

**Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities
Staff Response to 2007 Recommendations**

The Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) made a number of recommendations in the 2007 report and presentation to the School Board. On behalf of the board, we are pleased to respond to those recommendations.

Recommendation 1: FCPS teaching staff be given increased access to non-traditional training opportunities.

Response: Office of Special Education (OSE) staff members, in collaboration with Professional Learning and Training, and Instructional Services, are in the process of developing a variety of non-traditional professional development opportunities to address the needs of new and experienced teachers. For example, a webinar entitled, "Technology to Enhance Secondary Reading Instruction" was developed and several "hybrid" courses have been offered by OSE, including a seventh grade Life Science course where teachers were assigned science videos to view on their own, and were then required to attend several class sessions. In addition, an on-line course related to twice exceptional students was offered. Staff will continue to explore a variety of ways to provide staff development opportunities and follow-up support to teachers on identified school and division initiatives.

Recommendation 2: FCPS support full, rapid, district-wide implementation of the Learning Management System software.

Response: This recommendation has been accomplished through the Professional Learning and Training (PLT) initiative.

Recommendation 3: Essential areas of training should be made mandatory.

Response: The Leadership Team, comprised of the superintendent, deputy superintendent, and assistant superintendents, is in the process of identifying the trainings that will be mandatory for staff. There are certain trainings that have already been identified as mandatory. For example, training and school division certification in the on-line IEP system, SEA STARS, is required for special education teachers. In addition, teachers and instructional assistants providing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services to students in preschool autism classes and elementary enhanced autism classes must complete three core training sessions: Applied Behavior Analysis Fundamentals, Verbal Behavior Fundamentals, and ABA/VB Beginning Hands-On training.. We envision using the My PLT learning management system to notify staff of the mandatory trainings and to monitor completion.

Recommendation 4: Principals should be made accountable for developing, implementing, and sustaining professional training plans for their schools.

Response: Principals are already responsible and accountable for professional training plans for their schools. There is a school improvement planning process, in which staffs review grade-level, department, and schoolwide aggregate and disaggregated data, and determine areas for improvement. Cluster assistant superintendents are responsible for evaluating principals and reviewing the professional training plans for their schools.

Recommendation 5: FCPS designate monies in the budget for 1) supplies, reinforcers and "booster" training funds for the PBS sites 2) additional coaching positions on both the elementary and secondary levels of the ABA Coaching Model, and 3) an extension of the three-year program to at least five years for the Cluster-Based Instructional Coaches

Pilot Program.

Response: These recommendations have primarily been accomplished. In the FY08 budget, the School Board allocated funding to train up to 50 additional schools in Positive Behavior Support (PBS) and to sustain the 71 schools currently implementing PBS. Two applied behavior analysis (ABA) coaches and two ABA specialists were added. In addition, 15 more instructional coaches were added to the Cluster-Based Instructional Coaches Program.

Recommendation 6: FCPS implement strategies to increase awareness and access to Career and Technical Education courses, the Academy Programs, other career-related programs, and transition and career planning tools and curriculum to students with disabilities and their parents.

Response: FCPS offers a continuum of career-related education and training options to students with disabilities: within the general education setting, within the general education setting with support, and within the special education setting. Employment and transition representatives (ETRs) work collaboratively with guidance counselors and school staff to prepare students for transitioning to post-school options. Students and parents are informed of the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services and other postsecondary options and supports in several ways: at the student's IEP meeting, through correspondence from ETRs to parents, at all parent trainings offered by Career and Transition Services (CTS), and at student information sessions, such as Northern Virginia Community College Collaboration orientations specifically for students with disabilities and their parents, Future Quest, academy tours, and presentations by ETRs and guidance counselors. Information regarding adult services is also available on the CTS website. Additional strategies for increasing awareness will continue to be explored.

Recommendation 7: The Davis and Pulley Centers should be given a budget priority commensurate with their needs.

Response: There is an appropriate level of staffing at Davis and Pulley. Services are staffed the same as low incidence high school special education services. There are two types of teacher positions at Davis and Pulley—198-day teacher contracts and 194. Based on the needs of the center, the administrator has the flexibility to trade back and forth between those two types of positions when there are vacancies. Approximately nine teachers at each site are in 198-day positions; this is approximately half the total number of teachers allocated to each site.

Responses to the additional recommendations made by the committee are as follows:

Recommendation: That the School Board change the composition of the Committee in order to have a seat for a representative from Fairfax County's Therapeutic Recreation Services.

The School Board has acted on this recommendation; as a result, a representative from Therapeutic Recreation Services will be added to the committee.

Recommendation: That a detailed, building-by-building plan for increasing access to the general curriculum for all students with disabilities be developed, disseminated widely, and discussed publicly.

While we appreciate the recommendation and concerns that have led to this recommendation, we do not support this specific action at this time. It is our belief that the current school improvement planning process and the requirements related to No Child Left Behind require that principals focus on and plan for the achievement of all of their students. Concerns about

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individual schools may be addressed with the cluster assistant superintendents who are charged with reviewing school plans and evaluating principals. We recognize that additional tools may assist principals in obtaining information related to the needs and perceptions of their individual school communities and are in the process of developing those types of tools. For example, a climate survey and an updated Inclusive Schools Self Assessment will soon be available for schools to use as tools to assist them in collecting information and identifying further actions. We appreciate the input that was provided by ACSD representatives as the process of updating the Inclusive Schools Self Assessment was initiated.

Thank you again for your recommendations. We consider the role of the ACSD to be invaluable in contributing to the continued success of providing quality special education services for students in FCPS. Communication of your recommendations regarding special education services helps to strengthen the collaboration between FCPS and the community which is essential in achieving the outcomes we desire for our students. We encourage you to continue to work collaboratively with staff as you approach the new charge you are undertaking in the area of reading, and we look forward to considering your 2008 recommendations.