

Special Education Advisory Committee Annual Report 2008 – 2009

Committee Charge

To advise the local school division of unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities.

Committee Members

Karen Bodett, Stephanie Castleman-Argue, Tammy Compton, Karen Durham, Katina Grow, Beth Haw, Julie Jefferson, Tona Jones, Leigh Kades, Carol Lewin, Sharon Insabella-Mackert, Jan Newton, Kimberly Overton, Roland Overton, Susan Reese, Susan Sullivan-Tubach, Megan White

Staff Consultants

Beth Buttner, Yolanda Conaway-Wood, Karen Davis, Renee Dino, Paula Edgette, Suzanne Stuart, Kathleen Velez

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The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) had 8 meetings during the 2008-2009 school year. As a result of presentations and discussions at those meetings, we submit the following two topics for your review. Both of these resolutions to unmet needs are absolutely free of cost and will not impact the already strained budget in any way.

1. Increase Disability Awareness: In an effort to increase disability awareness to the W/JCC School Board Members, School Personnel, and Parents, we are informing you of a video entitled: *How Difficult Can This Be? The F.A.T. City Workshop*, which is presented by Richard Lavoie, a nationally known expert on learning disabilities who has worked with best practices in special education since 1972 as a teacher, administrator, author, and consultant. *F.A.T. City* refers to the frustration, anxiety and tension experienced by many students with learning differences. This video can be borrowed from the W/JCC School Division Parent Resource Center, which is located at Berkeley Middle School on Ironbound Road. (Please call 221-9659 or email Suzanne Stuart at stuarts@wjcc.k12.va.us.) Additionally, several books and other videos on this topic are available to borrow from the Parent Resource Center. The Williamsburg Regional Library and the James City County Library also have copies of this video. (Please call WRL at 757-220-4040 or JCCL at 757-259-7753 or reserve it on-line at www.wrl.org with your library card.) We will continue to address this topic at our SEAC Meetings, which are summarized in the Meeting Minutes on the W/JCC School Division website. (Select *Programs* from the top menu and then *Special Education* from the drop-down menu, and then click *SEAC* on the right side for *Meeting Minutes*.) We will continue our ongoing discussions with the Office of Special Education and other school division personnel to increase disability awareness to all students.

2. Improve our working relationship with the W/JCC School Board: Each year, the SEAC submits an Annual Report to the School Board as we fulfill our mission to advise you of unmet needs in the education of students with disabilities. To establish better understanding between us, please accept our invitation for one or more School Board Members to attend our October, 2009 SEAC Meeting to inform us on how the board processes our information and how we can better provide usable information to our school division.

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Current Observations of the 2007-2008 SEAC Annual Report topics:

1. **More communication with the Superintendent and the School Board.** Meeting agendas and minutes were forwarded to the Superintendent and School Board Members during the 2008 – 2009 school year. We will continue to invite all School Board Members to our meetings that are not scheduled on the same night as their meeting. Two School Board Members did attend the October 14, 2008 SEAC Meeting.

2. **Consistent compliance of Individual Education Plans.** We do hear some positive feedback from parents regarding the successful implementation of their child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). However, most of the feedback we continue to hear about is regarding the IEPs that are not well-written to meet the needs of the student or are not implemented consistently. We look forward to seeing a more consistent application of IEPs, Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), best practices for special education school-based transitions, policies, and procedures. We are also very concerned about the enormous amount of time needed for our Special Education personnel to complete the new alternative assessments: Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA), Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP), and Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP). Additional staffing continues to be an important consideration.

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Current Observations of the 2006-2007 SEAC Annual Report topics:

1. Disability Awareness – Through the efforts of parents on the SEAC and the funding of individual school PTAs, disability awareness programs have been presented at some elementary schools. Special Education personnel continue to research various curriculums for all grade levels.
2. Training/Accountability/Performance Indicators - The Easy IEP, which is an on-line system, will be implemented in the fall of 2010. Some of the State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators address these issues. The *Updated Discipline of Disabled Students Made Easy*, by Kathleen Mehfoud, is a resource guide to assist with discipline issues.
3. Transition Process Improvements – Matt Luther, Transition Specialist, and Michelle Green, Employment Services Specialist, continue to collaborate with local agencies and employers to provide work- based training and initiate networking to generate partnerships for high school students. The W/JCC Public Schools Office of Special Education offered very informative workshops entitled: Transition Series- Brighter Outcomes. The extensive information packets from the W/JCC Public Schools entitled: *Special Education Best Practices for School-Based Transitions (August 2006)*, which addresses all grade levels, will be made available to all parents in the SEAC area of the W/JCC Public Schools website
4. Staffing Requests – We understand some of the 2009 stimulus money might be used to hire 2 Educational Diagnosticians.
5. Physical Education – Adaptive P.E. - We understand that some of the 2009 stimulus money might be used to hire an Adaptive P.E. teacher for the next 2 school years.
6. Wilson Reading Program Support - We understand that 2 teachers will be trained in Wilson Reading Program during the 2009 - 2010 school year.
7. Support for Students with Cochlear Implants - The school division does not have additional funding for this or auditory verbal therapy, but invoices continue to be paid for the related services that are required for students with Cochlear implants.
8. Autism Resource Team (ART) – Members of the ART team continue to be available to consult as needed at each school for best practices strategies for child study referrals and Response to Intervention (RtI) strategies. They are also available to consult regarding students with autism when assistance is required by teachers and building staff.
9. SEAC Information Distribution - We were able to have the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) brochure distributed to all students in K-12 in the first-day-of-school packet. This year, we would also like to include the Pre-school Programs.
10. Social Skills Curriculum for Students with Autism - Several Social Skills Curriculums continue to be available. The most current one is *Everyone Counts*. Many of these programs are looked at from the perspective of bullying and how to be a friend.