Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

ANNUAL REPORT
2016-2017

Outlining the Unmet Needs Identified in the 2016-2017 School Year and
Establishing 2017-2018 Priority Needs and Concerns for
Students Receiving Special Education Services in
Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS)

Prepared for:
The LCPS School Board
November 2017

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INTRODUCTION

"The mission of Virginia's public education system is to educate students in the fundamental knowledge and academic subjects that they need to become capable, responsible, and self-reliant citizens."
-Virginia Department of Education

"Empowering all students to make meaningful contributions to the world."
-LCPS Vision 20/20 Strategic Framework

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is grateful for the opportunity to work with parents, staff, students and the school board to identify the unmet needs, suggest improvements, and advance the interests of students receiving special education services in Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS). SEAC typically presents an annual report to the school board each fall to highlight vulnerabilities, ongoing concerns and widespread gaps in meeting the needs of special education students, which will enable these students to actively and fully participate in their educational environment and be provided with appropriate opportunities to reach their academic potential.

This annual report satisfies the requirements set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia to advise the local school division of needs in the education of students with disabilities, participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs, and submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of students with disabilities.

The purpose of special education is to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) that prepares students for a secure and meaningful future as productive and independent citizens. For students with disabilities, the quality of their educational experience -- including academic, social and emotional development -- affects their ability to develop the tools and knowledge needed for a successful life after high school based on their capabilities and aspirations. The supports and services provided through K-12 public education for students with disabilities are vitally important in setting the tone and trajectory for self-efficacy and the life accomplishments of our students.

This report identifies areas of need in the education of students with disabilities in LCPS and outlines recommendations for both the provision and ongoing improvement of special education and related services. The recommendations from the prior year have also been reviewed and SEAC has noted the progress towards those recommendations with

input from LCPS staff members (See Reference section for link to SEAC's 2015-2016 Annual Report). In addition, SEAC has identified emerging trends and concerns for the current school year. These issues will be monitored and explored throughout the year to determine prevalence, magnitude and if recommendations from SEAC are warranted to address the concerns or suggest steps that may prevent the issues from escalating to an unmet need.

SEAC appreciates the collaborative and positive relationship with the Department of Pupil Services and particularly with Dr. Suzanne Jimenez, Director of the Office of Special Education, for open and timely communication in support of SEAC's work to examine the needs of students receiving special education services. Likewise, access to staff experts within the Special Education Office and beyond has been a tremendous resource in aiding SEAC's work. SEAC commends the department for their dedication to continuously improving services for our students, often above and beyond the minimal requirements promulgated by the Virginia Department of Education, and for seeking the best solutions available to address the evolving needs of the SEAC community.

LCPS has a reputation as an exceptional public school system whose students are well-rounded, well-prepared and highly-competitive in the college and job markets. SEAC would like to ensure that all students with disabilities have the necessary and appropriate accommodations, supports and services so they may also access and receive the same advantages and opportunities that other LCPS students enjoy and for which they derive benefits. The LCPS belief that an inclusive, safe, caring and challenging learning environment is the foundation for student growth, is precisely the kind of atmosphere in which students with disabilities best learn and thrive. SEAC acknowledges and commends LCPS for its commitment to providing an excellent education for students with disabilities.

SEAC'S PURPOSE

The *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* reflect the state and federal requirements for the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities in the Commonwealth. The functions of the SEAC, as specified by Section 8VAC20-81-230 D.2 of these regulations are to:

- Advise the local school division of needs in the education of students with disabilities;

- Participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of students with disabilities;

- Submit periodic reports and recommendations regarding the education of students with disabilities to the division superintendent for transmission to the local school board;

- Assist the local school division in interpreting plans to the community for meeting the special needs of students with disabilities for educational services;

- Review the policies and procedures for the provision of special education and related services prior to submission to the local school board; and

- Participate in the review of the local school division's annual plan.

OVERVIEW

<u>COMMENDATIONS</u>

SEAC wishes to express appreciation and ongoing support for LCPS's efforts to recognize the needs and inherent value of students with disabilities within our educational community. Providing proper supports, services and opportunities to special education students while involving them in all aspects of the LCPS curriculum and educational setting prepares every LCPS student with the foundation to be self-sufficient in accordance with their capabilities, a good citizen, and a principled member of society.

Specifically, SEAC affirms LCPS in several areas and highlights how these approaches impact students with disabilities. SEAC commends LCPS for:

- Focusing on the development of the whole child as articulated in the mission of the Department of Pupil Services, which is "to educate the whole child by providing supports and services to meet the academic, social, emotional, behavioral and health needs of all students so they may enjoy a successful school experience."

  There are many factors that affect a student's ability and motivation to learn. The learning process can be hindered without ongoing consideration for a student's social, emotional, behavioral and health needs.

- Recognizing, valuing and building strong partnerships between schools and families in the pursuit of excellence.

  Many Loudoun County parents of students with disabilities have faced heartache, frustration and stress from trying to effectively advocate within systems to obtain the understanding, support and services their child needs to learn, grow, develop, and lead a meaningful and fulfilling life. Providing a welcoming, respectful and transparent experience for families of students with disabilities who strive to be supportive and involved in their child's education, serves the best academic interests of the child and can have a profound impact on quality of life for the student and his/her family.

  Continuing to foster collaboration among and between stakeholders (families, students and communities of interest) and LCPS officials and staff to meet or exceed federal, state and local requirements for student achievement benefits all involved.

- Codifying inclusivity as part of LCPS's strategic action plan whereby all schools will implement effective inclusive practices to increase participation of students with disabilities in general education environments and their access to the general education curriculum.

  Prioritizing and maintaining small class sizes helps special education students function more effectively, reduce disparities, experience more frequent success, and

benefit academically, socially and emotionally from participating and being integrated in the general education curriculum and daily life of the school.

- Concentrating on individualized learning and preparing **all students** to make meaningful contributions to the world by applying learning to real world situations.

    SEAC enthusiastically supports the **One to the World** instructional initiative, the focus on developing critical thinking skills, and the ability to create projects that allow special education students to explore their unique abilities, feel a sense of accomplishment, and become meaningful contributors now and in the future.

- Acknowledging the need and taking steps to provide differentiated resources for schools to better meet the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and special education students to help close achievement gaps.

    Every campus has a unique culture that may amplify or impede opportunities for students with disabilities to be successful, integrated members of the school community. The tone is set from the top and administrators vary in their understanding, sensitivity and level of commitment to the needs of special education students. The leadership's philosophy and staff's attitudes towards students who exhibit a range of disabilities has a profound impact on a student's mental health, self-esteem, and performance. As long as the minimum threshold for special education requirements are met at each campus, individual considerations and differentiated resources should be available to different schools in the same manner that the supports, services and goals are customized to the individual needs of students with disabilities.

- Refining the gifted education program offerings to ensure that students with advanced academic abilities **from all student subgroups** receive curriculum and instruction commensurate with their abilities.

    Students with disabilities may be "twice exceptional." If given the opportunity to participate in honors classes, gifted, and other special academic programs with the necessary supports, they can achieve academic excellence and greater confidence in their true abilities.

- Continuing efforts to implement programs and services that promote a safe, positive, supportive and healthy learning environment to include: suicide prevention; bullying prevention; restorative practices; positive behavioral supports/behavior interventions; threat assessment; and crisis intervention/response.

    Students with disabilities are especially susceptible to the negative consequences of an unsafe learning environment, both emotionally and physically, which affects their availability for learning, mental health and overall success.

- Considering the causes and seeking solutions to correct discipline disproportionality among students with disabilities and other diverse student populations.

  SEAC supports ongoing efforts to ensure that staff understand and appropriately respond to the different manifestations of a student's disability, rather than assume an unsubstantiated motivation and misinterpret intentionality. The latter can lead to escalation of behavioral issues and ineffective disciplinary actions.

- Maintaining funding for special education services and recently adding new FTE special education supervisors to help monitor and ensure fidelity in the delivery of special education supports, services and programs.

  Without the necessary staff expertise and measures of accountability, programs designed to support the specialized learning needs of students with disabilities will be ineffective, or potentially detrimental to student progress.

- Continuing to focus on shaping desired behavior through the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program.

  For special education students, it is most effective to focus on their successes throughout the school day and over the course of their education to reinforce positive work habits, help them develop mastery and competencies, and exhibit prosocial behavioral skills that increase the student's availability for learning.

- Ongoing investment in Parent Resource Services (PRS) to assist with questions, referrals and resources that benefit the special education community and promote productive engagement.

  SEAC values the involvement of PRS in the development and delivery of monthly programs at SEAC business meetings and in advising parents about options and opportunities that may be of assistance to their children.

SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT YEAR'S (2017-2018) PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS

The recommendations addressing top priority needs and issues of concern for the special education community for the current year are the result of using various sources of data, including:
- Formal public comments presented at SEAC meetings;
- SEAC subcommittee reports;
- SEAC focus group reports;
- Discussions, comments and information shared as part of SEAC's monthly programs;
- Informational meetings with staff; and
- The annual SEAC Parent Survey (See Appendix, Exhibit 1).

The top five priorities identified or ongoing for the prior year (2016-2017) continue to be areas of need with new or different aspects of these priorities emerging as important foci. A sixth priority has been added this year (2017-2018) regarding the mental health students and the specific mental health vulnerabilities for special education students.

PRIORITIES – This year's (2017-2018) top six priorities for unmet special education needs are:

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.

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.

3. **Quality Inclusion** – Provide an inclusive educational, social and extracurricular experience at each LCPS school.

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

5. **Dyslexia Services & Supports –** Provide early identification, appropriate teacher training, supports and services for students with the Specific Learning Disability of Dyslexia.

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.

CONCERNS - Areas of concern that necessitate further monitoring and study to determine the possible identification and prevalence of unmet needs within the special education community:

1. **Budget** – Maintain funding for existing SPED services and supports, and allocate additional funds to address the priorities (above) for meeting the unmet needs of SPED students.

2. **Discipline** – Eliminate the discipline disproportionality gap for students with disabilities, African-American students and Hispanic/Latino students, including day-to-day in-school disciplinary practices, exclusionary discipline (including those with law enforcement), as well as suspension rates.

3. **Differentiated Resources and Supports** – Deliver effective and efficient individualized *s*upport and resources to close the achievement gap for students with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and English language learners.

4. **Speech Language Pathology Services** – Provide appropriate screenings, assessments, supports and services to identify and remediate SLP issues through coordinated participation and communication with Speech/Language Pathologists to integrate services for the whole student.

5. **SPED Expertise** – Ensure all SPED-related staff have the appropriate training and expertise that is relevant to all major areas of SPED disability classifications to properly recognize, execute, monitor, modify, report and/or supervise/direct SPED programs, supports, services and staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table displays the recommendations that were made the prior year (2016-2017) with status updates from the Office of Special Education. This information is presented first in this report to provide context for the current year's recommendations, given that some of the prior year's recommendations may be unfinished or serve to reinforce and expand the current year's recommendations.

Following the status update for the prior year's recommendations immediately below, the new current year's (2017-2018) recommendations are outlined.

STATUS OF THE 2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Status Updated are Provided by the LCPS Office of Special Education.

Recommendations 2016-2017	Status Update as of November 2017
Priority 1: Consistency in Programs and Services *Provide clear, consistent, and understood practices and policies to ensure that students are receiving services that are available and appropriate.* *(Priority for SEAC in year's 2010-2011, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017)*	
Recommendation 1A: Program Stability	
Once a special education program is located at a school, it should not be moved due to space issues; *Once specialized programs are established in an assigned school, the program should remain in the assigned school, unless the program is no longer needed to serve students within the cluster area;* *Self-contained programs, whenever possible, should be located in the same school and the classroom makeup should be split, into K-2 and 3-5, to remain in the same school and maintain stability for students that are most vulnerable to transitions. There are currently self-contained programs for autism, emotional and intellectual disabilities in most clusters;* *Each school has designated resource classroom space and this space is not lost to accommodate overcrowding, additional general education classrooms, electives, or specials; and* *School capacity formulas include standards for dedicated space for students with disabilities, including the necessary*	No special education programs were moved to new locations for the 2017-28 school year.

budgeting for staffing and building resources to meet the students' needs. **This is a repeat recommendation from previous annual reports.	
Recommendation 1B: Services, Implementation	
Administrators and staff should be provided with clear, consistent and expected practices for the implementation of the special education process (identification and referral, evaluation, determination of eligibility, development of the IEP and determination of services, implementation of the IEP and reevaluation). Considerations to improve this implementation include: *1. On-going staff development opportunities for all administrators and educators;* *2. Documentation of staff development training completed should be included in the Teacher Performance Evaluation review;* *3. Creating a system wide environment of accountability at the school level with the expectation of evaluation; and* *4. Monitoring the fidelity of implementation of academic and behavior support as well as IEP implementation. Greater opportunities for staff development and ensuring that administrators and staff are provided with clear and consistent information can be achieved by staff accessing training modules that are easily accessible on Vision. Modules would also provide consistent information. The modules include topics such as:* • *Identification and Referral* • *Evaluation* • *Determination of Eligibility* • *Development of the IEP and determination of Services* • *Implementation of the IEP* • *Reevaluation*	On-going professional learning opportunities are provided throughout the year using a variety of formats. A division of procedural support is staffed with a supervisor and coordinator.

• *Data Collection* • *Rights, roles and responsibilities of the parents in the IEP process* • *Substitute teacher orientation specific to special education* • *Leveled transitions* • *Postsecondary transitions* • *Preparation for IEP meeting* • *Preparing IEP goal goals* **This is a repeat recommendation from previous annual reports.	
Recommendation 1C: Services, Awareness	
Continue to improve parent and staff awareness of policies, procedures, regulations and resources by: *1. Encouraging each school to appoint a SEAC Parent Representative to enhance the flow of communication to and from the parent community;* *2. Continuing to encourage 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;* *3. Continuing to encourage schools to provide special education specific information such as special education contacts at the school level, resources available at the school and within the district, case manager role and responsibilities, schedules (bells, lunch), academic, etc. as a part of their Back-to-School activities;* *4. Encouraging schools to host quarterly special education parent information sessions on topics of interest to the special education community;* *5. Performance indicators for parental involvement should be reviewed at the school level and where necessary, implement*	The Office of Special Education works with school-based administrators for communication and collaboration.

improvements to address the participation of parents in regular and meaningful communication in order to improve services and results for students with disabilities in LCPS. **This is a repeat recommendation from previous annual reports.	
Priority 2: Quality Inclusion *Provide an inclusive education and extracurricular experience at each LCPS school.* *(Priority for SEAC in year's 2008-2009, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017)*	
Recommendation 2A: Administrative school staff involved in special education will be staffed by individuals who embrace inclusivity and establish/promote an inclusive school-wide culture.	
Inclusiveness will be clear as demonstrated by: *1. Evidence of promoting cooperative and collaborative teaching practices;* *2. Evidence of promoting social-emotional growth of all students. Example: use of peer supports in the classroom and school activities;* *3. Implementation of evidence based inclusive practices. Example - the Stetson Inclusive Practices framework;* *4. Provision of collaborative planning time for staff in the school structure. Example – utilizing responsible scheduling and offering professional learning communities;* *5. Engagement of students with disabilities and other at-risk populations in a wide range of activities including the general education setting, nonacademic and extracurricular activities. Examples include peer supports, cooperative learning, and encouraging case managers to reach out to students and invite them to participate in school activities; and* *6. Inclusion of a disability statement on all school materials for activities and programs. For example, "If, due to a disability, you need assistance to enable you*	LCPS has adopted a Strategic Action with a plan for inclusive action plans and strategies for all schools.

to participate in this program or activity, contact (identify school contact) at (phone number) five working days before the event." *7. Performance indicators to measure and monitor leadership and decision making, student achievement and involvement and other measures to cultivate effective inclusive classrooms, nonacademic settings and extracurricular activities.* **This is an ongoing recommendation from previous annual reports.	
Recommendation 2B: Ongoing Professional Development	
Continue to provide educators with ongoing professional development focused on skills needed to improve educating a diverse population of students in the general education setting with an emphasis on disability specific teaching strategies. *In addition to increasing awareness of programs available, greater opportunities for staff development are also possible by developing training modules that are easily accessible. The modules could be produced on topics such as, but not limited to:* • *Differentiated Instruction* • *Accommodations/Modifications* • *Assistive Technology* **This is a repeat recommendation from previous annual reports.	
Priority 3: Transition Services *Continue efforts to provide effective transition services and programs that prepare LCPS students with disabilities for life after high school.* *(Priority for SEAC in year's 2010-2011, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017)*	
Recommendation 3A: One (1) FTE Dedicated Transition Supervisor	
The SEAC Transition subcommittee recommends one (1) FTE Transition Supervisor because the scope, volume, and variety of Transition Services require the full attention of a dedicated FTE Transition	Standing recommendation

Supervisor to oversee planning, preparation, and programs for students with IEP's.	
Recommendation 3B: One (1) FTE Community Independence Instruction (CII) Specialist Responsible for Elementary and Secondary IEP Students.	
Community Independence Instruction (CII), formerly Community Based Instruction (CBI), is provided to students with IEPs. The program requires a full-time specialist to ensure that procedures, preparation, and planning are developed and in place and that there is oversight to ensure that the program is effective, efficient, and consistently implemented throughout the school district.	Standing recommendation.
Recommendation 3C: Transportation	
Provide adequate transportation for community based transition programs, including Community Independence Instruction (CII) program and the Community and Schools Together (CAST) program.	The Office of Transportation has hired a coordinator dedicated to transportation activities for students with disabilities.
Recommendation 3D: Other Services	
Continued expansion of work experience programs for IEP students aged 18-22 years old who need job skills but do not need certification or licensure. *This may be accomplished by greater outreach within our business community as well as by providing a path through the Monroe Technology Center for students to participate and achieve skills without needing to receive licensure or certification.* **This is a repeat recommendation from previous annual reports.*	Two new CAST sites have been developed and additional work sites were developed by Transition teachers.
Recommendation 3E: Training	
Provide a life skills training classroom in each high school equipped with daily living materials for students to be taught to become independent proficient. (An evaluation of the overall transition programming continues to reveal that	One school has been equipped

students require more comprehensive life skills training, which can be conducted at each high school if the appropriate resources are made available.) **The above recommendation was originally submitted in October 2015. *Provide distributed vocational models to offer specific training at various school locations throughout the school district.*	

Priority 4: Dyslexia Services and Supports
Provide early identification, appropriate teacher training, supports and services for students with the specific learning disability of dyslexia.
(Priority for SEAC in year's 2015-2016 and 2016-2017)

Recommendation 4A: Early Identification of Students with Dyslexia

LCPS should implement a universal screening tool that can be used to identify students who might be dyslexic or at risk for dyslexia. (The purpose of screening is to identify students who are not mastering the specific skills that correlate with broader reading achievement) *If LCPS continues to use the PALS assessment in K-2 as their universal screener, additional curriculum based measures (such as those listed in the dyslexia subcommittee's full report) are recommended to screen those students not able to meet the PALS benchmark.* *In addition, consideration should be given to early language impairment as well as family history of dyslexia.*	A comprehensive Strategic Action plan and ongoing stakeholder meetings and reports provide dynamic updates.

