

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

TO: Arlington School Board
FROM: English Language Arts Advisory Committee
DATE: Nov. 11, 2015
SUBJECT: Recommending Year Report

INTRODUCTION

The English Language Arts Advisory Committee (ELAAC) studies all parts of the English Language Arts Program (ELA): reading, writing, speaking and listening. The committee focuses on how these components are taught in all grade levels, kindergarten through high school. The committee meets monthly. Over the last year, our meetings included a review of reading achievement data; presentations on the Early Literacy Initiative, the ELA Teachers Manual, the extended day and summer school programs, and Arlington Tiered System of Supports; and discussions of textbook adoption, professional development, best practices in teaching reading and writing, and various approaches to teaching writing, including writers workshop, Step Up to Writing, and writing across the curriculum. The committee was asked to present recommendations at the School Board Work Session on Literacy in April 2015, along with the Special Education and ESOL/HILT advisory committees. The committee also began discussion and meetings with the Social Studies and Science advisory committees regarding curriculum integration.

This year, the School Board's priorities include a continued "focus on literacy, ensuring students are reading on level by grade three and ensure that struggling readers at all grade levels receive appropriate services," and strategies to improve student outcomes, particularly for certain achievement gap subgroups. We have attached an update of the reading and writing achievement data provided to the committee. (Appendix A). The Virginia Department of Education increased the difficulty of the Reading SOL tests in 2012, and districts across the state, including APS, saw the reading and writing scores drop significantly at all grade levels in 2012, particularly for at-risk subgroups. The 2015 Reading SOL data reflects the good news that overall scores have returned to their pre-2012 levels.¹ However, Limited English Proficient Students, Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students have not yet returned to their pre-2012 scores. These groups have made recognizable gains at the elementary level in recent years but little to no gains at the middle school level. The scores for the Writing SOL have not shown the same recovery, and the achievement gaps for racially and ethnically diverse students, Limited English Proficient Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Students with Disabilities are larger than they have been in the last five years. The SRI middle school data shows that from 19% to

¹ The Virginia Department of Education estimates that 4 percentage points of the 2014-15 gains for grades 3 through 8 are attributable to expedited retakes. http://doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2015/08_aug11.shtml.

45% of middle school students are reading below grade level, and at some schools, 15% to 19% are reading more than one year below grade level. This committee's recommendations continue to focus on the needs of these struggling students. However, we recommend improvements for students at both ends of the learning spectrum – consistent with APS's goal of ensuring that every student is challenged and engaged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Ensure that the Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) is integrated into a coherent education framework for all students at all grade levels in all schools. Under this framework, ATSS and professional learning communities together provide the means by which APS achieves the goal of all students meeting college and career ready standards, through both remediation and extension. Adoption of an APS Policy by the Board is an important step.

Rationale:

The School Board has emphasized, in its Priorities and the Strategic Plan, the prime goal of ensuring that every student is challenged and engaged while also meeting the needs of the whole child. This is a child-centered approach which treats the child as an individual with strengths and weaknesses, and not as a label or category. To meet the needs of a whole child, the school must provide supports and services that address not only academic needs but also social/emotional and behavioral needs.

Those are the aspirational goals. The Arlington Tiered System of Support should be considered the plan to achieve those policy priorities.² It implements all five of the Strategic Plan goals. ATSS also is singularly responsive in addressing the School Board's priority focus on literacy to ensure that students read by the third grade and that all struggling readers receive interventions, the priority on support strategies to improve student outcomes for diverse groups, and the priority to differentiate instruction for all students. As stated by the Board when ATSS was first adopted, "APS will not 'wait for students to fail' before it provides additional supports. The [ATSS] framework will build consensus and understanding by developing organizational structures that will facilitate interventions and supports for students in need that will enrich their educational experience. The plan will actualize APS' vision as a diverse and inclusive school community, committed to academic excellence and integrity, and continuous improvement."³ Neither should APS allow students at any level to not achieve their full potential.

Given the unique responsiveness of ATSS to the stated goals and mission of APS, we think it is vital that the School Board ensure that its own focus and that of its

² See Appendix B for a description of ATSS.

³ APS FY2015 Budget, p. 38,

[.http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/99/Budget_FY2015_Adopted_Final_Web.pdf](http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/99/Budget_FY2015_Adopted_Final_Web.pdf).

administrators is on the successful implementation of ATSS, and provide adequate targeted funding to ensure that the priorities and Strategic Plan goals that ATSS addresses actually can be achieved. An important step is to adopt a policy to communicate to all in the system, from the Superintendent to school staff, that APS is truly committed to ATSS and that all will be held accountable for its success.

Arlington is not alone, or even out in front of other school systems in introducing a multi-tiered system of support. At least 20 states and hundreds of school districts have adopted a multi-tiered system of support. Numerous states and school districts have adopted formal school board policies establishing their system wide commitment to a multi-tiered system of support.

As we have watched the roll-out of ATSS (now in year 2 of an ambitious 5-year implementation plan), we continue to be concerned about a number of aspects that we feel would benefit strongly from School Board guidance. We think the success of ATSS may depend upon a School Board policy that clearly links ATSS to the mission, goals, and priorities of APS, and presents guidelines and goals that establish an expectation of commitment and consistent implementation across all schools and departments and at all levels, from the Superintendent's office to the classroom.

Commitment. A school board policy establishes a top down commitment to seeing ATSS through to success. We are deeply concerned that the commitment of Student Services and Special Education (SSSE) and ELA administrators is not shared by all administrators, principals or teachers. We see little evidence that school administrators are actively engaged with making ATSS work or are sufficiently knowledgeable about ATSS. We do not believe that any administrator other than the ATSS Supervisor has a SMART⁴ goal related to moving ATSS forward. Few School Management Plans have goals relating to ATSS. Everyone needs to be on board working toward the success of ATSS, not waiting for it to fail. We understand that adoption of a significant new approach requires overcoming the natural skepticism of teachers and staff who may feel bombarded by what may appear to be a constant stream of new and unrelated instructional approaches, such as Intervention Assistance Teams, Professional Learning Communities, Interactive Achievement, and new tests such as SRI or PALS. We believe that a School Board policy would make it clear that this is a serious commitment to a system-wide framework, not a pilot or experiment, or a fad that will pass if it is ignored long enough.

