



*Fairfax County Public Schools*

**Annual Report of the**

**Advisory Committee for**  
**Students with Disabilities**

**to the**

**Fairfax County School Board**

Fairfax County, 2009

# Recommendations of the Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities

## Goal 2 Subcommittee .....3

1. FCPS revise the Student Responsibilities & Rights (SR&R) to accommodate the different cognitive levels of students with disabilities across the county and ensure that the adapted versions are distributed countywide.  
.....

2. FCPS embed all of the SR&Rs throughout the curriculum of low incidence students and students with social and emotional disabilities to ensure that students who are not in a “basic skills” class have access to the curriculum.....

3. FCPS intensify training for school personnel on how to appropriately implement the SR&Rs for students with all levels of disabilities, including but not limited to, the appropriateness and effectiveness of suspensions and expulsions for students with low incidence disabilities, Functional Behavioral Assessments, Behavior Intervention Plans, and communication with families related to the SR&Rs.....

4. FCPS incorporate an extensive safety curriculum throughout elementary, middle and high school for students with disabilities of varying levels. ....

5. FCPS build an inter-agency collaboration between FCPS schools (elementary, middle and high schools) and Fairfax County Therapeutic Recreation Services (TRS) to ensure inclusion education and support is available to all school personnel, including teachers, coaches and administrators. ....

6. FCPS offer courses that support personal development including social skills and critical life skills within every middle and high school across the county, and provide a personal development curriculum for all elementary schools.....

7. FCPS develop a comprehensive communication plan that will serve as a roadmap to inform, educate, and answer questions regarding Goal 2, available to all students and parents across all disability levels and socio-economic status. ....

8. FCPS work collaboratively with the ACSD on the Goal 2 projects by including members of the ACSD on each project team to ensure that parent perspectives are considered as this initiative evolves. ....

## Reading Subcommittee.....

1. FCPS direct their cluster superintendents to require and hold principals accountable for maintaining fidelity of reading programs used in their schools and provide sufficient and ongoing

training and funds to ensure their teachers implement programs in the manner in which the program was intended. ....

2. FCPS create a formal committee supported by School Board approved regulations that governs the adoption of reading programs and supplemental reading materials and resources to teach reading to special education students from K-12. ....

3. FCPS increase training that incorporates Assistive Technology Services (ATS) and different techniques when teaching students with cognitive and physical disabilities that impacts their access to traditional classroom supports.  
.....

4. FCPS flexibly staff schools with reading teachers/specialists according to the needs of the students so that all secondary schools have access to a highly qualified reading teacher to staff a class when needed.....

5. FCPS emphasize the need to address sequencing accuracy before fluency in reading instruction.....

6. FCPS use the researched and proven techniques of Direct Instruction for students with significant reading deficits, with an emphasis on replacing the two currently used programs at the Elementary level (Cognitive Reading Strategies and Reading Mastery).....

**Common Language Subcommittee.....**

1. FCPS increase training of parents and educators of students with disabilities in building partnerships and collaboration with an emphasis on effective communication as the foundation of successful parent-school partnerships.....

2. FCPS conduct a yearly random survey to look at parent-school relationships; such as, the number of parents who report participation in IEP meetings, meaningful collaboration with the team, and overall satisfaction with the special education information, processes, services and providers, to include interactions with administrators and other key staff with whom parents regularly communicate and collaborate. ....

3. FCPS review and promote the use of existing support structures, resources and relationships at the local school level to help identify and respond to the needs of parents of children with disabilities.....

4. FCPS measure the number of parents who report, in a survey, being informed by school staff of the Special Education Parents Handbook and the Parents Resource Center. ....(bullet under 2)

5. FCPS increase participation in staff development opportunities and parent participation in workshops offered by the district; track said data by Cluster and local school (bullet under 1).....

6. FCPS measure the number of hits on the FCPS special education links and PRC website (bullet under 1).....

7. FCPS add links on the parents' page of *Blackboard* for all students to Student Services, the Special Education Parents Handbook and the Parent Resource Center and track usage to measure communication of the special education process and procedures (under 1).

FCPS provide data collected from the above recommendations to the ACSD for continuing subcommittee work

**Future Issues**.....

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# **Annual Report of the Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities Fairfax County, 2009**

## **Committee Overview**

This annual report covers the work of the Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD, hereafter also referred to as “the Committee”) from September 2008 through May 2009. The ACSD advises the Fairfax County School Board and the Department of Special Services on issues affecting students receiving special education services. The committee is required by Virginia’s state regulations for special education. The ACSD meets the second Wednesday of each month with the exception of August. The 33 members are School Board appointees, parent representatives from each cluster and representatives from community boards and groups. (See Appendix I for 2008-2009 members and attendance.)

## **Committee Organization**

The Committee has two co-chairs and two co-secretaries. This was the third year the Committee received a charge from the School Board. The charge from the school board asked the committee to identify and recommend the best practices for teaching and assessing essential life skills for students with disabilities as defined in School Board Strategic Goal 2. One of the three temporary subcommittees specifically addressed this charge. Another subcommittees addressed common language and collaboration between the school system and parents. The remaining subcommittee was a continuation of last’s years reading subcommittee. However, the focus of the subcommittee this year was on reading programs at a secondary level. An on-going follow up committee also reported on the status of previous Committee’s recommendations and the school system’s response.

