern Virginia Regional Detention facility. Middle schools typically have a social worker on staff 3-3.5 days per week, and those school social workers may also have an elementary school assignment.

There are currently 23 school-based licensed psychologists on staff (four are part-time, 19 are standard full-time). There are currently 18 school-based licensed social workers on staff (four are part-time, 14 are standard full-time). There is one licensed psychologist currently serving as a Section 504 coordinator/pupil services specialist, and one full time social worker supporting division-wide

responsibilities related to foster care, homeless, interagency (truancy) and residency cases (**not included in the count of staff**). Additionally, 1 of 18 of the full-time social worker positions is currently funded out of contingency.

In all cases, at least one full day each week is spent in mandated special education meetings, leaving the remaining day(s) to provide mandated special education services as well as non-mandated services. This structure has the largest impact on service delivery at the elementary level, as this represents approximately 50% of the time assigned. However, despite the current minimal number of days assigned (time in the school setting), psychologists and social workers work hard to meet the needs of students and families. **In order to comply with state and federal timelines for mandated assessments, school psychologists and social workers often write reports, or complete other indirect support services, outside of their contracted hours.**

Currently, the ratio of APS psychologists and social workers is far below that recommended by national standards. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of staff:students of 1:500-700, while the APS ratio is 1:1,650. The National Association of School Social Workers recommends a ratio of 1:250, while the APS ratio is 1:1,650.

Figures from surrounding jurisdictions:

School System	Psychologists	Social Workers
APS	1:1,650	1:1,650
Alexandria	1:815	1:588
DC Public	1:502	1:286
Fairfax	1:1,251	1:1,243
Loudon	1:2,196	1:2,296
Montgomery County	1:1,424	1:10,989 includes pupil personnel workers (1:2,958)
Prince Georges	1:1,420	1:13,777 includes 49 pupil personnel workers (1:2,530)
Prince William	1:1,912	1:2,051

Budgetary Implications for Recommendation #3:

To allow for increased support across all schools and programs, ASEAC recommends that the current APS school psychologist and social worker ratio be reduced from 1:1,650 to 1:650 (for each professional category). This ratio brings APS into closer alignment with national recommendations for best practices and allows APS to significantly improve/increase services to schools and ultimately

the students and families in greatest need. Staffing at this level would allow for full time psychologists and social workers in each elementary and middle school, two full-time psychologists and social workers for each high school, and one full time psychologist and social worker to support each County-wide program (Langston, Career Center/Arlington Mill, H-B Woodlawn).

Staff	Number of Staff @ Current Planning Factor 1:1650*	Number of additional Staff @ New Planning Factor 1:650 (based on published APS enrollment of 25,678, August 2015) Note: Max of 2 FTE at high school level + extra (.5 FTE) to provide additional support to child find.*	Anticipated Cost
Psychologist	22	18	\$1,620,000
Social Worker	18	22.5	\$2,025,000
TOTAL			\$3,645,000

Note - The base salary of a 10-month employee (T scale employee) is \$90,400 to include salary and benefits. (The same base figure would be used for an SA counselor).

***Note** – Social Worker additional staffing includes one social worker position currently funded out of contingency.

***Note:** Psychologist current staffing reflects removal of one part time psychologist who is assigned to conduct special assessments across the district and is not assigned to a school

Committee Vote for Recommendation #3:

ASEAC Vote: 14 (yes) - 0 (no)

Past Recommendation #1: Implement a five-year plan to deploy the Arlington Tiered System of Supports (ATSS) throughout all Arlington public schools in partnership with the Department of Instruction. Establish and follow specific benchmarks, put into place a management system that guarantees accountability, and provide appropriate professional development to ensure fidelity throughout the system.