Coordination and Teamwork. ATSS is intended to be a system-wide framework, but responsibility for making it happen appears to be falling into the same silo patterns we have seen with previous attempts to provide intervention and support to students. ATSS is a general education initiative, yet it is staffed and funded through the Department of Student Services and Special Education. There has been great support from ELA administrators, but otherwise we do not see leadership on the Instruction side taking

⁴ Under APS Policy Implementation Procedures 35-7.2 and 35-7.3.1, all administrative and teaching staff are required to “develop and implement progress SMART goals each year. A SMART goal is specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic (but rigorous), and time limited.

responsibility for the success of the framework or its integration with Professional Learning Communities or standards-based learning. The very point of a multi-tiered system of support is to provide a framework for differentiated instruction, by providing just-in-time support to students who need it, whether it is remediation or enrichment. Professional learning communities are engaged collaboratively to use data to review student performance, improve instruction, and focus their training. This requires teachers, staff, and administrators to break out of the silo structure and work together. All departments must take ownership for every student, contribute their support to develop appropriate screening tools and evidence-based interventions, and provide the instruction and interventions with fidelity. We cannot continue to view “those students” as the responsibility of special education, general education, Title 1, ESOL/HILT, Gifted, this school or that school. They are all APS students and therefore everyone’s responsibility.

As it stands, ATSS is currently presented as a Student Services and Special Education initiative. It is described on the SSSE website, and was included in the SSSE budget (although it is not actually visible). It is not mentioned on the Instruction webpages, or in the Instruction budget. We are fairly confident that many general education teachers continue to be unaware of ATSS, and many who are aware of it are suspicious that it is just another burden without benefit. Staff that should be an integral part of an ATSS team, such as the ESOL/HILT, Gifted, Psychological Services, Title 1, and Instruction departments, are not thinking about how their work fits into the ATSS framework. Most of the actual work of implementation has fallen on the shoulders of a single SSSE administrator, when it should be equally shared by a cross-departmental team. (Yes, we know there is a chart showing a cross-departmental team but we think that apart from significant ELA support, the reality is otherwise.) To adopt a policy would send a strong signal that the Board expects all departments that serve the instructional or social/emotional/behavioral needs of children to be sharing in the work of ATSS.

Accountability. We are also concerned about adequate accountability for the success of ATSS throughout the system – accountability at the school level for the success of ATSS for each student, classroom and grade, and overall system-wide accountability that ensures that each school is implementing ATSS with the highest fidelity. For this reason, we strongly recommend that the School Board consider adopting a School Board Policy and Policy Implementation Procedure to provide clear guidance as to the expectations for ATSS across the system.

Proposed Policy. The Board should adopt a School Board Policy, to be followed by a Policy Implementation Procedure (PIP), which makes an institutional commitment to ATSS (and intensive literacy intervention) for all students in all schools.

One of the goals in the Board’s FY 2016 Priorities is to “strengthen differentiated instruction and begin review of APS Policy 20-3 as part of the work to ensure that all students are challenged and engaged to meet their academic goals.” APS Policy 20-3 concerns Differentiated Instruction. This would be an excellent opportunity to incorporate a policy adopting ATSS as a division-wide framework

and philosophy of instructional decision making and continuous improvement at the classroom, school, and division level. Such a policy might include language such as:

“Arlington Public Schools supports and uses a division-wide instructional model, the Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS). ATSS is a continuous improvement framework for improving the learning outcomes of every student through a tiered continuum of evidence-based instructional and differentiation practices, academic and/or behavioral assessment and interventions, and progress monitoring through data. This systematic early intervention process ensures a rapid response to the academic and behavioral needs of every child, at every grade level, for additional support and/or enrichment, to enable them to succeed and to meet college and career ready standards.

ATSS consists of three tiers of student support: quality core curriculum standards-based instruction based on the Virginia Standards of Learning, focused supplemental small-group instruction, and intensive interventions specifically designed to meet the individual needs of students. ATSS utilizes evidence-based, system-wide practices to provide a quick response to academic and behavioral needs, including regular screening, evidence based interventions, and frequent progress monitoring that enable educators to make sound, data-based instructional decisions for students. Professional Learning Communities, working collaboratively to identify student needs, review data, and improve instruction, are an integral part of ATSS.”

Sample policies from Wake County, North Carolina, and the Seattle, Washington Public Schools are attached at Appendix C.

Alignment with Strategic Plan and School Board FY2016 Priorities:

ATSS is the only APS initiative in recent years that aligns with every Strategic Plan goal, and also contributes substantially to most of the School Board’s FY 2016 Priorities, including Student Achievement and Success, Meeting the Needs of the Whole Child, and Supporting Teachers and Staff, as well as the Board’s focus on the Whole Child.

Goal 1: Ensure that Every Student is Challenged and Engaged. The purpose of ATSS is to ensure that every child receives the academic and behavioral support he or she needs to meet high expectations for student success. Properly implemented, it should improve educational outcomes for all students, whether struggling or gifted.

Goal 2: Eliminate Achievement Gaps. ATSS provides early identification, individualized intervention, and progress monitoring that can be expected to contribute significantly to eliminating achievement gaps.

Goal 3: Recruit, Retain, and Develop High Quality Staff. The core of ATSS is quality professional development to ensure that all staff are highly skilled at providing differentiated instruction, identifying students in need of

additional assistance, selecting and providing targeted interventions or identifying appropriate system resources, and using data to shape instruction. This professional development and ATSS experience will increase the value of our staff and their skills and effectiveness in helping every child to reach their potential.

Goal 4: Provide Optimal Learning Environments. This goal includes the use of technology to assess student achievement in authentic and meaningful ways by generating data that can be used to identify student needs and to modify instructional practices. This describes the very core of ATSS – using data to identify students in need of greater differentiation, to select and modify interventions, and to evaluate progress.