The Committee also requested that FCPS resubmit the public comment made to the Virginia Department of Education regarding the proposed special education regulations when an additional comment period was announced. Pubic comment was also made to the School Board with respect to the proposed FCPS budget.

The Committee held its annual retreat in September. The purpose of the retreat was to develop plans for the coming school year and become better acquainted with each other as members of the Committee. New members received orientation books containing information about federal, state and local regulations governing their work, a Committee roster, a staff directory, useful Web sites, and last year’s annual plan, as well as other reports and resources.

## **Committee Presentations and Activities**

The Department of Special Services made several presentations to the ACSD, some initiated by the department and some requested by the Committee. The presentations were on the following:

- VDOE Instructional Memorandum

- Consultant's Report
- Budget Presentation
- Accessible Materials
- SOL Assessments
- Annual State Report

In addition to these more formal presentations, the Committee responded to monthly "stakeholder questions" developed by the Assistant Superintendent, Kim Dockery, to elicit input into a variety of FCPS special education issues. Attendance at meetings generally ranged from 2 to 5 guests in attendance.

The Annual Special Education Conference was on April 25, 2009 at Marshall High School. Although attendance was not as high as hoped for, the comments captured on the exit surveys indicate that the parents that attended found the conference helpful.

## **Public Comment**

The Committee received public comment on each of the following topics:

- The need for alternative programs for students with Aspergers and ADHD due to their different learning styles
- Comment regarding the VDOE position regarding the application of the fourth circuit's decision in the A.K. case
- Comments regarding the education of intellectually disabled children
- Concern regarding how the budget cuts will adversely affect the provision of PE, health and driver's education in the least restrictive environment.
- Concern regarding the impact budget cuts will have on adaptive PE
- Concern regarding the use of restraint and seclusion rooms in FCPS.
- Concern with respect to the reduction of services for children who will be aging out of the school system.

## **Recurring Issues within FCPS**

This year we have asked all members to submit a list of problems within the schools that have been brought to their attention as ACSD members. In many cases these problems have occurred with alarming frequency in both elementary and secondary schools. The Committee is very concerned that the rights of students with disabilities are being violated under IDEA and their access to the education available to their non-disabled peers compromised. The following is a list of the most prevalent and pervasive issues:

- Failure to provide intensive reading remediation at the secondary level to students who have been successful with accommodations but are unable to read independently. This a continuing concern and was cited by the Committee last year
- Bullying of children with disabilities and the school's either failure to act upon it or blaming the bullied student for it.

- The reauthorized *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* in 2004 (IDEA 2004) included significant changes related to monitoring that emphasized improving educational results and functional outcomes for children with disabilities. IDEA makes clear that at all levels of the special education process the inclusion and involvement of parents is crucial in the provision of special education services and a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) . The requirement that states report on the extent to which their schools facilitated parental involvement in their annual progress reports (APR) to the US Department of Education recognizes the importance of family involvement. See Appendix A for DOE internet resources and documents.
- Failure to use Psycho-educational Evaluations report data by IEP Teams when creating IEPs in favor of teacher reports.

The Committee strongly recommends that these issues be examined systemically to determine if FCPS is adequately meeting the needs of its students with disabilities. This may also offer insight to the new special education director with respect to any pervasive problems in FCPS.

## **Goal 2 Subcommittee**

This year's charge from the School Board asks that, "The ACSD will identify and recommend best practices for teaching and assessing essential life skills for students with disabilities as defined in School Board Strategic Goal 2." Briefly, Goal 2 breaks down "essential life skills" into the following subcategories: Demonstrate honesty, responsibility, and leadership, work effectively within a group dynamic, develop the resilience and self-confidence required to deal effectively with life's challenges, possess the skills to manage and resolve conflict, be inspired to learn throughout life, courageously identify and pursue their personal goals, develop practical life skills including but not limited to: problem solving/critical thinking, work habits, financial competency, self-sufficiency and time management, and make healthy and safe life choices. Our subcommittee was divided into smaller groups focusing on these areas and specifically on behavior, safety, recreation, social skills, and communication.

