

**ANNUAL REPORT:  
Inclusive Practices in Successful Schools:  
Assessing Progress and Future Steps**

**Albemarle County Public Schools  
November 10, 2022**

According to Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) means that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (34 CFR 300.114 through 34 CFR 300.120)

The following is an initial self-assessment with the goal of familiarizing the system to the intent of the self-assessment, the scope of review as well as context of inclusive practices from the perspective of the Virginia Department of Education. While there are many perceived strengths that have been demonstrated by leadership and staff of Albemarle County Schools. It is also recognized that there is work to be done on improving practices associated with successful and inclusive schools as well as the need for development of rubrics to create a much more robust process for future self-assessments.

**1. A CLEAR AND CONSISTENT VISION AND VOCABULARY**

A system-wide understanding of our district's vision for and plans to achieve inclusion for diverse students, success is optimized. Additionally, a clear vision and set of expectations for every school promotes consistency from school to school and the potential for equitable opportunities for students.

**Strengths**

There is evidence of

- A clear and consistent vision for services for students with disabilities in inclusive settings in Albemarle County Public Schools.
- A common vocabulary regarding services for students with disabilities throughout the division.
- A continuum of services for students with disabilities with preferences for students being served in the general education environment.
- Leadership and faculty being able to articulate the main points of the schools' vision and commitment to all students.

### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- School faculty meet to review the district vision and align School vision and practices to it.
- Faculty members feeling a strong sense of shared responsibility for all students.
- Creating an organizational structure for our school that reflects shared ownership for the success of all students.

### **Action Steps**

- Refine its vision and mission statements / work to specifically clarify and promote inclusive practices in Albemarle County Public Schools.
- Support school faculty and staff in a move toward developing a sense of shared responsibility for all students across the division.
- Research, visit and assess / apply findings from exemplar divisions / schools both inside and outside the division.
- Develop an annual survey or other similar method of data collection to more accurately inform future inclusive annual reports of this kind.

## **2. LEGISLATIVE AND ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS**

Albemarle County Public Schools receives funds for serving students with disabilities and as a result must submit and be measured against established State standards. The Virginia Department of Education standards for accountability regarding implementation of inclusive practices for students with disabilities have been established. This next section describes the self-assessment determination of Albemarle County Public Schools status with regard to these standards.

### **Strengths**

There is evidence of

- The practice that each child's neighborhood school is the default location of services for students with disabilities receiving their education with in Albemarle County.
- Albemarle County Public Schools meeting the Virginia state Target of 70% of students spending 80% or more of the day in general education. Albemarle County was last reported to be at 83%.
- Albemarle County Public Schools meeting the Virginia state standards of LESS THAN 8% of students with disabilities spending less than 40% of their time in the general education setting. Albemarle County Public Schools was last reported to be at 6%.
- Facilities used by students with disabilities (when specialized services are required) are not stigmatizing with regard to location, appearance or design.

### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- Improving the percentage of students receiving special education services to mirror state and federal statistics. The percentage has been generally agreed to be between 8-12% as cited by the 2016 annual report to Congress regarding the implementation of IDEA.

- Increasing the percentage to greater than 32% of students aged 3-5 with IEPs, receiving the majority of their special education and related services in the regular early childhood program. Currently Albemarle county was last reported to be at 30%.

#### **Action Steps**

- Continue the recent work focusing on collaborative work between the Department of Instruction, International and English for Speakers of Other Languages, the Office of Community Engagement to partner and pool resources and capacity to address the overidentification of students requiring special education services.
- Continue to develop collaborative procedures and practices, focusing on inclusive practices in the development and implementation of preschool programs across Albemarle County Public Schools.

### **3. STRONG TIER ONE INSTRUCTION**

Albemarle County Public Schools goal is that in every general education classroom a rich engaging an evidence-based instructional program focused on grade level standard will be implemented. We recognize if this is present students are more likely to experience success in school and be less likely to be referred for special education services. we believe it is inappropriate to find students eligible for special education services in response to poor instruction in the general education classroom. Tier 1 instruction is arguably the most critical level in a multi-tiered system of supports to ensure success for all students while appropriately identifying students who need additional services.

#### **Strengths**

There is evidence of

- The understanding of a multi-tiered system of supports across the division and staff allocated to provide consistent administrative procedures.
- School wide behavioral support systems are in place and is focusing on creating positive and respectful learning environments for all students.

#### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- The consistent implementation of instruction in classrooms that utilize differentiation and utilize effective practices for mixed-ability groups of students.

#### **Action Steps**

- The continued work between the Department of Instruction and the Department of Special Education to collect and analyze data to produce baseline data sets to inform current state and future goal setting in the areas of inclusive practices utilized within and across classroom in schools.

#### **4. STUDENT CENTERED DECISIONS / STAFFING AND SCHEDULING**

Albemarle County Public Schools strives to utilize a standard for making decisions about a student with disabilities consistently following a continuum from least to most segregated settings and using a process for ensuring that each decision is based on the needs and capabilities of the student.

##### **Strengths**

There is evidence that

- Schools utilize an objective, student-centered process for determining Staffing that is consistent across grade levels and departments.
- No single approach (co-teaching, support facilitation, resources Etc.) is the only service delivery option for special needs students in our school.
- Special education teachers recognize they may serve multiple roles throughout the day on the basis of student needs. Their roles are not defined by place or disability category. On the basis of student needs, a special education teacher May provide both in class support and support in a specialized setting.

##### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- The practices associated with developing the master schedule to meet the needs of students with disabilities that is efficient effective and fair.