Goal 5: Meet the Needs of the Whole Child. Although this committee's focus is the impact of ATSS on reading and writing achievement, a significant component of ATSS that we do not address in detail here is the attention to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children in a way that is needs-based and holistic. This includes training teachers to recognize children in need of behavior interventions, providing Positive Behavioral Interventions (a proactive approach to teaching and supporting appropriate behavior), and monitoring outcomes.

Budgetary Implications:

Adopting a policy costs nothing, but the value is immeasurable.

Recommendation #2: Within the ATSS framework, effective interventions must be available to all students at all grade levels, with a focus on fidelity, targeting student needs, intensive training, and progress monitoring.

Rationale:

The School Board priorities include a continued focus on literacy to “ensure that struggling readers at all grade levels receive appropriate services.” Priorities also include “support strategies to improve student outcomes”, with particular attention to subgroups which have historically struggled, and strengthening differentiated instruction to ensure all students are challenged, and integration of technology.

A continuing problem in many schools is that interventions often are available only for early elementary students or students who have certain labels, such as Title 1 or Special Education or Gifted. Other students might expect, at best, random acts of intervention. Many parents and teachers have expressed frustration at the unavailability of interventions for all students in all grades at all schools. ATSS is intended to make targeted interventions available to all students at all grade levels in all buildings, regardless of label.

In recent years, we have seen significant expansion in the availability of reading interventions for struggling readers, although most of the improvements in access

have been for students in the early elementary years. The early planning and implementation of ATSS has appropriately focused on grades K-2, because research shows us that interventions before grade 3 are most effective. However, we are concerned that interventions are not always provided by appropriately trained teachers, are not provided with fidelity to the protocols or guidelines, and progress is not being monitored with data in a way that offers objective evidence of progress or lack of progress. We still hear reports of students who are denied interventions or placed in inappropriate interventions.

The chief weaknesses of many of these efforts at intervention have been failure to provide the intervention with fidelity, the selection of inappropriate interventions, inadequate training (which often becomes diluted to indirect training by someone who is not really an authorized trainer), and failure to maintain data which should be used to monitor the intervention, relying instead on subjective judgments as to whether the intervention is “working” or not.

All interventions must be provided with fidelity to any protocols or instructions provided by the publisher or the training. Interventions must be targeted to the needs of the individual student. Selecting an intervention simply because it is all the teacher has been trained to do or because it is the only intervention claimed to be available cannot be acceptable under a tiered system of support framework like ATSS. Teachers providing interventions must have access to adequate and sufficiently intensive professional training. Ideally, opportunities for coaching, workshops, and collaborative problem solving would be part of the training. It is also important to continue training teachers to the certification standards expected by the intervention. Interventions also require consistent progress monitoring for each student through data that can be reviewed and used to modify the nature or intensity of the intervention, and also reviewed and used at the school and district level to monitor the selection and efficacy of interventions, fidelity, and the need for further professional training or oversight.

An excellent illustration of these principals is Reading Recovery, which has long been a trusted intervention program, albeit limited to first graders. Reading Recovery is effective for many students not simply because of its content, but because it is implemented with incredible fidelity and rigor. Reading Recovery should be used as a procedural model of how to structure and maintain consistency and efficacy for all APS interventions. The virtues of Reading Recovery include: the absolute commitment to fidelity to the program standards and guidelines in selecting students and providing the instructional program with appropriate frequency and intensity, teacher/student ratios, and methodology⁵; the use of data to guide instruction and track student progress; the intensive and ongoing training provided to teachers; the availability of highly trained

⁵ Standards and Guidelines for Reading Recovery in the United States (2012), https://readingrecovery.org/images/pdfs/Reading_Recovery/Implementation/Standards_Guidelines-12_Sixth_Edition_Full.pdf

supervisory/coaching staff; and the ability to track data by student, by classroom, by school, district-wide, and from year to year.

Other interventions, such as Orton Gillingham and Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), should be administered with that same model. There must be clear guidelines for appropriate identification of students, intensity of instruction, implementation with fidelity, progress monitoring, data gathering, training, oversight, and accountability for all of these aspects. The training and materials for these programs are expensive. Ineffectual use or misuse of these programs would be a waste of the investment and time, and potentially harmful to the affected students.

We are also concerned that secondary students still do not have access to appropriate interventions, and we do not see efforts to expand the range of effective interventions available. This issue is particularly compelling because passing the 11th Grade Reading and Writing SOLs is required under Virginia law to earn a diploma. The English Language Arts Department offers Reading Strategies in grades 7 and 8, but the classes have no established curriculum and do not provide either Tier 2 or 3 Interventions.⁶ The High School Program of Studies includes only one elective course which might provide a setting and framework for intervention, (9th grade Reading Strategies) but several of the high schools have chosen not to offer it, and teachers report that it has no curriculum and does not offer any interventions. There are no elective reading or writing intervention or remediation courses for 10th, 11th, or 12th grades, other than an 11th grade SOL preparation course limited to students who have exited HILT. The only secondary reading intervention that is used in secondary schools (Read 180) is available only to special education students. Worse, it has not been demonstrated to be effective for such students.⁷ Parents at several secondary schools have been told that Orton-Gillingham instruction is not available, or not available in their child's grade, or the teacher has not been trained up to a level at which that intervention would be effective for an older child. Students are told that there are no other available interventions, or they are offered computerized programs that are to be used without a teacher or at home, or non-interventions are proposed (such as independent reading). We think it is important that in developing reading and writing interventions, there is recognition that computerized programs can provide practice but have not been demonstrated to be effective at actually teaching reading.

Secondary interventions also need to be focused on the reading and writing skills needed for college and career readiness, rather than test-taking. The SOL "boot camps" that secondary students are often put through in April and May should not be a substitute for actual evidence-based intensive reading instruction.

⁶ See description of Tier 2 and Tier 3 Interventions below under Recommendation #3.

⁷ What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report: Read 180 (Students with Learning Disabilities), http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/intervention_reports/wwc_read180_071310.pdf (no studies meet evidence standards to support efficacy of Read 180 for students with learning disabilities). But see What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report: Read 180 (Adolescent Literacy), http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/intervention_reports/wwc_read180_102009.pdf (potentially positive effects on comprehension and general literacy achievement for adolescent learners).