The group focusing on behavior looked at the FCPS Student's Responsibilities and Rights booklet for students across all disability categories and met with Clarence Jones, the Coordinator of the FCPS Safe and Drug-Free Youth (SDFY) section. We discussed the handbook's format and clarity and how schools could effectively teach these rules to students of all disability levels. In the course of this discussion we learned that schools are encouraged to test the students on the information in the handbook, and revisit specific topics when necessary. However, because the suspension rates for students with disabilities are still 4 times higher than that of general education students, this group believes that there is still a disconnect between the information specific to the SR&Rs and the way in which it is presented on paper, in the classroom, and on assessments to students with varying special needs. Therefore the ACSD recommends that:

- 1) FCPS revise the Student Responsibilities & Rights (SR&R) to accommodate the different cognitive levels of students with disabilities across the county and ensure that the adapted versions are distributed countywide.**

- 2) **FCPS embed all of the SR&Rs throughout the curriculum of low incidence students and students with social and emotional disabilities to ensure that students who are not in a “basic skills” class have access to the curriculum.**
- 3) **FCPS intensify training for school personnel on how to appropriately implement the SR&Rs for students with all levels of disabilities, including but not limited to, the appropriateness and effectiveness of suspensions and expulsions for students with low incidence disabilities, Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans and communication with families related to the SR&Rs.**

Related to the SR&Rs, we had a group examine student safety in school and in the community. Here, the group found FCPS needs to teach more appropriate safety rules to students with varying disabilities, with a particular emphasis on low incidence students and students with social and emotional disabilities. This curriculum might include how to call for help, how to identify and go to safe places, how to positively interact with and reduce the fear of law officers and fire fighters, how to react safely and appropriately in law enforcement encounters, how to recognize inappropriate touching and sexual advances, and how to report bullying, teasing and taunting incidents. Thus the ACSD recommends that:

- 4) **FCPS incorporate an extensive safety curriculum throughout elementary, middle and high school for students with disabilities of varying levels.**

Our next group looked at recreation. FCPS provided 2008-2009 After School Social Inclusion Clubs for Secondary Students with Disabilities data. The data shows that approximately 53% of middle schools and 45% of high schools have some sort of *Best Buddies*/independent social clubs/supported after school activities for students with disabilities. Based on these low numbers, and the IDEA mandated support for students with disabilities participating in after school activities, the ACSD recommends that:

- 5) **FCPS form an inter-agency partnership between FCPS schools (elementary, middle and high schools) and Fairfax County Therapeutic Recreation Services (TRS) to ensure inclusion education and support is available to all school personnel, including teachers, coaches and administrators.**

This will increase the capacity for individuals with disabilities to successfully participate in after school clubs and sports by giving teachers, coaches and administrators the tools they need to maintain an inclusive environment.

With regards to social skills, FCPS shared data from the Middle School and High Schools Currently offering Personal Development Courses during the 2008-2009 School Year. These classes are the primary environments in which schools teach social skills at the secondary level. However, again, the numbers of schools offering these courses are low: 53% of middle schools offer a Personal Development or ED Basic Skills course that supports personal development and 48% of high schools offer similar programs. Furthermore, at this time, FCPS does not offer a Personal Development class or a similar class that supports social skills on the elementary school level. Therefore, this subcommittee recommends that:

- 6) FCPS offer Personal Development Courses or courses that support personal development including social skills and critical life skills within every middle and high school across the county, and provide a Personal Development curriculum for all elementary schools.**

Our communications group addressed the fact that the teaching of Essential Life Skills, by its very nature, requires a trusting and collaborative approach that extends into the home and the community. Students, teachers, parents, and interested community members all need a roadmap that clearly communicates how Goal 2 will be realized and measured and what roles each party will play.

This group has researched “best practice” for communicating the goals, plans and progress of Goal 2 within the special education community. Best practice indicates that a comprehensive communication plan or roadmap is needed to inform, educate and answer questions such as: who are the stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, community members) and what are their roles and responsibilities; what are the specific implementation plans, programs, and timelines; what specialized plans have been developed to meet the unique needs of each affected group (General Ed, Special Ed, ESOL, Elementary, Middle, High School, etc...); how and when will individual Student Learning Plans be developed and how will they be accessed; how will progress be measured and monitored; how and when will progress be reported upon; and how will all of this information be communicated to each stakeholder.

FCPS needs to identify specific messages that will inspire thought and action and create a campaign to get these messages out using all forms of technology. Best practice indicates that FCPS should also determine whether the stakeholders are getting the message, and change course if the answer is ‘no’.

One specific idea: As the new Student Learning Plans are developed, they should be posted and regularly updated on each student’s Blackboard site.

The limited information on Goal 2 currently provided on the FCPS website is rather cumbersome to read. There are some fine programs, already in the works that are getting near zero visibility in the community. The Parent Resource Center also offers excellent workshops that should be tied in with the Goal 2 initiatives. The subcommittee therefore recommends that:

- 7) FCPS develop a comprehensive communication plan that will serve as a roadmap to inform, educate, and answer questions regarding Goal 2, available to all students and parents across all disability levels and socio-economic status.**

Finally, FCPS made a presentation to the School Board on March 19, 2009, outlining new “Projects for Goal 2”. The project titles include: Student Survey, Build Positive Student Character, Positive Behavior Approaches, Health and Safety Choices, Goal Setting and Reflection, Economic Literacy/Finance Park, Group Process Skills, Student Learning Plan, Peer Mediation and Teacher Survey. Some of these projects are already underway, some are in the

beginning stages, and some are as yet unfunded. As of yet, these project teams do not have parents on board. With this in mind, the Goal 2 subcommittee recommends that:

- 8) **FCPS work collaboratively with the ACSD on the Goal 2 projects by including members of the ACSD on each project team to ensure that all perspectives are considered as this initiative evolves.**

The ACSD would like to extend the Goal 2 subcommittee to the 2009-2010 SY to further examine the Davis and Pulley Centers, communication to stakeholders of post-secondary options for students of varying disabilities, training for all students receiving special education on career, vocational and life skills goals in high school and the diploma options for students of varying disability levels.

