



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From SEAC's 2016-2017 Annual Report

SEAC 2017-2018 Recommendations
Generated from the 2016-2017 School Year

CURRENT YEAR'S (2017-2018) RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority 1: Mental Health Awareness and Integrative Supports

Create policies and implement consistent practices to recognize, monitor and support students at risk or experiencing mental health concerns and provide appropriate staff training, resources and in-school programs that enable inclusion and eliminate discipline disproportionality while utilizing appropriately trained and licensed mental health professionals to integrate services for the whole student.

Recommendation 1A: Training in universal warning signs and appropriate interventions.

All staff who work directly with special education students should be trained to recognize the warning signs of the most prevalent mental health struggles adolescents experience such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, eating disorders, and suicidal ideation. Staff should be trained to understand and recognize the different presentations of these mental health issues specifically in students with disabilities, some of which may present as behavior problems and be addressed with disciplinary action, thus contributing to discipline disproportionality.

Recommendation 1B: Address stigma and provide contacts and resources for help.

Address stigma on school campuses regarding mental health issues and communicate the points of contact at school and additional resources available to help students experiencing symptoms.

Recommendation 1C: Increase mental health staff support throughout LCPS.

Increase the staffing levels for qualified, licensed mental health professionals to meet recommendations from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) for a maximum student-to school psychologist ratio of 1,000 to 1 for the general population, and increase the staffing levels for school psychologists providing comprehensive and preventative services recommended by NASP for a ratio not to exceed 500-700 students per psychologist.

Priority 2: Consistency in Programs and Services

Provide clear, consistent, and understood practices and policies to ensure that students are receiving services that are available, appropriate and delivered in a timely manner.

Recommendation 2A: Best practices for student-to-school succession

Develop and implement a set of best practices and procedures that provide for smooth and effective student transfers from pre-K to elementary school, elementary school to middle school, and middle school to high school based on the individual needs of the student.

**Please also see Dyslexia Recommendation 5C(v) regarding program fidelity regarding continuity of services, selection of tools and fidelity during transfers between elementary, middle and high school.*

Recommendation 2B: Back to IEP Basics – Implementation of Services

- i. Administration and staff should be provided with clear, consistent and expected practices for the implementation of the special education process, and their compliance with the process should be evaluated regularly (and more frequently for new special education supervisors) and considered as part of their performance evaluation for accountability.
- ii. Refresher trainings and ongoing staff development should be regularly provided to staff responsible for drafting, contributing to the development, determining present levels of functioning, monitoring and reporting on progress, tracking the implementation of supports and services, revising and reporting on IEP progress.

Recommendation 2C: Awareness of Services

Continue to improve parent and staff awareness of policies, procedures, regulations and resources by:

- i. Asking each school to appoint a SEAC Parent Representative to enhance the flow of communication to and from the parent community.
- ii. Continuing to ask school based administrators to provide information to parents of students in the referral process and for students identified for special education services about Parent Resource Services, LCPS special education web resources, and SEAC – and monitor for cooperation.
- iii. Continuing to ask schools to provide special education specific information such as contacts at the school level, resources available at the school and within the district, case manager role and responsibilities, routes for addressing concerns with processes, programs, staff or services, and school-based protocols.
- iv. Encouraging schools to host regular special education parent information sessions on topics of interest to the special education community.
- v. Reviewing performance indicators for parental involvement at the school level, and where necessary, implementing improvements to address the participation of parents in regular and meaningful communication to foster service improvement and positive student outcomes.

Priority 3: Quality Inclusion

Provide an inclusive educational, social and extracurricular experience at each LCPS school.

Recommendation 3A: Create and Expect an Inclusive School-wide Culture

The expectation should be set from the highest ranks of LCPS leadership through Principals and Administrators that all LCPS schools are compelled to implement and monitor inclusive practices. Tools should be provided to schools that help promote an inclusive school-wide culture where individual differences are valued, embraced and evidenced by:

- i. Promoting and recognizing cooperative and collaborative teaching practices that seek to integrate special education students in the classroom setting and model behaviors that demonstrate acceptance, support and understanding, and providing collaborative planning time for staff to better coordinate personalized learning.
- ii. Supporting the social-emotional growth of all students using strategies such as peer supports in the classroom, buddy systems for lunch and school activities, and sponsorship of students' participation in extracurricular activities.
- iii. Utilizing evidence-based inclusive practices, such as the Stetson Inclusive Practices framework.
- iv. Creating a welcoming environment for students with disabilities at school events and before/after school activities by placing a disability statement on all school materials for activities and programs (e.g. "If, due to a disability, you need assistance or accommodations to enable you to participate in this program or activity, contact -name- at -email/phone- five working days before the event.")
- v. Establishing performance indicators to reassure and monitor leadership and decision making and rates of special education student involvement in the life of the school inside and outside of the classroom.
- vi. Create district wide opportunities to share and promote examples of inclusive practices in action.