We are aware that some schools have adopted school-wide programs, such as Kenmore's 40 Book Challenge, which reportedly have had significant benefits for many students. But we do not yet see progress in developing the practice of identifying the intervention needs of each student and providing the array of interventions with highly trained teachers that would allow the school to offer an appropriate intervention targeted to a student's needs.

The ATSS Supervisor and the ELA Supervisor have identified and begun implementation of several reading interventions for elementary students, particularly for the lower grades. We believe that APS has a good selection of appropriate interventions and appropriate licenses and materials. Access to interventions at the elementary level is largely a matter of professional development to ensure that enough teachers are adequately trained to appropriate standards and available to provide interventions to students who need them.

Providing secondary interventions where they do not currently exist requires professional development for secondary ELA teachers, many of whom have never been trained to teach the basic reading skills needed by significant groups of students. This also may require research to identify appropriate interventions for older students. It cannot be assumed that intervention methods and materials that are effective for elementary students are effective for older students. Expanding access to interventions for both elementary and secondary students requires a commitment on the part of school management to ensure that each school offers the full range of available interventions to all students.

Alignment with Strategic Plan and School Board FY2016 Priorities:

This recommendation coincides directly with several of the School Board's priorities for this year. It directly addresses the Board's continued focus on literacy to "ensure that struggling readers at all grade levels receive appropriate services." Another Board priority is to "support strategies to improve student outcomes, with particular attention to racially and ethnically diverse groups, English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and Economically Disadvantaged Students." A third priority is to "strengthen differentiated instruction." It also addresses several Strategic Plan goals:

Goal 1: Ensure that Every Student is Challenged and Engaged. The purpose of ATSS and the interventions it provides is to ensure that every child receives the academic and behavioral support he or she needs to meet high expectations for student success, without waiting for the student to fail. Properly implemented, it should improve educational outcomes for all students, whether struggling or gifted.

Goal 2: Eliminate Achievement Gaps. ATSS provides early identification, individualized intervention, and progress monitoring that can be expected to contribute significantly to eliminating achievement gaps.

Goal 3: Recruit, Retain, and Develop High Quality Staff. The core of ATSS is quality professional development to ensure that all staff are highly skilled at providing differentiated instruction, identifying students in need of additional assistance, selecting and providing targeted interventions or identifying appropriate system resources, and using data to shape instruction. This professional development and ATSS experience will increase the value of our staff and their skills and effectiveness in helping every child to reach their potential.

Goal 4: Provide Optimal Learning Environments. This goal includes the use of technology to assess student achievement in authentic and meaningful ways by generating data that can be used to identify student needs and to modify instructional practices. This describes the very core of ATSS – using data to identify students in need of greater differentiation, to select and modify interventions, and to evaluate progress.

Budgetary Implications:

Continued adequate annual funding is needed to ensure that ATSS is a robust system that is universally implemented in all schools

Professional development in reading and writing interventions: Orton-Gillingham is an intensive instructional approach for students who need a more language-based, structured approach. It is estimated that it would cost \$95,000 to train 100 teachers in grades 3 to 5, \$47,500 to train 50 secondary teachers, \$192,000 to train all teachers in grades 1 to 3, and \$140,000 to train all K-12 special education teachers. Training in Step Up to Writing for four groups of 30 teachers each (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12) would be \$19,200.

Some of the high schools do not have reading specialists who are able to provide intensive intervention to students reading many years below grade level. To add a reading specialist is approximately \$80,000, plus benefits.

Professional development and materials for other interventions: \$60,000.

Adding a staff person to provide intervention training, monitoring, and oversight, would be \$75,000, plus benefits.

Researching secondary interventions: There is no cost associated with researching secondary interventions, but once identified, APS probably would want to pilot them to evaluate their efficacy. Full implementation costs would not occur until the following budget year (2017-18).

Recommendation #3: Develop and support a summer reading intervention program that provides targeted Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions to students at all grade levels.

Under ATSS, the needs of most students (approximately 85%) will be met by the Core Instruction in English Language Arts, which is a robust research based core curriculum that supports Virginia's Standards of Learning, and provides explicit

and differentiated instruction.⁸ Students who do not make adequate progress with the Core Instruction will be provided one or more Tier 2 Interventions, which provide more intensive supplemental instruction targeted at individual needs.⁹ Tier 2 Interventions are commonly delivered in a 30 minute block and provided three to five times per week, in addition to core instruction time. Typically, progress is monitored every 2-3 weeks. Tier 2 Interventions may include Orton Gillingham, Phono-Graphix, Earobics, Book Buddies, Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), My Virtual Reading Coach, Read Naturally, and Step Up To Writing¹⁰. If a student does not respond to a Tier 2 Intervention, a Tier 3 Intervention is provided. Tier 3 Interventions may consist of more intensive delivery of Tier 2 Interventions, or may be a different intervention such as Reading Recovery, PCI, or SpellRead. A Tier 3 Intervention is commonly delivered in a 60 minute block and provided five times per week, in addition to core instruction time. Instruction at this level is more intensive, focused, frequent and individualized. Progress is usually monitored every week.

If APS is serious about equity in education and student outcomes, it needs to make high quality Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions available to all eligible students during the summer months. The ten weeks of summer are much too valuable to waste. Students who are reading below grade level have no time to lose, whether they are first graders or 9th graders. We are all aware of the disturbing data regarding outcomes and risks for students who are not reading at grade level by grade three. The risks and outcomes are even more dire for high school students unable to pass required reading and writing SOL tests to graduate with a diploma.

We also know the research regarding summer reading losses. The ELA Department has already implemented voluntary programs to stem those losses for students who have motivational challenges or little access to books, such as the Summer Literacy Academy for Rising Sixth Grade Boys of Color, the Traveling Trolley, the Title 1 Department's Mailbox Books, and the Abingdon Read and Roll Book Bus. Arlington also offers summer school for 5 weeks. Elementary summer school consists of approximately three hours per day, divided between English Language Arts and Math. The instruction is designed to prevent summer reading loss, review prior year concepts and skills, and introduce some concepts for the coming year.