## Reading Subcommittee

This committee was chaired by Maureen Nameroff and comprised of Dawn Battle, Tim Campbell, Laura Gerke, Claire Gesalman, Angelica Lower, Marjorie Lynum, Shelley Mansfield, Joan Rizek, Patricia Trahan, and Lynn Wiley.

This year the School Board asked the ACSD and the reading subcommittee, to expand on the work that was done last year and to further explore the various reading program options and their implementation in FCPS with a focus on the Secondary level.

The committee continued to research best practices and reviewed the responses to the ACSD's 2003 reading subcommittee report and last years report. We also conducted a panel discussion with FCPS. The panel consisted of staff from both the Department of Special Services and Instructional Services (see Appendix A for a list of those in attendance). Finally the committee consulted with Dr. Nikki Miller, Assistant Professor, George Mason University, College of Education and Human Development and Dr. Elaine Holden, Fellow, Academy of Orton Gillingham Practitioners and Educators, Director of Tutorials, The Reading Foundation, Amherst, NH.

Reading performance or lack thereof, for students with disabilities in FCPS has been a major focus for both the ACSD and the School Board. This is evidenced by the fact that we have spent three of the last six years advising the School Board on this issue. With that in mind it is the Reading Subcommittee's *overall* recommendation to the School Board that in order to sufficiently address this issue, there ***must be a fundamental and systemic shift in how FCPS approaches reading instruction.*** Furthermore the impetus for this must come from the top down. To support this systemic change, FCPS must give appropriate attention to the tools that the county uses to teach reading to students in Special Education and to the direction and training teachers *and* Principals receive regarding these tools. Specifically, teacher preparation must include:

- The structure of English Language,
- The stages of Reading Development (Chall, Appendix B),
- Skills for Multisensory Remediation, and

- The five components from the Report of the National Reading Panel (Appendix C).

While the panel has looked into reading programs in FCPS over the course of the past two years, a second systemic issue has surfaced that is an increasing problem. Specifically, the issue is the manner in which reading programs are implemented at the school level. Many teachers throughout FCPS are pulling out “pieces” of various reading protocols to address the needs of their students and subsequently calling them a “program”. For example, using a part of one reading program for decoding, another for comprehension and yet another for fluency. While this may seem innocuous on the surface, according to the experts we consulted and current research, this can have extreme detrimental effects on students with moderate to significant reading impairments. When individual components of a specifically developed and structured program are separated fidelity and reliability of that program is compromised. The same holds true for a “complete” program that is not implemented in the prescribed manner. Instead of this piecemeal approach, students need an approach that systematically covers all five reading components, is scaffolded to ensure that no skill area is missed/skipped, has a diagnostic component and is direct and explicit.

From the panel discussion we found that both the Department of Special Services and Instructional Services agree with this issue in theory and provide training that incorporates it. However, they are only advisors and have no authority to ensure that it is carried out or put into practice. For example, Read 180 was developed and meant to be used with Stage 3 readers (see appendices B and D), who have no problems with decoding and *are not* significantly behind in reading. It also requires 90min of direct instruction daily. However, it is currently the “go to,” and often the only program, being used at the secondary level for reading remediation. Many schools even state in their course catalog that it is for students who are 2-3 years behind in reading, which is contrary to the published program guidelines. It is also only being provided in 45-minute time blocks. If schools are choosing reading programs based on documented results, those results are no longer valid if the program is not implemented as the program designers intended. Breaking down a program reduces the fidelity of that program, skews the results, and therefore lowers the expected progress of the student. Thus the ACSD strongly recommends that:

- 1) The School Board direct their cluster superintendents to require and hold principals accountable for maintaining fidelity of reading programs used in their schools and provide sufficient and ongoing training and funds to ensure their teachers implement programs in the manner in which the program was intended.**

According to the panel discussion, the Textbook Adoption committee works under the auspices of School Board Regulations 3004 and 3005.5. These directives mainly govern the choosing of Basal and Supplemental reading material, not reading remediation programs or materials used in the Special Education classroom. They also primarily review material based on its appropriateness for the classroom in relation to ethnic differences, violence or implied or explicit sexual situations to name a few issues. In addition, the Basal Reading Guides were chosen before the National Reading Panel’s Report came out in 2004. FCPS could not use the report as a contributing guideline to SB R3005.5, nor has any recommendations from the report since been added to the regulation. The Reading Subcommittee concludes there is no clear definition or

guideline for choosing a reading program or supplemental reading materials that specifically addresses remediation programs used with special education students. Nor is there any specific criterion to which the committee must adhere when reviewing a potential reading program for its appropriateness for students with special needs. While the Textbook Adoption committee may touch on the validity or the reliability of a reading program, it is not the main focus. And while a principal or a special education teacher may choose a reading program for the school, they are usually without the professional expertise (a *current* reading degree or recent credit level courses) to make a well-informed decision. Based on this information, the subcommittee continues to recommend (see previous reports from 2003,2008) that:

- 2) FCPS create a formal committee supported by School Board approved regulations that governs the adoption of reading programs and supplemental reading materials and resources to teach reading to special education students from K-12.**

Our subcommittee also discovered teachers need increased training regarding children with significant cognitive and physical impairments that require ATS intervention and support. Teachers need to better understand how to integrate high-tech equipment into their reading lessons, using the reading programs that best fit their student's needs. Thus, the ACSD recommends that:

- 3) FCPS increase training that incorporates ATS and different techniques when teaching students with cognitive and physical disabilities that impacts their access to traditional classroom supports.**

With regard to Secondary reading instruction, the subcommittee conducted an informal survey of FCPS middle and high schools to see what programs were available and to whom they were targeted. What we found was alarming. Several high schools offered no reading remediation programs/classes at all. Of the high schools that actually offer reading classes, most rely on their Developing/Expanding Literacies classes to fill this need. This represents a very narrow approach and does not address the individual educational needs of students. Staff also echoed the concern regarding the limited reading remediation opportunities at the secondary level. In additions, many principals don't staff with future needs in mind, which further complicates the issue. For example they wait till the last minute or not at all, to consult with feeder schools about the needs incoming students might have with regard to reading. This means that the school may not have staff with appropriate training in specific reading programs to meet the individual reading needs of students entering the school.

We also found that while FCPS might state that "no single approach to reading will work...for all children..." or that a "one-size-fits-all approach does not provide appropriate instruction" (see staff response to ACSD reports for 2003,2008); in practice this is not the case. This is especially true with regard to middle school reading classes. An example of this is the use of Read 180 in almost all middle schools for reading remediation. Read 180 does not work for, nor was it intended to work with all students, yet it is the primary program offered at the middle school level. FCPS staff has advised principals against the "dumping" of students into Read 180 classes, yet the practice continues.

In order for FCPS to address the literacy needs of students at the middle and high school levels, there should be at least one teacher at each at both the middle and high school who has a working knowledge of a wide variety of available reading programs and can be made available to staff the necessary reading class. This will enable FCPS to create reading classes around the needs of the students as opposed to trying to fit all students into one class and on structure like Read 180. Thus, the ACSD recommends that:

- 4) **FCPS flexibly staff schools with reading teachers/specialists according to the needs of the students so that all secondary schools have access to a highly qualified reading teacher to staff a class when needed.**

Finally, FCPS must make an all-important change in its reading philosophy in order to improve the reading skills of children with special needs. FCPS needs to “catch up” with best practices and implement successful, proven strategies for students with significant reading deficits. Most important among these is a decision to use and implement reading programs that are complete, systematic and comprehensive programs and utilize direct instruction techniques. While this subcommittee recognizes that fluency and automaticity are necessary components of reading development-and research supports this, there are too many teachers who emphasize fluency programs for students that are not yet able to decode. Thus, FCPS should focus on accuracy in phonemic awareness and phonics to a standard of 90% as per the national Reading Panel and nationally recognized specialists in reading instruction. It is with this systemic shift in mind that the ACSD recommends (along with our recommendations from 2008):

- 5) **FCPS shift its emphasis to incorporate the need for accuracy before fluency.**
- 6) **Utilize the researched and proven techniques of Direct Instruction for students with significant reading deficits, with an emphasis on replacing the two currently used programs at the Elementary level.**

### **Common Language: The Parent-School Partnership in Special Education**

The subcommittee was chaired by Connie Lorentzen and Irene Moore and comprised of members Kelly Greenwood, Sheree Brown Kaplan, Allan Phillips, Carmen Sanchez, Kathy Webster, and Jeffrey Nolan.

The Subcommittee purpose was to look at the issue of communication, the meaningful collaboration between parents of students with disabilities and principals. The Subcommittee noted FCPS has long acknowledged the need to develop mutual respect and trust and build parent-school partnerships and promote meaningful collaboration with all parents and, in particular, parents of students with disabilities. The Subcommittee supports the districts’ efforts and believes the recent reorganization of the Department of Special Services offers an important opportunity to refocus efforts to develop additional strategies and procedures which foster and increase the parent-school partnership in order to improve both academic and functional outcomes for students with disabilities.

The reauthorized *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* in 2004 (IDEA 2004) included significant changes related to monitoring that emphasized improving educational results and functional outcomes for children with disabilities. IDEA makes clear that at all levels of the special education process the inclusion and involvement of parents is essential to the provision of FAPE and now requires reporting on family involvement. See Appendix A for DOE internet resources and documents. In response to this mandate, the U.S. Department of Education identified parental involvement as a quality indicator and stated that in order to ensure the provision of a FAPE to children with disabilities; states must now demonstrate a measurable increase in parent involvement in the special education process. This is now measured in the State Performance Plan that must be submitted to the Secretary of Education.

