



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: October 27, 2017
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Virginia's Statewide Inclusion Action Plan**

Background and Purpose

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires states to report state-level and division-level data on the performance of students with disabilities on several indicators. The IDEA also requires reports on progress toward meeting state targets, as described in the state's Special Education State Performance Plan. Virginia did not meet the targets set for Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement. Review of school divisions' LRE data reflected varying levels of participation in the general education setting by students with disabilities. Although placement decisions are made by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team, parents have expressed concerns about inclusion opportunities for students with significant disabilities and learning needs to the State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC), and as part of an inclusive practice workgroup with stakeholders (June 2016). As a result, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is implementing a Statewide Inclusion Action Plan PreK-12 to assist school divisions with effective inclusive practices.

Goals

The Statewide Inclusion Action Plan aims to increase:

- the quality of the instructional practices for students with disabilities in general education settings;
- access for students with disabilities, preschool through graduation, who need significant supports to be engaged in instruction and socialization in settings with typically developing peers;
- the capacity of parents and school leadership to work together in building and maintaining inclusive schools; and
- the capacity in school divisions to provide ongoing professional development and support to schools' for maintaining an inclusive philosophy and implementing effective practices.

Support for Schools and Timeline

The VDOE has conducted, and is planning, activities to support the development and implementation of the Statewide Inclusion Action Plan.

Spring 2016 – Summer 2016:

- Inclusive Practice Stakeholder Workgroup was held. Members included representatives of the State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC), parents, school division personnel, school division directors of special education, other state agencies, the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC), Training/Technical Assistance Centers early childhood specialists, transition specialists, various advocacy groups, and VDOE staff members.
- Report to SSEAC - A summary of the workgroup feedback with recommendations was provided.

- In collaboration with VDOE instructional staff, summer content academies were held for adapted physical education, co-teaching math, science and English, multi-sensory structured language reading instruction.

2016-2017 School Year:

- Statewide Inclusion Action Plan was developed based on the recommendations from the stakeholder workgroup and SSEAC annual plan, and was discussed with SSEAC.
- Placement data was reviewed with a focus on students with intellectual disabilities, emotional disabilities, and autism (typically, students with significant academic and behavioral support needs).
- In partnership with the VDOE School Improvement Office, school divisions were prioritized for professional development in the areas of co-teaching, specially designed instruction in the general classroom, standards-based IEP, and using data to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Twenty-three of the 132 divisions were selected to participate in the Best Practice for Inclusive Education Academy Institute at James Madison University (June 2017). Twenty out of the 23 invited school divisions, plus seven additional school divisions (either were recommended by the Results Driven Accountability (RDA) team or volunteered).
- Approximately 700 special and general education teachers and administrators participated in additional institutes, in the following areas: Adapted Physical Education, Co-teaching math, science and English, Twice Exceptional, Multi-sensory Instruction.

2017-2018 School Year:

Ongoing technical assistance activities and resource development include:

- best practices in inclusion guidance document including a self-assessment tool;
- critical decision points for families and children with disabilities guidance;
- inclusive practices partnership project;
- follow-up professional development with the summer 2017 best practice institute participants; and
- inclusive education resources will be added to the VDOE website.

Summer 2018 and Ongoing Initiatives:

The VDOE will continue to support the following professional development and student-centered initiatives.

- Co-teaching initiatives and demonstration sites
- Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS)
- Positive behavior intervention and functional behavior assessment
- Dyslexia awareness and training resources
- Traumatic Brain Injury team training
- Autism Center for Excellence's inclusive classroom sites
- Hearing and vision impairment resources
- Early childhood inclusive practices institutes and resources
- Twice-exceptional guidelines and institutes
- I'm Determined project
- Customized Employment
- Project SEARCH
- Start on Success project
- Ace-It in College
- Youth/Parent Summits
- Family involvement activities & support of the Family Involvement Center
- School improvement professional development workshops
- Standards-based IEP training

The VDOE continues to update online resources. Additional resources can be found at [Link: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/index.shtml). Some of the current resources available to parents, teachers, and administrators include:

- Aligned Standards of Learning (ASOL) teaching resources
- Standards-based IEP resources and training modules
- Twice-Exceptional guidelines and institutes
- Disability Specific Guidance Documents (Autism, Learning Disability, Dyslexia, Speech and Language Impairment)
- Related Services Guidance Documents
- Evaluation and Eligibility Guidance Document
- Applied Studies Curriculum Map
- Guide to Planning an Inclusion Project in partnership with VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities-2016
- Supporting World Language Learning for Students with Disabilities

The current list of co-teaching demonstration sites is an attachment to this Superintendent's Memo. To schedule a visit to a demonstration classroom, contact the Training Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) in your region.

Inclusion Recognition Program

The VDOE would like to recognize outstanding schools and/or educators who have developed programs that have been designed to ensure students with disabilities, especially those with more significant academic and behavior needs, have access to inclusive education with their peers in general education settings through a new initiative called the "Inclusive Practice Partnership Project." The Inclusive Practice Partnership Project is designed as a professional development model to support inclusive education that recognizes and promotes the sharing of resources and expertise of schools and teams who have demonstrated successful inclusive practices within the school and community.

The VDOE is seeking applicants, Pre-K through high school who would be willing to share their inclusive practices initiative(s) with others through videos, implementation guidance, distance mentoring, and on-site visits. The types of inclusive practices initiatives may be academic, extracurricular, and/or social in nature such as clubs, sports, and community-based activities.

The Inclusive Practice Partnership Project participants will be selected based on the following criteria:

- involving parents as partners in the initiative(s);
- encouraging student's self-determination;
- promoting inclusive practices that allow students with disabilities to be included with peers and the school community;
- providing leadership in sharing the values of inclusion in their school(s) and in the community; and
- modifying curricula or providing support services that enables access to the general curriculum.

Each selected team or individual will receive \$2,500 grant for resources for their school to support their inclusive practices initiative and a \$500 stipend for each team member, up to five team members. The selected teams will be invited to share their initiatives at a VDOE special education sponsored professional development event. In addition, to promote more inclusive practices throughout the Commonwealth, the team will be asked to develop a five to ten minute video highlighting the initiative or a "how to implement guide" for the initiative. The video and/or guide will become an online resource for others and would be developed within six months after receiving the grant award. Also, if appropriate the individual or team may be asked to participate in distance mentoring or professional learning community or be open to on-site visitors.

For additional questions, contact Dr. Teresa Lee, Coordinator for Special Education Instructional Services at Teresa.Lee@doe.virginia.gov or at (804) 371-8283 or Ms. Deborah Johnson, Specialist for Students with Intellectual Disabilities at Deborah.Johnson@doe.virginia.gov or at (804) 371-2725.

SRS

Attachments:

- A. [Co-teaching Demonstration Sites List](#) (Word)
- B. [Inclusive Practices Partnership Project Application](#) (Word)

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