



The Service Planner

Albemarle County Schools Communication to Private, Parochial, Independent, and Home School Programs that Serve Students With Disabilities

Services Plans for Students with Disabilities

Students eligible to receive special education services as a child with a disability who attend a private, parochial, independent or home school program located within Albemarle County are eligible to receive some special education services. The services, which are outlined in an individual private service plan, are defined by Albemarle County Schools in consultation with private and home school representatives as well as with parent representatives.

The services are limited by the amount of "set aside" money Albemarle County is mandated to calculate and spend on this population.

Each year Albemarle County Schools will invite private

school representatives and parent representatives to attend a consultation meeting in order to assist Albemarle County Schools in determining the best way to utilize the dollars that are set aside. The next meeting will be scheduled to occur in March, 2007.

Below is a list of schools with which Albemarle County Schools is working to identify and serve students eligible for special education.

- Albemarle Christian Academy
- Charlottesville Catholic School
- Charlottesville Waldorf School
- Covenant School (Upper School Only)
- Einstein School
- Free Union Country School
- Lafayette School and Treatment Center
- Little Keswick School
- Miller School
- Montessori Community School
- Peabody School
- St. Anne's - Belfield (Lower School Only)
- St. Bede's Latin School
- Tandem Friends School
- University Montessori
- *Home School Programs in Albemarle County* ■

Meet Pattie Watson

Pattie Watson is Albemarle County Schools' case manager for eligible special education students in private school and home school programs.

Ms. Watson brings a wealth of knowledge to her role as consultant and case manager. She is a special educator, with over 20 years of experience in the field, teaching students with disabilities aged 2-21. She has consistently advocated for appropriate services for students with disabilities and has extensive experience in research based literacy and numeracy programs.

She has been a leader in the Albemarle County School System, and has

served as Special Education Lead Teacher. Ms. Watson is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Branch of the International Dyslexia Association. Ms. Watson has experience working with students from every category of disability, and she focuses on supporting each student in the regular education classroom with non-disabled peers while setting challenging standards of achievement.

She is also experienced as both a tutor and home school instructor for students with disabilities. Ms. Watson has participated in the Literacy Seminar with the University of Virginia, the Multicultural Education Program for Teach-



ers and in the Cross-Cultural Immersion Program for teachers in Central America.

Although the restructuring of special services to students in private and home school programs has been a monumental task, Pattie has remained focused, positive and is energized. Her goal is to assist in the education of all children with disabilities through networking and collaboration with the teachers and parents. ■

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Eligibility for Special Education Services

Special education is defined in Virginia as specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of the student with a disability so that they can “meet the standards that apply to all children”.

Albemarle County has broken this determination into a three part test for eligibility based on Virginia Regulations and Federal Law. The first requirement is a determination that a child meets the criteria of a disability as defined by Albemarle County.

Secondly, it must be determined that, as a result of the disability, the student cannot meet the basic standards that apply to all students. The standards that apply to all children are the Standards of Learning and NOT the expectations of advanced classes or an accelerated educational program. If a student is functioning above grade level and would very likely pass the Standards of Learning assessments in Virginia, they would not be eligible for special education services. It is important to remember that the student

would not be eligible even if there is evidence of a disability.

This premise has been the core of many misunderstandings at eligibility meetings with parents. To clarify, special education is not designed to help students reach their potential or provide students with the best educational experience. Special education is specially designed instruction to assist students who are limited by a disability to meet the basic standards that apply to all children.

Finally, the third requirement is addressed. The special education eligibility team must determine that the child, based on a disability, requires special services to access the general curriculum so that they can meet the standards that apply to all children. This is a very important point. A team is not necessarily saying a child doesn't have a disability—but rather it is saying the child's disability is not at the



level of impairment that justifies identification for special services.

As you can see, a student would only be eligible for special education if all three requirements or conditions for eligibility are met.

Children that are struggling with advanced standards and expectations should utilize the supports that are available through their private school system. ■

Please visit the Albemarle County Website for more details on specific disabilities and criteria.