Recommendation 3B: Expand Professional Development for Disability-specific Teaching Strategies

Existing professional development opportunities should continue and new programs, with easily accessible training modules, should be offered to provide educators with ongoing opportunities to increase skills in educating a diverse population of students in the general education setting. Particularly relevant training topics include: differential instruction, providing accommodations/modifications, assistive technology, manifestations and effective interventions for ADHD, helping students manage their anxiety, and facilitating social skill developing in routine classroom activities.

Priority 4: Transition Services

Continue efforts to provide effective transition services and programs that prepare LCPS students with disabilities for life after high school.

Recommendation 4A: Academies of Loudoun

Provide students with disabilities access to the curricula offered at the Academies of Loudoun (AOL), for the purpose of gaining skills from courses not offered at their local high schools by developing a flexible model that would allow these students to apply to classes at AOL, rather than programs.

Recommendation 4B: Vocational Training Model at the High Schools

The School Board should convene a committee to evaluate the scope of current vocational programming and develop recommendations for a formal vocational training model that can be delivered on high school campuses to special education students.

Recommendation 4C: More Training for Job Coaches (TA's)

With student outcomes directly tied to the quality of instruction and supervision job coaches receive, more training should be provided to increase the quality of the coaching they provide.

Recommendation 4D: Dedicated Transition Supervisor

Establish a dedicated transition supervisor to oversee the programming and ensure that it expands to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

***Note that this recommendation was also made last year.*

Priority 5: Dyslexia Services & Supports

Provide early identification, appropriate teacher training, supports and services for students with the specific learning disability of dyslexia.

Recommendation 5A: Early Identification of Students with Dyslexia

- i. School professionals who are testing children for eligibility should be provided the necessary training to understand and apply the science of reading (see subcommittee report for discussion) in order to effectively assess weaknesses and strengths and thereby make recommendations accordingly.
- ii. LCPS should revise their "Recommendation" drop-down menus for evaluations to align with the new science based reading training (FOLI, OG). In addition, the drop-down menus should only serve as a guide since every recommendation should be specific to each child's unique needs.
- iii. LCPS Evaluators and staff should reference and/or use the words "dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia" in evaluations, eligibility, and in developing IEPs.
- iv. Decisions regarding RTI/ MTSS components (universal screeners, progress monitoring software, interventions and training for staff to help provide services

- to students with reading deficits) should not be made by administrators at the building level but at the district administration level.
- v. LCPS should follow testing recommendations, provided by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) for each grade level (Universal Screening: K-2 Reading) to ensure that all identified skills have been assessed at the appropriate grade level.
 - vi. Expand use of the LCPS selected “FastBridge” universal screening battery as well as the LCPS compiled screening document (“RTI/MTSS manual”) and LCPS “Decision-Making Tool for Targeted Intervention” document. These tools are critical in assisting school teams who will determine appropriate instructional match for targeted reading interventions.
 - vii. Should LCPS continue to use the combination of PALS and DRA as screening tools, then the Dyslexia Subcommittee strongly recommends that LCPS add a Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) assessment to these batteries of screeners.

Recommendation 5B: Professional Development/Training on Dyslexia

- i. To continue to expand awareness and understanding of the most common specific learning disability, LCPS should continue to provide all teachers access to the MindPlay training modules on dyslexia and dyslexia characteristics at every school.
- ii. SEAC recommends that LCPS use the nine FOLI trainers to train all LCPS K-3 teachers and reading specialists in FOLI to allow current Tier 1 reading instruction to effectively align with the science of reading.
- iii. SEAC continues to support LCPS’s intent to build division-wide capacity to provide specialized reading (Structured Literacy) across the division.
- iv. LCPS explicit staff development model of Pathways should be revised to incorporate a structured literacy approach for grades K-3 in order to increase alignment and compatibility among all “tiers” of service.