In addition to being a mandated measure, meaningful parent collaboration is best practice and fundamental to the success of special education. “The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life.” (A New Generation of Evidence, Henderson and Berla (1994). Because IDEA directs Individualized Educational Program (IEP) teams to operate by consensus, it is integral that parents understand all decisions on goals and objectives, accommodations and modifications, state and division-wide assessments, services and placement. Equally important is the school’s understanding of the parent’s concerns and perspectives. Further, in Virginia any decision to screen, evaluate, find eligible and create or change IEPs for students with disabilities must include the parent’s active involvement and consent. Because the need for consensus building is integral to providing children with disabilities with a free and appropriate public education the Committee recommends the Board:

- 1. Increase training of parents and educators of students with disabilities in building partnerships and collaboration with an emphasis on effective communication as the foundation of successful parent-school partnerships.**
- 2. Conduct a yearly random survey to look at parent-school relationships, such as, the number of parents who report participation in IEP meetings, meaningful collaboration with the team, and over all satisfaction with the special education information, processes, services and providers, to include interactions with administrators and other key staff with whom parents regularly communicate and collaborate.**

Family involvement has clearly reached a new level of acceptance today as one of many factors that can help improve the quality of schools. However, “acceptance does not always translate into implementation, commitment, or creativity.” (Drake, 2000, p. 34). We cannot assume that educators naturally know how to work effectively with parents and families. Administrators and teachers, at all levels, need ongoing professional development addressing ways to create family-friendly schools, build positive school-family relationships, understand families and their perspectives and involve families in the education of their children in greater ways. Greater value must be placed on the importance of the parent-school partnership, particularly in special education. Families know their children best and their input needs to be respected for their unique knowledge. Schools have a great deal of expertise about children, but they are not in the relationship for a lifetime. Although FCPS has made some attempts to train FCPS professionals in these skills FCPS must better prepare educators to more effectively work with families that

have children with disabilities in their shared mission of educating children to build mutual trust and a climate of respect. Therefore the Committee recommends the Board:

- 3. Review and promote the use of existing support structures, resources and relationships at the local school level to help identify and respond to the needs of parents of children with disabilities.**
- 4. Provide non-negotiable job embedded staff development to increase the level of awareness and sensitivity to the needs of parents of children with disabilities.**

Successful parent-school partnerships require sustained mutual collaboration and participation of schools and families, both at home and at school, in activities that directly affect the success of children's learning. If families of students with disabilities are to work with schools as full partners in the education of their children, then schools must provide them with the opportunities and support needed to promote success. There are many proven general approaches, one-on-one strategies and best practices available to build the parent-school partnership to increase meaningful collaboration in the special education process. See Appendix B for a list of examples of parent-school partnership models, resources and publications. However, the first step to developing improved parent school relationships is to assess the parent's current perception of the relationship they have with the school and whether they are being provided with the information necessary to be an active participant in the decision making process for their child. Therefore, the Committee recommends the Board:

- 4. Increase the number of parents who report, in a survey, being informed by staff of the Special Education Parents Handbook and the Parents Resource Center by school staff.**
- 5. Increase staff participation in staff development opportunities and parent participation in workshops offered by the district; track said data by Cluster and local school.**
- 6. Increase the number of hits on the FCPS special education links and PRC website.**
- 7. Add links on the parents' page of *Blackboard* for all students to Student Services, the Special Education Parents Handbook and the Parent Resource Center and track usage to increase communication of the special education process and procedures.**

## **Future Issues**

We have established a Follow-Up Subcommittee, now in its fourth year, to report in collaboration with the staff on the status of past recommendations. The Follow-Up Subcommittee's report on last year's recommendations is scheduled for September at our annual retreat.

The Committee thanks the School Board for its continued interest in special education as well as individual members' interest in our activities. We are confident that with Mrs. Wilson as our liaison to the School Board, there will be continued frequent communication between the

Committee and the School Board. We look forward to working with the School Board to develop a charge for our coming year's work.

## **Appendix A – FCPS Reading Panel**

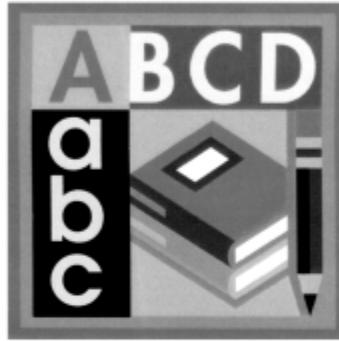
Chris Johnston	Director, Secondary Special Education
Pat Fege	Coordinator, Language Arts
Sue Phillips	High School Remediation Specialist
Sherry Levitt	High School English Specialist
Terri Rubin	Middle School Language Arts Specialist
Alicia Hall	Middle School Reading Resource Teacher
Mary Beth Cunningham	Secondary ED/LD Manager
Katherina Johnson	Secondary ED/LD Specialist

## Appendix B – Stages of Language and Reading Development

According to Jeanne Chall and Elaine Holden, Ph.D.