We are aware that some individual schools have recently offered summer literacy programs to their own students. For example, a literacy-focused model was piloted as part of the 2014 summer school program at Hoffman Boston, Drew and Randolph Elementary Schools, which each operated summer school programs for

⁸ See, e.g., APS English Language Arts Elementary Curriculum Framework, http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/58/APS%20Curriculum%20Framework%20August%202017_GK.pdf.

⁹ See, e.g., Intervention Guidance Document for Elementary English Language Arts (September 2015), <http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/3169/2015%20Elementary%20Intervenions.pdf>.

¹⁰ The listed interventions are examples of interventions currently available although most are not available at all grade levels.

their own students. We also understand that Abingdon had a summer school program in 2014 for its own students focusing on literacy development using a core curriculum component, readers and writers workshop (which also included some math). We do not know if these school-specific programs were offered in summer 2015.

Apart from the limited Reading Recovery, none of these summer programs are Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions designed to accelerate reading progress for students who are significantly behind their peers and whose reading difficulties are related to factors other than motivation.¹¹ For several years, a few elementary students have been selected to participate in the University of Virginia Summer Reading Clinic, but the capacity is quite small. Otherwise, the ELA Department has not been able to offer summer reading intervention to all eligible elementary students, and none has been offered for secondary students.

We believe the demand exists for such a program. Special education has offered a well-attended summer reading camp, available only to elementary students who have IEPs and are reading at least one year below grade level. The classes have 10 students per class, but there is no common curriculum or consistency in instruction, other than a limited amount of Tier 2 instruction, which is not individualized but is the same for all students. Special Education also offers limited Reading Recovery for 30 minutes a day to a handful of first graders who did not complete the program during first grade and who are enrolled in regular summer school.

What most of these programs have in common is that the intervention typically is not targeted at the needs of the individual child. Most are simply extensions of regular classroom instruction. They do not involve diagnostic testing prior to the program to provide information about appropriate placement, or involve data monitoring which follows the child back to the regular school program or can be used to evaluate the efficacy of the intervention.

The summer reading intervention we envision would be in a clinical setting with highly trained teachers providing high intensity Tiers 2 and 3 interventions with small groups of 6 students per teacher for students at Tier 2, and groups of 3 students per teacher for those at Tier 3. The program would rely on careful screening and diagnostic reading evaluations to assess student needs, to identify the students to be encouraged to participate, and to place them in appropriate interventions targeted to their needs.

¹¹ Researchers identify three broad reasons for reading difficulties: “1.) problems in understanding and using the alphabetic principle to acquire fluent and accurate word reading skills; 2.) failure to acquire the verbal knowledge and strategies that are specifically needed for comprehension..., and 3.) absence or loss of initial motivation to read....” Torgesen, J.K. (2007). Recent Discoveries from Research on Remedial Interventions for Children with Dyslexia, in M. Snowling and C. Hulme (Eds.). *The Science of Reading: A Handbook*. Oxford:Blackwell Publishers.

The clinic also would create a training laboratory or workshop for teachers. They would be provided with training (or advanced training) in an intervention during the week or two before summer school, and supervision and coaching would help them learn how to use the intervention in a classroom setting, to use data to modify instruction and placement, and to track student progress. Planning time could be provided for teachers to share experiences, best practices, and engage in collaborative problem-solving. Highly-skilled reading specialists who are qualified as trainers in the interventions could provide supervision and coaching. Co-teaching with special educators could be offered to provide special education teachers without reading credentials a solid training in an intervention. Those skilled teachers would return to their schools in the fall with a much higher degree of training and confidence than would result from the basic training that is typically provided for interventions. The program might also partner with one or more universities to provide opportunities for teachers to work on reading endorsements and earn continuing education credits.

Since the program would be intensive, four 60-90 minute sessions could be scheduled in one day. One teacher could work with as many as 12-18 students during a full day. For an even greater impact on students in need of immediate intervention, this program could be longer than the usual summer school session.

To create instructional efficiencies, it could be co-located with the Special Education Summer Reading Camp, the UVA Reading Clinic, and other summer ELA classes. If transportation and family needs require longer summer school, it could be co-located with a summer school program that provides language arts or other academic enrichment for the rest of the morning or afternoon.

Alignment with Strategic Plan and School Board FY 2016 Priorities:

This recommendation aligns with the School Board's FY2016 priority on a continued focus on literacy, "ensuring that students are reading on level by grade three and ensure that struggling readers at all grade levels receive appropriate services," its priority for "support strategies to improve student outcomes" and its priority to "strengthen differentiated instruction." It also aligns with two Strategic Plan Goals as well:

Goal One: Ensure That Every Student is Challenged and Engaged. The purpose of this recommendation is to ensure that every child is given the support he or she needs to meet high expectations for student success.

Goal Two: Eliminate Achievement Gaps. This recommendation encourages APS to meet the unique needs of students that are not being addressed effectively by existing APS programs.

Budgetary Implications:

Many of the students who would benefit from such interventions may already be in summer school programs that provide general instruction intended to prevent loss

of skills. If small group interventions are provided, it would require a lower student-teacher ratio and more teachers. The number of teachers would depend on enrollment in the program. For example, the cost of hiring 50 additional summer school teachers for a 5 week program would be estimated at less than \$200,000, with additional transportation costs for students not already in summer school.

PAST RECOMMENDATIONS

Past Recommendation #1: APS should adopt a multi-tiered process to identify, implement, and monitor effective reading and writing interventions for students at all levels.

Status: APS is in the second year of an ambitious five-year implementation plan. The first year was a planning year, to identify screening tools and interventions for reading, to begin planning a data collection system, and to meet with administrators and staff to begin the professional development process. A new website was also created. See <http://www.apsva.us/Page/27613>. Screening tools for reading were implemented for all secondary students, and possible tools are being piloted for grades 3 to 5. Several reading interventions and a writing intervention were identified, and training and materials offered to all elementary schools. Training in the Orton Gillingham method has been provided to over 100 teachers across the division. Leveled Literacy Intervention was also purchased and training is under way.

