

25 September 2007
SECAC-PG Meeting
The Arc of PG County

Attendees:

Mike McLaughlin - Chair
Lillie Bond - Vice Chair
Sarah Wayland - Secretary
Meg Dillman - Treasurer
Gail Voigt - Asst. Secretary
Pamela Downing-Hosten - Director of Special Education
Karen Haynes
Evelyn Reynolds
Robert Wright
Sherri Wright
Tjamiaka Purnell Davenport
Lakwanda Simmons
Grace Williams

General Introductions

Approval of Minutes - Mr. McLaughlin noted that the minutes from last month are five pages long, which is too much to ask people to read and approve in our short meeting. Those present agreed that it made sense to have the board discuss whether it is okay to send minutes out to the SECAC listserve after Mr. McLaughlin and Ms. Bond have approved them. Then, when we get to the stage of approving the minutes at the meeting, people attending the meeting will have had a chance to read the notes ahead of time.

(1) SECAC-PG business:

(1.a) SECAC focus on Outreach

- (1.a.1) Website - post to SECAC listserve asking for volunteers and input
- (1.a.2) Speaker Series - who should we invite?
- (1.a.3) Increase Membership (see below under Committee Formation)
- (1.a.4) TIES Conference a big success.

(1.b) Committee Formation

(1.b.1) PR/Communications - Brigid Chatman agreed to be the chair. She will work on improving relations with the press. She is a PR/marketing professional. Mike mentioned that he would like to see PGCPSS do something like the Disability Awareness Program (DAP) Days in Howard County.

(1.b.2) Membership - Do we need this committee? Gail Voigt thinks there should be one. Mike would like to see a membership list of people who are members and not just those people who are on the listserve. Lillie Bond wants to make sure we reach out to the schools so people in school programs know about SECAC. Dr. Downing Hosten says we should talk to the Parent Liaisons. Principals not distributing fliers to families to tell them about the meetings.

Mr. McLaughlin asked that Ms. Voigt bring the current SECAC membership list to the next meeting.

We also discussed having a phone tree for telling people who are not on listserv about upcoming meetings.

(2) Director's Update - Dr. Downing Hosten

(2.a) General Information

Dr. Downing Hosten's department is working to monitor Special Education programs as PGCPS adds programs. They are in the process of starting to create the FY 2009 Budget. The plan is to expand the autism programs (which are currently deployed only for grades K-3.) PGCPS has opened 2 middle school autism programs (at Isaac J. Gourdine and Kenmoor) and is working on High School programs. The plan is to return as many students as possible from non-public programs to local public schools, but with all appropriate supports in place.

Oxon Hill HS is in construction phase. Dr. Downing Hosten is working to insure that appropriate supports and services for Special Education students are implemented, as they did at Surrattsville HS when they moved those students back to their neighborhood school. The goal is to integrate regular and special education students, and Dr. Downing Hosten is working to make sure her department gets input.

Greenbelt HS is also being renovated. Dr. Downing Hosten is working to make sure that the Special Education classes are throughout school and not segregated in one area.

Her department is also looking at programs for emotionally disturbed (ED) children, making sure that they are getting additional mental health supports. Her department has a grant with the University of MD Mental Health unit and their psychiatrists are working with PGCPS psychologists to provide appropriate supports for the ED students at Suitland HS and Kettering MS. Those schools currently have the largest number of ED students going to non-public programs. The plan is to expand these services to other schools. ED students are largest number of students currently enrolled in non-public programs. Dr. Downing Hosten's goal is to evaluate what we need to put in place to allow these children to be educated in their local schools.

Dr. Downing Hosten stressed that PGCPS will maintain a continuum of services. The goal is to build to capacity within PG County, making sure all supports are in place, though they recognize that some students will still need the extra support of non-public placement.

There is also Research & Development money in next year's budget. Dr. Downing Hosten's department wants to evaluate interventions based on outcomes. This department will look at supports and services, initiatives, ED programs, MEANS, and students coming back from CSEP and non-public placements to evaluate whether those programs are helping students.

In addition, her department will continue monitoring existing programs to insure that they are meeting Maryland State Department of Education's goals.

(2.b) Procedural Safeguards (tonight's presentation)

A new version is out as of July 2007, which has been revised to comply with COMAR. You

can download a copy of the old version at:

<http://www.pgcps.org/~procedur/10000/ProceduralSafeguards.pdf>

I could not find a revised version on the PGCPs website. I did find a copy on the Montgomery County Public Schools website at:

<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/specialed/safeguards.shtm>

Tonight's presentation focused on consent, discipline, and resolving disagreements, because those are the areas of greatest concern to parents and educators alike.