##### **Action Steps**

- Work with school principals to determine the current state of practice is utilized to develop Master schedules.
- To review the current research with regard to master schedule development and the most effective way to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

#### **5. EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES**

##### **Strengths**

There is evidence that

- Practices are in place to recruit and retain highly qualified Educators who are skilled in implementing effective services for students with disabilities.
- All teachers including teachers of students with disabilities have access to grade level Teacher's Editions, all relevant materials and to professional development relative to the district curriculum and effective practices.
- The times when required or popular subjects are scheduled are varied throughout the day to maximize the availability of special education teachers and other specialized personnel.
- Training for paraprofessionals is provided to enable them to assume their instructional support roles with confidence.

- There are clear and objective criteria for providing one-to-one paraprofessional student services. This practice is only used when the health, safety and participation of the student requires it.

### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- Master scheduling to ensure the needs of students with disabilities is addressed.
- Planning time is protected for special educators to ensure they can coordinate planning, information sharing and service delivery for students with disabilities.

### **Action Steps**

- To review the current research with regard to master schedule development and the most effective way to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- Collect data through survey or other means to create a baseline of practices related to planning time practices and opportunities.

## **6. COLLABORATION AMONG EDUCATORS**

Effective collaboration among General and special Educators, related service personnel, and parents represents the Hallmark of inclusive schools. Time and support that are provided, increases the success of inclusion.

### **Strengths**

There is evidence that

- Special education teachers are members of grade level or Department teams and share planning times, professional development, and responsibility for all students.
- General and special education code teachers use a variety of instructional strategies and collaborative teaching approaches and equally share roles and responsibilities as appropriate.
- Special education teachers are welcomed in general education classrooms and are recognized as Professionals of equal status.

### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- Common planning time provided to support quality collaboration.
- The time for teachers to debrief successes and areas of concern in their practice on a regular basis

### **Action Steps**

- Collect data through survey or other means to create a baseline of practices related to planning time practices and opportunities.

## **7. SPECIALIZED SUPPORT**

Albemarle County Public Schools recognizes that in inclusive schools, the needs of each student determines the setting in which he or she is educated.

### **Strengths**

There is evidence that

- Individual decisions about specialized support reflect student needs rather than what is available on the campus.
- The service is provided in specialized settings that are specially designed to meet the students' individual needs that cannot be met at this time in the general education classroom.
- The general education curriculum is the standard for each student. Unique or non-standard curricula are used only when necessary for the student.
- Specialized support settings provide instruction to small groups of students who are working on the same or very closely related, learner objectives at any given time.
- Research-based instructional practices are used to support learning and improve academic achievement, functional outcomes, and post school success.
- The need for services outside of the general education classroom is reviewed often and objectively and when appropriate, students with disabilities are returned to the general education classroom. It is the team's responsibility to identify and address whatever deficits are preventing the student from accessing the general classroom setting.

### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- Assess classrooms to ensure appropriate materials and activities are being used in the specialized setting and ensure that well used academic learning time is met in all classes including in specialized supported settings.
- Ensure that special and general education teachers routinely communicate with one another and coordinate efforts to align the work in the special education classroom with the general education classroom.
- Community-based instruction, when appropriate for the student, especially for transition age students, is provided and the community is viewed as an inclusive setting.

### **Action Steps**

- Collect data through survey or other means to create a baseline of practices related to the utilization of specialized support.

## **8. SOCIAL INCLUSION**

Albemarle County Public Schools recognizes that While physical and academic inclusion are critical for the success of students with disabilities, each School must also focus on providing social inclusion opportunities with same-age peers. This Focuses on the needs of the “whole child”, having a significant impact on well-being, academic achievement, and post school success.

### **Strengths**

There is evidence that

- Regular and frequent opportunities are planned and provided for adults and youth to work together to solve problems and learn together.
- Physical barriers are eliminated to ensure that a learning environment that is physically accessible, safe and supportive is in place for all.

### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- School staff providing high-quality opportunities for same age students with and without intellectual disabilities to work together for the benefit of all.
- Faculty members creating opportunities for building relationships developed in classrooms and in Social and after-school settings.
- Students with disabilities, including those with cognitive and emotional disabilities, having opportunities to serve in leadership roles in the school.

### **Action Steps**

- Collect data through survey or other means to create a baseline of practices related to social inclusion.

## **9. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Strengths**

There is evidence that

- Family members are included as active members of teams making decisions about their child.
- Students encourage family involvement through active participation in school programs / events and parent communication.

### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- Continued work and expanded efforts to build relationships between families of children with disabilities and schools through two-way communication, off campus outreach, non-threatening fun activities, and a positive school climate.

### **Action Steps**

- Collect data through survey or other means to create a baseline of practices related to family and community engagement.

## **10. SUSTAINING INCLUSIVE SUCCESS**

### **Strengths**

There is evidence that

- The District produces district and school specific data snapshots to maintain the expectation of improvement and change.

### **Focus of Future Work**

It is recommended that Albemarle County Public Schools Focus on

- Inclusive education being recognized as a district-wide priority not the priority of a single Department.
- Leadership sessions being conducted periodically with key personnel to ensure the vocabulary and rationale regarding inclusion are uniformly understood and communicated.
- Model sites are identified and featured for school personnel and parents to visit and expand their knowledge of inclusive practices.

### **Action Steps**

- Developing opportunities through leadership meetings (i.e. Principal Meetings, Special Education Lead Teacher Meetings, Professional Learning Communities) and work sessions to focus on the work noted above.

Respectfully submitted for your review,



Kevin M. Kirst  
Executive Director of Special Education and Student Services



Katy Compel  
Director of Special Education