The ATSS model will address all six priority recommendations in the Evaluation of APS Services for Students with Special Needs, ensuring that “all students receive the instruction and interventions they need to support academic and social emotional learning and to achieve at a higher level of performance.” The six recommendations are summarized below from the PCG Final Report:

1. Multi-tiered System of Supports. Expand on the current IAT process to make it more reflective of a comprehensive and research-based MTSS framework.
2. Inclusive Education. Actualize APS’ vision as a diverse and inclusive school community, committed to academic excellence and integrity, by maximizing inclusive and effective instruction, intervention and support for all students, including those with special and dual needs.
3. Organization & Collaboration. Maximize collaboration between personnel in the Department of Instruction and Student Services and within Student Services to facilitate the coordination of all APS resources to support teaching and learning.
4. Operating Standards. Produce electronic Standard Operating Procedure Manuals (SOPM) to post policies, procedures and expected practices for MTSS, Section 504 and special education/related services with links to additional information and resources.
5. Accountability. Establish a system of accountability that reflects APS’ vision of high expectations for all learners and a service delivery model that is proactive rather than reactive – and inclusive in nature.
6. Parent, Family, & School Partnerships. Increase parent awareness and understanding of the Parent Resource Center, MTSS, Section 504, and inclusive education/special education processes and increase communication between task forces and stakeholders to enhance their effectiveness.

ATSS will address improving educational outcomes for all students, but particularly for students with disabilities, minority students, and ELLs. Implemented with fidelity, ATSS will also support the closing of APS’

Achievement Gaps by providing “an earlier and more appropriate identification of students who are not on track academically and allows differentiated instruction and intervention as soon as a need is identified” 4 resulting in students not having “to exhibit significant academic failure or behavioral difficulties before they receive support.” (Common Core State Standards and Diverse Urban Students: Using Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, A Councils of the Great City Schools White Paper).

Status of Past Recommendation #1: Ongoing (see current year Recommendation #1)

ASEAC continues to be concerned about adequate accountability for the success of ATSS throughout the system – accountability at the school level for the success of ATSS in each classroom and grade, and overall system wide accountability that ensures that each school is implementing ATSS with the highest fidelity. To further establish the importance of ATSS and to ensure universal and consistent employment of ATSS, the School Board should adopt a School Board Policy and Policy Implementation Procedure to provide clear guidance as to the expectations for ATSS across the system and provide adequate staffing in the Division Leadership Team.

Strategic Plan Alignment: 2011 – 2017 Strategic Plan Alignment: ATSS aligns with every Strategic Plan goal, addressing the diverse 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 Rationale:

Committee Members

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Heather Alderman, Nadine Asef-Sargent (co-secretary), Cloe Chin (co-secretary), Misty Costner, Katherine Harris, Genevieve Heighberger, Jennifer Johnson, Kay Luzius, Margaret McGilvary, Jim Melvin, Donna Owens (chair), Paul Patterson (vice chair), Gary Steele, Tauna Szymanski

STAFF LIAISON: Wendy Carria

ASEAC appreciates the opportunity to work with the Board, APS Staff, and the community on Special Education issues. We are also very grateful for the support of the APS staff, especially our outgoing Director of Special Education, Dr. Kristi Murphy, and our Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services, Dr. Brenda Wilks. ASEAC also looks forward to continuing our collaborative work with the Interim Director of Special Education, Wendy Carria. We recognize the extraordinary work load which staff carried this past year managing departmental changes and the never-ending needs of our Special Students. On behalf of the students and families, thank you.

Appendix 1: Special Education Count (December 2014) by Disability

Disability	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Specific Learning Disability	959	1008	1023	1050	1080
Other Health Impairment	552	654	724	807	741
Speech-Language Impairment	481	437	436	440	493
Autism	324	361	421	445	457
Developmental Delay	261	206	222	165	252
Emotional Disability	229	227	227	229	249
Multiple Disability	108	116	118	121	121
Intellectual Disability	109	107	106	99	117
Hearing Impairment	47	46	49	49	51
Orthopedic Impairment	21	22	18	17	20
Visual Impairment	13	13	12	10	15
Traumatic Brain Injury	12	7	7	7	8
Deaf-Blindness	0	0	0	1	1
Total	3116	3204	3363	3440	3605

Appendix 2: ASEAC Ongoing Concerns Not Addressed in This Year's Recommendations and Topics that Continue to be Under Study

These topics, which we did not specifically address in our Recommendations this year, are still considered to be areas where we feel changes and improvements must occur. ASEAC is actively working on these topics with APS Staff.

