

SECAC Meeting: March 25, 2014

The following people attended the March 25, 2014 meeting:

Mary Bell, Sarah Wayland, Kay Kane, Anthony Wright, Shemika M'Crae, Sharon Laufer, Mary Smith, Dorie Flynn, Donna Njoku, Ann-Marie Nwabudike, Rachel Palmer, Kendra Hill, Chris Casey, Liz Burley, Frieda Perry, Betty Jones, Dr. Jeniece Weddington, Peggy Higgins, Maria Leonard, Meg Dillman, Denise Joseph, Kim Tart, Enid Smith, Kati Thomas, Amani Kharma and Maher Kharma.

The meeting was opened by welcome and introductions of attendees.

Mary Bell with other staff from Prince Georges County Public Schools (PGCPS) did a presentation on Community Referenced Instructional (CRI) Program and Non-Public Placement.

Freda Perry of High Point High School's CRI program: The CRI Program services students with significant cognitive disabilities from ages 5-21. The program is geared towards life and functional skills. Currently CRI is in thirteen elementary schools, seven middle schools and thirteen high schools within PGCPS. CRI has the following components: Alternate Achievement Content Standards (IEP); Functional Academics which includes Math, English, Science and Biology; Community-Based Instruction (CBI); Job Sampling and Work Study; and Transition Planning.

There is a unique learning system in CRI that is geared to students in grades 1-12. This system is based online and it is aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). It defines a student's functional skill outcomes in reading, math, science, and social studies. In addition, it helps families and teachers work together to help students succeed, which promotes progress monitoring. Students' progress is continually monitored, and the curriculum is presented at the student's current level. There are three levels of instruction. The system is still being evaluated by the PGCPS Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

CRI is self-contained special education that is housed in regular neighborhood schools. The majority of the instruction is given in a small self-contained classroom. Students in the program take the alt-assessments. Students in grades 3-8 and 10 are tested in reading and math. Students in grades 5, 8 and 10 are also tested in science. The alt-assessment measures students' progress and evidence of the testing is currently presented in a portfolio. The new National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) testing, which was presented in the SECAC February's meeting, will roll out in 2015-2016 school year.

Inclusion in CRI placement was discussed and parents were told that in high school, students in special education are included in the following areas: assemblies, lunch, recess, PE, music, health, art, speech, TV production, keyboarding, chorus, clubs, food and nutrition. There is also "reverse inclusion" where peers come into the self-contained classroom to work with the CRI students. In middle school, students are included in PE,

chorus, art, computer & tech, studio, breakfast and lunch, creative arts with a TAG partner and school dances.

A parent asked if CRI students get homework. It was noted that CRI students get homework, depending on the teacher. Some teachers will give students a weekly homework packet to complete for the week, while others will give homework on a daily basis.

Liz Burley discussed the stages of transition planning. The first stage she talked about is *pre-vocational interest*. At this stage, parents should know their child's likes and dislikes. She advised parents to expose their kids to a lot of things. The second stage is *job sampling*. She encourages parents to have their kids experiment jobs at this stage. For instance, the child should try to get a classroom job by assisting his or her teacher. Next stage is work *study/ vocational skills*. It starts at the 11th grade where students go out of the school building four days a week. It gives them variety of experiences. The fourth stage is *life skills*. It teaches students interviewing techniques so that they are ready to interview for jobs when they turn 21 years old. The fifth stage is *self advocacy skills*. Students should know what they would like to do. Ms. Burley talked briefly about entitlement versus eligibility. She noted that a child is entitled to services from birth to 21 years. After 21 years, they are eligible for services, but not entitled to them. They must apply for services for the rest of their lives, for example, through the Maryland Department of Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) services. At the *post secondary options* stage students will seek to further their education at a university/college. Some of the schools that have post secondary options are UMBC, GMU and MCC which has graduate transition programs. The last stage is *adult services*. She noted that DDA is a critical service at this stage. Ms. Burley encourages parents to visit mdtransition.org to obtain more information about transition planning. Transition planning starts when the child turns 14 years old.

Kati Thomas and Anthony Wright did a presentation on Non-Public schools. They discussed the process by which the decision is made to place a child in non-public schools. Ms. Thomas noted that for a child to be placed in non-public schools the following must be considered: The child must be identified and receiving IEP services. The child's neighborhood school can not meet his or her needs. She gave few examples: if a child has active psychiatric issues and the neighborhood school cannot meet the child's needs, it will be determined whether the child goes to a PGCPS program at another public school or be considered for non-public. Another example, a student attends CRI for a few years and not making meaningful progress. Or if the child has had a Functional Behavior Assessment and the school team has implemented a Behavior Intervention Plan and the child is getting specialized instruction and is still not making meaningful progress – the child can be referred to the Central IEP team for determination of a more suitable placement.

Both Mr. Wright and Ms. Thomas emphasized that the IEP needs to tell the child's story – the CIEP team is not allowed to consider information external to the IEP, e.g., videos and work samples. Parents should make sure that progress in every area is documented

in the IEP. Specialists should be at the IEP team meetings. If the child's neighborhood school does not have the programs to support a child with behavior challenges, the school team should determine whether the child would be better served by a different program. The IEP team should identify what supports and services are needed for the child to be successful. If the school can't implement programs and the child is not making progress, the CIEP team should recommend separate non-public placement.

Every year PGCPs evaluates whether a child who attends non-public should transition back to public school. In addition, they decide whether there is a program within the public schools that can support the child.

A parent was concerned about the transition process and wanted to know if the child gets monitored once he or she returns back to the public settings. It was noted that children who have returned to a public school setting are monitored by non-public officials for approximately 60 days after their return to insure the setting is appropriate.

Dorie Flynn also noted that MANSEF provides "wrap around" services to help transition students back to the public system.

A parent asked about the level of training for teachers at non-public school. It was noted that non-public school teachers have the same level of training as public school teachers.

Non-public placements have a high teacher/student ratio. Currently, there are approximately 870 PGCPs students (K-12) in non-public placements. There are thirty-five non-public schools. It generally offers a small class size and has the flexibility to change curriculum as appropriate, and implements therapeutic components that are not available in other settings. Behavior management is very intensive in this placement.

Prince George's County School Board would like input regarding funding priorities before November 1, 2014.

Donna Njoku did a presentation on building a partnership between PGCPs and local college students for students in the CRI programs. She noted that many of the recommended work study job sites do not have job openings for students in the CRI program. She asked that a partnership be formed between PGCPs and college students so that they can assist teachers in finding job opportunities for students in the CRI Work Study Program. SECAC and PGCPs would like to review the proposal and discuss at another meeting.

The Extraordinary Service Awards nomination deadline is Tuesday, April 22, 2014. The Awards banquet will be held on Tuesday, May 27, 2014.