Recommendation 4B: Professional Development/Training on Dyslexia

LCPS should provide teacher and staff training on dyslexia to include an understanding of this specific learning disability, symptoms and warning signs, appropriate interventions and accommodations as well as effective assistive technology. Professional development should cover the following:	

• In-service day for teachers of reading and special education to participate in a 2 hour "Dyslexia for a Day" simulation in which they will experience the frustration and failure that dyslexic students face every day in all content areas. Program to be expanded to all general education teachers. (Simulation kits available at www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org). • Teacher training on dyslexia offered to all teachers at every school, using the MindPlay modules, to increase awareness of students with dyslexia and dyslexia characteristics. • In-service training with specialists from the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) or the Institute of Multisensory Education to cover the history, current research and best practices for teaching dyslexic students. • If LCPS implements a universal screening tool for dyslexia, teachers and Reading Specialists who are to conduct the screenings must receive adequate training on administration and interpretation of results. Teachers and reading specialists who will be providing specialized reading services to dyslexic students should receive training in structured literacy that covers phonemic awareness, phonics, orthology, and morphology. Without training in remediation approaches that are effective for dyslexic students, teachers rely on general literacy strategies that work with non-dyslexic readers but result in dyslexic students not achieving reading proficiency in the primary grades. Therefore, LCPS specialized reading services should include the following: • Pilot program in designated schools to use Orton-Gillingham based reading	

programs such as Wilson and Barton Reading and Spelling exclusively and with fidelity to the program developer's guidelines. *• Teachers who receive Structured Literacy Instruction should receive adequate training in order to pass the Tier 1 Certification in Structured Literacy that is provided by the Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI).*	
Recommendation 4C: Appropriate Interventions	
Reading Specialists and Special Education Staff who will be working with dyslexic students to remediate academic deficits must be highly skilled in multisensory, structured language approach. *SEAC supports LCPS's intent to develop a comprehensive plan for expanding current capacity to provide specialized reading (Structured Literacy) across the division. This plan should include "Tiered Reading Intervention Levels" that include those programs appropriate for students with dyslexia.* *General Education and Special Education teachers who will work to remediate students identified with the Specific Learning Disability of dyslexia in grades K-12 must be certified in Structured Literacy Instruction (such as Orton-Gillingham).* *If Structured Literacy Instruction is to be implemented in student groups, groups must be limited to five students and be homogenous.* *For Tier 3 reading interventions, instruction may need to be delivered one-on-one.* *In conjunction with appropriate interventions, SEAC recommends effective progress*	

monitoring that utilizes diagnostic tools, as opposed to teacher records and includes frequent communication and data provided to parents. At a minimum, this information should be included in the quarterly IEP progress reports. *In order to appropriately meet the unique academic needs of the largest category of special education students and close the trending achievement gap, a new Dyslexia Specialist FTE position is needed.*	
Recommendation 4D: Access to Assistive Technology	
Whenever possible, LCPS should use assistive technology in conjunction with remediation efforts and not as a replacement to learning skills that help alleviate deficits, such as decoding, encoding and reading fluency skills. *In accordance with developing an IEP, consideration must also be given to a student's individual needs and user preferences when making decisions on assistive technology.* *SEAC supports the creation of an Assistive Technology Task Force, to include School Board Members and a Representative from the SEAC Dyslexia Subcommittee, in order to assess current Assistive Technology (AT) and Accessible Educational Materials (AEM), professional development and student accessibility.*	
Priority 5: Autism Programs and Supports *Enhance efforts to provide effective autism programs and services and implement current and long-term planning to address the growing populations and changing needs of the division's students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and similar educational needs.* *(Priority for SEAC in year's 2015-2016 and 2016-2017)*	
Recommendation 5A: Provide Funding for an Autism Supervisor in the FY18 LCPS Operating Budget to address the following:	
LCPS should conduct or obtain a division wide assessment of its autism programs and services and periodically evaluate the current	Dr. Joy Engstrom was promoted to Autism Supervisor for LCPS in Spring 2017.

and expected state of programs, services and supports for children and transition-age students with ASD and similar educational needs.

LCPS should identify and then aggregate the data and trends needed to make informed decisions about the services and supports that are required to meet the needs of its autistic students. A comprehensive review of autism programs and services should measure how LCPS achieves 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.

LCPS should evaluate and address current and expected needs for autism programs and services, including these identified areas of need:
1. Implementation of current and long-term planning for autism programs, services and supports to address needs. Current and long-term planning should address the division wide implementation of effective programs and services as well as respond to weaknesses or gaps. Effective planning should also identify current or expected changes, such as the current growth rate of students with ASD at LCPS.
2. Improved training in instructional methods and behavioral techniques. Training of administrators, principals, teachers (both general and special education), school psychologists, speech therapists, support staff and related services personnel continues to be an area of focus in LCPS.
3. Program development and fidelity of program and services implementation. The development of autism programs, such as an effective social skills program for all grade

In Spring 2017, the SEAC Autism subcommittee conducted surveys of parents and teachers regarding services for students with Autism in LCPS. See Appendix 3 for survey summary.

Re: #1 - As demonstrated in the SEAC survey and APERS assessment, LCPS recognizes the need for continued planning, development, and growth of services for evolving needs of students with ASD across the continuum of services. Systems change work is targeted to address both the horizontal structure (across grades and schools) and the vertical structure (across professional levels of service delivery). The long-term planning process currently underway will further develop the infrastructure and processes to support students with ASD while increasing the professional capacity of service providers across the continuum of special education services. Increased professional development opportunities will also further advance and support systems change initiatives.

Re: #2 - Training continues to be a major focus in LCPS. In autism, areas of needs have been identified through the SEAC and VCU surveys and program assessments. Avenues for meaningful professional development have been explored and utilized to expand capacity of staff within the division. LCPS autism staff currently participate in the three-day Autism Institute prior to the beginning of each new school year. Courses in Autism are offered online throughout the school year and summer via VCU ACE and facilitated by LCPS administrative staff. Participants in the online courses have spanned across disciplines to include general education teachers, related service providers, social workers, teaching and behavior assistants, special education teachers, and

levels, and the fidelity of program implementation continues to be a critical need in LCPS.

4.   Improved transition planning, training and services in order to meet the unique needs of students with ASD moving from school to post-school activities.

administrators. The current focus, which will be supported by the work of the VCU grant, is the development of a tiered system of training to address specific areas of needs related to autism in a systematic, forward manner. Autism Quarterly meetings offer staff opportunities to collaborate and receive updates throughout the year. Professional development days and after school opportunities are planned for teaching and support staff. Additionally, a social competence training was provided to school based multi-disciplinary teams over two days in the summer of 2017. The teams were introduced to and provided curriculums to address social skills, emotional regulation, and executive function. The use of real time coaching further supports the development of skills and knowledge of staff within the division.

Re: #3 - The administrative autism team has focused a significant effort in this area in the 2017-2018 school year. The team developed and implemented the initial step in program evaluation beginning in September 2017. The Autism Program Observation Walkthrough that is currently used to evaluate autism and combined autism and intellectual disabilities self-contained programs in the areas of physical environment, visual strategies, functional communication, instruction (academic, social, and behavioral), classroom management, and classroom staff using a Likert 3-point scale. The tool continues to undergo refinement to obtain valid and reliable measurement of current programs.

To date all programs have been scored against all components of the program walkthrough tool and have been categorized into a tiered system of support from Level 1 (all areas above 80%), Level 2 (1-2 areas

	below 80%), and Level 3 (3 or more areas below 80%). Currently, the majority of programs are currently operating at Level 1 proficiency demonstrating core components of a quality program. Programs will be reassessed throughout the school year and provided support in the areas identified as requiring intervention to build consistency and fidelity of programs and services across the division. Re: #4 - The Autism and Transition teams continue to work collaboratively to effectively foster viable, meaningful skill instruction and opportunities for students looking forward to post-secondary education, employment, and living. Continued efforts are needed to adequately identify paths for students to meet their unique needs and increase their independence in society. Collaboration is ongoing.

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.

(Established as a SEAC priority in 2017-2018)

Background/Rationale: As discussed in SEAC's 2015-2016 Annual Report, students with disabilities are at a higher risk for mental health disorders. Risk for suicidal ideation and behaviors is higher if the disability is less visible. SEAC previously identified a need to educate school administrators, teachers and families about mental health disorders, stigma and how to positively intervene in a coordinated system of care. Without adequate mental health services available through the school system, students with disabilities will continue to be at higher risk for school failure, disproportionate in-school disciplinary actions, suspensions and expulsions. SEAC continues to be concerned that many students, including those with mental health issues and those with disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviors, will not be provided positive behavioral supports or other preventative mental health interventions. LCPS does not have comparable mental health staff support in comparison to other Northern Virginia school districts to address this increasing student need.

> **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.

(Priority for SEAC in year's 2010-2011, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017, and 2017-2018)

Background/Rationale: Students with disabilities should have a similar experience from the time of referral through the delivery of special education services. Every special education student should have a truly customized IEP that comprehensively addresses their unique learning needs and correctly identifies present levels of functioning in order to measure progress and the effectiveness of interventions. The value of the IEP Team is that several voices and perspectives contribute to developing what should be a rich, thorough and useful IEP. However, there is widespread variability about how decisions about students' needs, the goals they are capable of achieving, and how they receive their services. Compliance with regulations, including IEP implementation also varies significantly.

Parent involvement is essential to developing a proper IEP that will meet the needs of the child, yet there is longstanding concern over parents being adequately involved in the process. Self-contained programs, or schools within schools, can function counter to an inclusive philosophy when segregation is not always appropriate and may serve to stigmatize special education students. Designated resource classroom space is inconsistently used for its' intended purpose. There has also been growing concern regarding the quality of IEP's and how well the goals address the student's needs, the teams' awareness of available and appropriate services and support, effective communication between case managers and teachers about classroom accommodations and student needs, and the processes necessary to put appropriate interventions in place.

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.

(Priority for SEAC in year's 2008-2009, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018)

Background/Rationale: *providing an inclusive educational and extracurricular experience for students with disabilities remains a major focus of SEAC and is also reflected in the LCPS Vision 20/20 Strategic Action Plan. A culture of acceptance and inclusion starts with the example and philosophy of the leaders on each campus. Quality inclusion goes beyond the participation of special education students in general education classes. It involves the daily practices of reaching out to students with disabilities to invite them to participate with peers in the*

classroom, in unstructured settings such as lunch time, recess, in before and after school clubs, and various sports and academic teams. Raising awareness about inclusion, valuing and involving those who are different from us, is an on-going daily process.

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 revenant 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.

(Priority for SEAC in year's 2010-2011, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018)

Background/Rationale: *Current data from the Department of Labor - Office of Disability Employment Policy indicates that the "labor force participation rate" for persons with disabilities is 21%. This grim statistic indicates that we need to do a better job of preparing our students to exit the school system and enter the workforce. There is a gap in service for students with disabilities to access meaningful, structured/formal curriculum related to vocational areas of study. Consistent with LCPS's 20/20 Strategic Vision and action plan, students with disabilities should be included and have access to all suitable LCPS programs.*

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.

Background/Rationale for Recommendation 4A: *Many of our students with disabilities, who are on an Applied Studies diploma track, would not meet the admission criteria for Monroe within the Academies of Loudoun (AOL). However, these students would greatly benefit from access to the courses that are offered as a means of pursuing vocational exploration and training. Admission to AOL is competitive. Students with disabilities may have interest in coursework offered at AOL, but would not necessarily meet the admission criteria. If a student did meet those criteria, they may not be able to pass the licensure exam associated with the program (e.g. Monroe vet tech). As students are trying to gain skills that will lead to future employment opportunities, they need access to classes that target those skill areas. Many of the classes offered provide curricula that is not available at the high schools.*

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.

Background/Rationale for Recommendation 4B: *There are high school students with disabilities who may not meet the criteria for AOL, C.A.S.T. program, or Project Search. These students may have support needs that are beyond the criteria for such programs. They are based in the high schools and by the time they reach the age of 18-21, they are filling their schedule with elective classes that they have already taken, such as Gourmet*

Foods, Yearbook, P.E., etc. While they may be participating in Community Independence Instruction or have a "job" within the school setting, there is no formal programming/curricula that is followed. LCPS needs to develop vocational programming across the high school campuses to meet this need.

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.

Background/Rationale for Recommendation 4C: *Job coaches do not receive the training they need because they do not participate in professional development during the summer, they work 6.84 hours per day, and their entire 6.84 hours are spent directly supporting students. There is one job coach at each high school, one in each of the five C.A.S.T programs, and one at the Project Search site.*

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.

Background/Rationale for Recommendation 4D: *The current transition supervisor fulfills a dual role as a SPED supervisor for 7 high schools, as well as supervising transition services. A transition supervisor in a full-time dedicated position would ensure that the changes that have been implemented, (e.g. the addition of Project Search, expansion of C.A.S.T. program, and revamping of Community Independence Instruction), would continue to flourish, and the development of new programming would be expedited.*

Priority 5: Dyslexia Services & Supports

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

(Priority for SEAC in year's 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018)

Background/Rationale*: Please refer to the Dyslexia Subcommittee update on page 45 for a comprehensive review of the issues leading to the following recommendations.*

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.

(Priority for SEAC in year's 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018)

Background/Rationale: *Recent improvements have been made in beginning to examine the current status of autism programs and supports through LCPS. The addition of a new Autism Supervisor has been helpful in beginning this assessment process. Autism Spectrum Disorders*

(ASD) and students who exhibit characteristics of ASD are extremely variable in symptomology, needs and behaviors that affect learning. These complex issues necessitate highly individualized evaluation, understanding, monitoring and adapting to help these students function optimally. Not only might there be a wide range of communication issues, there also exists social, emotional and behavioral issues that can cause rejection and isolation. Developing the most efficacious interventions combined with a complementary approach to teaching and guiding these students requires special expertise and ongoing training and development for the professionals who interact regularly with these students.

Importantly, students with ASD and similar education needs have the potential to function successfully in an appropriately supportive environment. These students are also likely to have talents that should be taken into consideration and nurtured to help them reach their potential. Transfers between schools, transitions out of high school and adapting to the new demands associated with these changes, create susceptibilities for ASD students to disengage or have significant adjustment difficulties that can escalate into problems that impede success.

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.