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

ACI Vote: 21-1-6

Budgetary Implications: The initiative included a Supervisor to oversee the implementation of ATSS. The budget for implementing ATSS in FY2015 included:

- ATSS Supervisor \$129,400
- Professional Development for principals, assistant principals, teachers, counselors, and support staff \$195,000
- Materials development and printing \$75,600

The FY2016 budget did not have an amount identified for ATSS. Presumably the supervisor was included in the payroll for the Department of Student Services but it is impossible to determine whether any additional amount was appropriated for ATSS, including the acquisition of screening tools, interventions, professional development, or the online data collecting system. We understand that close-out

funds were used to purchase an intervention, Leveled Literacy Intervention, to make it available to all elementary schools.

Past Recommendation #2: APS should research the practices of schools, both within and outside APS, which have made progress toward improving reading and writing proficiency among students for whom APS shows persistent achievement gaps, focusing on the needs of students who are economically disadvantaged and students of color. The result of this research should be a plan, to be implemented no later than the 2015-2016 school year, to eliminate these achievement gaps.

Status: We do not believe that there has been any progress in pursuing this recommendation. We are not aware that such research was undertaken, nor have we seen a comprehensive plan to address the unique academic needs of economically disadvantaged students or students of color.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

- Goal One: Ensure That Every Student is Challenged and Engaged
- Goal Two: Eliminate Achievement Gaps
- Goal Four: Provide Optimal Learning Environments
- Goal Five: Meet the Needs of the Whole Child

ACI Vote: 25-0-3

Budgetary Implications: There were no budgetary implications other than reprioritizing and reallocating current APS administrative staff time. As APS already subscribes to the Hanover Research Council, any research requests would not incur additional costs.

Past Recommendation #3: APS should develop short- and long-term strategies to make better use of the time outside the traditional school day and year to target and support students who are not reading or writing on grade level. These strategies should include providing effective and differentiated (not generalized) summer school classes at every grade level for all students who are reading and writing below grade level.

Status: We understand that literacy-focused summer programs were offered by Hoffman Boston, Drew, Randolph and Abingdon Elementary Schools for their own students. We think these examples demonstrate both the need and demand for system-wide programs for all eligible students.

We are not aware of any steps that have been taken to implement any extended day instruction or intervention. We expect to continue to review that topic this year.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

This recommendation aligned with two Strategic Plan Goals:

- Goal One: Ensure That Every Student is Challenged and Engaged
- Goal Two: Eliminate Achievement Gaps.

ACI Vote: 24-1-3

Budgetary Implications: The budget amount for teacher compensation would depend on the scope and nature of the program. The number of summer school teachers depends on summer school enrollment. Many of the students in need of targeted intensive instruction are already in summer school. If demand increases, the number of teachers needed will increase. For example, the cost of hiring 50 additional summer school teachers would be estimated at less than \$200,000 with additional transportation costs.

Past Recommendation #4: Hire additional staff for the ELA Program Office to be able to implement the recommendations from the Evaluation and from this committee’s report.

Status: Funding has not been provided for additional staff.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

This recommendation aligned with three Strategic plan goals:

- Goal One: Ensure That Every Student is Challenged and Engaged
- Goal Two: Eliminate Achievement Gaps
- Goal Three: Recruit, Retain and Develop High-Quality Staff

ACI Vote: 18-1-9

Budgetary Implications: The estimated budget implication for each additional staff member was approximately \$80,000.

Future Work

In the coming year, the committee hopes to explore some of the following topics:

- Learning devices and how they can support personalized learning in reading, writing and English language instruction;
- The Board’s request to help define “Success” for APS students and schools;
- Meeting the needs of gifted students in ELA classrooms, particularly at the middle school level;
- Reading and writing interventions and how APS is addressing identification of appropriate intervention, fidelity, adequate training, progress monitoring, and use of data; whether data supports the use of existing interventions, and alternatives;
- Writing instruction at all grade levels;

- Word study and how the structure of the English language is taught at all grade levels (e.g., letter sound relationships, decoding, orthography, morphology);
- Opportunities to leverage time students spend in extended day/check-in programs for additional literacy support;
- Review of achievement data;
- Consider the request from ACI and Information Services regarding data -- what data should be maintained, for what purposes, with what access, for how long;
- Meet with the advisory committees for Science and Social Studies to consider proposals for more interdisciplinary or integrated approaches to curriculum;
- Meet with the ESOL/HILT, Special Education, and Gifted Services Advisory Committees to discuss common concerns;
- Investigate the needs of secondary students in technical and career programs for targeted reading instruction relating to technical reading and training manuals;
- Textbook adoption. Broadly speaking, this encompasses the adoption of all materials used for English Language Arts instruction;
- Hold a parent forum to gather parent feedback regarding English Language Arts instruction.

ELAAC Committee

Linda Arnsbarger, co-chair
 Judy Rudman, co-chair
 Nancy Benton
 Amy Borek

Elaine Maag
 Sandra Munnell
 Susan Omberg
 Stacy Rosenthal
 Claire Rusk

Jenn Vogel, ACI Liaison
 Dr. Michelle Picard, Staff Liaison, Supervisor, English Language Arts

APPENDIX A
ARLINGTON COUNTY READING SOL PASSING RATE, 2011-2015 (%)

		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
3rd grade:						
	All Students	87	87	78	83	87
	Black	81	74	63	65	74
	Hispanic	75	79	60	66	74
	White	95	94	90	92	95
	Asian	86	93	77	89	91
	Students with Disabilities	71	64	56	61	66
	Economically Disadvantaged	74	76	55	65	72
	Limited English Proficient	76	78	60	70	73
5th grade:						
	All Students	91	90	81	81	87
	Black	85	77	60	65	80
	Hispanic	84	78	63	63	70
	White	97	97	94	93	96
	Asian	94	91	83	91	91
	Students with Disabilities	74	68	56	52	59
	Economically Disadvantaged	83	75	60	60	68
	Limited English Proficient	84	79	57	58	65
8th grade:						
	All Students	91	90	77	77	83
	Black	78	80	62	63	69
	Hispanic	82	79	57	56	61
	White	98	98	93	93	96
	Asian	96	93	72	83	87
	Students with Disabilities	67	67	48	45	48
	Economically Disadvantaged	79	78	56	54	60
	Limited English Proficient	79	77	46	39	43
High School						
	All Students	96	95	89	89	92
	Black	93	88	76	75	83
	Hispanic	91	91	82	83	86
	White	99	99	98	97	98
	Asian	97	94	90	86	93
	Students with Disabilities	88	82	70	70	77
	Economically Disadvantaged	92	88	79	78	83
	Limited English Proficient	86	86	67	66	74

Source: VDOE Report Cards, Arlington Public Schools, 2014-15 and 2012-13.

