

28 October 2008
SECAC-PG Meeting

Mike McLaughlin, Sarah Wayland, Sharon Laufer, Pamela Downing Hosten (Director, PGCPD Department of Special Education), Abila Tazanu-Legall, David Kiasi-Barnes, Joanne Greene, Mary Bell (Coordinating Supervisor PGCPD Department of Special Education), Carlin Brodie, Asha Lateef-Williams, Gail Voigt
Review of September Minutes – accepted

Work-Study Program for HS CRI Students: Parent of a child at Bowie High School who is currently in the CRI work study program was at the meeting. His child is in the second year of a program in which the child is placed at a work site to get work experience. 10 days into the program this year, students were told that 2nd year students would not be sent out to work. A few days later, the same message went out to 3rd year students. The parent wanted to know: Where did the decision come from? County? State?

Dr. Downing Hosten discussed the situation and the factors that led to this decision. Students in the CRI program can spend up to 2 years at predetermined grades to get the appropriate number of credits to graduate. Starting in 2009 students must pass HSAs (or ModHSAs or AltHSAs) to graduate. Because of this requirement, two years ago the Special Education program started developing a program to make sure students would be able to pass the HSAs. This means that they have to address a child's academic needs as well as preparing them for "the real world" in order for them to meet graduation requirements.

In addition, the programs need to be implemented consistently throughout the county so that if a student transfers, the program would be consistent across all school sites. This means that the program has been revised so that the work study program is now implemented in the last 2 years (11th & 12th grades) of the program. The first two years (9th & 10th grade), students must prepare for the HSAs and the world of work. The 9th & 10th grade years are devoted to achieving academic goals because 10th grade is the year the Assessments are done. In the case of the students at Bowie HS in the CRI program, children in 9th & 10th grade are required to do the academic piece now, and job training for 11th & 12th grades.

Dr. Downing Hosten also discussed situational job sampling. This is useful because there are many opportunities for work, so during a student's first two years in the CRI program, the staff assesses the student's strengths and weaknesses and then matches them with their work placements where they can use their strengths. Dr. Downing Hosten gave her direct number to the parent so that he can call her in the future if there are other issues that require clarification: 301-817-3142.

The parents said that in his experience there were two kinds of parents - One kind

wants their child to do well academically, while another kind realizes that these academic skills won't carry child into adulthood.

Dr. Downing Hosten mentioned that maybe it was time for him to revise his son's IEP. She thought it was important for his son to be exposed to the same content as his nondisabled peers, but that it should be presented at an appropriate instructional level. Another parent asked whether children can be dual enrolled at Community college and in HS. Dr. Downing Hosten said that it is possible.

Membership Update (Gail Voigt) - Showed a draft letter encouraging professionals (Department Heads, SLPs, OTs, PTs, PPWs, school counselors, nurses, parent liasons, principals, parents of kids with IEPs, etc.) to attend SECAC meetings.

Her goal is to find people to make presentations about the SECAC at the Children's Developmental Clinic, parents' centers, and other classes. The idea is to have something short available at all these kinds of meetings that will encourage parents to join. E-mails, letters, presentations, etc.

We looked over her letter and we all thought it looked great. The group also expressed their approval of her approach.

Presentations at future meetings on Speech Language Services: We discussed having someone from PGCPs who deals with speech and language services come to a future meeting or SECAC-hosted workshop.

Mary Bell suggested perhaps running a workshop for all related services. We thought this was a great idea, but thought perhaps we could invite someone to discuss a particular service at each meeting. So parents could hear about one related service per SECAC meeting. A good way to increase attendance!

We discussed the forum on related services presented earlier this year, and some parents expressed frustration that the presentation was focused on Autism and CRI programs, when there are other programs they wanted to hear about.

Director's Update: We are in the process of preparing the budget for special education. Every department had to revise their budget to reflect a 10% reduction. We are in the process of preserving programs, but they will look different.

Mr. McLaughlin asked about the new PGCPs Special Education website. When is it coming on line? Dr. Downing Hosten said that their unit is very short staffed, and many resources are devoted to counting current number of students in various programs to help determine funding priorities. After that is complete and verified, those resources will be realigned to work on the website. We are hoping it will go live sometime in January or February of 2009.

President's Update: Mr. McLaughlin talked about volunteer and leadership awards for Prince George's County Department of Mental Health, Hygeine & Disabilities. Marcy Canavan won the leadership award for her work with the Disability Advisory Board, and Sarah Wayland won the volunteer award for her work on the SECAC website.

Mr. McLaughlin distributed a resolution that will be presented by Donna Hathaway Beck

at the next Board of Education meeting that requires PGCPs to use People First Language when talking about people with disabilities. The first reading will be at Thursday's BOE meeting, with a second reading and vote next month.

Mr. McLaughlin also talked about the Independent Facilitated IEP Team Meeting Pilot project. He mentioned that PGCPs now has a stable mediation organization to help with IEP facilitation. The Facilitation Pilot involves a partnership between 11 Maryland county school systems, MSDE, and community mediation centers. This mediation helps with communication between IEP team members. You can request mediation through the compliance office. (PG County and Baltimore County are the only remaining counties that ask parents to request facilitation through the compliance office. All other counties allow requests through the parent centers.)

Mr. McLaughlin said that he has asked MSDE to add information about the Independent Facilitated IEP Team Meetings to the Procedural Safeguards document.

Ms. Wayland asked about iStation, which is reading intervention software available for students in grades K-5 who have a documented reading disability. Dr. Downing Hosten said that the decision to use this software should be based on the educational team's decision, which must choose the most appropriate intervention for the child; it's not appropriate for everyone. Best for kids who are no more than 2 grade levels below their current grade level, without tactile, and motor issues.

Dr. Downing Hosten and Ms. Bell also mentioned that the Houghton Mifflin Little Readers are available to all students from the reading specialist.

The group decided that the November/December SECAC meeting will be a combined meeting to take place on December 2nd. This means that the meetings that would normally have been scheduled for November 25th and December 23rd will be cancelled.

As a final note, Mr. McLaughlin mentioned that the bylaws dictate that his tenure as president can only run for two years, which means it is up at the end of this year. So the group needs to think about who will be the new president