

2024 Special Education Update:

Key State and Local Developments

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HIGHLIGHTS

- **SPECIAL EDUCATION HISTORY**
- **OUR REGION: NORTH CENTRAL VIRGINIA**
- **2024 VIRGINIA ROADMAP FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION**
- **2024 OMNIBUS SPECIAL EDUCATION LEGISLATION**
- **VAAP PARTICIPATION DECISION-MAKING TOOL**
- **LITERACY INSTRUCTION**
- **WRAP-UP AND QUESTIONS**

SPECIAL EDUCATION HISTORY

1950s

- ARC founded by parents
- First research on IDD
- ARC advocates for research spending
- Brown v. Board of Education

1970s

- Shift from institutions to communities begins
PARC and *Mills*
- EHCA of 1975
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

1990s

- IDEA updated EHCA, requiring services in the general education curriculum
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Organization name changes to The Arc

1960s

- ARC opens office in Washington DC
- First President's Panel on Mental Retardation
- Medicare and Medicaid enacted

1980s

- Medicaid Home and Community-Based Waiver created
- Handicapped Infants and Toddlers Program expands services for babies with IDD

2000s-Today

- DOJ settlement with Virginia requiring community-based supports (2012)
- Settlement agreement extended through 2024
- Priority I waiver slots fully funded in Virginia

OUR REGION: NORTH

CENTRAL VIRGINIA

The Arc of NCV Region

Students	IEPs	Schools	
8368	998	11	Culpeper
10845	1691	15	Fauquier
1671	175	4	Madison
5082	683	9	Orange
774	110	2	Rappahannock

NEW SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTORS



Fauquier County - Angie Gum

- Began teaching in Fauquier County in 2010
- Assistant Principal at C.M. Bradley Elementary School in 2012
- Special Education Instructional Supervisor 2013-2024
- Appointed Interim Director of Special Education in February 2024



Culpeper County - Bari Nixon

- 10 Years as a Special Education Teacher in Goochland County
- Served as Instruction and Compliance Coordinator for Richmond City Schools
- Special Education Positions in Powhatan and New Kent Counties
- Appointed Special Education Director Effective July 1

SPECIAL EDUCATION OFFICES

Culpeper County

Website: culpeperschools.org/page/special-education

Director: Bari Nixon

Email:

Madison County

Website: www2.madisonschools.k12.va.us/page1471

Director: JoAnn Amburn

Email: jamburn@madisonnschools.k12.va.us

Fauquier County

Website: fcps1.org/about-us/departments/special-education

Director: Angie Gum

Email: agum@fcps1.org

Orange County

Website: occss-va.org/departments/special-education

Director: Susan Aylor

Email: saylor@ocss-va.org

Rappahannock County

Website: rappahannockschools.us/speced

Director: Dr. Carol Johnson

Email: cjohnson@rappahannockschools.us

2024 ROADMAP FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

ROADMAP for Special Education

HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION

- High-quality instructional materials for all students
- Co-teaching and collaboration to support specially designed instruction
- Inclusive practices and action planning



INCLUSION

- Meaningful instruction and participation in inclusive settings to improve outcomes
- Division level professional development for all teachers
- Student self-advocacy and leadership



RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Collaboration with institutes of higher education on teacher and administrator preparation
- Grow Your Own initiatives and support of provisionally licensed staff and paraprofessionals
- Professional development, mentorship, and retention efforts



PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

- Ensuring families are empowered as partners in students education
- Strengthening relationships across stakeholders
- Educating families about graduation and assessment options



POST-SECONDARY TRANSITION

- Transition planning and the role of other agencies, providers, and partners
- Career and technical education (CTE) access, support, and achievement
- Professional development for teachers and counselors on services and supports



MONITORING

- Regulatory revisions required by OSEP
- Virginia IEP
- Implementation of support for administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals
- Special education program improvement and funding



