

Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee (SECAC) of Prince George's County--2013-2014 Year in Review

July 23, 2013 -- Topic: Transportation Concerns for Special Needs Students

Discussion:

Proposed new initiatives to work with bus staff to reduce complaints and increase positive partnerships between staff, parents and students. SECAC spoke at bus training, highlighting parents' desires to build positive relationships between bus staff and parents. SECAC created one-page template (Guide to my Child, located on SECAC web page) that parents can voluntarily use to provide additional information to bus staff. It is designed to help bus staff better understand students riding their bus with unique, special needs.

Follow-Up:

Scheduled additional meeting in Fall 2013 to address any on-going concerns or problems.

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## **August 2013 - No meeting**

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September 24, 2013 -- Topic: Effectively Addressing Concerns

Discussion:

The intended goal of this meeting was to promote a relaxed and engaging atmosphere where parents and stakeholders feel comfortable communicating openly on matters of concern. SECAC reviewed "chain of command" for parents to utilize when concerns arise, and how to effectively address concerns. Discussion also highlighted the Office of Constituent Services and Partners for Success Parent Center as a source for parents to utilize for resolution of problems or concerns.

Follow-Up:

Schedule Partners for Success Parent Center to present in SY 2014-2015.

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## **October 22, 2013 – Guest Speaker, Rose Blucher, Learning Disabilities and Twice Exceptional Students**

### **Presentation:**

Presenter discussed talented and gifted program and its support for students receiving special education instruction. She underscored that we are all "gifted" learners in areas we individually excel in. Parents were encouraged to continue learning about their child, as they grow and change, and seek out varied learning environments to maximize educational and life outcomes.

**Follow-Up:**

Poll general membership for interest in scheduling this Speaker again in 2015.

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November 19, 2013 -- Meeting with Transportation Director**Discussion:**

Meeting focused on continued changes, new initiatives, arrival/pick-up times, and improvement in communication/problem-solving with transportation department. Positive feedback on transportation was shared with Director of Transportation, along with a few challenges parents were currently facing. Also, there was positive feedback from parents and bus staff on implementation of one-page student template for bus staff (Guide to My Child, posted on SECAC website).

Follow-up:

Transportation department proposed development of transportation advisory board (to include parents). SECAC proposed video modeling of appropriate behavior for all students riding the bus, with safety as the main focus. Continue encouraging parents to use one-page template (Guide to my Child) as additional source for staff.

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**December 2013 - No meeting**

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January 28, 2014 -- Topic: Overview of Special Education Programs and Services**Discussion:**

Detailed information was provided to SECAC membership on current programs and services available to students receiving special education instruction. This meeting continues to be one of our most well attended meetings of the year.

Follow-Up:

Continue offering this meeting on a yearly basis, including college and career ready initiatives. Offer small break-out groups so that members can have a greater focus on the age group/transition of their individual student.

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**February 25, 2014 -- Topic: Common Core and Special Education (topic changed due to unavailability of speaker)**

**Discussion:**

Scott Geist presented on new assessment that will replace the Alt-MSA in 2015 called the National Center and State Collaborative assessment (NCSC). This assessment promotes higher academic outcomes for students significantly impacted by a disability, with emphasis on preparedness for post secondary educational outcomes.

**Follow-Up:**

Schedule follow-up presentation on new NCSC assessment and reschedule Common Core presentation for Fall 2014.

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March 25, 2014 -- Topic: Non-Public and Community Referenced Instruction Placement

Discussion:

An outline of what the Community Reference Instruction (for students with significant cognitive impairments who cannot earn a diploma) program provides, the student-centered approach, curriculum and instruction, assessments, transitions, and opportunities for inclusion were discussed. The curriculum is currently being evaluated by PGCPD Department of Curriculum and Instruction. The non-public office explained how a student is identified as a candidate non-public placement, the process, and stressed the need for the IEP to document a student's educational story. Discussion also outlined the steps involved in identifying students as candidates for transitioning back to a less restrictive environment, including the supports to ensure a smooth transition.

Follow-Up:

As we continue to focus on least restrictive environments in PGCPD, we should consider how unique, person-centered instruction and services can appropriately be implemented in public schools. Poll membership for interest in scheduling this topic again in Fall 2015.

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**April 22, 2014 -- Topic: Guest Speaker: Mary Funk, Advocacy, Spanning A Lifetime**

**Presentation:**

Presenter focused on definition of advocacy, the fact that advocacy is required throughout a person's lifetime, and how parents can effectively pass the torch to a sibling or extended family. The discussion emphasized characteristics of effective advocacy, advocacy successes, and the 4P rule: "Prior Planning Prevents Problems."

### **Follow-Up:**

This was a fantastic presentation! Poll membership for interest in scheduling this speaker in Spring/Fall 2015.

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May 27, 2014 -- Ceremony: Extraordinary Service Awards

Presentation:

Awards and certificates presented to extraordinary staff servicing students with special needs. The Transportation Department and many of its staff received awards for its outstanding service. The 2014 Extraordinary Service Winners are:

Lori Carter-Evans, Director, Department of Transportation, Tammi Morris, Scheduler, Department of Transportation, Randolph King, Bus Attendant, Howard Wellington, Bus Driver, Tena Johnson, Bus Driver, Susan Atchison, Bus Driver, Elizabeth Fowler, Bus Driver, Gertrude Ledwell, CRI Vocational Specialist, Lisa Belcastro, Teacher, Adaptive Physical Education, Megan Burham, Special Education Resource Teacher, Adebisi Babayemi, CRI Special Educator, Stella McLean, Dedicated Aide, Lynn Ciocon, Special Education Teacher, Lystra Richardson, Dedicated Aide, Doreen Griffin, Occupational Therapist, Belinda Wiltz, Special Education Teacher.

Honorable mentions for 2014 are Maria King, Paraprofessional Educator, Jonathan Scott, Dedicated, Patricia Kelly, Resource Teacher and Karen Jenkins, Special Education Teacher.

If you have not already done so, please take the time to read the recipients extraordinary summaries listed on our webpage (<http://secacpg.org/SECACAwards2014.html>). You will be inspired!

Follow-Up:

Continue to recognize the outstanding work of PGCPs employees who show extraordinary service and effort in servicing the needs of students with disabilities.

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### **June 24, 2014 -- Topic: Home and Hospital Teaching**

#### **Discussion:**

Presentation provided in-depth information on Home and Hospital Teaching, and new initiatives currently being developed to serve the needs of this population of students (PowerPoint Presentation available on SECAC's webpage).

### **Follow-Up:**

No additional follow-up necessary at this time. Individual concerns will be forwarded to appropriate staff member for resolution.

## **Survey of Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities**

SECAC began work on the survey in December 2012 as a result of several parents expressing concern about the plight of twice exceptional children who very often struggle with executive functioning. We distributed the survey in late spring (June) of 2013, collected results over the summer, and presented the survey results at our October 2013 meeting. A copy of the survey is available on our website at [www.secacpg.org](http://www.secacpg.org).

As follow-up to October's SECAC meeting, we met with Dr. Shawn Joseph, and several Board members, to discuss PGCPs policy banning the use of cell phones and tablets in the classroom. We believe that this advocacy contributed to the PGCPs Board of Education revising its ban on the use of electronic devices in the classroom in policy dated August 12, 2014.

We are also working with PGCPs employees on a presentation to describe different technologies that teachers can use to communicate assignments to students at the Powering up with Technology conference, sponsored by PGCPs, in November of 2014.