- Stage 0- Oral Language/Pre-reading Stage: Unsystematic accumulation of understandings about reading between pre-school and kindergarten.
- Transition (Phonological Awareness): Phonological Awareness is the ability to recognize the sound patterns of oral language.
- Stage 1-Initial Reading of Decoding Stage (grades 1-2; ages 6-7): Student's central task is learning arbitrary letters and associating them with corresponding parts of spoken words. Phonics.
- Stage 2- Confirmation, Fluency, Ungluing from print, Automaticity Stage (grades 2-3; ages 7-8): Consolidation of what was learned in Stage 1. Students are able to apply phonetic skills to one-syllable words, use basic sight word vocabulary, and sound out simple stories. During this stage, students increase their fluency and Automaticity.
- Stage 3- Comprehension, Reading for Learning (grades 4-8; ages 9-13): Readers need to bring prior knowledge to their reading. Children acquire facts.
- Stage 4-Multiple Viewpoints (High School; ages 14-18): Readers are to appreciate abstract concepts and issues from multiple points of view.
- Stage 5-synthesis of Unique Point of View (college; age 18 & up): Considered the ultimate stage of reading ability, in which readers are able to synthesize new information with their background knowledge in order to create new, complex knowledge.

Appendix C – Reading First Report



# National Reading Panel

**TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ:  
An Evidence-Based Assessment  
of the Scientific Research Literature  
on Reading and Its Implications  
for Reading Instruction**

## **Appendix D – Differences Among Reading Programs**

Elaine Holden, Ph.D., (COPAA 2009)

Many reading programs are suggested – few are appropriate. Fit the reading program to the child, not the child to the program. Below are a list of several reading programs and the reading stage they correspond to.

### Stage Zero (NO Letters)

- LIPS
- Reading Readiness (Neuhaus)
- Sounds and Letters (Sopris West)
- Soundations (Margaret Taylor Smith)

### Transition Stage (Phonemic Awareness)

- Reading Readiness
- Orton-Gillingham
- Multisensory Teaching Approach (MTA)

### **Stage One: Letters**

- Orton-Gillingham
- Multisensory Teaching Approach
- Alphabet Phonics
- Spalding
- Slingerland
- Recipe for Reading
- Wilson (only for high stage one)
- Language!

### **Stage Two**

- Orton-Gillingham
- Great Leaps
- Read Naturally
- Basal Series

### **Stage Three**

- Visualizing and Verbalizing
- Neuhaus Metacognitive Vocabulary and Comprehension
- Story Grammar Marker
- Project Read
- Language!
- Read 180

### Stage Four

- Read 180
- Authentic Literature

### Stage Five

- Novels
- Textbooks

## Appendix E – DOE Internet Resources and Documents

Part B State Performance Plans (SPP) Letters and Annual Performance Report (APR) Letters:  
<http://www.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/index.html>

The parent/family measurement scales developed by the National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring (NCSEAM): [file:///C:/DOCUME~1/User/LOCALS~1/Temp/B-8\\_NCSEAM\\_parent\\_family\\_involvement\\_measures-11-13-07-2.htm](file:///C:/DOCUME~1/User/LOCALS~1/Temp/B-8_NCSEAM_parent_family_involvement_measures-11-13-07-2.htm)

Parent Involvement Resources & Publications (includes the samples noted below): <http://spp-apr-calendar.rrfcnetwork.org/explorer/view/id/527?3#category3>

### **Parent – Professional Collaboration Models**

- Collaborative Partnerships Between SEAs and Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) (Müller, 2007)
  - Elements for Successful Parent-Professional Collaboration: The Fundamental Things Apply As Time Goes By (Sheehey & Sheehey, 2007)

### **Home – School – Community Partnerships**

- Educating Our Children Together: A Sourcebook for Effective Family-School-Community Partnerships (Carter, 2003)
- Parents, Families, and Local Communities (IDEA Partnership)

### **Parent – Professional Communication**

- How Families and Professionals Can Build Winning Partnerships (Vermont Parent Information Center, 2005)
- Working Together: A Parent's Guide to Parent and Professional Partnership and Communication (PACER Center, 2006)

## Appendix E

### PROVEN APPROACHES TO BUILDING SUCCESSFUL PARENT-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS:

#### U.S. Department of Education (DOE)

- **Engaging Parents in Education: Lessons from Five Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs)**, June 2007. "Training Parents and Educators to Function in Teams." Several of the highlighted PIRCs have established programs to create and train school-based teams to focus on parent involvement and student achievement.  
<http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/monitor/index.html?src=m>
- **Family Involvement in Children's Education**, October 1997. "Families and Schools as Partners." This Idea Book is intended to assist educators, parents, and policy makers as they develop and nurture school-family partnerships.  
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/resources.html>

#### Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)-funded Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE)