CONSENT: Before the initial IEP is developed, the team must convene to discuss suspected areas of disability. After that initial discussion, the team moves forward to determine the appropriate assessments for identifying the areas of disability. Consent from the parents is required to do these assessments.

If, during re-evaluation, a new area of concern is raised, the team will need parental consent to do a new assessment. The initial consent pertains forever after to the identified areas of disability.

If parent does not provide consent, the school system can request a due process hearing, in which administrative law judge will determine whether the tests and services can be provided. In order to go to due process, the team must document that have tried on multiple occasions to get consent from the parent.

After the initial IEP is developed and signed, new IEPs can be implemented without parental consent, unless a parent requests a due process hearing asking the school to NOT implement the plan.

p 8. **DISCIPLINE:** Code of Student Conduct Administrative Procedure 10101. Students cannot be suspended for more than 10 days without meeting to discuss whether the child's disability caused the behavior. A school can't just remove students for 5 days at a time a few times - parents need to notify the PGCPs Special Education department about cases when this happens. Parents will need to document that the request process has been followed.

Dr. Downing Hosten stressed that parents don't have to accept suspension - there is a free period.

A school principal can use their own discretion to determine whether to suspend a child for up to 10 days for a "free period" without calling a manifestation determination meeting. Parents can dispute this decision, and request that meeting be held to discuss the suspension.

If it is still within the 10 day period, parents should ask whether there is any procedure in place to help students so their behavior can be remediated. Parents can also request an IEP team meeting to determine whether the IEP needs to be revised, the child needs a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA), etc. Parents should make sure to talk to school personnel about behavior of concern BEFORE a suspension if at all possible. And if an infraction causes suspension, parents should arrange a meeting as soon as possible.

When a child is removed for more than 10 days, that results in a change in placement, and the

child should continue to receive services to enable him/her to continue to participate in the general education curriculum although in another setting and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in his/her IEP. If a child is moved to an Interim Alternative Educational Setting this is considered an alternative placement, and will require an IEP meeting (p 9.)

The appeal process is discussed on p 9 as well.

A parent asked about how bus drivers can address discipline issues on a non-public bus. Dr. Downing Hosten said that the bus driver would have to contact the school - because only the school can suspend a child, so the driver would call the non-public facility.

RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS - p 12.

Dr. Downing Hosten mentioned that the Procedural Safeguards fail to mention facilitated IEP meetings, which can be a much more productive first step before the parent/school go to mediation. She said that if the parent disagrees with the other members of the IEP team, the safeguards say that the first course of action should be to discuss the issue with the school principal. If the issue cannot be resolved, the parent can then file a complaint. She discussed the difference between a State Complaint and a Due Process Complaint. A State complaint alleges a violation of IDEA requirements by a public agency. A due process complaint relates to the identification, evaluation or educational placement of a child with a disability, or the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to the child.

A parent asked about whether an IEP meeting can be held if parent cannot attend (e.g., if child in the hospital) - and then have another meeting to discuss the outcome with the parents. Dr. Downing Hosten explained that the IEP team might need to do that because of state-mandated deadlines, purpose, etc., to determine whether the IEP needs to be revised. In most cases, the team will convene another meeting that the parent can attend as a follow-up. If they don't, the parent can always call another IEP meeting.

Dr. Downing Hosten explained the importance of school personnel meeting IEP deadlines. Apparently, PGCPs just got out of "corrective action" and if schools don't have meetings in timely fashion, this can cause problems for PGCPs. Missing IEP deadline is an "egregious violation".

(3) Information Sharing - Mike McLaughlin

(3.a) State of Inclusion Report - It's out and it's done!! This report contains information presented at last year's Community Inclusion Forum. They gave recommendations, as well as pluses & minuses of inclusion.

(3.b) Disabilities Issues Advisory Board to Board of Education. Mr. McLaughlin will serve as the SECAC representative. This board is currently focused on ADA compliance in schools as some older buildings not even wheelchair accessible.

(3.c) Dr. Deasy will be at The Arc Monday October 8th - 6:30 pm.

(3.d) Mr. McLaughlin shared a notebook he had gotten when attending the Boundless Learning program. This is the program schools are using as the MEANS program is being implemented in PGCPs. Carol Reed (Supervisor of Elementary Special Education Programs - <carolr@pgcps.org>) can tell you when the program is offered, and anyone can attend the

workshops.

(3.e) Lillie Bond said that the SECAC board needs to review new version of by-laws - need input from all board members.