SEAC STRUCTURE

SEAC COMPOSITION

SEAC is composed of 21 members who are parents and at least one educator who volunteer their time to our community. They are appointed for two-year terms by the School Board through an application and recommendation process. The executive committee of SEAC is elected by its 21-person membership to lead the work of SEAC throughout the year. SEAC also requests that a PTA/PTO Representative for each LCPS school be appointed each year to attend meetings, participate in discussions, and report back to the school on matters that affect special education. The following SEAC members were elected to the following officer roles on the SEAC Executive Committee for this year (2017-2018):

Dr. Carol Williams-Nickelson, Chair	seacchair@lcps.org
Lorraine Hightower, Immediate Past Chair	seacpastchair@lcps.org
Sharon Tropf, Vice Chair, Membership	seacvicechairmembership@lcps.org
Shehnaz Khan, Vice Chair, Planning	seacvicechairplanning@lcps.org
Kristin Kane, Vice Chair, Communications	seacvicechaircommunications@lcps.org
Alison McArthur, Secretary	seacsecretary@lcps.org

As of November 2017, there are three open membership slots for the twenty-one-member committee. There are two applications in process of being recommended to the school board for appointment. In addition to the executive committee, the committee is composed of the following additional members:

Jackie Baker, Dyslexia Subcommittee Chair	Jackie.Baker@lcps.org
Billie Jo Bevan, Speech/Lang Focus Group Chair	BillieJo.Bevan-SEAC@lcps.org
Danielle Borde	Danielle.Borde@lcps.org
Deana Czaban, Transition Subcommittee Chair	Deana.Czaban-SEAC@lcps.org
Nancy deLlanas	Nancy.deLlanas-SEAC@lcps.org
Amy Elledge	Amy.L.Elledge-SEAC@lcps.org
Jodi Folta, Awards Ceremony Chair	Jodi.Folta-SEAC@lcps.org
Susan Grimes, Mental Health Focus Group Chair	Susan.Grimes@lcps.org
Anne Madlin	Anne.B.Madlin-SEAC@lcps.org
Melinda Mansfield	Melinda.Mansfield-SEAC@lcps.org
Nichole McMahon	Nichole.McMahon-SEAC@lcps.org
Craig Metz	Craig.Metz-SEAC@lcps.org
Kimberly Shierts	Kimberly.Shierts-SEAC@lcps.org

SEAC and its officers work closely with the Director of the Office of Special Education, Dr. Suzanne Jimenez, as the staff liaison to SEAC where she serves as a consultant and resource for SEAC. (Suzanne.Jimenez@lcps.org)

SEAC's school board liaison is Debbie Rose. The school board chair assigns liaisons to various LCPS groups each January. (Debbie.Rose@lcps.org)

SEAC establishes subcommittees and focus groups each year to examine and make recommendations pertaining to its priority issues and concerns. All SEAC members are required to participate on at least one subcommittee. The SEAC Chair serves as an ex-officio member of all subcommittees and focus groups.

The subcommittees and groups for the prior year (2016-2017) included Autism, Dyslexia, Transition and a focus group on Speech-Language Pathology.

This current year's (2017-2018) subcommittees include Autism, Dyslexia, Transition and a Mental Health focus group.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

SEAC business meetings are held throughout the school year, typically on the first Wednesday of each month at the LCPS Administration Building. SEAC's bylaws require at least six (6) business meetings per year, which SEAC meets or exceeds. The agenda for business meetings are published in advance of the meeting on the SEAC web page (www.lcps.org/seac) and the meetings are open to the public. Minutes are approved at the next scheduled meeting and posted to the SEAC web page. Talking points are created after each meeting and posted to the SEAC web page for PTA/PTO Representatives to share helpful information and updates on their respective campus. Business meetings include reports and updates from SEAC officers, the Director of Special Education, Parent Resource Services, and chairs of subcommittees and focus groups, as well as appropriate follow-up on issues raised at earlier meeting and new business. Time is reserved at each business meeting for public comment. Guidelines for public comment are also available on the SEAC web page.

Executive Committee planning meetings are held regularly throughout the school year. The agendas for these open meetings are also posted to the SEAC web page in advance of the meeting. Similarly, subcommittee and focus group meeting agendas and minutes are posted, and they are open to the public.

SEAC's business meetings are well-attended. They are paired with panel presentations that address SEAC's priorities and concerns to help identify and clarify the unmet needs of special education services. Last year's schedule panel presentations began at 7:00 p.m. with the business meeting following the presentation, and often with some subcommittee's meeting after the presentation. This year, SEAC's business meetings start at 6:00 p.m., with the panel presentation beginning at 7:00 p.m. This year's meetings and presentations are equally well attended thus far compared to last year.

SEAC's Bylaws were revised this year to ensure they were consistent with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), in which SEAC, as an advisory committee of the school board, must adhere. The guidelines for SEAC Public Comment are currently under revision for the same reason.

Prior Year's Public Comment Themes (2015-2016)

The public comment process is an important mechanism for obtaining feedback from the SEAC community in identifying widespread unmet special education needs. The following themes were identified through the 2015-2016 public comment process and contributed to the development of the current year's (2017-2018) priorities and concerns:

Self-Contained Classroom Models
- Students that are "mainstreamed with support" might benefit from a High Functioning ID self-contained classroom. (02/17)

Assistive Technology
- Assistive Technology Evaluation – disagree with denial of AT, what's next? (05/17)
- LCPS should offer Accessible Educational Materials (WEM) through AIM-VA; lack of understanding results in denial of effective communication supports (11/16)

Educational Evaluations
- Staff not using correct or current tests for assessments (10/16)
- Inadequate funding for IEE's at $2,000 (independent evaluation is more than $2,500 and parents must bear the financial burden) (10/16)

Understanding Special Ed Process
- Frustrating for parents to navigate, particularly non-English speaking parents – please simplify (12/16)

Early Identification of Needs
- Concern about a "waiting to fail" model and the loss of time produces anxiety/stress (12/16)

Reading/Dyslexia
- Better screening and identification tools needed early and fidelity checked; labeling kids with dyslexia is important so they don't feel "stupid" and have low self-esteem (12/16)
- Teachers should know how to teach and support dyslexic students (10/16)
- Pathways is ineffective for dyslexia (10/16)
- LCPS is behind in offering programs that benefit dyslexic students (10/16)

- Dyslexia programs taught incorrectly by other teachers who are not appropriately certified (10/16)

Staff Skills/Training to Work with SPED Students
- Psychologist & Educational Diagnostician missing dyslexia; Reading specialists untrained in signs of dyslexia (12/16)
- Inexperienced case managers making decisions that negatively impact SPED students (12/17)
- Administrators/others forcing kids into "flight or fight" mode w/child cowered in corner (12/17)
- General ed teacher grabbed SPED student resulting in a major meltdown (12/17)
- School limiting contact with staff due to staff that have had incidents with SPED student's due to problematic approaches that cause student distress; staff "scared" SPED student which resulted in student making self-harm statement to parent (12/16)

Case Mangers
- Inconsistency in who they are and approaches/decisions made that don't match needs of child or parent input (12/16)

Better Management of ASD/Autism
- Students with high functioning autism are treated poorly, physically attacked and bullied by LCPS employees who do not know how to interact with this population – causing distress and harm (12/16)
- Lack of differentiated programs for the range of ASD (12/16)

Appropriate Behavioral Interventions/Staff Lashing Out/Reports of LCPS Employee Abuse
- SPED teacher "punched 4th grade SPED student in face" with only acknowledgement that things "were handled badly" though later Principal and AP had home visit and indicated that the incident was "reported to the proper channels" but family did not hear any other follow-up (12/16)
- Staff sabotage: teacher got mad at SPED student using an anger escalation 1-5 chart and told student that she was at a "10" with him, demonstrating to student that he could now get more upset that an "5"; feeling that the few staff who have child's best interest at heart can't "protect" the child 100% of the time, nor should they have to (12/16)
- Request to make available to SEAC and public reports that track LCPS teacher or school employee abuse referrals that include demographics such as referrals by school, type of victim, type of perpetrator and perpetrators with more than one referral to determine patterns and what interventions and training is being provided to staff in the prevention, identification and discipline related to reports of abuse (11/16)

Reading, Following and Participating in the IEP
- Staff don't interact properly with children because they haven't read or follow IEPs, and don't understand disabilities – includes administrators and general ed teachers (12/16)
- Students attending IEP meetings and asked to sign without parent or legal counsel consultation (10/16)
- Student was required (not optional) to attend IEP meeting and sign the document the student did not understand (10/16)

Suspensions and Other Discipline due to Behaviors Associated with Disabilities
- Elementary student suspended for behaviors that are manifestation of disability, including documented/official suspensions and undocumented/unofficial suspensions for several years (12/16)

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Prior Year's Programming (2015-2016)

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Topics for SEAC's monthly presentations are generated from community interest, informational needs, and SEAC's priorities. SEAC's 2015-2016 programs were paired with business meetings and were as follows:

October 5, 2016:	**Dyslexia Part I: Vision and Data Collection from Community**
Dr. Suzanne Jimenez, LCPS Special Education Director

November 7, 2016:	**Executive Functioning: Strategies for Supporting Your Student**
Madhu Boland, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, Mindwell Psychology
Heather Applegate, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, LCPS Supervisor of Educational Diagnostic Services

December 7, 2016:	**Inclusive Schools: Best Practices Panel Discussion**
Bulldogs Understanding Differences in Students (BUDS Club), Stone Bridge HS
	David Lind, Dean of Resource & BUDS Club Advisor + Two Club Members
Best Buddies, John Champe HS
	Kelsi Yingling, Learning Resource and Best Buddies Advisor
	Vanessa Willett and Callie Fernanedez, Club Co-Vice Presidents
Bridges Program, J. Michael Lunsford MS
	Staff: Gigi Ozgur, Courtney Blauvelt, Valerie Cashman + One Student Member
Marching Panthers, Potomac Falls HS
	Tim Niebergall, Director of Band Programs

January 4, 2017:   **Dyslexia Part II: Services and Supports**
Dr. Suzanne Jimenez, LCPS Director of Special Education

February 1, 2017:   **Transition: Focus on CII-Community Independence Instruction (formerly CBI)**
Janet Clark, LCPS Transition Specialist
Bridget Gorey, Special Education Supervisor
Mary Young, Transition Consulting Teacher

March 2, 2017:   **Mental Health Concerns & Supports for Students with Disabilities Panel**
Neil McNerney, LPC, Board Member, Loudoun County Comm. Svcs. Board
John Lody, LCPS Director of Diagnostic and Prevention Services
Suzie Bartel, Ryan Bartel Foundation
Tom Sweitzer, A Place to Be (Music Therapy)

May 3, 2017:   **Assistive Technology: Supports and Services**
Mark Nichols, Supervisor, LCPS Assistive Technology
Andrew Drummond, Consultant and Founder, Out of the Box Accessibility, LLC

Current Year's Programming (2016-2017)

Consistent with past practices, the panel presentations this year occur in conjunction with monthly business meetings and were developed to complement the issues that SEAC is examining. The explicit goals for SEAC programs are to share progress and updates regarding SEAC's ongoing priorities and concerns, and deliver a panel presentation that provides information to generate SEAC member and participant discussion to help identify unmet special education needs. The schedule for this year's meetings and programs follows below.

September 6, 2017:   Orientation for PTA/PTO Reps and New Members, 6:15 p.m.
SEAC Briefing 2017-2018: The Role of SEAC in Identifying Unmet Needs, 7:00 p.m.
Henry J. Millward, Director, Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement, Division of Special Education and Student Services, Virginia Department of Education

October 4, 2017:   (Dyslexia Awareness Mo.) SEAC Business Meeting, 6:00 – 6:50 p.m.
An Update on Dyslexia Interventions and Next Steps, 7:00 p.m.

November 1, 2017:   SEAC Business Meeting, 6:00 – 6:50 p.m.
Understanding the LCPS Budget Process: Advocating for the Necessary Funding to Support Special Education, 7:00 p.m.

December 6, 2017: (Inclusive Schools Week) SEAC Business Meeting 6:00 – 6:50 p.m.
IEP Part 1 - Promoting True Individualization of the IEP: Goals, Services and Expertise, Inclusion, Discipline, Giftedness, 7:00 p.m.

January 17, 2018: SEAC Business Meeting, 6:00 – 6:50 p.m.
IEP Part 2 - Promoting True Individualization of the IEP: Goals, Services and Expertise, Inclusion, Discipline, Giftedness, 7:00 p.m.

February 7, 2018: SEAC Business Meeting, 6:00 – 6: 50 p.m.
Related Services: Speech/Language, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Music Therapy and Social Skills Training, 7:00 p.m.

March 7, 2018: SEAC Business Meeting, 6:00 – 6:50 p.m.
Facilitating a Continuum of Successful Transitions: From Elementary to Middle, Middle to High, and After High School, 7:00 p.m.

April 4, 2018: (Autism Awareness Mo.) SEAC Business Meeting, 6:00 – 6:50 p.m.
An Update on Autism Service Expansion, 7:00 p.m.

May 2, 2018: (Mental Health Awareness Mo.) SEAC Business Meeting, 6:00 – 6:50 p.m.
Mental Health Awareness and Integrative Supports for SPED Students (Cosponsored by LEAP/ MSAAC), 7:00 p.m.

May 15, 2018 (Tues): SEAC Annual Excellence in Special Education Awards Ceremony, 6:00 p.m.

ANNUAL EXCELLENCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AWARDS

The Annual Recognition of Excellence in Special Education Awards program is an important way for the LCPS community to thank those who through dedication, creativity, patience and determination excel at helping LCPS students receiving special education to experience success. Award recipients and nominees serve as role models as they promote acceptance and inclusion and an environment where every student is valued, welcomed and encouraged to succeed.

This past year marked the seventh anniversary of the annual awards ceremony. It was held in the three rooms for LCPS school board meetings and the space was overflowing with enthusiastic and proud supporters. SEAC was pleased that Superintendent Williams and school board member, Debbie Rose, participated in congratulating every award recipient. The opening remarks provided by Dr. Williams and Dr. Kealy, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services, communicated a powerful message about the value of inclusion and the significant contributions that students with disabilities can make that enrich learning for everyone and promote acceptance. (See Appendix 2 for a list of 2017 Award Recipients and Honorees.)

SEAC SUBCOMMITTEES AND FOCUS GROUP UPDATES

Last year's (2016-2017) subcommittees focused on autism, dyslexia and transition. A speech-language pathology (SLP) subcommittee was formed to review current SLP services and offer preliminary findings and recommendations to address concerns that were identified (outlined below). Updates for each subcommittee and focus group are provided below if not addressed elsewhere in this report.

AUTISM SUBCOMMITTEE

In Spring 2017, the SEAC Autism subcommittee conducted surveys of parents and teachers regarding services for students with Autism in LCPS. The SEAC Parent survey yielded a sample size of 480 responses (n=480) while the Teacher survey yielded a sample size of 301 responses (n=301) with 90.7% of those respondent's case managing and/or teaching students with ASD. The largest sample obtained was reflective of elementary age students with autism across parents (47.6%) and teachers (34.2%). Consistent areas for improved services and training were indicated across groups in the areas of social skills, executive functioning, and behavior. Transition services were also noted for an area of improvement in addition to services for students with high functioning autism and/or dually exceptional students. Teachers highlighted the need for increased training in Evidence Based Practices to include Applied Behavior Analysis. See Exhibit 3 for a summary of survey results.

LCPS accepted the Virginia Commonwealth University Autism Center for Excellence (VCU ACE) intensive technical assistance grant in March 2017. Throughout the spring, the core LCPS team worked with VCU ACE staff to complete the Autism Program Environment Rating Scale (APERS) assessment in schools and classrooms throughout the division across grade and service levels. The APERS indicated areas of improvement as social competence, communication, personal independence/competence, functional behavior, and curriculum and instruction across the continuum of services. Strengths that were gleaned from the assessments included family involvement, teaming among staff, and positive learning climates. The core Autism Services Improvement Team (ASIT) traveled to Richmond in June 2017 where the data gathered from the APERS and SEAC survey were analyzed to begin development of the four goal areas (Curriculum and Content Area of Focus, Evidence Based Practices, Professional Development, and Systems Change) on which the team will focus through the duration of the grant. The goals are divided into short term, intermediate, and long-term action plans to create the foundation for long term systematic change. While the goals are not formally completed, work toward the goals has already begun. The goals and plan will be presented to the larger ASIT advisory committee once completed.

LCPS autism staff also participated in the statewide Communities of Learning in Autism (CoLA) in June, 2017 in Richmond. The summer CoLA conference is an opportunity for divisions statewide to gather and learn about the state of the commonwealth in regard to special education as well as collaborate and problem solve common issues. Regional CoLA meetings are held throughout the year. LCPS will be presenting at the upcoming Region 4 CoLA meeting regarding our work with VCU ACE and other initiatives specific to Autism.

Based on Autism Subcommittee member discussions with parents at the beginning of this (2017-2018) school year, areas of need were identified as follows:

1. Training Assistant teachers (SPED) in proven therapies like ABA.

2. Encouraging weekly or bi-weekly communication between the Speech and Occupational therapists at school with the student's private speech and OT to ensure that goals are achieved faster.

3. Instill empathy for kids with special needs among all students through Disability Awareness activities.

4. Providing more inclusive programs like Reverse inclusion (currently available at Moorefield Station Elementary)

6. Currently it is difficult to find substitute teachers for the Special Education classrooms. This is especially true in the case of some classrooms with students that exhibit intense behaviors. What is the solution for this problem?

