

Madison County Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

2018-2019 Annual Report

We are fortunate to have a talented, passionate Special Education community in Madison County. While our Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is grateful for the dedicated commitment of our special education faculty and staff, we have identified several areas worthy of attention in order to best support and serve our students.

Address the Special Education Achievement Gap

The Special Education Performance Report for FFY 2016, based on data from 2015-2016, indicates an ongoing discrepancy between English/reading proficiency and math proficiency between special education students in our county and state targets - 31% vs. >66% and 45% vs. >65%, respectively. (See Addendum 1 Indicator 3c) It should be noted that our county proficiency rate in math improved one percentage point, yet the county proficiency rate in reading fell six percentage points (and the state targets increased) compared to the previous year.

Improve Continuity of Advocacy/Services When Changing School Setting

Our committee recommends that protocols be developed and implemented, prior to the first day of school, to allow easier continuation of services when “moving up” from grade to grade, primary to elementary school, elementary to middle school and middle to high school. Streamlining this process benefits the administrators and teachers but, more importantly, maintains thoroughness of care and services for our students. Aligning language and expectations to maintain consistency in the different settings improves transitions, behavior, and academic achievement.

Expand Professional Development about Special Education

We recommend dedicated professional development time on Special Education topics for special education teachers, general education teachers, specials teachers (PE, art, music, etc.), and after-school supervisors. With the increasing move toward inclusion for special education students, there should be emphasis on educating the myriad of teachers these students see each day on specific conditions, instructional methods, best practices, etc. The Committee recommends a minimum of 3 hours of professional development in Special Education topics at the beginning of each school year.

We also support additional opportunities for special education teachers and teaching assistants to observe at other school divisions and alternative schools to then confer, analyze, and incorporate best practices at those sites into the Madison County School system.

Increase Awareness of Existing Special Education Resources for Parents and Families

The Special Education Advisory Committee sees a need for improved outreach to the general public, our current special education families, and those families new to the Special Education process. Navigating the Special Education world is, at best, complicated, and at worst, frightening. The Committee wishes to express our appreciation for increasing Madison County Schools' connection with the Piedmont Regional Education Program through its participation with the Parent Resource Center. We ask that this addition of including the Parent Resource Center be continued.

Post High collaboration

As Madison County has a low (and trending lower) number of students, there are low numbers of special education students in each grade level. For the special education students continuing in school after 12th grade there is often a need for additional functional skills learning. The Committee would like an individual or committee created to investigate a collaborative Post High Program with another county to expand on independent living skills, social skills, job opportunities, internships, and volunteer opportunities. Our committee would like to be notified of the findings of this research which we would like to have include information on Postsecondary Outcomes on higher education, employment, and postsecondary training programs. (See Addendum 1 Indicator 14)

The Special Education Advisory Committee appreciates the consideration of these recommendations in discussion of programming and funding priorities for the next and subsequent academic years.

This report was prepared by SEAC Chairperson Betsey Soulsby, with input from the SEAC membership. The document was presented, amended, and approved by the Committee April 10, 2019.

On April 10, 2019 SEAC reviewed the Madison County Special Education Annual Plan/Part B Flow Through Application completed by Jeanette Alexander, Supervisor of Student Services. The Committee agrees that using the funds for special education teaching staff is the best utilization of the funds.

Addendum 1

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/reports_plans_stats/special_ed_performance/division/2016-2017/spp-app/madison.pdf