

**Department of Special Services
Staff Response to the Annual Report of the
Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities
June 2005**

Background:

Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia require that a local advisory committee for special education, appointed by each local school board, advise the school board through the division superintendent of unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities. The regulations state that the composition of the committee shall include parents of children with disabilities and persons with disabilities.

Key Issues: The Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) made the following recommendations:

1. The School Board include in its budget the funds to implement a school wide Positive Behavioral Support Program in all schools by the year 2010.
2. Fairfax County Public Schools increase joint training of parents and educators to encourage greater collaboration and a common understanding of issues.
3. FCPS create and implement uniform division-wide procedures governing Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) and Positive Behavior Intervention Plans (PBIPs).
4. FCPS develop a review process for schools with high rates of suspensions in an effort to reduce those rates.
5. FCPS implement procedures for identifying general education students who are suspended and may need special education services.
6. Create a task force to hold a community discussion about out how best to serve students in crisis, to include issues related to locked seclusion rooms and physical restraints.
7. FCPS increase training of secondary special and general education staff on differentiated learning and instruction, supports that benefit all students, and collaborative teaching models.
8. FCPS and the School Board recognize those secondary schools that most effectively teach students with low-incidence disabilities in inclusive settings.

Staff Recommendation:

Overall, staff members can support the recommendations of the ACSD and will continue to collaborate with the committee in implementing the recommendations wherever feasible. Staff members have been addressing concerns identified by the ACSD in the area of student behavior through the Target 9 committee and through training provided for school teams in school wide approaches to positive behavioral support; 41 schools will have completed training by September 2005 with funding provided by the Department of Special Services (DSS), via a grant, and the Target 9 Committee (future funding sources will need to be determined). There are many other approaches schools use to proactively address student behavior. For example, six schools have been

trained in The Responsive Classroom and many schools have school wide character education programs.

DSS staff members have reviewed and provided input into proposed guidelines developed by the Virginia Department of Education regarding the seclusion and restraint of students with physically aggressive behavior; these guidelines have also been reviewed by the State Special Education Advisory Committee. As suggested in the proposed state guidelines, DSS staff members have drafted a policy for School Board approval to clarify the responsibilities of schools in addressing the needs of students with physically aggressive behavior. In addition, a new regulation has been drafted to clarify procedures schools must follow in managing aggressive behavior. This regulation states that physical intervention and/or seclusion shall be used only as a last resort when other interventions have been exhausted; the regulation also communicates the requirements for staff training and the requirements for documenting and reporting incidents where physical restraint and/or seclusion are used. The decision to convene a task force is recommended for deferral pending adoption of the policy, implementation of the new regulation, and a review of updated information by county personnel regarding their efforts to address the mental health needs of students in crisis.