DYSLEXIA SUBCOMMITTEE

The dyslexia subcommittee's objective is to determine whether parents, students and educational staff have information and resources available to appropriately identify, support and remediate dyslexia and dyslexic children in Loudoun County Public Schools. This objective is supported by the following:

- Dyslexia, an unexpected language processing disorder, neurological in nature, can affect fluent reading, spelling, written expression, math and learning a second language.
- Dyslexia is the most common type of "specific learning disability" and affects 80 percent of individuals who have a learning disability or as many as 1 in 5 students.
- Dyslexia is distinguished from other learning disabilities due to its weakness occurring at the phonological level. Students with dyslexia experience difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities despite average to above average intelligence.
- Teachers, Reading Specialists and Special Education Teachers in pre-service education, receive minimal instruction on how to teach reading and receive even less instruction on dyslexia.
- There is compelling scientific evidence that intervention using a research validated code-based, multi-sensory, direct, explicit, structured, diagnostic and sequential structured literacy approach in instructing pupils with dyslexia, improves literacy outcomes for most students with dyslexia or symptoms of dyslexia.[1]
- Multiple studies have shown that early reading difficulties without appropriate remediation will have adverse effects leading to high school dropout, behavioral issues and socio-economic impact.[2]

Over the course of this past school year, the Dyslexia Subcommittee continues to receive input from parents, advocacy groups, and teachers who believe that LCPS remains reluctant to reference or use "dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia" in evaluations, eligibility, or in developing IEPs. While LCPS does not diagnose or identify students with dyslexia, as part of IDEA regulations, they do conduct evaluations to identify children who may have a specific learning disability, which includes dyslexia and other forms of learning disabilities. In accordance with the Virginia Education Code and IDEA, one of the Dyslexia Subcommittee's 2016 recommendations was that LCPS develop more effective tools to identify dyslexic students or students with characteristics of dyslexia. By implementing effective tools, appropriate interventions and supports can be provided thus closing the achievement gap for students with specific learning disabilities. While LCPS is starting to use a more comprehensive screening tool, SEAC continues to hear public comments regarding the need for parents to

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[1] IDA Fact Sheet on Structured Literacy. (2015). *Effective Reading Instruction for Students with Dyslexia*. Retrieved from https://dyslexiaida.org/effective-reading-instruction/
[2] American Psychological Association. (2012). *Facing the school dropout dilemma.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/school-dropout-prevention.aspx

request Independent Educational Evaluations (IEE) because "the county evaluation is not extensive enough to understand all of the unique academic needs for a child with the specific learning disability of dyslexia."

Although public comment indicates that LCPS continues to be reluctant to reference or use "dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia" as mentioned above, the Dyslexia Subcommittee is encouraged by the Diagnostic and Prevention Services (DPS) presentation made to SEAC in October 2017. At this time, DPS provided information about the training of Educational Diagnosticians, new progress monitoring software, differential assessments to identify different types of dyslexia, identification of new assessments related to orthographic dyslexia, and dyslexia risk scores.   In addition, the collaboration of DPS in the new Strategic Action Plan and Specialized Reading Instruction Stakeholders Committee and designing of "decision making tools" and new RTI/MTSS manual as resources for building level decision making teams is promising. There is clearly a need for this training and new resources as demonstrated by public comment regarding the identification and evaluation from LCPS testing professionals (School Psychologists and Educational Diagnosticians.) Public comment further indicates that LCPS testing professionals are still recommending Whole Word and Balanced Literacy Strategies in the "Recommendation" section of educational and psychological evaluations. These strategies include, but are not limited to, the "3 cueing system" as reading decoding strategies for children with dyslexia and weak readers. The Dyslexia Subcommittee strongly advises that the school professionals who are testing children for eligibility now, understand and apply the science of reading while assessing for weaknesses and strengths, and thereby make recommendations accordingly. The Dyslexia Subcommittee further recommends that LCPS revise their "Recommendation" drop-down menus for evaluations to align with the new science based reading training (FOLI, OG) and that drop-down menus only serve as a guide as every recommendation should be specific to each child's unique needs. The Dyslexia Subcommittee continues to encourage evaluators to reference and/or use the words "dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia" in evaluations, eligibility, and in developing IEPs.

The Purpose of RIT & MTSS

"Response to Intervention (RTI) is an administrative framework for organizing the resources of a school to provide appropriate instruction to all students. Through quality classroom instruction and increasingly intense interventions, RTI models are intended to reduce referrals to special education while increasing the accuracy of learning disabilities classifications through high-quality classroom instruction and increasingly intense interventions for students at risk (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002)."

A multi-tier system of supports (MTSS) is more comprehensive. It may include the three levels of RTI. But MTSS goes beyond just academics and will cover social and emotional supports. MTSS includes three levels, or tiers, of instruction. Each tier has a set of evidence-based practices to meet the instructional goals. (See APPENDIX A)

Findings from Review of RTI/MTSS in LCPS

According to a review of multiple School Improvement Plans (SIPs), it appears that each School Principal determines the RTI/ MTSS components that include universal screeners, progress monitoring software, interventions and training for staff to help provide services to students with reading deficits. Of the schools that SEAC reviewed, every single school has a different model for RTI/MTSS which includes universal screening, identification for intervention, definitions of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 instruction, progress monitoring and intervention. More importantly, this includes the duration and frequency of progress monitoring as well as the amount of time it takes to refer a student to Child Study or Special Education for eligibility testing, if that student does not make adequate progress from Tier 2 instruction.   SEAC is concerned that RTI/MTSS is being implemented differently all over the county as it does not allow a way to determine whether or not programs are effective.   In addition, SEAC recognizes the issue of equitable treatment regarding students receiving RTI/MTSS without fidelity. As noted in previous annual reports, a multi-year top priority for SEAC continues to be consistency for special education students throughout the district.

The Importance of Universal Screening for Early Identification of Students with Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a neurobiological disorder. Research has shown that brain plasticity decreases through childhood. It takes four times as long to intervene in fourth grade as it does in late kindergarten (per NICHD) because of brain development and because of the increase in content for students to learn as they grow. Children at risk for reading failure can be reliably identified even before kindergarten. "Deficits in phonological awareness, rapid automatized naming, verbal working memory and letter knowledge have been shown to be robust precursors of dyslexia in children as young as age three" (Gaab, 2017). Extensive evidence exists that supports the fact that early intervention is critical. Struggling readers who do not receive early intervention tend to fall further behind their peers (Stanovich, 1986). Psychological and clinical implications of poor reading development can be prevented/minimized if we identify and intervene as early as possible.

As stated above, part of the RTI/MTSS model is universal screening to identify those students who are potentially at risk for reading failure, including those who may have developmental reading disabilities. Recently at the National Science Foundation Conference on Dyslexia (September 27, 2017), John Gabrieli spoke to members of Congress and policy makers about the issue of screening. It was determined that "*one test "was not as important in the research as what to test*. Below is an excerpt that outlines the recommended areas to test, per current research, by grade level from the International Dyslexia Association Factsheet "Universal Screening: K-2 Reading" published October 4, 2017:

Although a quick assessment (no longer than 30 minutes), a screening battery should include key domains, identified as predictors of future reading performance.

Kindergarten
Research indicates that kindergarten screening measures are most successful when they include assessment of the following areas: phonological awareness including phoneme segmentation, blending, onset and rime; rapid automatic naming including letter naming fluency; letter sound association; and phonological memory, including non-word repetition (Catts, et al. 2015; Jenkins & Johnson, 2008).

First Grade
Research indicates first-grade screening measures are most successful when they include assessment of the following areas: phoneme awareness, specifically phoneme segmentation, blending, and manipulation tasks; letter naming fluency; letter sound association; phonological memory, including nonword repetition; oral vocabulary; and word recognition fluency (i.e., accuracy and rate) (Compton, et al., 2010; Jenkins & Johnson, 2008). The Center on Response to Interventions Screening Briefs indicate that oral reading fluency could be added in mid first grade.

Second Grade
The Center on Response to Interventions Screening Briefs indicate that in second grade, screening assessment should include word identification, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Word identification assessments should include real and nonsense words.

K–2
The assessment of oral expressive and receptive language (including vocabulary, syntax and comprehension) provides key information in an individual's reading profile and is predictive of reading outcomes. Unfortunately, there are limited measures at the K-2 level to assess these areas for screening purposes. Without such screening measures, testing for expressive and receptive language is usually done in diagnostic evaluations (Gersten et al., 2008).

There is no one test or assessment tool that measures all reading skills. Different assessments measure different discrete skills. Ideally, multiple measures for screening purposes should be used to ensure that all identified skills have been assessed at the appropriate grade level. When multiple measures are used to screen students, the accuracy of identifying those at risk improves significantly.[3]

Current Status of LCPS Use of Universal Screening for Early Intervention

According to the Diagnostic and Prevention Services (DPS) presentation to SEAC (10/2017), LCPS will continue to use the PALS and DRA as required universal screening tools for reading skills in all schools at the beginning and end of each grade levels. However, in response to the SEAC Dyslexia Subcommittee's request for a more robust Universal Screening battery, the LCPS

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[3] International Dyslexia Association Factsheet, 2017. "Universal Screening: K-2 Reading." Retrieved from https://dyslexiaida.org/universal-screening-k-2-reading/

Specialized Reading Instruction stakeholder committee has selected the FastBridge Assessment to assist in "identification of children at-risk for academic failure." According to the DPS SEAC presentation, FastBridge is able to screen for "numerous discrete foundational reading skills, as well as all five areas related to reading instruction."

In addition, this committee has developed a recommended screenings document ("RTI/MTSS manual"), along with a "Decision-Making Tool for Targeted Intervention" document to assist teams in determining an appropriate instructional match for targeted reading intervention. This is an exciting step in the correct direction. According to IDA and all current research presented at NSF, "when multiple measures are used to screen students, the accuracy of identifying those at risk improves is significant."

Since Principals are considered the Instructional Leaders at their schools and make decisions as to whether the school will participate in RTI/MTSS, LCPS has provided a RTI/MTSS manual for those schools who may choose to use additional screeners. Yet only if it is determined that more information is necessary, would a "Decision-Making Tool for Targeted Intervention" be implemented. DPS indicated that this tool is supposed be a *uniform approach county-wide, have hyperlinks for targeted interventions in areas of need, give direction regarding how/when to intensify duration or frequency of intervention if not successful, and provide on-going differentiation and remediation within core instruction*. Currently, it is unclear to SEAC who or what will trigger or determine its implementation.

SEAC Recommendations for Early Identification

As stated in SEAC's previous annual report, the PALS and DRA scores alone are too limited in scope to effectively identify students with dyslexia and do not take in to account all of the areas recommended by current research for each grade, frequency for screening, student's history of language impairment or family history of dyslexia. In fact, LCPS's own research regarding use of DRA scores in identifying reading difficulties found that there was not a strong correlation between DRA and ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) scores. LCPS reported that an overall strength of the relationship between Grade 2 DRA and Grade 3 ITBS scores did not approach $r = .70$. Therefore, LCPS researchers were not able to ensure that the DRA validly measures a "*student's ability to decode and comprehend what he/she has read*." At the time that this research was conducted, LCPS researchers recommended that "*Until these correlation results are improved, future evaluations of reading outcomes using the DRA should be limited to the classroom level*."[4]

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[4] Green, Chad & Knoblock, Stephan Ed.D. (2008) Program Evaluation *Steps to Literacy Program (Cohorts 1-3).* LCPS Research Office. pg. 11.

LCPS's research outcomes further confirms the findings of their own literature review, "*the DRA places high demands on teacher judgment in the selection of appropriate grade-level texts, scoring, and interpretation. Although instructionally relevant to educators, the assessment exhibits some reliability and validity problems, rending them inappropriate for high-stakes purposes, such as the identification of reading difficulties*" (Invernizzi, M., Landrum, T. J., Howell, J. L., & Warley, H. P., 2005; Spector, J., 2005). Nevertheless, the DRA does appear to have sufficient reliability for lower stakes decisions, such as the selection of classroom reading materials (e.g., leveled texts).[5] While the Dyslexia Subcommittee appreciates the use of the DRA for lower stakes decision making, SEAC continues to recommend that the DRA not be utilized as a screening tool, progress monitoring tool or even for verification of PALS in identifying or monitoring reading due to concerns with reliability and validity (DRA). The Dyslexia Subcommittee agrees with this LCPS finding and recommendation that the DRA be limited to the classroom level to be used for selection of classroom reading materials. As stated in the 2016 SEAC Report, the PALS is too limited in scope to effectively screen for reading difficulties and assess for the presence/absence of the underlying skills that support reading skill development and the presence/absence of other red flags/risk factors. The combination of PALS and DRA is not fully sufficient to guide initial instructional methods, support keen and accurate observations of progress/lack of progress, and support earlier identification and intervention. Should LCPS continue to use the combination of PALS and DRA as screening tools, then the Dyslexia Subcommittee strongly recommends that LCPS consider adding a Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) assessment to the battery of screeners.

Furthermore, the Dyslexia Subcommittee agrees with the current research findings and recommendations from IDA that indicate a universal screening should be a screening battery that includes the key domains, identified as predictors of future reading performance. In addition, a universal screening test battery should be consistent throughout the district. Early intervention is so key that IDEA defines, "Early identification and assessment of disabilities in children" means the implementation of a formal plan for identifying a disability as early as possible in a child's life. (34 CFR 300.34(c). SEAC does not agree that decisions about universal screening (K-2), progress monitoring and early intervention should be a building-level decision as it is too significant to dismiss. Extensive evidence exists that supports the fact that early intervention is critical. "Although a diagnosis of dyslexia usually is not given before the end of second grade or the beginning of third grade (after the requisite period of failing), intensive interventions are most effective in kindergarten or first grade." (Gaab, 2017.) "It takes four times as long to intervene in fourth grade as it does in late kindergarten (NICHD) because of

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[5] Green, Chad & Knoblock, Stephan Ed.D. (2008) Program Evaluation *Steps to Literacy Program (Cohorts 1-3).* LCPS Research Office. pg. .5.

brain development and because of the increase in content for students to learn as they grow older."

<u>The Critical Need for Effective Reading Instruction</u>

According to research, only 5% of the student population, learns to read without much effort and 35% of the student population will learn to read relatively easily with broad instruction (balanced literacy and whole word approach). Even so, the research has found that these two populations would still be advantaged by a structured literacy approach to reading. However, in order for 40-50% of the student population to learn how to read proficiently (to make progress and go forward) the structured literacy approach which is code-based, explicit, systematic and sequential instruction is essential. For the bottom 10-15% of students (those with dyslexia), a structured literacy approach which is code-based, explicit, systematic, sequential, diagnostic instruction combined with many repetitions is crucial. (Lyon 1998; NRP, 2000; IDA, 2015; Hempenstall, 2016) <u>Research supports that 50-65% of all students **require** a code-based, explicit, systematic, sequential, diagnostic instruction.</u> [6] [7] [8] [9]

The current issue of <u>Perspectives, (Volume 43, No. 3)</u> a quarterly publication by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) is titled "Response to Intervention: Promises, Problems, and Progress." This issue contains articles that discuss the basic information about the framework with a focus on core instruction and its implications for curriculum decisions, teacher training, and referrals. Below are some key points from these articles:

> "When interventions are carefully designed, fully implemented, and closely monitored, early grade small group instruction can achieve the goal of reducing the incidence of reading failure (Balu et al., 2015).
> Advisories on implementation of RTI (e.g., Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs & Barnes, 2007; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012; Spear-Swerling, 2015) consistently advocate the adoption of school-wide procedures, including universal screening, progress-monitoring, "high-quality" classroom instruction, tiered intervention, and flexible grouping so that students with similar instructional needs can be taught efficiently and effectively from their first years in school.

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[6] Lyon, Reid. (1998). *Why Reading is not a Natural Process*. <u>Educational Leadership, Volume 55, Number 6 What Is Basic?</u> Pages 14-18. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar98/vol55/num06/Why-Reading-Is-Not-a-Natural-Process.aspx

[7] National Institute of Child Health & Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.* (NIH Publication No. 00 4769). Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office.

[8] IDA Fact Sheet on Structured Literacy. (2015). *Effective Reading Instruction for Students with Dyslexia*. Retrieved from https://dyslexiaida.org/effective-reading-instruction/

[9] Hempenstall, Kerry, (2016). *Read about it: Scientific Evidence for Teaching Reading.* (The Center for Independent Studies. Retrieved from https://dataworks-ed.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Kerry.pdf

It is possible, however, for schools to adopt an RTI framework without embracing assessment and instruction practices that are consistent with current reading science (Brady, 2011; Foorman et al., 2016; Kilpatrick, 2015; Seidenberg, 2017). The framework alone does not ensure that optimal methods– language-based, explicit, systematic, cumulative, and hands on–are used by all teachers. The stagnation of fourth-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress reading scores between 2007 and 2015 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016) and the recent evaluation of RTI by the Institute of Education Sciences (Balu et al., 2015) suggest that reading instruction is far from optimal, even in schools that say they are implementing RTI.