Recommendation 5C: Appropriate Interventions

- i. SEAC recommends and supports expansion of the Language!Live (L!L) intervention so that all students who would benefit (if L!L is an instructional match) at their secondary school will have access to the L!L intervention.
- ii. Due to documented concerns regarding the effectiveness of blended learning programs used as interventions (i.e. Achieve3000), progress for students in special education must be closely monitored for appropriateness in meeting their unique academic needs.
- iii. Code-emphasis OG instruction should continue to be offered to secondary students for higher level spelling concepts, syllabication patterns for encoding and decoding, assessment, morphology - affixes, Greek and Latin bases, advanced encoding and decoding with morphemes, vocabulary, writing and grammar.
- iv. In conjunction with appropriate interventions, SEAC recommends that all progress monitoring utilize work samples and diagnostic tools, as opposed to

teacher observation and records, and include frequent communication and all data provided to parents. At a minimum, this information should be included in the quarterly IEP progress reports.

- v. Increase intervention options implemented with program fidelity at the secondary school level to maintain consistency in programming for students who are transitioning from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school. It would also be necessary to investigate and determine the similarities and differences in the different programs from elementary to secondary schools in scope and sequence so that students are able to maintain progress in reading goals and bridge achievement gap.

Recommendation 5D: Access to Assistive Technology

- i. In order to reduce the achievement gap, LCPS should use assistive technology accommodations and accessible materials in conjunction with remediation efforts of learning skills in all grades (including Kindergarten) to help alleviate deficits, such as decoding, encoding and reading fluency skills.
- ii. SEAC continues to support last year’s recommendation to create an assistive Technology Task Force, to include School Board Members and a Representative from the SEAC Dyslexia Subcommittee, to assess current Assistive Technology (AT) and Accessible Educational Materials (AEM), professional development and student accessibility.

Priority 6: Autism Programs and Supports

Enhance efforts to provide effective autism programs and services and implement current and long-term planning to address the growing population and changing needs of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and similar education needs.

Recommendation 6A: Regular Program Evaluation and Improvement

Due to the growing population and changing needs in the education of students with ASD and similar education needs, LCPS should have a process in place to regularly and formally evaluate its programs, services and the expertise of personnel to identify strengths, respond to weaknesses and devise plans to ensure programs and services are effective and implemented with fidelity. These findings and a plan to address any concerns should be published and available to parents and staff who work with ASD students.

Recommendation 6B: Uniform and Appropriate Measurement of Progress

Evidence-based and innovative strategies and tools that adhere to PBIS principles should be incorporated into individualized goals for students with ASD in the areas of behavior management, communication, social skills, independent living skills, and preparation for college or post-secondary employment, with the proper supports and services provided in a timely manner.

Recommendation 6C: Immediate and Long-term Planning for Autism Programs, Services and Supports

Immediate and long-term division-wide planning should address implementation of effective programs and services, as well as respond to weaknesses or gaps. This planning should consider current and anticipated changes in demand for ASD-related services and supports and building capacity to meet new demands for services and supports.

Recommendation 6D: Improved and Regular Training in Instructional Methods and Behavioral Techniques

As the demands for higher levels of skill and expertise in working with students with ASD and similar educational needs increase, LCPS should be proactive in developing an ongoing professional development curriculum that involves administrators, principals, general and special education teachers, school psychologists, speech therapists, school counselors, teaching assistants and related services personnel to increase competence and efficacy in serving the needs of these students.

Recommendation 6E: Immediate Implementation of Social Skills Programs

Because social skills are prerequisite to academic success, ASD and other students who struggle in this area are at risk for poor academic performance, mental health issues, peer rejection and staff bias. It is imperative that these students receive regular, appropriate and individualized social skills training so they feel more confident in their ability to participate in the classroom and campus milieu as an accepted member of the school community. An effective social skills program for all grade levels, and the fidelity of program implementation, continues to be a critical and overdue unmet need for the special education students.

Recommendation 6F: Effective Transfer and Transition Planning

Because ASD students tend to have more difficulty with disruptions to routine and new situations in new environments, it is critical that meaningful and effective plans be developed and followed that consider the unique needs of each ASD students, preparation practices and time for adjustment will vary widely from student to student. Transition teams should work together as frequently as needed to ensure a smooth hand-off and adaptation to new demands, people and expectations.

Recommendation 6G: More Career Planning

Due to the significant challenges students with ASD often face in finding and choosing the right career path, standard career counseling, college planning and occupational assessment are not designed to evaluate the unique profiles, abilities and challenges of students on the autism spectrum. Programs should be put in place to help these students explore and identify possible career and college paths beginning in middle school and more intensely in high school to help with the transition to a successful life after high school.