**2024 OMNIBUS SPECIAL
EDUCATION LEGISLATION**

SB 220/Chapter 502

- Co-sponsored by Sen. Barbara Favola (D-Arlington) and Del. Carrie Coyner (R-Chesterfield)
- Signed by the Governor April 4
- Requires VDOE to Develop Training and Templates for IEP Writing and tracking
- Data Dashboard with State, Division, and School-Level Special Education Data
- \$100,000 for a Two-Year Outside Review of the Special Education Dispute Resolution System Overseen by The Commission on Youth
- Resources for professional development to ensure teachers, principals, teacher's aids, and other paraprofessionals are equipped to support specially designed instruction in inclusive settings
- Designated Faculty Member as Parent/Family Liaison for Special Education
- Funding for Eight Regional Special Education Family Support Centers (PEATC)
- Additional options for awarding verified credits to students with disabilities
- Requirement that Virginia colleges teach inclusive education strategies as part of teacher education curriculum



VAAP PARTICIPATION DECISION-MAKING TOOL

“Most Significant” Cognitive Disability

- Not a category in IDEA
- Cannot be based on a specific disability category or solely on IQ
- Must be based on a wholistic understanding of the student’s complex needs
- Intellectual ability and adaptive functioning must be well below average
- Other characteristics must be considered beyond standardized test scores
- IDEA first allowed alternate assessments for students “who cannot participate in State and district-wide assessment programs.”
- The “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)” was the first to address alternate assessments for “**students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.**”

BACKGROUND

- Developed by VDOE to **guide and support IEP teams** in determining whether a student is appropriately assessed using Virginia's alternate assessment.
- Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (**ESSA**), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act in 2015, is intended to provide **all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education** and to close educational achievement gaps.
- **ESSA requires that the vast majority of students take a state's general assessment** at various grade levels, as this helps to measure educational progress.

BACKGROUND (Continued)

- Only students with the **most significant cognitive disabilities** are eligible to be assessed using an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards.
- ESSA limits the number of students who may take such assessments to **one percent of all tested students** in a given subject.
- An **FAQ Document** provides additional information about this tool, and a glossary of terms.

INSTRUCTIONS

The IEP Team must complete this tool every school year that a student would participate in the state's general assessment or prior to a student participating in the VAAP. This tool comprises Sections A-D and a Decision Summary. The IEP Team must follow the steps outlined below.

- Work through the document in its entirety, in sequence, starting with Section A.
- At the end of each section, the team should determine if the student meets the criteria to proceed to the next section.
- If, after reviewing all completed information, a student does not meet the eligibility criteria in all sections, the student may not participate in Virginia's alternate assessment.
- All team members must sign and date the Decision Summary section at the end of this document.
- Maintain the completed document attached to the student's IEP.

INSTRUCTIONS (Continued)

To complete this tool, the IEP Team must consider multiple sources of student-specific data.

These sources may include but not limited to:

- formal and informal assessment results;
- evidence-based intervention data;
- assistive technology evaluation or assessment data;
- learner characteristics; and
- current and recent IEPs documenting supports, services, and progress.

Note: The word “most” is being used in this guidance document to reflect language used in IDEA and ESSA.

[Link to VAAP Participation Decision-Making Tool](#)

Links to Additional Resources

[The Arc of North Central Virginia Website](#)

[PEATC VAAP Eligibility Resource Document](#)

[VDOE Critical Decision Points Resource Page](#)

[VDOE Inclusive Practices Page](#)

[VAAP Participation Decision-Making Tool](#)

[VAAP Participation Decision-Making Tool FAQ](#)

VIRGINIA LITERACY ACT

IMPLEMENTATION

About the VLA

- Applies to All Students
- K-5 Implementation in 2024-25
- Middle School Implementation 2025-26
- Requires Science-Based Reading Instruction
- State Approval for Curriculum and Intervention Materials
- Provides for Individual Reading Plans for At-Risk Students
- Teacher Training in Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction
- Included Funding for Intervention Services
- New Literacy Standards of Learning to Comply with VLA

Literacy: Key Points for Parents of Students with IDD

- 2024-25 May Be Bumpy – But Worth It
- Be Patient and Kind – This Is a LOT for Teachers and Students
- Follow Teacher/School Communications Closely
- Reading Instruction Is Vital for All Students
- Presume that a Child Can Learn to Read with High-Quality Instruction
- Detailed and Accurate Present Levels Are a Must for Setting IEP Goals
- Individual Reading Plans Will Mesh with IEPs for Students with Disabilities
- Systematic Phonics Provides Predictability for Students Who Need It

QUESTIONS?