As originally conceived, RTI depends first and foremost on effective classroom teaching so that fewer students need small group or intensive remediation. Successful RTI approaches also require alignment and compatibility among the "tiers" of service so that classroom teaching is supported and reinforced in supplemental small groups (Tier 2). Intensive remediation (Tier 3), necessary for students with the most severe reading disabilities, should be coordinated with regular classroom materials, strategies, and content. Otherwise, students may be caught between conflicting approaches or may simply not experience the comprehensive instruction, reinforcement, or consistency that will help them learn." [10]

Improving Outcomes of LCPS Pathways Reading & Structured Literacy Approach

As previously discussed, 50-65% of students will require code-based (code-emphasis) instruction to learn how to read. Code-emphasis instruction is based in the current science of reading. LCPS's Pathways to Reading and Writing, an explicit staff development model, which provides kindergarten, first and second grade teachers, and instructional specialists with a "consistent, research and strategies-based framework of reading and writing instruction" is a Balanced Literacy/Whole Language approach (Literature-Emphasis) to reading and writing. This Literature-Emphasis based approach to instruction involves teaching children to use the three cueing systems (meaning, sentence structure, and letter sounds) all together, in learning to read. Instruction integrates reading with thinking, writing and listening.

Strategies for LCPS instruction include the following:
- **Letters and Sounds**: Letters have distinctive features and may be identified by names or sounds.
- **Word Study**: The phonetic and structural features of words.
- **Comprehension:** The process of constructing meaning while reading.
- **Phonics**: Letter and sound relationships and how they are used in reading and writing.

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[10] Moats, Louisa. (2017). *Can Prevailing Approaches to Reading Instruction Accomplish the Goals of RtI?* Perspectives, (Volume 43, No. 3), International Dyslexia Association (IDA) "Response to Intervention: Promises, Problems, and Progress".

- **Independent reading**: Students read texts independently with teacher support as needed.
- **Shared reading**: Teacher and students read text together concentrating on targeted skills.
- **Guided reading and strategy lessons**: Teacher guides the reading of small, differentiated student groups with appropriate leveled texts.
- **Read aloud**: Teacher reads text aloud to students in order to model and focus on skills.
- **Writer's Workshop**: Students are engaged in the writing process and produce pieces of writing in many genres.

According to Moats (2017) there is a fundamental difference between the two approaches of reading of code-emphasis instruction (Structured Literacy approach) and literature emphasis instruction (Balanced Literacy/Whole Word approach):

"There is an easily identifiable, fundamental difference between code-emphasis instruction, supported by research, and meaning-emphasis instruction, which is not nearly as effective (Foorman et al., 2016; Kilpatrick, 2015; Seidenberg, 2017). Code emphasis instruction assumes that basic skills are difficult to acquire and that students who learn to read by incidental exposure to print are the exception, not the norm. Literature-emphasis instruction assumes that printed word recognition will be easily learned if the student's drive to make meaning out of the print is engaged. With literature-emphasis instruction, phonics and word reading skills are viewed as unnecessary, distracting, and even harmful by some proponents (Clay, 1991; Goodman, 1986; Smith, 1992). Although the latter views have been disproven many times over, their influence in classrooms is deeply ingrained and perpetuated by professional organizations, conferences, and teaching materials."[11] (SEE APPENDIX B)

In order for RTI/MTSS to work as it was designed, structured literacy must be incorporated into LCPS Pathways reading model:

"Successful RTI approaches also require alignment and compatibility among the "tiers" of service so that classroom teaching is supported and reinforced in supplemental small groups (Tier 2). Intensive remediation (Tier 3), necessary for students with the most severe reading disabilities, should be coordinated with regular classroom materials, strategies, and content. Otherwise, students may be caught between conflicting approaches or may simply not experience the comprehensive instruction, reinforcement, or consistency that will help them learn."[12]

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[11] Moats, Louisa (2017) "Can Prevailing Approaches to Reading Instruction Accomplish the Goals of RtI?". Perspectives, (Volume 43, No. 3), International Dyslexia Association (IDA) "Response to Intervention: Promises, Problems, and Progress" pg. 18.

[12] Moats, Louisa. (2017). *Can Prevailing Approaches to Reading Instruction Accomplish the Goals of RtI?* Perspectives, (Volume 43, No. 3), International Dyslexia Association (IDA) "Response to Intervention: Promises, Problems, and Progress" pg. 15.

With this science based knowledge, the Dyslexia Subcommittee recommends that the LCPS explicit staff development model of Pathways be revised to incorporate a structured literacy approach for grades K-3. This recommended revision to the Pathways model is necessary in order to increase alignment and compatibility among all "tiers" of service. SEAC believes classroom teaching should support remediation and not work against progress or be in conflict due to differing strategies. If LCPS continues to utilize a Balanced Literacy/Whole language approach in Tier 1, SEAC believes the "wait to fail" model for struggling readers will continue to persevere and the desired decrease in referrals and testing for special education services from RTI and MTSS will not be achieved.

SEAC believes a goal of Kindergarten-2nd grade English should be to provide a solid foundation for reading with an evidence-based English Language Arts (ELA) program for all students. Additionally, SEAC suggests that the prevention of reading difficulties should also be a goal of LCPS's ELA program. "Intervention researchers estimate that if the best prevention and interventional approaches of code-emphasis instruction were widely used, the percentage of elementary school students reading below a basic level would be about 5% rather than the current 30% to 34%."[13] "But if weak readers are encouraged to use weak-reader-style strategies (contextual guessing and not focusing on the precise spelling patterns within words), then how can they rise above that weak reading style and become proficient readers? We have no evidence that the three-cueing systems model provides poor readers with any kind of path out of their reading difficulties."[14] In fact, "skilled reading is not a matter of skilled guessing. Poor readers need to become proficient in the code of printed English and to build a large sight vocabulary. No amount of guessing ability will close the gap between poor readers and their typically developing peers."[15] To achieve the best outcome, SEAC recommends that LCPS ensure delivery of science based reading instruction[16] and intervention, in order to maximize the number of children who are reading proficiently, as well as provide the type of early intervention that meets IDEA requirements of Early Identification (34 CFR300.34(c), known to mitigate the long-term impact of dyslexia.

Legislation Requiring Dyslexia Advisor

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[13] Kilpatrick, David. (2015). *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties (Essentials of Psychological Assessment)* pg. 288.

[14] Kilpatrick, David. (2015). *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties (Essentials of Psychological Assessment)* pg. 38.

[15] Kilpatrick, David. (2015). Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties (Essentials of Psychological Assessment) pg. 288.

[16] Reade, A. & Sayko, S. (2017). Learning about your child's reading development. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Improving Literacy. Retrieved from http://improvingliteracy.org

A new Virginia Law (HB2395), Effective July 2017 requires public schools with Reading Specialists to designate a Dyslexia Advisor:

> *In addition to the full-time equivalent positions required elsewhere in this section, each local school board shall employ the following reading specialists in elementary schools, one full-time in each elementary school at the discretion of the local school board. One reading specialist employed by each local school board that employs a reading specialist shall have training in the identification of and the appropriate interventions, accommodations, and teaching techniques for students with dyslexia or a related disorder and shall serve as an advisor on dyslexia and related disorders. Such reading specialist shall have an understanding of the definition of dyslexia and a working knowledge of (i) techniques to help a student on the continuum of skills with dyslexia; (ii) dyslexia characteristics that may manifest at different ages and grade levels; (iii) the basic foundation of the keys to reading, including multisensory, explicit, systemic, and structured reading instruction; and (iv) appropriate interventions, accommodations, and assistive technology supports for students with dyslexia.*

Definition of a Dyslexia Advisor

In accordance with the new law (effective July, 2017), LCPS was required to designate a Dyslexia Advisor. SEAC was provided the bio for the Dyslexia Advisor and Co-Advisor, as well as LCPS's description of the new Dyslexia Advisor role:

> "LCPS Dyslexia Advisor serves as a liaison between the Specialized Instructional Facilitators in Reading (SIF-R) Team and the Reading Specialists. Facilitates collaboration between special education and general education. Brings the expertise of both special education and reading specialist to professional learning opportunities.
>
> The role of Dyslexia Advisor at LCPS is to serve as a resource for staff regarding dyslexia identification, and intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia and the provision of specialized reading instruction. Additional responsibilities are to advise the stakeholder's group as the strategic action plan is developed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated and to provide/participate in division-wide professional learning and learning opportunities for interested parents and community members. The advisor will provide input and feedback to the Strategic action plan for specialized reading, will serve on the stakeholders group for specialized reading instruction and will work under the direction of the supervisor for specialized reading instruction in the training for all staff, modeling and coaching of instructional strategies as well as observations and feedback to ensure implementation and fidelity of practice across schools."

An area of concern for the SEAC community is that the Dyslexia Advisor is not accessible to parents and will not participate in IEP meetings. In addition, LCPS's current definition does not state how the Dyslexia Advisor will assist in selections of appropriate accommodations and

assistive technology as described by the new law. LCPS's definition focuses on serving as a resource for staff in the identification, intervention and provision of specialized reading instruction. According to public comment, parents are concerned that since training of staff is limited and in the beginning stages of "building capacity," that often there is no one at the IEP table to advise on best practices related to goals, accommodations, and assistive technology for students with the Specific Learning Disability of dyslexia. This is magnified by the fact that screening, progress monitoring, and interventions are determined at the building level, and LCPS's Tier 1 (and often Tier 2 and Tier 3 depending on the school) ELA curriculum is based in a balanced literacy approach.

While SEAC would like to see expansion of the Dyslexia Advisor's role, the Dyslexia Subcommittee commends the Director of Special Education, the Supervisor of Instructional Facilitators in Specialized Reading as well as the Dyslexia Advisor who have recently started actively engaging and collaborating with the SEAC Dyslexia Subcommittee. SEAC representatives have also been provided and greatly appreciate the opportunity to give input at the LCPS Specialized Reading Instruction Stakeholder meetings. The Dyslexia Subcommittee acknowledges and appreciates staffs' time, hard work and efforts to develop resources, offer training opportunities, provide coaching and build division-wide capacity to meet the personalized literacy needs of all students. The Dyslexia Subcommittee encourages and looks forward to continued collaboration with these individuals in order to achieve best outcomes for students with the Specific Learning Disability of Dyslexia.

Impact of Specialized Reading Instructional Facilitators (SIF-Rs)

In response to the Dyslexia Subcommittee request for structured literacy training for teachers, a new position of Supervisor of Instructional Facilitators for Specialized Reading and a team of nine SIF-Rs were identified and trained. The mission of the SIF-R team states, "We will empower LCPS teachers with knowledge to meet the personalized literacy needs of all students by building division-wide capacity through ongoing, collaborative professional learning and coaching to facilitate the delivery of explicit, systematic, multi-sensory, and direct instruction in a data-driven structured literacy approach implemented with fidelity." The role and responsibilities of SIF-Rs include, coaching and peer feedback, planning effective instruction, delivering instruction with fidelity, summarizing instructional data for IEP/progress reporting purposes, modeling of instructional practices, with gradual release of support, assistance with universal screening, data analysis and progress monitoring, consultation and collaboration for those delivering intervention (instructional match), and delivering professional learning opportunities (FOLI, Language! Live.)

Currently, the Elementary direct coaching support is determined by a school selection process indicated by a gap in performance between Non-Special Education and Special Education Students (those schools with the largest gap of 40%). SIF-Rs currently serve one or two elementary schools as a primary "Home-base" school and SIF-Rs only serve Secondary Schools in order to directly coach implementation of Language!Live (L!L) intervention. It is of note that

the Secondary Schools are self-selected by participation in the L!L intervention. Currently, only 68% of secondary schools are participating in the L!L intervention. In addition, due to parent feedback, not all students who would benefit (L!L is an instructional match) from the self-selected secondary school have access to the L!L intervention. This is due to a combination of factors that Special Education Teachers are assigned per grade level, not all special education teachers are trained in L!L, and each school determines how the class will fit into building-determined intervention model. Consequently, SEAC has multiple concerns related to effective reading intervention for a large population of students in middle and high school. According to information provided at a Specialized Reading Instruction Workshop, hosted by LCPS Parent Resource Services, "All schools have access to consultation/ collaboration points of contact, facilitated through their Special Education Supervisor and Supervisor of SIF-Rs." Yet SEAC remains concerned that schools have access ONLY if they so choose and maintain certain RTI/MTSS requirements which again, are determined at the building level.

LCPS Training Efforts for Specialized Reading Instruction

LCPS states that participants in the Specialized Reading Instructional Training may be a resource to their school in collaborating with team members on data analysis, instructional match suggestions, peer fidelity feedback and/or suggested research-based strategies. However, SEAC notes that just because a Principal selected "Specialized Literacy Team" was trained in FOLI and OG, this does not guarantee that a structured literacy approach is being implemented to a student in need by members of this team. Please refer to APPENDIX C for a list of the offered LCPS training, the description, number of teachers and administrators, who have completed the training and LCPS's targeted audience to receive different levels of training.

Comments Regarding Training

The Dyslexia Subcommittee is confident that the new training in code-emphasis instruction (FOLI) will prove to be of great benefit to all teachers and students. In addition, the Dyslexia Subcommittee could not be more excited about the investment LCPS has made with IMSE for OG training of SIF-Rs. This partnership is critical to closing the achievement gap for students with the specific learning disability of dyslexia as it is the SIF-Rs who will ultimately provide coaching to build capacity for the evidence based instruction that these students, and students with dyslexia related characteristics, require in order to advance. The Dyslexia Subcommittee understands and appreciates that full implementation of district teachers and reading specialists will take time. That aside, SEAC recognizes and commends LCPS for making significant training strides and putting resources in place for long-term maintenance.

SEAC's Recommendation for Expansion of Fundamentals of Literacy Instruction (FOLI)

FOLI is professional development and training for a general education K-3 teacher to learn how to put together an English language arts lesson plan according to the science of reading. It is training for teachers to learn code emphasis based instruction for Tier 1. Currently, LCPS has

targeted Secondary Special Education Teachers servicing students with SLD in the area of basic reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) skills, Reading Specialists and Diagnosticians for this training. Currently, LCPS has 9 LCPS staff members (SIF-Rs, Consulting Teachers and Supervisors Trained as Trainers) that have been trained as trainers for FOLI, in order to build capacity with future professional learning opportunities. FOLI is aligned with best practices for Tier 1 code emphasis (science based) reading instruction K-3. Per IDEA, the school district is responsible to meet requirements of early identification and intervention (34 CFR300.34). As a result, the Dyslexia Subcommittee recommends that LCPS use the nine FOLI trainers to train all K-3 teachers and reading specialists in FOLI in order to facilitate the movement of current Tier 1 reading instruction to align with the science of reading.

Findings for Middle School and High School Instruction

According to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), popular reading approaches (i.e. Guided Reading or Balanced Literacy) are not effective for students with dyslexia because these approaches do not focus on the decoding skills struggling readers need in order to succeed. Structured literacy (such as Orton-Gillingham) explicitly teaches systematic word identification/decoding strategies. These strategies benefit all struggling readers but are vital for those with dyslexia. When a student with dyslexia is taught the structure of the language using a structured, multisensory, explicit and systematic approach, they are able to improve and maintain their reading and spelling skills.

SEAC does not support Reading and Writing Workshop as an appropriate approach for teaching children who need a structured multisensory, explicit and systematic approach on how to write. Writing workshop is more appropriate for a student who is a solid reader and writer, has good, solid foundational literacy skills, and is functioning at the average or even above-average level across the ELA spectrum. Writer's workshop works - when the students who are experiencing it already know how to read and write well but need more opportunities to write - and to have their writing revised and discussed. Unfortunately, that is not the case for students who have dyslexia. Students with dyslexia require a systematic, direct, explicit and cumulative instruction for writing at the transcription level, the sentence level and the paragraph/essay level. [17] [18]

Currently, the only Reading Intervention listed for students in middle and high school is Language Live! (6-12), Reading Strategies (6-8) and Literacy Strategies (9-12). SEAC is concerned about the Reading and Literacy Strategies classes as this intervention varies from

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[17] International Dyslexia Association. (2017) *Dyslexia in the Classroom: What Every Teacher Needs To Know.* Retrieved from https://dyslexiaida.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/DITC-Handbook.pdf

[18] Berninger, V., Richards, T., Abbott, R. (2015, published on line April 21, 2015). Differential diagnosis of dysgraphia, dyslexia, and OWL LD: Behavioral and neuroimaging evidence. *Reading and Writing. An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *28*, 1119-1153*.* doi:10.1007/s11145-015-9565-0 A2 contains supplementary material available to authorized users: NIHMS683238 Publ ID 2615-04-21_0002. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4553247/

school to school. SEAC has learned that the Reading and Literacy Strategies classes can be anything from a balanced literacy blended learning program (like Achieve3000), a structured literacy program (like Wilson Reading System) or Language Live/L!L (a new hybrid of code-emphasis blended learning and teacher instruction program and/or a combination approach of different software and teacher instruction). It is important to note that L!L is a 2-year program (only if implemented with fidelity to the program) with an end target of an 8th grade reading level outcome. Even more concerning to SEAC is the fact that it is completely up to the Principal how the school will fit and implement the reading interventions into their school schedule and who will qualify.