Numbers in **RED** indicate declines from the previous year.

*VDOE estimates that 4 percentage points of the 2014-15 gains for grades 3 through 8 are attributable to expedited retakes.

http://doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2015/08_aug11.shtml.

ARLINGTON COUNTY WRITING SOL PASSING RATES, 2011-2015 (%)

		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
5 th grade:						
	All Students	91	93	84	85	*
	Black	82	79	59	71	*
	Hispanic	84	87	66	70	*
	White	95	98	95	94	*
	Asian	94	93	85	87	*
	Students with Disabilities	64	70	57	51	*
	Economically Disadvantaged	81	81	60	67	*
	Limited English Proficient	79	86	60	66	*
8 th grade:						
	All Students	93	91	81	78	82
	Black	87	82	66	58	67
	Hispanic	86	80	64	60	60
	White	98	98	94	93	95
	Asian	96	95	81	83	84
	Students with Disabilities	71	67	48	45	41
	Economically Disadvantaged	83	79	62	55	57
	Limited English Proficient	81	79	54	42	35
High School						
	All Students	96	95	91	88	88
	Black	94	89	82	76	76
	Hispanic	91	92	85	80	80
	White	99	99	97	97	96
	Asian	96	95	96	88	93
	Students with Disabilities	85	87	68	67	66
	Economically Disadvantaged	92	89	84	77	71
	Limited English Proficient	86	86	82	68	68

*The 5th grade writing SOL test was eliminated.

ARLINGTON COUNTY READING SRI DATA*, Fall 2014 and Fall 2015

		Below Basic**	Basic**	Proficient**	Advanced**
Gunston		Percentage (%)			
	Grade 6				
	2014	18	25	19	37
	2015	17	27	24	31
	Grade 7				
	2014	14	22	21	43
	2015	16	22	19	43
	Grade 8				
	2014	15	22	27	36
	2015	11	18	19	53
	All students				
	2014	16	23	22	39
	2015	15	22	21	42
Jefferson					
	Grade 6				
	2014	18	27	21	35
	2015	18	35	22	25
	Grade 7				
	2014	16	25	17	42
	2015	13	23	20	44
	Grade 8				
	2014	11	19	21	49
	2015	11	27	22	40
	All students				
	2014	15	24	20	42
	2015	15	29	21	35
Kenmore					
	Grade 6				
	2014				
	2015	27	24	24	25
	Grade 7				
	2014				
	2015	18	24	20	38
	Grade 8				
	2014				
	2015	15	30	25	31
	All students				
	2014				
	2015	19	26	23	32

ARLINGTON COUNTY READING SRI DATA*, Fall 2014 and Fall 2015 (Cont'd.)

		Below Basic**	Basic**	Proficient**	Advanced**
		Percentage (%)			
Swanson					
	Grade 6				
	2014	7	15	22	56
	2015	10	24	22	44
	Grade 7				
	2014	5	12	16	67
	2015	8	10	19	63
	Grade 8				
	2014	14	14	22	51
	2015	5	11	19	65
	All students				
	2014	8	14	20	59
	2015	8	16	20	56
Williamsburg					
	Grade 6				
	2014	9	12	20	60
	2015	8	18	24	51
	Grade 7				
	2014	6	8	20	67
	2015	7	13	14	66
	Grade 8				
	2014	5	9	20	66
	2015	4	9	21	66
	All students				
	2014	7	10	20	64
	2015	6	13	20	61

* The SRI is the Scholastic Reading Inventory, administered two or three times a year to secondary students as a reading comprehension screener to determine their needs for differentiated instruction, supports, or interventions.

** Scholastic defines the performance standards as:

- “Advanced—Students scoring in this range exhibit superior performance when reading grade-level appropriate text and can be considered as reading ‘above grade level.’
- Proficient—Students scoring in this range exhibit competent performance when reading grade-level appropriate text and can be considered as reading ‘on grade level.’
- Basic—Students scoring in this range exhibit minimally competent performance when reading grade-level appropriate text and can be considered as reading ‘below grade level.’
- Below Basic—Students scoring in this range do not exhibit minimally competent performance when reading grade-level appropriate text and can be considered as reading significantly ‘below grade level.’”

Scholastic Presentation to VDOE (2012),

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/procurement/student_growth_assessments/scholastic/RFP_VA_D OE-SGA-2012-15_REDACTED_Oct_29.pdf.

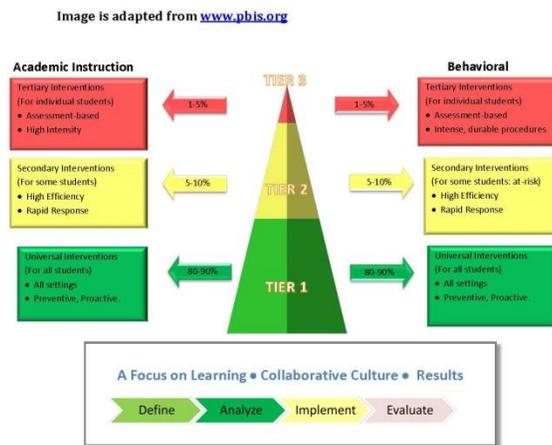
APPENDIX B

Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS)

The Virginia Department of Education [defines a Tiered System of Support](#) as a framework and philosophy that provides resources and supports to help every student reach success in academics and behavior. It begins with systemic change at the division, school and classroom level that utilizes evidence-based, system-wide practices to provide a quick response to academic and behavioral needs. These practices include frequent progress monitoring that enable educators to make sound, data-based instructional decisions for students.

