

SECAC Meeting: November 19, 2013

The following people attended the November 19, 2013 meeting:

Pamela Talley, Adreinne Barnett, Betty Jones, Roberta Medley, A'Fenia Hubbard, Sarah Wayland, TaMeika Purnell Davenport, Scott Geist, Lori Carter-Evans, Beth McCracken-Harness, Chris Casey, Robert Kurz, Denise Joseph, Enid Smith, Amani Kharma, Donovan Blake, Meg Dillman, Delores Banks, Kim Tart and Joan Rothgeb.

The meeting was opened by welcome and introductions of attendees.

An update on special education was provided by Joan Rothgeb, Director of Special Education for Prince Georges County Public Schools (PGCPS). She provided update on the meeting she had with Dr. Monique Davis, new Deputy Superintendent for PGCPS). Joan noted that Dr. Davis was very engaged and asked appropriate questions in regards to special education. She is very supportive and interested in the Common Core State Curriculum (CCSC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC). In addition, she asked to focus on grade two - initiative at reading and writing. Also, focus on grade nine - transition from middle school to high school.

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She also reported that Dr. Sito Narcisse is the new Associate Superintendent for high school performance for PGCPS.

MSDE - Joan discussed what accounts for achievement gaps. She talked about these gaps for kids who are in ELL/ESOL/Special Education, and discussed how the disparities will be addressed through curriculum and instruction; and how teachers handle challenging behaviors. Students with disabilities are suspended twice the rate of typically developing kids.

Sarah noted that she would like to have a SECAC member on the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) committee. Joan responded that PGCPS has the highest number of students in separate settings and they are being monitored. There is a special education workgroup including principals that meet regularly. Joan would like to have parent involvement and SECAC will have a board meeting to discuss.

Joan also noted that there is a LRE improvement plan that MSDE is monitoring and how it support the general education population. It requires engagement with Executive Council and Cabinet and evaluates how the service delivery model interacts with LRE.

Ms. Lori Carter-Evans, Director of Transportation was invited to the meeting. She noted that she is working to establish collaborative relationship between parents and transportation department. She talked about the new initiative, which bus driver supervisors are meeting directly with her to resolve issues. Also, she mentioned that transportation is also reviewing time of arrivals to resolve safety issues.

She noted that the Operations Supervisor (Assistant Director) position has been vacant for a long time and it is difficult to fill - hope to fill the vacancy soon. Also, she is looking for another person to help with routing and scheduling. One person is now doing the coordination.

A parent provided compliment and noted that she is grateful for the work transportation is doing. Her daughter has a wonderful bus-aide.

Another parent noted that drivers and aides have been wonderful, however there had been lack of contact with transportation (prior to Lori's employment). In addition, a parent asked for air conditioning buses and scheduling of the buses.

Another parent noted that the process needs to be easy for parents. She has to provide documentation each year to show that her child needs transportation. The child is on a 504 plan.

Another parent asked about sensitivity training – would like aides to be trained on how to handle behavior especially when big kids become aggressive. Attendants are not able to handle due to the child's age and disability.

Another parent asked when is a reasonable time to alert transportation when you move. Lori noted that if you move across town it will take longer. However within county and notification, it will take a week to change bus pickup/drop off.

Another parent was concerned about not getting a letter, phone call regarding bus pickup time prior to the beginning of the school year. Some parents noted that they received letters and phone calls. Lori mentioned it should be partnerships with parents, aides and drivers verifying information. The sooner they know about the issues the better so that they can assist parents. Also, she noted that this year all buses have GPS tracking units.

Another parent suggested video modeling for student training. It will show students how to get on and off the school bus (It can be on the PGCPs website). Lori noted that it is a great idea and would look into it.

Another parent suggested an open house day so that kids that are new to the bus will get some practice exposure before the beginning of school year.

A parent asked if there are cameras on the buses, and Lori noted that the old buses do not have cameras, but the new buses have cameras.

A parent asked about the transportation advisory committee that was discussed in the last meeting. Lori noted that it is still on and part of her work plan for transportation. This committee will consist of regular/special education, principal, non-public and parents.

A parent suggested that parents use the getting to know my child template and do a one page summary to share with the bus drivers and aides in case of an emergency.

Lori expressed her gratitude to Pamela Talley and Armani Kharmi for attending the transportation workshop and sharing parental insights to bus drivers and aides.

Chris Casey discussed starting up a Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) chapter in Prince Georges County. He noted that Montgomery County has an active chapter and website. He would like to have a website where parents have more connection and outreach. It would provide links and resources for

parents seeking support. He is trying to get a sense of parent that will be interested by doing a survey. Joan suggested another place that could help is Partners for Success Parent Center (Beth Diate).

Information sharing – A suggestion box has been placed in the back for parents to note topics that they will be interested to talk about.