SEAC believes this decision-making model leads to both equity and program fidelity issues. Implementing reading interventions without fidelity to research validated program recommendations will not allow students with dyslexia to make progress. In addition, parents continue to express concern to SEAC that LCPS will not provide them with diagnostic data to support evidence of student progress in reading programs. As SEAC noted in the 2016 annual report, without consistent and effective progress monitoring, dyslexic students might spend years in specialized reading instruction or special education without ever acquiring functional decoding, encoding (spelling) and/or written expression skills.

Currently, there is the lack of research regarding blended learning programs (e.g., Achieve3000) and their use as intervention for students with dyslexia. A recent special report from Education Week about personalized learning in general states, "The evidence base is very weak at this point."[19] "Overall, the personalized-learning field is still marked by significant unresolved pedagogical tensions, said Benjamin Riley, the Executive Director of the nonprofit Deans for Impact, which seeks to improve teacher preparation. Among the biggest concerns is the appropriate role for software in the classroom, how much autonomy is best for student learning, and the challenge of maintaining high standards and social interaction when every student is pursuing his or her own path."[20] For those reasons, the Dyslexia Subcommittee recommends that the blended learning programs used as interventions for students be closely monitored for appropriateness of meeting the unique needs of students in special education.

The Dyslexia Subcommittee has identified areas of concern for students transitioning to and currently attending middle and high school. Students transitioning to middle school currently do not have the option to continue an OG approach in middle school. The lack of interventions and division-wide consistency due to principal "buy-in" for all secondary students and lack of fidelity to program models because of scheduling will continue to push students further behind

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[19] Herold, Benjamin. (2017) *6 Key Insights: Rand Corp. Researchers Talk Personalized Learning. From* Education Week Special Report, Personalized Learning: Vision vs. Reality. Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/11/08/6-key-insights-rand-corp-researchers-talk.html?cmp=eml-eb-sr-personalized-11082017&M=58266449&U=2635593
[20] Herold, Benjamin. (2017) *The Case(s) Against Personalized Learning. From* Education Week Special Report, Personalized Learning: Vision vs. Reality. Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/11/08/the-cases-against-personalized-learning.html?cmp=eml-eb-sr-personalized-11082017&M=58266449&U=2635593

and not make progress. In addition, the Dyslexia Subcommittee strongly recommends that blended learning programs utilized for intervention be monitored for appropriateness and recommended publisher program fidelity. The Dyslexia Subcommittee strongly recommends that code-emphasis OG instruction be continued in 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.

LCPS Current Status of Unmet Need: Access to Assistive Technology
This section remains in the report due to continued public comment regarding need of access to assistive technology, accessible materials, creation of accessible materials, lack of overall knowledge of IEP Teams regarding policy and appropriate assistive technology for children with dyslexia and dysgraphia, accessibility analysis of blended learning software, and math and science accessibility.

The SEAC Dyslexia Subcommittee work group for Assistive Technology (AT) met with LCPS administration on May 6, 2016 and requested data regarding specific Assistive Technology service and delivery questions. The answers provided from the LCPS Assistive Technology department on October 25, 2016, were not responsive to the questions posed. As a result, in an effort to establish a baseline and assess where LCPS is in their AT and Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) implementation, the Dyslexia Subcommittee work group for Assistive Technology recommends that a task force be created by the School Board, to include a SEAC Dyslexia Subcommittee member, in order to assess the following areas:

Area 1: Federal and State Laws Regarding Assistive Technology (AT) and Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)

Area 2: Current LCPS Assistive Technology (AT) and AEM Technical Assistance Documents

Area 3: Specific Supports for each school to create, acquire, provide, and distribute AEM

Area 4: Early Identification of students and use of AT and AEM in Grades K-3

Area 5: LCPS processes to identify, review, and match AT with educationally relevant tasks and document in IEP or 504 Plan

Area 6: Funding for professional development of teachers and consideration of allotment to cover student's IEP Team

Area 7: Inclusion of accessibility analysis as part of acquisition procedures before creating or acquiring emerging LCPS technology

Area 1: Federal and State Laws Regarding AT and AEM

Assistive Technology Devices and Services (AT) and Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) as defined by IDEA, ADA Title II, Section 504 and 508. Include a review of guidance documents from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) examining AT and AEM provision to students with disabilities.

Task Force Questions:

1. Does LCPS assistive technology and accessible educational material practices align with all Federal and State Laws for students with disabilities?
2. Is school staff trained and knowledgeable about laws and current OCR guidance documents related to "effective communication" and independence obligations, accessible technology software and hardware requirements, accessibility related to teacher-created materials, including limitations related to math and science accessibility, etc.?

Area 2: Current LCPS AT and AEM Technical Assistance Documents

1. Is there a current LCPS AT and AEM technical assistance document collated into a book form, handed out to every Assistant Principal and utilized during every IEP or 504 plan meeting?
2. Does the technical assistance document define terms, outline specific processes and procedures and provide tangible supports to school and IEP teams?
3. Does the technical assistance document from LCPS clearly define all laws, OCR guidance, and all LCPS policies and procedures for everything related to AT and AEM?

Task Force Actions:

Clarification regarding "Bring Your Own Technology" (BYOT) policy and AT. The use of personal technology to provide educational material (BYOT) is not a necessity but a privilege. Assistive Technology is a necessity.

District-wide training for clarification and understanding of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and AT. This would include definition and understanding regarding differences of instructional technology and supports located in the environment and the full Assistive Technology definition from IDEA and ADA. It must be clear UDL and AT are distinct but complementary. UDL is for designing curricula. What separates AT from UDL is that AT is individualized for a student with a disability and must be documented in the IEP or 504 Plan.

Clarification regarding teacher's ability to "touch" personal devices that are documented as necessary in the IEP or 504 Plan. AT devices that are documented in the IEP/504 Plan becomes the responsibility of the School System. Therefore, the school system is responsible and is able to touch the AT devices.

Area 3: Identify Specific Supports for Each School to Create, Acquire, Provide, and Distribute AEM

1. What are the specific supports that are put into place for each school to create, acquire, provide, and distribute accessible educational materials to students with disabilities?
2. What is the training needed for the assistive technology required to access the educational materials?

   Task Force Considerations:
   Materials required to be accessible include but are not limited to the following: Teacher-created materials, curriculum, class and district-wide assessments, benchmarking, online programs, personalized learning software, computer adaptive assessments.

   All materials used in the classroom must be accessible to students with disabilities. Emerging technology utilized in the classroom must be accessible to students with print-based disabilities. Requiring the use of an emerging technology in the classroom that is inaccessible to students with disabilities constitutes discrimination under the ADA and under Section 504. Students with disabilities must be able to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as students without disabilities with substantially equivalent ease of use.

Area 4: Early Identification of Students and Use of AT and AEM in Grades K-3

1. Is there early identification (K-3) of students who need assistive technology and accessible materials?
2. Are younger students provided with AT and AEM?
3. Are the students being accommodated while they are being remediated?
4. Is there an unconscious barrier regarding accommodating while remediating?

   Task Force Considerations:
   In order to decrease the achievement gap, it is necessary to start early (Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade) in the student's educational life and provide accommodations (AT, AEM) while remediating for skill deficits with intensive targeted interventions. Remediation of skill deficits in reading, writing, spelling, and math is time- and personnel- intensive. Without simultaneous remediation and accommodation, a student may continue to experience an ongoing cycle of failure and continue to fall further behind his/her peers. Remediation and accommodation are not exclusive of each other and are complementary.

   AT and AEM should be incorporated early into a dyslexic student's education so that he/she is able to practice the skills necessary and effectively learn to use and practice the technology necessary in order to be independent and reach academic potential.

Area 5: LCPS Processes to Identify, Review, and Match AT with Educationally Relevant Tasks and Document in IEP or 504 Plan

1. How are educationally relevant tasks for each instructional access area (i.e., reading, writing, spelling, organizing, thinking, math) being reviewed in consideration of AT?
2. How are those educational tasks then matched to the needs of identified students with the appropriate technologies so that students with dyslexia have technological access across all content areas?
3. How is it documented into the IEP?

> *Task Force Questions and Comments*
> 1. Are good grades a determining factor and/or a deterrent in considering whether or not a dyslexic student should have AT or AEM accommodations listed in their IEP or 504 plans?
>
>   Dyslexic students have inconsistent strengths and weaknesses and are an enigma to teachers and administrators. ADA maintains, "it is critical to reject the assumption that an individual who performs well academically or otherwise cannot be substantially limited in activities such as learning, reading, writing, thinking, or speaking."[21]
>
> 2. Is "effort" and "automaticity" taken into account when considering AT and AEM?
>
>   The amount of "effort" it takes a Dyslexic student to read, write, spell, and do calculations are an important factor in considering AT and AEM accommodations. New guidance from ADA clarifies, "For the majority of the population, the basic mechanics of reading and writing do not pose extraordinary lifelong challenges; rather, recognizing and forming letters and words are effortless, unconscious, automatic processes. Because specific learning disabilities are neurologically-based impairments, the process of reading for an individual with a reading disability (e.g. dyslexia) is word-by-word, and otherwise cumbersome, painful, deliberate and slow—throughout life."[22]

Area 6: Funding for Professional Development of Teachers and Consideration of Allotment to Cover Student's IEP Team

Funding for professional development and consideration for allotment to cover a student's school team to help increase knowledge and use of AT software and successful integration into the classroom. IDEA 2004 requires schools to provide assistive technology training for the

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[21] Department of Justice (2016). Office of the Attorney General 28 CFR Parts 35 and 36 CRT Docket No. 124; AG Order No. 3702-2016. RIN 1190-AA59. *Amendment of American with Disabilities Act Title II and Title III Regulations to Implement ADA Amendments Act of 2008*. FINAL RULE Retrieved from https://www.ada.gov/regs2016/final_rule_adaaa.html

[22] Department of Justice (2016). Office of the Attorney General 28 CFR Parts 35 and 36 CRT Docket No. 124; AG Order No. 3702-2016. RIN 1190-AA59. *Amendment of American with Disabilities Act Title II and Title III Regulations to Implement ADA Amendments Act of 2008*. FINAL RULE Retrieved from https://www.ada.gov/regs2016/final_rule_adaaa.html

teachers, child, and family. (20 U.S.C. 1400(2)(E) & (F)) Training of teachers, students and family regarding Assistive Technology needed for accessibility of currently utilized curriculum software and hardware across all learning domains.

Task Force Actions:
Ensure that the technology is current and effective and that the educators have the skills to effectively pick and use the technology. Technological training, in both hardware and software uses is important for teachers and students.

Specific training of teachers, students and family regarding Assistive Technology needed for accessibility of currently utilized curriculum, software and hardware across all learning domains.

Area 7: Inclusion of Accessibility Analysis as Part of Acquisition Procedures Before Creating or Acquiring Emerging Technology
All educational software and personalized learning should be aligned with accessibility standards including WCAG 2.0 (minimum level AA compliance) and Section 508 (or Section 508 Refresh once approved.)

Task Force Actions:
1. Ensure all LCPS created educational software and personalized learning software is created using best practices for accessibility.
2. Ensure all educational software and personalized learning are evaluated for accessibility, including by users with disabilities, before purchase.

TRANSITION SUBCOMMITTEE

The background for the identified unmet needs and recommendations pertaining to transition services are outlined in the current year's (2017-2018) priorities and recommendations on page 29.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY FOCUS GROUP

The Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Focus Group was formed to explore concerns raised by the special education community about the effectiveness of SLP referral, assessment, intervention and team collaboration processes.

The SLP focus group interviewed over 45 LCPS parents with a variety of children identified with special needs, all of which have LCPS IEP's or are actively pursuing special education supports to ask how LCPS was meeting the needs of students being referred and receiving SLP assessment and therapy. Questions regarding parent satisfaction with assessments, goal setting, progress monitoring, and SLP related services were asked. Parent feedback was also solicited regarding where they wanted to see more support services for communication.

Qualifications of a Speech-Language Pathologist
According to the American Speech-Language-hearing Association (ASHA), a speech-language pathologist is responsible for the diagnosis, prognosis, prescription, and remediation of speech, language, and swallowing disorders. A speech-language pathologist evaluates and treat children (and adults) who have difficulty speaking, listening, reading, writing, or swallowing. The overall objective of speech-language pathology services is to optimize an individuals' ability to communicate and swallow, thereby improving quality of life. Guidance from ASHA about roles and responsibilities of speech-language pathologists in school is available at
www.asha.org/policy.

Initial Findings
Important to note is that several parents interviewed provided rave reviews for SEAC conducting this exercise for the LCPS school board. Parents reported that they appreciated a confidential and discreet way to convey areas of concern and to share ideas that could be directly channeled through SEAC to the LCPS Director of Special Education and other leaders.

The majority of parents are happy with their public school SLP practitioners and had several positive comments about the programming provided by their child's current SLP. Several parents reported being engaged in their child's routine therapy and that they were working alongside the SLPs to create a positive relationship to facilitate their child's progress, monitor and achieve IEP goals.

The biggest need identified by parents is that they would like SLPs to have a strong leadership role in the planning and decision making in IEP meetings. SLPs are trained experts in

communication. Accordingly, parents feel that students would benefit if SLPs were allowed to have a greater role in the IEP process and the ability to influence goal setting and programming for students across the student's school day, so that the student could generalize and apply newly taught skills. It also appeared to parents that SLPs would benefit from professional development opportunities within LCPS.

Concerns identified by parents:

1. The process of early identification of language-based disorders needs review and support. Parents want more thorough screenings in pre-kindergarten to identify language disorders to address receptive language, expressive language, early reading and social skill issues.

2. LCPS is currently suing non-validated measurement tools (i.e. CELF-4). CELF-5 is well-established and used within the SLP profession. It was published in Fall 2014.

3. All schools need training and access to these new assessments. Using non-validated, out of date measurements leaves LCPS vulnerable. Parents are focused to obtain an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) to support their children with language deficits.

4. SLP's should use a peer review team, or supervisor, to review for quality assurance before the assessment results are finalized and shared with parents. This could reduce the number of IEE's needed and correct the simple errors/typos that are frequent in these reports.

5. Parents would like more robust programming for the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) community and individuals with Complex Communication Needs (CCN).

6. Parents would like to see SLP's and the Assistive Technology Team work together more closely and build communication opportunities for teacher training and goal setting.

7. It was suggested that LCPS pair SLP's who specialize in working with who do not have language acquisition. This population requires specialized training in verbal behavior. Thus, it would be advantageous to better match the expertise of the SLP with the needs of the child, since the areas of SLP specialization are wide.

8. Parents want to see LCPS using SLP's to assist children with auditory processing, phonological remediation and executive functioning skills. These are under the umbrella of SLP areas of expertise.

9. Parents noted that IEE's are routine granted, but unattainable due to being underfunded, thus making it difficult to accurately assess a student's communication needs. LCPS's SLP assessment would benefit from being more thorough, including in-depth additional measures as needed, conduct areas assessed/method of assessment observations, and addressing more speech-language needs to improve educational outcomes.

10. The homeschooling community would like to learn more about Individual Service Plans (ISPs) and other services, as well as the possibilities of accessing and using enterprise-wide assistive technology software offered by LCPS.

11. Parents are asking for full SLP support during Extended School Year (ESY) programming.

Seven major themes emerged from the interviews:
1. Additional layers of support: phonological awareness, executive functioning, auditory processing (26%)
2. Inadequate funding toward IEE's because it has not changed in 10 years (20%)
3. ESY support (18%)
4. More SLP therapy time (15%)
5. Out of date assessments (8%)
6. Peer review 98%)
7. Pair SLPs to student profiles/needs (5%)

How SLP's can help with dyslexia:
- SLP's are valuable members of the literary team. Dyslexia is a language-based disorder that affects reading, writing (grammar and spelling), executive functioning, and more.
- SLP's have extensive knowledge in phonological processing: theory, assessment and treatment.
- SLP's have in-depth knowledge of phonological skills and language.
- Some student with word reading problems have language problems and also need word reading intervention.
- SLP's can make a large positive impact in the lives of those who have dyslexia.

How SLP's can support executive functioning:
- SLP's are valuable members of the communication team. Their intervention for executive functioning skills focuses primarily around the language aspects of the deficits. Higher-level executive functioning skills involve meta-cognition (the process of "thinking about thinking"). These skills are language based, as they involve self-talk and language processing in order to monitor, plan, and execute actions.