<http://www.k12albemarle.org/SpecialEducation/home.html>

Assistive Technology—Lending Library

Part of the plan to provide support to home and private schools includes access to assistive technology. This idea came from the input from representatives during the 2006 consultation meeting. The result is the development of a Lending Library strictly for students with a service plan (eligible for special education) enrolled in a home or private, independent or parochial school in Albemarle County.

The Lending Library is presently being developed by Ms. Pattie Watson. She is in the process of collecting technology that has been recommended for students with disabilities that she or teachers in the field have recommended.

Assistive Technology may include, but is not limited to software programs (i.e. Inspiration, Kidspiration etc.), equipment and / or hardware (i.e. AlphaSmart,

adaptive keyboards, etc.).

It is hoped that the access to specialized technology for students with disabilities will offer interventions that increase student access to the general curriculum by providing on-site interventions.

“access to specialized technology for students with disabilities will offer interventions that will increase student access to the general curriculum”

Things to remember:

- Only Home School or Private School programs with students on an active service plan can access technology.
- Requests are limited to technology that is in the Lending Library at the time of the request.
- A referral form must be completed to access assistive technology.
- Technology is provided based upon a review of the referral by the Director of Special Education on a monthly basis. Use of technology is based on a

child's disability, limits of access to the curriculum and appropriateness of technology to address access. All decisions are final.



- Albemarle County remains the “owner” of all technology.
- All Assistive Technology is to be returned to Albemarle County Schools by July 1 to begin a new lending cycle on September 1.
- Participating schools / parents will be required to sign an agreement with Albemarle County Schools.

Should you have ideas for purchases, please forward them to Pattie Watson at (434) 296-5885 or via e-mail at pwatson@k12albemarle.org ■

Where's the Speech Therapy?

The Decision Process

Albemarle County did not include “direct services” in the services provided as part of the service plans developed for the 2005-2006 School Year. This article will explain how the decision was made and some of the reasoning behind it.

For students enrolled in private or home school programs, the determination for the need for a related service, like speech, was based on the consultation with school and parent representatives from the private school and parents of children in home school programs that are eligible for special education in Albemarle County. This is critically different than IEP decisions that are used in the public school setting. However, the decision to prioritize services that did not include direct speech services is based on the IEP process as well as the limited budget Albemarle County Schools has to work with in this regard.

In March of 2006, a group of representatives from private, parochial and independent schools gathered to consult with the Director of Special Education to share their thoughts on how to best provide special education services with the limited funds available. The primary issue was one of building capacity for teachers at the private schools and in home school programs in order to increase student access to the curriculum. The goal is to provide teachers with effective tools (knowledge / skills) to enable differentiated instruction to students significantly limited by their disability and increase student achievement. These “building capacity” services were determined based on the consultation model as well as the federal premise that special

education services should be provided first and related services considered only after services were developed or in place.

The Changing Role of the Speech Therapist

The efforts of the school based speech and language pathologist are directed at enabling the student to access the curriculum and to benefit from the special program.

Services provided by a school speech pathologist in the public schools are not meant to correct articulation or language issues unless the speech and language impairment substantially impacts the child's educational achievement. A speech or language impairment that falls short of substantially impacting educational performance is a job more appropriate for the speech and language pathologist in private practice vs. a school based pathologist.

Services Include Students with Speech and Language Impairments

Albemarle County Schools in consultation with private school and parent representatives attempted to shift the focus from services in isolation (i.e. 30 minute individual sessions) to a model that ensured success for all children with disabilities. These services include assistance to teachers who work with students with speech and language impairments. The goal is to provide support to the teachers who work with the children directly.