Focus and Core Beliefs

The focus of ATSS is to address the whole child and what 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. Focus will be on evidence- based core (Tier 1) instruction with additional Tier 2 and 3 interventions for students who need them to create a unified system of timely responses for all students to achieve success (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009). A system of interventions for both academic and behavioral needs that can increase intensity and duration will provide necessary help and support all students to prepare for college and career.



(Click image to enlarge)

- ATSS is a system for meeting the needs of all students.
- All students will receive differentiated and scaffolded Tier 1 or core instruction.
- Both academic and behavioral gaps are addressed to meet the needs of the whole child.
- Students receive timely interventions at the first indication that they are in need of more support.
- Consistent and systematic use of interventions are available at all schools.
- Students will be monitored frequently.
- Any student in need of support will be monitored through the ATSS Process (formally known as IAT).
- Schools will employ a collaborative culture fostered in their PLC time to answer the following questions.
 - What do we want students to know and able to do this year?
 - How will we know if they have learned it?
 - What do we do if they have not learned it?
 - What do we do if they have learned it?

Key Principles

- Intervene early through the use of universal screeners and other forms of assessment
- Use a multi-tiered system of support
- Tailor instruction to the individual learner's needs
- Use data based decision making to inform instruction and monitor progress
- Use research-based interventions and instruction
- Ensure fidelity of implementation
- Document and encourage parental involvement in all steps of the process

Benefits

- Improves education for ALL students
- Proactive early intervention
- Instruction and intervention that is data driven
- Encourages collaboration among educators, families and community stakeholders
- Fosters partnerships with experts in the fields of mental health, social services, medical, juvenile justice, and cultural domains when needed
- Can address a need without formal evaluations
- Provides academic and behavioral supports in the Least Restrictive Environment
- Provides support to teachers
- Prevents over-referral to special education

From ***Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS)***,
<http://www.apsva.us/Page/27613> .

Virginia Tiered System of Supports

The Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) is a framework and philosophy that provides resources and support to help every student to be successful in academics and behavior. It begins with systemic change at the division, school and classroom level that utilizes evidence-based, system-wide practices to provide a quick response to academic and behavioral needs. These practices include frequent progress-monitoring that enable educators to make sound, data-based instructional decisions for students.

The following initiatives fall under the VTSS umbrella:

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Content Literacy Continuum (CLC)

The [VTSS guide](#) (PDF) provides information to support division leaders in implementing VTSS division-wide research-based best practices and evidence from expert educators. This information will support division leadership teams as they assemble the structures necessary at all levels.

From ***Virginia Tiered System of Supports***,

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/virginia_tiered_system_supports/index.shtml

See *also* Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS): A Guide for School Divisions, VDOE,

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

Appendix C

Examples of School Board Policies Adopting a Multi-Tiered System of Support

Wake County (Raleigh), North Carolina:

Board Policy 5500 Multi-Tiered Framework For Academic Achievement

A. MULTI-TIERED FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The philosophy of the Board concerning academic achievement is based on the premise that students have diverse capabilities, interests, and individual patterns of growth and learning. Hence, the Board endorses a multi-tiered system of support for instruction and intervention to provide opportunities for all students to be academically successful.

A multi-tiered system of support provides the structure within which all efforts of WCPSS fit to ensure that instruction, academic, and behavioral/social emotional needs of all students are a high priority, including English Language Learners (ELLs), Students with Disabilities (SWDs), and Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) students.

The Superintendent shall develop guidelines and otherwise implement this framework throughout the Wake County Public School System.

Adopted: August 20, 1976

Revised: August 5, 2014

<https://webarchive.wcpss.net/policy-files/series/policies/5500-bp.html>

	<p>SUPPORTS & INTERVENTION S</p>	<p>Policy No. 2163 December 7, 2011 Page 1 of 2</p>
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It is the policy of the Seattle School Board to ensure that all students receive high-quality, research-based general education core instruction and, as appropriate, strategic and/or intensive intervention supports matched to student needs. The district utilizes the core principles of the Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) process which combines systematic assessment, decision-making and a multi-tiered services delivery model to improve educational and social and emotional behavioral outcomes for all students. Under this model, students receive support through differentiation in core classroom instruction and small group instruction in class or during additional intervention time.

The district's process identifies students' challenges early and provides appropriate instructions by ensuring students are successful in the general education classroom. In implementing the MTSS process, the district shall apply:

- A. Data-driven academic and behavioral interventions in the general education setting;
- B. Measure the student's response to intervention; and
- C. Use multiple assessments and progress monitoring to inform instruction.

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures to implement student interventions; and use teacher observations and classroom, school, or district assessments to identify students who are at risk of academic or behavioral problems and thereby in need of scientific research-based interventions.

Intervention shall consist of three levels of assistance that increase in intensity. The three levels shall include:

- A. Screening and classroom interventions;
- B. Targeted small group intervention; and
- C. Intensive interventions

Parent/Guardian Involvement in the MTSS Process

The district shall inform parents/guardians regarding the use of scientific, research-based interventions, including: a) the state's policies regarding the amount and nature of student's performance data collected and the general education services provided; b) strategies used to increase the student's rate of learning; c) and the parents/guardians' right to request a special education evaluation.

 <p>SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS</p>	<p>SUPPORTS & INTERVENTION S</p>	<p>Policy No. 2163 December 7, 2011 Page 1 of 2</p>
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Adopted: December 2011

Revised:

Cross Reference: Policy No. 3123

Related Superintendent Procedure:

Previous Policies:

Legal References:

Management Resources: *Policy News*, December 2007

http://www.seattleschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_543/File/Migration/Departments/HR/2163.pdf

The related Superintendent Procedure 2163SP: Supports and Interventions to implement this MTSS Policy is found at

http://www.seattleschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_543/File/Migration/Departments/HR/2163SP.pdf