Useful tools:
- Executive Function Curriculum: unstuck and On Target
- Language Acquisitions through Motor Planning (LAMP) training for non-verbal population *(LCPS is currently using Words for Life)*

Next steps:
1. LCPS should take immediate steps to ensure CELF-5 is implemented in all schools this year and better track newly developed instruments.
2. Work with SEAC to consider possible enhancements:
   - Pair SLP's to students (i.e., AAC/CCN community)
   - Consider peer review/quality assurance teams for assessment and reports
   - Ensure SLP's are fully available to ESY programs
   - Professional development for SLP's from LCPS administration
   - Promote and offer SLP services to home-school population through an ISP and LCPS software programs

- Pre-screenings and early intervention for rising Kindergarten students

The SLP focus group initially recommended that SEAC establish a new subcommittee to continue to examine the issues outlined in this report. However, it was recently recommended that because these findings had already been shared with the LCPS Office of Special Education, SEAC should allow the office time to consider the findings and determine an implementation plan.

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1

SEAC Parent Input Survey 2017
Summary and SWOT Analysis

Please note that this is a summary of the survey results _only_. It does not include other sources of important information that will be used to identify the SEAC Priorities and Areas of Concern for the 2017-2018 School Year. In other words, these survey results will contribute to the formation of SEAC's 2017-2018 Priorities/Areas of Concern.

DATA POINTS:

Survey Period: June 8-30, 2017

Total Respondents: N=65

Representing (n=65):
ECSE/PreS= 8 (12.3%)
Elementary = 23 (35.4%)
Middle = 23 (35.4%)
High = 15 (23.1%)

SEAC Representative Appointed (n=65):
I don't know = 61.3%
Yes = 27.7%
No = 9.2%

Familiar with PRS (n=65):
Yes = 87.7% / No = 12.3%0

Used PRS/attended pgms this yr (n=61):
Yes = 52.5%
No = 47.5%

Areas of Need (n=63):
Early Intervention and Eligibility = 29 (46%)
Child Study = 22 (34.9%)
504 Eligibility = 15 (23.8%)
IEP (parent consent, compliance, parents & school understanding the process) = 40 (63.5%)
Utilizing appropriate discipline/behavior management = 24 (38.1%)
Transition Services (out of high school) – 19 (38.1%)
Transitioning from elementary to middle or middle to high school = 15 (23.8%)
Effective & meaningful home/school communication = 20 (31.7%)
Implementing inclusive practices = 19 (30.2%)
Employing effective behavioral supports (FBAs, BIPs) = 17 (27%)
Staffing (hiring, retention, levels, taking prof dev, disability knowledge, skill/experience level) = 28 (44.4%)
Assistive Technology = 17 (27%)
Dispute Resolution Rights = 13 (20.6%)

School Facilitates Active Parental Role (to meet my child's needs) (n=47):
Introduces me to staff who work w/my child & explains their roles = 35 (74.5%)
Helps me know where to go at school for resources/support = 13 (27.7%)
Identifies & directs me to additional resources/support w/in LCPS system = 18 (38.3%)
Keeps me updated in timely/clear manner on progress toward IEP goals = 32 (68.1%)
Regularly solicits & uses my input to craft plans, help child progress, & meet needs = 23 (48.9%)
Keeps me informed of ways child is included in school-wide activities and opportunities = 17 (36.2%)
Keeps me updated on academic progress in the general curriculum = 29 (61.7%)

Page 1 of 4

** STRENGTHS ** *What's working well in LCPS SPED*	** WEAKNESSES ** **Identified needs of students with disabilities (SWD)**
- Understanding dispute resolution rights 87.7% of survey respondents are familiar with Parent Resource Services - Of those, 52.5% have accessed PRS resources, including attending their programs 74.5% of 47 people indicated that the school introduces the parents to the staff who will be working with their child and explains their role 68.1% of 47 people indicated that they are kept informed in a timely and clear manner of progress made towards IEP goals 61.7% of 47 people indicated that they are updated on academic progress in the general curriculum - Hiring of autism specialist and review of programs underway to increase appropriate services for students with ASD - Pockets of praise given for some schools who prioritize SPED students, processes, teacher/parent engagement and admin support for communication, interventions and inclusive practices - Greater awareness of the problems inherent regularly in moving SPED programs to different schools - When some parents facilitate and ask for communication and meetings, schools are responsive	- Mental Health/Emotional Support: Increased prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress for SPED students that is inadequately or not addressed; disregarding outside professional evaluations and recommendations; poor integration back into school after returning from mental health treatment; high pressure environment and high suicide rate in LCPS - Social Inclusion: Social skills training and more social opportunities; programs for general ed students about diversity and preventing the bullying of students with special needs - Executive Functioning: Increase knowledge and intervention (tools/programs) throughout LCPS for students with study skill weaknesses, organizational skill deficits and test-taking - IEP's: Not well-written; don't reflect the true needs/real issues – not comprehensive enough and/or CM's can be rigid and resist adaptation to changing needs; compartmentalize more complex problems by fitting student into categories and subsequent goals that don't reflect individual needs – espec for students with multiple disabilities; general ed teachers don't know, read or understand IEP's; lack of fidelity; parents feel teams are dishonest; takes too long to communicate and implement intervention; parents not treated as an equal member of the team; poor communication about how IEP works - Staff Development: SPED, administrators and general ed teachers and others with direct student contact are not properly trained in consistent approaches to SPED students based on the student's unique needs - Honors for SPED: AP, honors society should be regular considerations for SPED students, too

** OPPORTUNITIES ** Happening or will happen that may enhance successful delivery of LCPS SPED services	** THREATS ** Challenges to successful delivery of LCPS SPED services
• Greater awareness of the need for SPED students to be included in school activities, including before and after school clubs and social events • Improvements to high school transition program • AT access and awareness improving; Still need better assessment of AT needs and more timely availability of tools; the use of recommended AT should not be a unilateral teacher decision • While disproportionality in discipline (suspensions plus day to day consequences) has received greater attention, SPED students still receive punishments for manifestations of their disabilities, particularly those that are labeled as "behavioral problems," which in turn are usually just the outward expression of underlying issues that are not being properly addressed • All teachers should be trained in and required to use the same technology tools that LCPS provides	• Proactive communication about programmatic changes, services available that could enhance educational experience for SPED students, and aspects about the IEP process • AP's and other key administration does not understand SPED and appropriate interventions (What training do they receive?) • Professionalism and lack of expertise of various specialists and case managers • Poor transition planning and hand-offs between CM's and other school staff between elementary to middle and middle to high school, resulting in regression and/or significant adjustment issues that prevent full participation in learning and social interaction • More parent awareness of and involvement in SEAC; greater communication and interaction among SEAC members and representatives; SEAC composition should be representative of all disabilities • Dyslexia supervisor needed at each school or cluster who is certified in OG training methods

SUGGESTIONS FOR 2017-2018 PRESENTATION TOPICS:

Note: There was a reminder given to SEAC offices that "the bulk of the presentations should be related to areas of need that have been identified or that are being reviewed as a possible need since SEAC is a working committee, not an information session."

• LCPS Policy for investigating claims of disability discrimination.

• Best practices of adjacent school districts to support students who are clinically depressed or at risk for suicide.

• What practices can schools adopt to ensure widespread and consistent support and compassion for students with disabilities?

• ADHD and the school's obligations for providing equal education.

- Policies and practices for supporting students encountering a mental health crisis.

- Guidelines that the 504 team or IEP team uses when determining not to grant accommodations requested by the student, parents and the student's doctors.

- The role of the case manager on the student's IEP team and within the general education/inclusion environment. What to do to ensure a swift response or change when a SPED teacher/case manager is not working well with your child and is even causing emotional harm.

- Dyslexia update/progress: What and how are the programs that were offered to teachers to take this year being implemented with students neat year? Why are these programs not offered to the reading specialists?

- Stop calling everything "behavioral problem" and get to the root of the issue.

- Training on autism for all staff, not just SPED teachers/case managers.

- Teachers integrating AT in the classroom.

- Panel discussion with teachers who have gone through the new reading instruction program for feedback on what is working and not working.

- Student self-advocacy: What are the expectations? How are students being taught to do this (or not taught)?

- Proper steps for making changes to the IEP, including the staff in the chain of command that parents should following when addressing issues.

End Note: SEAC was asked to reconsider the idea to invite external (non-LCPS) presenters, explaining that it is the role of parent resource services to provide an objective perspective. This respondent stated that SEAC's job is to facilitate conversations about needs in LCPS and outside presenters often don't have this perspective so they aren't asked questions from attendees who are more interested in what/why/how it works in LCPS.

Appendix 2

2017 Recognition for Excellence in Supporting Special Education Award Recipients

EDUCATOR

- Adminstrator — Jennifer Zecher, Countryside ES
- Paraprofessional — Lorraine Spencer, Cedar Lane ES
- Related Services — Deborah Schwind, OTR/L, Cedar Lane ES, Dominion Trail ES, Project Search
- General Education — Ashley Schmidt, Liberty ES
- General Education — Gillian Smith, Trailside MS
- Special Education — Justin Daily, Stone Hill MS
- Special Education — Jennifer Haggerty, Mill Run ES
- Special Education — Kristen Veltz, Catoctin ES
- Special Education — Beth Winsor, Harmony MS

INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

- Cedar Lane ES
- Dominion Trail ES

PROGRAM

- Assistive Technology Makers Club, Harmony MS
- Freshman/JV Chearleaders and Coaches, John Champe HS
- Riverside Cafe, Riverside HS

PARENT

- Anne Denzin, Riverside HS

STUDENT

- Miss B's PM Kindergarten Class, Liberty ES
- Olivia Puccinelli, Countryside ES
- Rachel Pruzina, Grace Luebke, Ellis deBouchel and Abbie Miller, Hillside ES
- Kim Trieu, Rosa Lee Carter ES
- Rachel Adams, Rosa Lee Carter ES
- Michael "Mikey" Harrigan, Belmont Ridge MS
- Caroline Davidson, Farmwell Station MS
- William Haskell, Trailside MS
- Eva McMullan, Trailside MS
- Wesley "Wes" Kubont, Riverside HS

SEAC wishes to acknowledge the educator honorees whose nominations reflect excellence that is to be commended. We extend congratulations and heartfelt gratitude to all of the nominees and to all those who submitted nominations for consideration.

2017 Educator Nominees

Alyssia Schular
Amanda Phillips
Anca Vinson
Ann Barkey-Moss
Beth Carl
Beverly Melby, Pamela Vennitti & Galin Oglevee
Carol Keyes
Catherine "Cathy" Tsao
Chanelle Hamilton
Cheryl Hutcheson
Christine "Chris" Hallet
Courtney McCartney
Cynthia "Cindy" Good

Danielle Troianello
Dr. Kevin King
Elizabeth "Beth" Barron
Elizabeth "Liz" Bergstrom
Heather Brewington
Jane Tello
Joanna Carlson
Jonathan "Krister" Tracey
Karli Hopke
Kathleen Wilson
Kathryn Iddings
Kelly Taeschner
Laura Lowther

Laura McCarty
Lauren Lindstrom
Lindsay Mages & Jennifer Cohen
Maria Echevarria
Marie Tsuda
Mary Beth Andrews
Maryann Childs
Megan Espinosa
Michael T. Trott
Michelle Manning
Neelum Chaudhry
Rachael Marker
Reagan Murnan

Robert Marple
Sherry Beverly
Sherry Foti
Sonia Widman
Stacey Costanzo
Stacey Privman
Stephanie Weaver
Stephanie Worthley
Susan Weltens
Tammy Hubbard
Teri Roberts
Trisha Dickshinski
William Herndon

SEAC-Autism Parent and Teacher Survey Results Spring 2017

Parent Survey

Total responses: 480

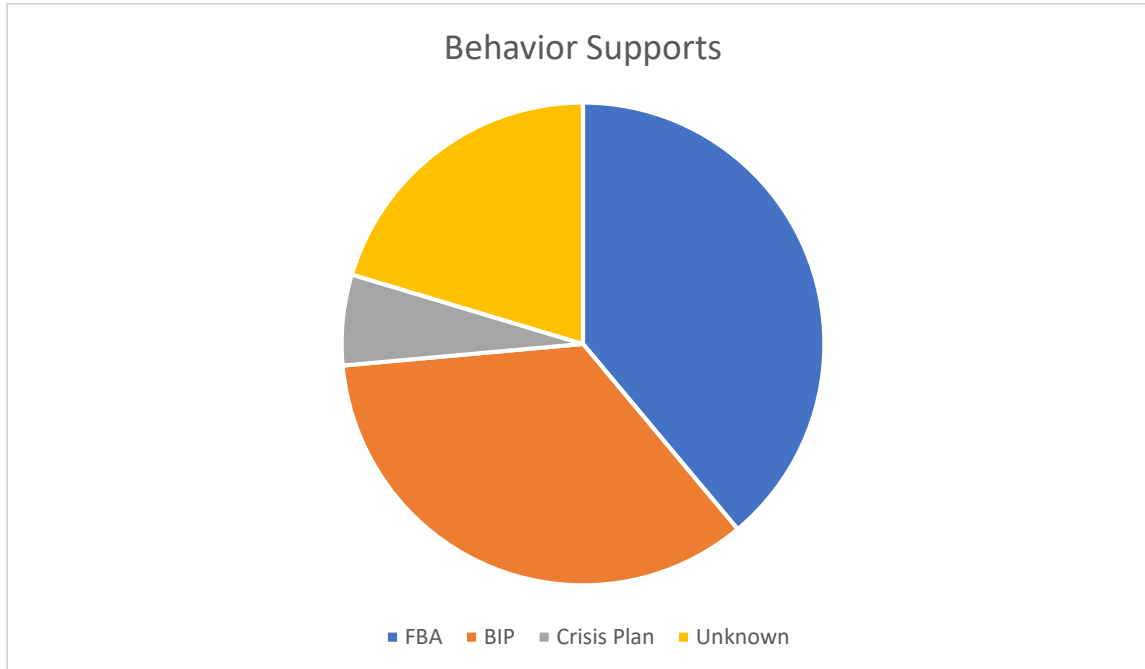Other Categories: 17 responses (1 in each category)

School category	Percentage of Respondents
ECSE	44 (9.4%)
ECSE-A	11 (2.4%)
Elementary	222 (47.6%)
Middle	93 (20%)
High	104 (22.3%)

Responses indicate that students receive academic (22.6%) and social/behavioral (21.5%) in the self-contained setting less than those in the general education (57%, 53.8%) or cross categorical resource setting (30.6%, 28.2%)

Service Time

■ 80% or more ■ 40-70% ■ Below 40% ■ Other
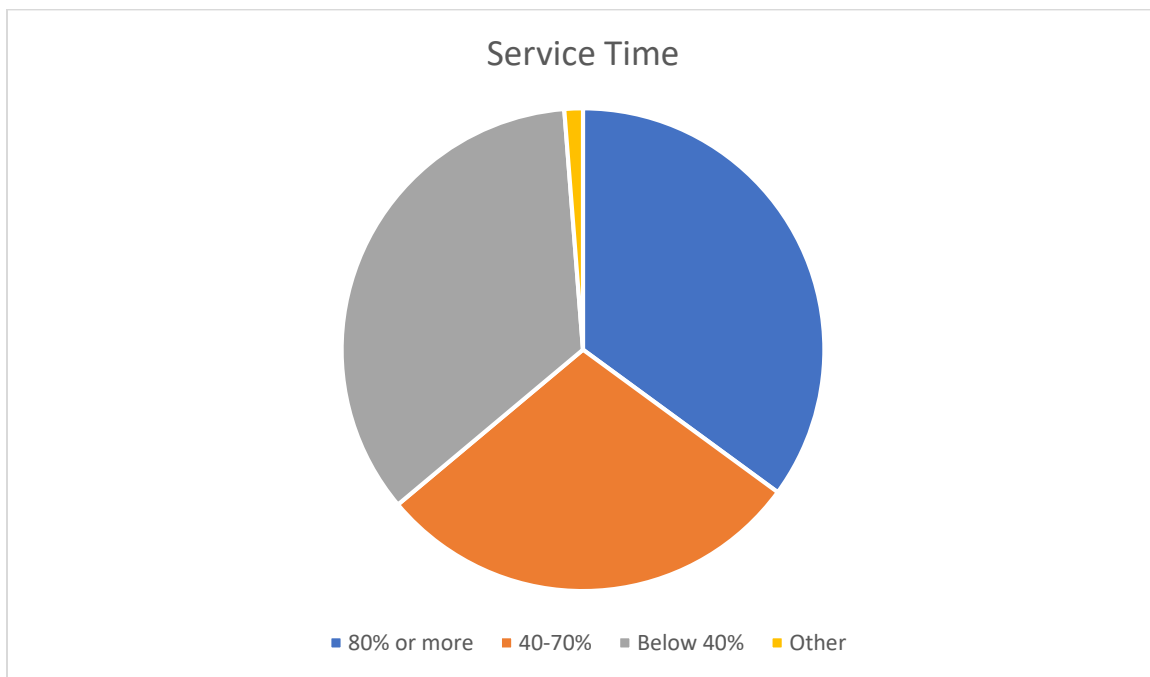
Related Services	Percentage of Respondents
Speech/Language	82.7%
OT	42.8%
PT	6.6%

Behavior Supports

■ FBA ■ BIP ■ Crisis Plan ■ Unknown

54.5% of respondents reported that their student with autism has a FBA while a slightly smaller percentage also reported having a BIP (48.5%). Crisis plans are reported by 8.5%. 28.5% of respondents do not know if their student has a FBA, BIP, or Crisis Plan.