The strategies and methodologies pro-

vided by our special education teacher, Pattie Watson, will be tailored to individual student needs. The consultation with teachers will work for all students as the focus of the interventions shares a common principle—access to the curriculum. However, it was the opinion of Albemarle County Schools that there may be cases where specialized interventions could be warranted, as in the case of a student with a speech and language impairment. Consultation or case review time with a qualified speech and language pathologist to assist Ms. Watson was built into the plan to address such challenges. This review is limited to students with speech and language impairments that present more complex issues in which interventions in the regular classroom have not been successful. The result of the review with the speech and language pathologist would provide Pattie Watson with interventions, methodologies and resources. The resulting collaboration may also include recommendations for assistive technology to be included in the lending library and subsequently loaned to private and home school programs for students with active service plans.

Albemarle County Schools agreed with the school and parent representatives of the private schools that the utilization of the limited funds be done in the most creative way to help the most children in the most effective and efficient way possible. We are hopeful that all children will increase their access to their curriculum through the consultation services provided by the public schools to the teachers and staff of private and home school programs. ■



Staff Development Opportunities

For Teachers:

- **Forward ideas for staff development**
Please send any / all ideas that would assist you when working with children with disabilities. Contact Pattie Watson via e-mail at: pwatson@k12albemarle.org.
- **Plan to attend!**
Albemarle County Schools will plan two staff development training events this academic year for teachers of stu-

dents with disabilities in private or home school programs. These events are limited to staff at the schools that have active service plans. Dates will be sent within the next few weeks.

- **Choose your representatives.**
In March, each private, parochial and independent school will be asked to send a school and parent representative to the consultation meeting.

For Teachers and Parents :

- **Begin planning now.**
Start discussing your vision for service plans for next year. Communicate with your school administrator!
- **Home school parents are included!**
Parents of children who are home schooled and have a service plan will be invited to attend the consultation meeting as well as staff development. ■



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Albemarle County does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sex, national origin, age, military service or disability. Reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities, if requested.

Why is Albemarle County Schools Doing This?

Albemarle County Public Schools is required by Federal Law to provide special education and related services for children with disabilities who are enrolled by their parents in private schools or home school programs located within the Albemarle County School Division. Albemarle County Public Schools can provide services, including direct services, such as professional development for teachers, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and provide educational materials in specialized formats. Funds for these services are equal to a proportionate amount of the federal funds made available to Albemarle County under part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The dollars available are directly related to the number of private school students located in the Albemarle County School Division.

The funds used to provide the special education and related services must be controlled and administered by Albemarle County Public Schools. In addition, Albemarle County Public Schools must provide the Virginia Department of Education the number of children enrolled by their parents in private schools evaluated by Albemarle County Public Schools, the number of such children determined to be children with disabilities, and the number of children served. ■

We Need Your Help

Our funding is utilized to serve students eligible for special education services, who are enrolled by their parents in private, parochial, independent or home school programs. The funding is based on the number of students served. A proportionate amount of funding is set aside for this program. Your assistance can help provide more funding to this endeavor.

Albemarle County Schools is limited in its ability to identify children with disabilities that have already gone through the special education eligibility process due to its commitment to honor laws protecting confidentiality.

"Parents, if your child is eligible for special education or has an outdated IEP, we are asking that you inform your school administrator and invite you to call Pattie Watson, Albemarle County's case manager for students with disabilities in private or home schools at (434) 296-5885"

If your child is eligible for special education or has an outdated IEP, we are asking that you inform your school administrator and invite you to call Pattie Watson, Albemarle County's case manager for students with disabilities in private or home schools at (434) 296-5885. A signed release of information allowing Albemarle County Schools to talk with the private, parochial or independent school is all that is required to begin the process. The consent would allow us to review your child's record and determine if your child remains eligible for special services. If eligible, they would count in the number of children being served and have access to services.

This is important because the money allocated to students with disabilities enrolled in home or private schools is based on a proportionate calculation. The more students identified as eligible for services, the larger the proportion of funds available for



If your child is eligible for special education or has an outdated IEP, we are asking that you inform your school administrator

children being served. The increase in funds would provide for increased flexibility in determining special services to students eligible to receive special education services in the form of a service plan. ■