(4) General Questions:

Lillie Bond asked about the Maryland On-line IEP and getting minutes of IEP meetings included in the IEP. She mentioned that the summaries have traditionally been included in the "Prior Written Notice", or in the "Discussion relating to the determination". Dr. Downing Hosten mentioned that some districts use a separate piece of paper for the meeting minutes, but PGCPS wants it all on-line because when on a separate piece of paper, the documentation is not all together and can get lost. Indeed, MSDE has found PGCPS non-compliant in some cases because they couldn't find these pieces of paper. So now, in every section, the IEP team must list the reasons for making a determination. This will be a learning process for the special education staff, but the goal is to have everything in one document.

She also mentioned that every teacher now has a laptop, and can access the Maryland On-line IEP from anywhere. The only issue during an IEP meeting is likely to be access to a projector.

Another parent asked a question about "behavioral goals" in an IEP and when you use a Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA). Dr. Downing Hosten said that it depends on the severity of the behavior and if it is disrupting the educational process. If it is a minor issue (e.g., rubbing nose, or pulling ear) the behavior can be addressed in an IEP. But if every day at 2 pm a child is taking a neighboring child's pencil so she can't work, the team would need a FBA to figure out why. An FBA identifies the Antecedents, Behavior, and Reward for a behavior and then determine what can do to modify the behavior, e.g., teach appropriate behavior. (An appropriate modification is NOT "the child won't misbehave or they will go to time out.")

Meg Dillman said that sometimes it is best if parent requests an FBA (and development of a functional behavior plan) when they first see the issue causing problems, rather than waiting for teachers to request it.

Gail Voigt asked about who conducts a FBA and develops a plan? Dr. Downing Hosten said that the parents, affected teachers, and behavior specialist (psychologist) all work together during the analysis and plan development process. Ms. Voigt then asked how PGCPS ensures consistency in the evaluation process? Dr. Downing Hosten told us about a form that school psychologists use. Ms. Dillman asked if we could see a copy of that tool at a SECAC meeting. Dr. Downing Hosten said that Sherri Wright will bring a copy to next meeting.

Dr. Downing Hosten also mentioned that PGCPS have increased their psychologist base - so that there are now only 4 schools per psychologist. This means that the psychologists really know the students of concern. So if an FBA needs to be done, it is possible for them to give meaningful input. Ms. Dillman asked whether an external specialists can help with FBA? Dr. Downing Hosten said, "Absolutely." Assessments would ideally be conducted both at school and outside of school to see what is different, and what you do at home to help shape appropriate behavior.

Lillie Bond mentioned that Dr. Marian Davis out of Washington Hospital Center is a neurologist who specializes in children with disabilities and behavioral issues who she will

be working with.

Dr. Downing Hosten also mentioned the Parent Center in Adelphi - which can provide training regarding the IEP process. I think this may be the Judy Hoyer Family Learning Center - you can read more at <http://www1.pgcps.org/judycenter/>

Ms. Dillman gave an example. Her child is in an autism program, and she is learning math via Touch Math at home. She wondered how the school system goes about supporting Special Education teachers in getting good learning materials? Teachers can't afford to purchase themselves. How does Special Education department fund these innovations?

Dr. Downing Hosten said that special education students have access to the general education curriculum. In addition, the school system has purchased research-based materials for different types of students. They have also purchased extensions to the standard curriculum that provide additional supports. In addition, each school principal has a discretionary budget they can use to buy additional materials that are (a) research supported in peer-reviewed journals, and (b) will not conflict with curriculum being taught. PGCPS does not support teachers buying things from Walmart that aren't research-based. PGCPS cannot use something that is not officially approved by PGCPS.

Another woman asked about suspension. Her grandson was having toileting accidents because he is scared of loud noises and afraid to go to the bathroom. His school suspended him for 6 days for indecent exposure when he went to change himself after having an accident. Dr. Downing Hosten said that his team needs to develop a toileting plan. For example, if he is afraid of sound of a flushing toilet, the plan can say that he can leave the bathroom door open so he can come out and someone else can flush the toilet. She recommended that the parent call another IEP meeting to discuss the issue. The grandmother said that they did schedule a meeting, but when the family arrived, no one from school knew about it and didn't show up.

Dr. Downing Hosten said she should get a copy of the salmon colored "Code of Conduct" to see requirements about notification for different levels of infractions.

Mr. McLaughlin then raised the issue of getting principles involved in education about disabilities. He asked whether the SECAC should go to the principles retreat? He mentioned that Superintendent Deasy wants special education training to be a mandatory part of staff training.

The SECAC members asked if Dr. Downing Hosten's office would be willing to give an overview of the MD Online IEP. Dr. Downing Hosten has staff training that shows what process is like, what forms look like, etc. She will ask one of them do the presentation. The board will pick a non-SECAC meeting date/ time that is mutually convenient to Dr. Downing Hosten's staff and will arrange to meet in the large conference room at The Arc. The board will set date, or will just make it part of the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Wayland
Secretary, PG-SECAC