Respondents indicated that LCPS delivers appropriate services to address:
Academic Skills- 57.5%
Expressive/Receptive Communication- 49.6%
Behavior- 48.3%
Social Skills- 44.4%
Fine Motor Skills- 36.2%
Self-Regulation- 35.4%
Pragmatic language- 34.9%
Gross Motor- 34.1%

Areas of Articulation, Executive Functioning, Sensory Processing and Functional Life Skills were rated by less than 30% of respondents as effective. Sensory Processing was rated the lowest of these by 24.7% of respondents.
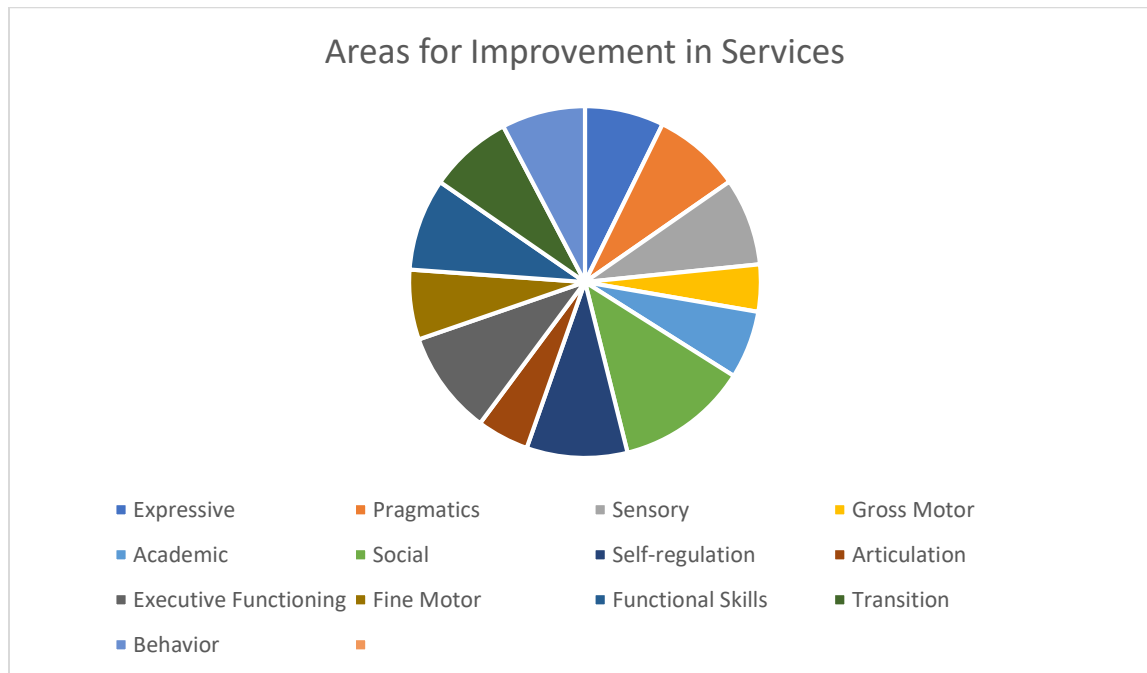
Comments regarding appropriate services (themes):
Note: this area was intended to highlight services that are delivered appropriately. Comments provided areas for improvement, not appropriate services.
- Believe services are ineffective for students with HFA. Students with HFA are often mislabeled and served through Emotional Disabilities and do not receive autism based services.
- Life Skills and Social Skills need to be addressed /improved
- ABA therapy and services incorporated more than they are presently
- Communication and AT services for students who are non-verbal increased
- Transition skills and Transition process to adulthood improved

- Consistent delivery of services between school levels needs improvement
- Special Education Counseling needs improvement
- Executive Functioning needs addressed
- Training and qualifications of teachers needs improvement
- Services to address the needs of dually exceptional students' needs enhanced
- Some respondents indicated that all services are inadequate and ineffective

LCPS demonstrates the need for improvement in the following areas as indicated by respondents:

Areas for Improvement in Services

■ Expressive   ■ Pragmatics   ■ Sensory   ■ Gross Motor
■ Academic   ■ Social   ■ Self-regulation   ■ Articulation
■ Executive Functioning   ■ Fine Motor   ■ Functional Skills   ■ Transition
■ Behavior   ■

Social Skills and Executive Functioning were identified by the majority of respondents as areas requiring improvement.

Comment section: areas noted that demonstrate the need for improvement: (themes)

Areas noted as repeated themes (High frequency)
Training Specific to Autism (ALL teaching staff, administration, BIT Teams)
Social Skills/Social Competence
Executive Functioning
Services for High Functioning Autism and Dually Exceptional students
Anti-Bullying
Consistency and transitions between programs and services across levels (elementary, middle, high)
IEP development and implementation (to include teaming and parent involvement)

Additional areas of improvement noted:
Training:
- Applied Behavior Analysis Training
  - Special Education Teachers
  - Teaching Assistants
- Training specific to girls on the spectrum

Transition to Post-secondary:
  - Advising parents more effectively
  - Linking to resources
  - Career goals
  - CII implementation

Increase service time for SLP, OT, PT
Eligibility process
  - Eligibility criteria
  - FAPE

Co-teaching
School Counseling services and Mental Health
Retention of teachers and changes mid-year
Sensory and Gross motor
Extra-Curricular / after school activities
Extended School Year (ESY)
  - Criteria
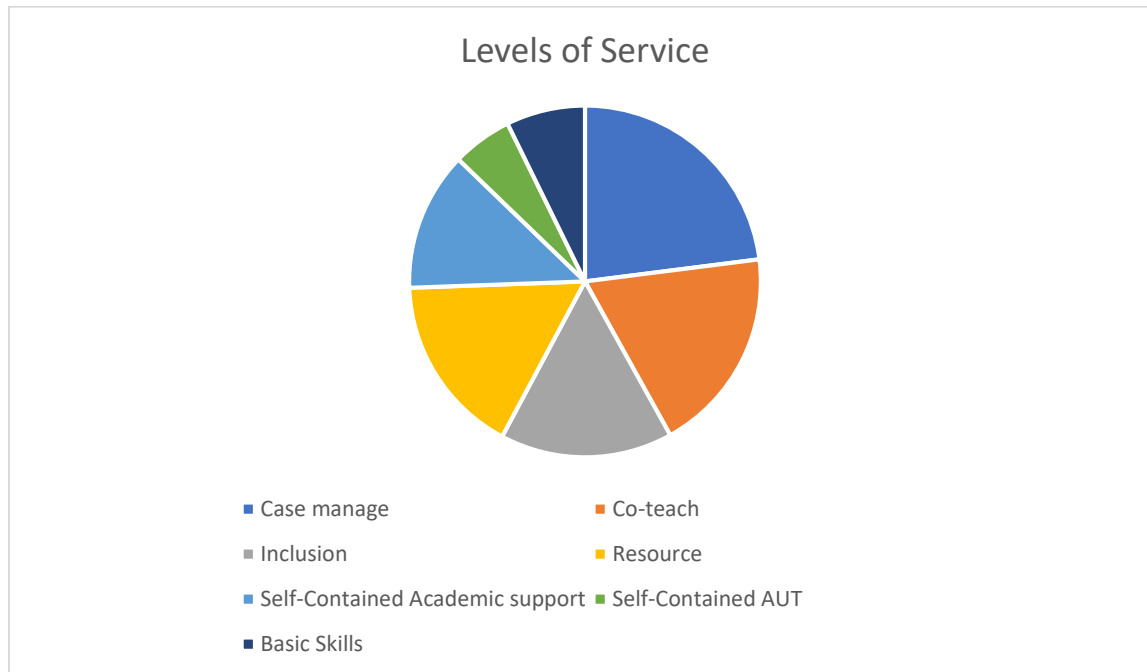 - Services
  - Assignments

Parent/School communication

Teacher Survey Results

Total Responses: 301
90.7% of respondents currently teach or case manage students with ASD.

Grade Level	Percentage of respondents
ECSE or ECSE-A	5.7%
Elementary	34.2%
Middle	28.5%
High	30.2%

Levels of Service

- Case manage
- Co-teach
- Inclusion
- Resource
- Self-Contained Academic support
- Self-Contained AUT
- Basic Skills

Teachers report that they require more training to provide effective services in the areas of (In descending order)
1. Social Skills
2. Behavior
3. Self-Regulation
4. Executive Functioning
5. Sensory Processing
6. Academic Instruction
7. Expressive/Receptive communication
8. Transition
9. Functional Life Skills
10. Fine Motor
11. Gross Motor
12. Articulation

Teachers report that they require more training in instructional strategies and interventions in the areas of (In descending order)
1. Self-Regulation
2. Applied Behavior Analysis
3. Social Skills
4. Executive Functioning
5. Behavior Interventions
6. Evidence Based Practices
7. Functional Behavior Assessment
8. Data Collection and analysis
9. Managing staff

10. Positive Behavior Supports
11. Sensory Processing
12. Differentiation
13. Crisis Plans
14. Visual supports
15. Study skills
16. Co-teaching
17. Transition
18. Communication
19. VAAP

APPENDIX 4
DESCRIPTION OF RTI AND MTSS

Tier 1

For MTSS, a school must first establish its tier 1, or universal, supports. Universal supports are the instructional practices that help all students in a school. Once the universal supports are in place, staff can use assessment data to determine which students need additional supports.

Tiers 2 and 3

The intensity and duration of supports increase for tiers 2 and 3. The appropriate level of support for each student is determined by assessment data.

Data-Based Decision Making and Problem Solving

Assessments provide data that can be used to determine the success of a practice or student support. If the data shows a weakness in a practice, or shows that a student is not responding to supports, staff can develop a plan of action to address the issue.

Universal Screening

Universal screening is the act of assessing all students in a consistent and regular manner. Universal screening is typically conducted three times a year to identify which students are at risk for behavioral or academic problems. Students identified as at-risk may require additional or alternative supports.

Screening Administration

A screening instrument needs to be quickly and easily administered. Screening can occur as early as preschool, but no later than kindergarten and at least three times a year through second grade. It is imperative for screening to occur for all children, not just the ones "at risk" or who have already been determined to have reading failure. Students who are English Language Learners or speak in a different dialect should be included in this assessment.

Since "dyslexia is strongly heritable, occurring in up to 50% of individuals who have a first-degree relative with dyslexia" (Gaab, 2017) initial screening should include family history. Teacher input on a child's phonological, linguistic and academic performance is also essential. Teachers can complete screening tools that require their rating of a child's abilities on a scale to measure risk of reading disability.

Continuous Progress Monitoring

Staff use progress monitoring for students that need additional supports in tiers 2 and 3. The students are assessed more frequently and the assessments match the instruction. The rapid and relevant feedback provided by progress monitoring allows staff to adjust instruction as needed in a timely manner.

APPENDIX 5
TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF CODE-BASED (STRUCTURED LITERACY) EMPHASIS WITH LITERATURE EMPHASIS (BALANCED LITERACY, WHOLE WORD) APPROACHES

Feature of Program	Code-Emphasis or Phonics-Emphasis	Literature-Emphasis or Meaning Emphasis
Organization	Scope and sequence of phonics and word reading skills determine lesson design and sequence and type of reading practice.	Organized by literature themes; may have ancillary phonics and phonemic awareness activities (not the focus of the reading lesson).
Texts for reading Instruction	Decodable until about grade 2; high proportion of pattern words that have been taught.	Texts "leveled" by presumed difficulty but not controlled for phonic correspondences.
Content	Phonemic awareness, phoneme-grapheme relationships, syllabication and morphology, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing; use of decodable text at K–1 level.	Shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, leveled books; often, writers' workshop. Minimal instruction for skill development.
Instructional time	In K–1, about half the time spent on word work (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency in word recognition), the rest on language comprehension and oral reading in K–1. In grades 2–4, more instructional time is spent on language and comprehension, and less on word work	In K–4, most or all of time spent on reading aloud, shared writing, independent reading of leveled books in K–1. Skill instruction embedded in "workshop" context or "word study" activities.
Method/teacher role	Mostly teacher-led; teacher actively leads students through decoding activities and guided practice. Until students can read words with a variety of phonic patterns, comprehension instruction is with read-alouds.	Often student-directed; more independent learning in centers; student choice of reading material. Leveled texts are used for reading and comprehension instruction.
Corrective feedback	Students asked to look carefully at the word; sound it out; check and see if the word they read makes sense.	Students asked what might make sense, given the topic, the pictures, and (perhaps) the first letter.
Types of practice	Synthetic skill building from sounds to words to sentences to text with high percentage of words with phonic patterns that have been taught.	Meaning-focused activities: creating books; memorizing through repeated readings of leveled books; writing in journals; talking about books and reciting stories.

Table taken from Perspectives on Language and Literacy Summer 2017[23]

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[23] Moats, Louisa. (2017). *Can Prevailing Approaches to Reading Instruction Accomplish the Goals of RtI?* Perspectives, (Volume 43, No. 3), International Dyslexia Association (IDA) "Response to Intervention: Promises, Problems, and Progress" pg. 18.

APPENDIX 6
LCPS TRAINING FOR SPECIALIZED READING INSTRUCTION

FUNDAMENTALS OF LITERACY INSTRUCTION- FOLI (528 completed)
Fundamentals of Literacy Instruction (4 days face to face, with practice/application activities)

Description: Fundamentals of Literacy Instruction is professional development for teachers of reading who want to implement the components and principles of Tier 1 scientifically based reading instruction for grades Kindergarten -3rd. This dynamic course deepens educator knowledge and skill as it:

- Introduces the science of how children learn to read
- Illustrates the importance of oral language, phoneme awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in reading instruction
- Demonstrates how to put these concepts to work in the classroom

LCPS Target Audience: Elementary and Secondary Special Education Teachers servicing students with SLD in the area of basic reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) skills, Reading Specialists and Diagnosticians

TRAIN THE TRAINER COURSE FOR FOLI (9 completed)
Description: 3 additional days, plus ongoing individual and PLC support, to be provided by Voyager/Sopris Staff.

LCPS Target Audience: Nine LCPS staff members (SIF-Rs, Consulting Teachers and Supervisors Trained as Trainers) were trained as trainers for FOLI, in order to build capacity with future PL opportunities.

ORTON GILLINGHAM (OG) COMPREHENSIVE provided by the Institute for Multi-Sensory Education (227 completed)
Description: Provision of (six) week-long professional learning opportunities on the OG approach provided by the Institute for Multi-Sensory Instruction.

LCPS Target Audience: Special Education Teachers servicing students with SLD in the area of basic reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) skills, Reading Specialists, School-based Specialized Literacy Teams.

ORTON GILLINGHAM (OG) ADVANCED TRAINING provided by the Institute for Multi-Sensory Education (142 completed)
Description: Provision of (six) week-long professional learning opportunities on the OG approach provided by the Institute for Multi-Sensory Instruction.

LCPS Target Audience: Special Education Teachers servicing students with SLD in the area of basic reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) skills, Reading Specialists, School-based Specialized Literacy Teams.

ACADEMY OF SPECIALIZED READING INSTRUCTION (90 completed)
Description: Provision of (4) week-long Specialized Reading Academy(s), plus additional practice/application and supervision (totaling 60 hours) to be delivered to: Special Education Teachers, Reading Specialists, Members of School-based Specialized Literacy Teams

ASR contains the following areas: Instructional Match, Progress Monitoring, Mastery Measures, CBMs as General Outcome Measures, Focus on Fidelity, Lesson Planning, Case study scenarios and data analysis

Target Audience: Special Education Teachers servicing students with SLD in the area of basic reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) skills

COLLABORATION WITH GMU

Description: LCPS established of a cohort with George Mason University, for staff to develop competencies in delivering structured literacy and specialized reading programs.

A cohort of teachers will engage in semester long coursework in specialized reading program aligned with the International Dyslexia Association for qualified teachers. This will include division support for four courses and development of opportunities for two practicum experiences. A partnership created with George Mason University to provide a graduate level cohort in Specialized Reading Instruction to 20 LCPS staff. A second cohort is scheduled to begin in Fall 2017.

Target Audience: Special Education Teachers servicing students with SLD in the area of basic reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) skills

OTHER TRAINING IN BLENDED LEARNING PROGRAMS

Training in Language! Live (Currently 75 staff trained, 55 Teachers Trained and Implementing for SY 2017-18 (only 68% of Secondary Schools Participating)

Description: Language Live is a hybrid, web-based, and teacher-led intervention that provides individualized, engaging, explicit and systematic literacy instruction to middle school and high school poor readers who are reading substantially below grade level. It aims to promote a 2-year gain in grade-level reading result in 6th to 8th grade reading levels, over 4 semester lessons averaging 90 min each. It targets an 8th grade level reading outcome. To be delivered by Voyager/Sopris PL Staff as well as ongoing coaching/fidelity support.

Target Audience: Secondary Special Education Teachers servicing students with SLD in the area of basic reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) skills.

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