- **Educating Our Children Together: A Sourcebook for Effective Family-School-Community Partnerships**, Susanne Carter and CADRE, 2003. This "IDEAs That Work" sourcebook provides guidance for schools on 80 promising practices organized into eight "cluster strategies."  
[http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/pdf/educating\\_our\\_children.pdf](http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/pdf/educating_our_children.pdf)
- **Process and Practice Information: Parent-to-Parent Assistance**. These approaches recognize that parents are a valuable source of assistance to other parents.  
<http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/ctu/processdefs.cfm?thisid=9>

**The Harvard Negotiation Project (HNP)** The HNP has developed proven strategies that can enhance communication between parents and schools in special education negotiations through the best practice of "principled negotiation." These practices are described in the following:

- **Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In**, Roger Fisher and William Ury. Based on research from the Harvard Negotiation Project, Getting to Yes teaches how to negotiate "win-win" solutions to disputes. Getting to Yes provides concise, step-by-step strategies that will help develop fair agreements in all kinds of conflict. "Principled negotiation" is at the heart of what was intended to happen within the IEP meeting.

**Getting Past No: Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation**, William Ury. While Getting to Yes describes the foundations of principled negotiation, Getting Past No focuses on what to do when negotiation breaks down.

## Appendix F – After School Social Inclusion Clubs

**2008-2009**  
**After School Social Inclusion Clubs for**  
**Secondary Students with Disabilities**

**The following Secondary schools participate in the *Best Buddies* program:**

- Carson MS
- Centreville HS
- Chantilly HS
- Marshall HS (meets during lunch)
- Oakton HS
- Westfield HS
- Woodson HS
- Langley HS
- Lake Braddock HS

**The following Secondary schools have organized independent social clubs:**

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Braddock MS | Bruin Club                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poe MS           | Special Afterschool programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sandburg MS      | Class based programs         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South County MS  | Partners Club                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thoreau MS       | Partners Club                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Twain MS         | Special Afterschool programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whitman MS       | Rec & Leisure Club           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Robinson MS      | Bridges Club                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lanier MS        | Flint Hill Friends           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annandale HS     | “B.” Buddies                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Robinson HS      | Partners Club                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South County HS  | Partners Club                |

**The following schools support SWD in afterschool activities of their choice:**

- Frost MS
- Hayfield MS
- Herndon MS
- Herndon HS
- Fairfax HS – Key Club

**The following Secondary schools are in the process of planning an after school Social Club for SWD:**

- Longfellow MS – Career Club starting April
- Stuart HS – Would like to start Best Buddies
- West Springfield HS – Best Buddies – Need a Teacher Sponsor

**Appendix G – Middle & High Schools Offering Personal Development Course (2008-2009)**

Currently, 14 middle schools are offering the Personal Development or ED Basic Skills course that supports personal development.

<b>Middle Schools</b>
Carson
Franklin
Hayfield
Irving
Jackson
Kilmer
Lake Braddock
Liberty
Robinson
Sandburg
South County
Stone
Thoreau
Whitman

Currently, 16 high schools are offering the Personal Development or ED Basic Skills course that supports personal development.

<b>High Schools</b>
Annandale
Edison
Fairfax
Herndon
Lake Braddock
Langley
Lee
Madison
Marshall
Mount Vernon
Oakton
Quander Road
Robinson Secondary
Westfield
West Potomac
West Springfield

Office of Special Education  
March 16, 2009

## Appendix H – Parent Workshop Attendance at 2009 Special Education Conference

Presentation	# of Attendees
Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans to help Students Improve	6
Free and Fun on the Web	3
Microsoft Word Homework Helpers	2
Planning for Life After High School: C&T Services in FCPS	5
Going Green: Turn your "Trash" in "Treasures"	0
Virginia Assessment Options for Students with Disabilities	0
Home and Study Skills (Spanish)	0
Executive Functioning (2 sessions)	27
SEASTARS Overview	2
ESOL Services for English Language Learners with Disabilities	1
Parent Toolbox for IEP Planning	10
Understanding the Process of Transitioning your Preschool Child to Kindergarten	13
Homework: Toward Organization and Independence (2 sessions)	7
Transitioning from School to the Community for Low Incidence Students	3
Having a Child with a Disability: An Unplanned Journey (2 Sessions)	11
Why is my Child Behaving this Way? Using Scatterplots to Figure out What to do	7
Gifted Students with Learning Challenges (Twice Exceptional) (2 sessions)	11
Programming for Students with Low Incidence Disabilities in MS & HS	6
Technology Tools for Struggling Readers	7
Tough Kid Solutions for Home and Community (2 sessions)	14
Windows XP Accessibility and Keyboard Commands	1
Math Strategies for Parents	9
Read-It, Get-It: Reading Comprehension Strategies for Students with High Functioning Autism/Asperger's	11
Helping Children Live with Stress	12
Overview of Secondary Reading Instruction for Students with Disabilities	4
Accessible Instructional Materials for Students with Print Disabilities	5
Text to Speech: How to Listen to Electronic Text on Your Home Computer	4
Making Electronic Books	10
Literacy Instruction for Students with Disabilities	8
Google It! (There's more than meets the Eye)	7

**Appendix H – Attendance at 2008-2009 ACSD Meetings**