

Madison County Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) 2019-2020 Annual Report

Introduction

Federal regulations require each state to have a Special Education Advisory Committee. Virginia, in addition, requires each school division to have a Special Education Advisory Committee. Madison SEAC is an evolving entity. Last school year the Committee met five times, this year 6 meetings are scheduled. The mandate is for 4 meetings per year. All meetings are open to the public and there is a Public Comment period. Attendance has been varied. We have implemented strategies to inform and encourage attendance and membership. The SEAC brochure has been redesigned and offered to each school for prominent display, colorful flyers of each meeting are given to SPED teachers for distribution to each family, SPED bus drivers are given flyers to distribute to parents/caretakers, PTOs are asked to post on Facebook meeting information. Meetings are listed on the division calendar and the SEAC webpage. The SEAC webpage has been redesigned to be more informative, user friendly, and inviting. Timely postings are needed in this endeavor. The Madison Eagle posts the meetings.

Each meeting has a presentation prior to the business portion.

September 11, 2019	Topic: Understanding Special Education – Stephanie Hicks (Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center)
October 9, 2019	Topic: Understanding Assessment Results – Ann Welch, PhD
November 13, 2019	Topic: Human Sexuality and Individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities – Katie Howell (VA REACH)
January 8, 2020	Snow day – rescheduled for February 12, 2020
February 12, 2020	Topic: Assistive Technology – Nita Collier
March 11, 2020	Topic: Madison Parks & Rec Inclusion Summer Program – Lindsay Von Herbulis

Planned presentation:

April 15, 2020	Topic: Executive Function – Diane Talarico-Cavanaugh Lead Autism and Behavior Consultant Piedmont Regional Education Program - PREP
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We again wish to express our appreciation to the Madison County Public School system and specifically the SPED faculty and staff for the focus and commitment to our students with special needs. The Madison Special Education Advisory Committee of the School Board submits the following recommendations for your attention to better support and serve our students.

To better facilitate current and future communication between the Board and the Committee, the Committee requests a written response to the items brought forth in its annual reports.

Quoting from the State Special Education Advisory Committee 2019 Annual Report:

For students with disabilities, parents need to be supported in a way that provides accurate information which will lead to positive academic experiences, career choices, and provide positive outcomes as these students transition into adulthood. (See addendum 1)

This generally needs to be more specific than for neurotypical students.

Address the Special Education Achievement Gap

The Special Education Performance Report for FFY 2017, based on 2016-2017 data continues to show gaps in English/reading and math proficiencies for special education students in Madison County and the state target percentages, even with the lowering of the state targets. (See Addendum 2 Indicator 3c for FFY2017 and Addendum 3 Indicator 3C for FFY2016)

Professional Develop about Special Education

The Committee continues to recommend dedicated professional development time on Special Education topics for general education teachers, career and technical education teachers, specials teachers (PE, art, music, etc.), after school personnel, and teacher aids, as well as special education teachers and SPED aides. We again request a minimum of 3 hours prior to the beginning of the school year. Additional professional development in aligning expectations and language will aid in improving continuity of advocacy and services in the multiple and varied settings involving our students, which will then improve transitions, behavior, and academic achievement.

Further Develop a Culture of Inclusion

Currently, there is not one universally accepted definition of inclusion; the definition varies in the context of theory and practice. Radford University has shared the progress of an Inclusion Practices Guide that is now available on the VDOE website. (see addendum 4)

The Committee asks that a definition of Inclusion be developed and posted on the MCPS Special Services webpage with information about Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Inclusion policies in Madison County Public Schools.

The Committee requests further development of inclusion plans and goals with metrics to assess and improve meaningful inclusion for students with disabilities in academic, non-academic, career and technical education, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

The committee recommends that MCPS develop a series of 5 standardized questions that can be used for both the teacher to do an assessment and, as importantly, for the student to do a self-assessment regarding her/his inclusion in the class. We believe asking the student and the teacher to answer the 5 questions on a regular basis will be helpful to both adjust the experience of the student, if needed, to confirm it is the right placement for the student, and for MCPS to collect and provide data that will show the impact and examples of inclusion.

Possible questions:

Is the student actively participating in the class (i.e. is she/he asking or answering questions in class conversations?) Provide an example.

Is the student participating in the same activities that the rest of the class is performing? (If not, explain why not.) Provide an example.

Is the student enjoying the inclusion in this class? Is she/he happy to be in the class? (If not, explain why not.)

Do you have examples of educational progress this student has made as a result of being included in this class?

How can this student be more included in this class?

Post High Collaboration

The Committee again requests an individual or committee investigate the possibility of a collaborative Post High Program with another school division to expand on independent living skills, social skills, job opportunities, internships, and volunteer opportunities for our students continuing in school to learn additional functional skills after 12th grade. Information should include useable data on Postsecondary Outcomes. (See Addendum 1, Indicator 14)

SEAC appreciates the opportunity to present these recommendations to the Board and hopes that they will be considered and implemented. We look forward to a response from the Board.

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 March 11, 2020. A verbal synopsis of The Special Education Annual Plan/Part B Flow Through Application was given by Jeanette Alexander at the February 12, 2020 meeting.

Addendum 1

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/committees_advisory/special_ed/index.shtml

Addendum 2

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/reports_plans_stats/special_ed_performance/division/2017-2018/spp-app/madison.pdf

Addendum 3

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

Addendum 4

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/iep_instruct_svcs/inclusive/k-12-inclusive-practices-guide.pdf