- 1. Diploma Options and Secondary Programing Options, particularly for students with disabilities:** With the end of the Modified Standard diploma option in 2013-2014, SWD were left with a gap in diploma options. If a student does not pursue a standard or advanced diploma, the only other option is a special diploma. The General Assembly amendment to the Code of Virginia is intended to raise expectations for students with disabilities. It emphasizes the development of college and workplace readiness skills for ALL students. They believe that when our children with special needs graduate with Standard diplomas they will have more opportunities for additional education and for employment. There is a concern among parents of SWD that there is now a gap in diploma options. While in theory our students that would have pursued a modified standard diploma will now pursue a standard diploma and will do so through an array of credit options available, a lack of clearly defined processes is hampering the ability of our students to do this. The problem that has risen is the lack of understanding of the current diploma options, what they mean, and what credit accommodations are available for SWD. This lack of understanding exists not only within the parent population but also APS at large. IEP teams are not aware of array of possible credit accommodations available. This was evident at a meeting in May of 2015 when members of the APS administrative staff discussed diploma and credit options with ASEAC and were not aware of some of the VDOE options that exist. As such, rather than raising expectations of our SWD population and the standard diploma, we have created an environment where many of our students will not achieve a standard diploma. This gap is something that ASEAC feels needs to be addressed sooner than later before we irreversibly put some of our students on a path that does not lead to a standard or advanced diploma when in fact many of our SWD are fully capable of doing so. It's also relevant to note that the Virginia State Special Education Advisory Committee Report (July 2014-June 2015) included a Recommendation for Diploma Information Communication, which focused on improving communication about the ramifications of making decisions to participate in alternatives to Standards of Learning (SOL) testing earlier in the IEP process.
- 2. Establishing Appropriate Expectations, Curriculum Access and Testing for Special Education Students in Self-Contained 'County-Wide Programs:** Dovetailing on the Diploma Options issue outlined above, this same issue was brought to the attention of APS, copying the School Board and Superintendent, through a letter submitted by ASEAC on May 4, 2015 "Establishing Appropriate Expectations, Curriculum Access and Testing for Special Education Students in

Self-Contained “County-Wide Programs”. ASEAC has asked the OSE for a formal written response to our letter and will continue to work towards improving the expectations, curriculum access, testing and ultimately the Diploma Options for SWDs that are currently being served in the ‘segregated’ classrooms, as described in our letter from May 2015.

3. **Parent/IEP Team Education:** There is a need for Parent/IEP Team Education with regard to the IEP (how to write good, standards-based IEP goals, what should be discussed at every IEP meeting, what data monitoring is appropriate, etc). At our September 2015 ASEAC meeting, we were excited to hear that the OSE has created a ‘Standards Based IEP’ Binder for all schools, but parents and many IEP Team members need to be trained on the content of this Binder.
4. **“Feedback Form for Parents” upon exiting from an IEP meeting:** ASEAC believes that many major IEP/Special Education issues stem from minor incidences in miscommunication or misunderstandings that occur in school-based IEP meetings that could quickly be resolved within the school-based IEP Teams by giving parents the forum to ask for clarification and seek guidance or provide feedback to Staff outside of the school-based teams (bringing in the official guidance from our Central Office Staff). A similar process, via a ‘Feedback Survey’ is utilized by Student Services after Section 504 meetings. Parents serving on their student’s IEP Team should have a similar process for giving feedback or soliciting specific guidance.
5. **Continuing to focus on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC):** AAC is, foremost, a set of procedures and processes by which an individual’s communication skills (production as well as comprehension) can be maximized for functional and effective communication. It involves supplementing or replacing natural speech and/or writing with aided (e.g., pictures communication symbols, line drawings, symbols, and tangible objects) and/or unaided symbols (e.g., manual signs, gestures, and finger spelling). Access to the general education curriculum and successful inclusion of SWD, particularly the most severely affected, depends almost entirely upon the use of an effective method of communication. The Assistive Technology Department, Library Services, Speech and Language practitioners, Occupational Therapists, and the Information Services Departments will need to continue to collaborate with students and families to increase Professional Development opportunities and use of AAC.