

Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee (SECAC)
of Prince George's County

Monthly Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 28, 2014

Pam Talley	Joan Rothgeb	Patricia Rodgers
Betty Jones	Jennifer Martin Johnson	Omar Rodgers
Robert Kurz	Tiffany Hemens	Meg Dillman
Sharon Laufer	Trudy Biddle	Peggy Higgins
Beth Ann Hancock	Sarah Wayland	Tracy Content Thompson
Scott Geist	Amani Kharma	Abila Tazanu
Liz Burley	Beth McCracken Harness	Joi Moorer
Terry Hampton	Lisa Brookes-Wilkins	+ more that came in late
Mark Johnson, Sr.	Mrs. Dash	
Shawn Joseph	Nwadimma Uzoukwu Omoike	

- **Approval of minutes** from September meeting - Because we have no secretary, and the Vice Chair was unable to attend, there was no one to take minutes. Beth Diaite gave a presentation about the Partners for Success Parent Center. The presentation and the handouts are posted on the SECAC website in lieu of official minutes.
- **Update from Department of Special Education (Joan Rothgeb)**
 - o 20 adaptive PE teachers and therapists from Brazil came to PGCPS to dialog with our teachers and therapists about what services look like in each country. The teachers met at Duckworth Regional School – they observed on Thursday and asked questions about the program.
 - o Joan participated in a Learning Walk (with representatives from the departments of Special Education and Curriculum & Instruction) at Frances Fuchs Early Childhood Center. The Learning Walk involved reviewing materials, touring the classrooms, and meeting with the entire school team. Also present were principals and administrators from schools where children will go after they age out of Frances Fuchs; this allowed administrators at those schools to see what support and curriculum their students currently receive.
 - o PGCPS School Psychologists also met with crisis teams, RTI intervention specialists, and the school board during the week.
 - o Some members of the Board of Education (Peggy Higgins, Verjeana Jacobs, and Edward Burroughs) are hosting a series of three Special Education Listening Sessions in October and November.
 - The first meeting was at Crossland High School. It was a very distressing meeting – approximately 85 people came; >25 spoke about the issues they were encountering and their concerns (went from 6:30 – after 9:30; and there wasn't time to hear everyone's story).
 - Board is meeting with Dr. Joseph and Ms. Rothgeb to figure out how to structure the next 2 meetings so they will be more constructive

- **Community Outreach Efforts** this fall – working to educate parents and the community about our mission.

- Special Education Coalition Meeting Nov 8th
- Back to School Night at CE Reig
- Listening Session 1: Thursday, October 16, 2014 @ 6:30 P.M. - Crossland High School ~ 6901 Temple Hills Road Temple Hills, MD 20748
- Listening Session 2: Thursday, November 6, 2014 @ 6:30 P.M. - Greenbelt Middle School ~ 6301 Breezewood Drive Greenbelt, MD 20770
- Session 3: Monday, November 10, 2014 @ 6:30 P.M. Tall Oaks Vocational High School ~ 2112 Church Road Bowie, MD 20716

- **SECAC brochures and posters** – Pam Talley talked about efforts to update our brochures with more recent pictures, updated text, and a new look. In addition, she has created a draft of a poster that we have budgeted for printing so that they can be posted at every school in the system. She passed around a draft, and Joi Moorer offered to help with the graphic design.

- **Year in Review** – Pam Talley wrote up a summary of all the work we did in 2013-2014; it is now posted on the SECAC website (www.secacpg.org). Copies were also circulated at the meeting.

- **Topic/Suggestion box** – Two Ideas

- Bring the Partners for Success Parent Center brochures so that our SECAC members can learn more about them.
- Create a one page “How to Address Questions & Concerns” handout to bring to each meeting

Presentations:

Dr. Shawn Joseph, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning was our first speaker. He has been with PGCPS since March 2014 (7 months). He was in Seaford DE just before coming to PGCPS, and was with Montgomery County Public Schools for 17 years before that. Dr. Joseph said he was called to Prince George’s County because it can be a model of equity and excellence. Some of the smartest people in the country in are in this area which has terrific resources. PGCPS is a large system with a \$1.8 billion budget, serving 28,000 students. It has the potential to be a model for the rest of America, serving kids of varied race, socio-economic status, native languages, etc.

He oversees the departments of Special Education, Curriculum & Instruction (including an Integrated Arts program), Testing, Student Services (including Family & Community Engagement), Secondary School Reform, and Performance Management.

His goal is to determine how to insure that we address the needs of all children, with a special emphasis on:

- Teaching kids to read;
- Supporting families, and helping them to navigate the huge and complex PGCPS system so that everyone has equal access, and full knowledge of the available resources;
- Determining how to best fix problems when we encounter them;
- Working on equity issues

Dr. Joseph said that he would very much like to come to future meetings of the SECAC.

Dr. Joseph then showed a video called E3 Presents: Education, Equity, Excellence – in which the point was made that in the 21st century, being smart means that you are good at navigating the available information.

After the video, there was further discussion including the following questions:

- Students bring different things to the table – how do we address that so we can collaborate?
- Parent asked (a) how do we know whether the administration is responding to good new ideas, and (b) how the SECAC is funded.
 - o Funding for the SECAC comes from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) which will pay for education (relevant to the SECAC’s mission) and outreach. We are not allowed to take donations.
- Is there some sort of certification program in place for kids getting special education who are not going to college?
- There are not enough kids in most highly technical/demanding programs. We need to change communication and access. Students in “specialty programs” are disproportionately NOT kids getting special education
- How do we prepare our students for gainful employment when they graduate? (Especially in regional schools for kids with the most severe disabilities.)
- How are we educating kids who are “outside the norm” – and who have very individualized needs
 - o The Child Find process helps identify kids early – takes kids referred at birth from the hospital. Maryland serves kids from birth to age 21. The school team develops an IEP – individualized education plan. Because every child is unique, we need to have appropriate people at the IEP table and in the classroom including mental health practitioners and parents who can share their knowledge.
- How does PGCPS adapt teaching so all children can learn?
 - o PGCPS provides resources to schools so they can adapt to their student population. (e.g., school-based budgeting)
 - o Our school system maintains a close collaboration with Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) in embedding Universal Design for Learning (which encourages multiple means of input, output, and engagement) into the classroom
- Are school teams using the assistive technology office appropriately?
- Parent asked if we could submit questions to Dr. Joseph if/when he comes back. Dr. Joseph asked if we could send them to Pam Talley – who will forward them to Joan Rothgeb and bring answers with her to the next meeting.

Scott Geist, Instructional Supervisor, Coordinating Special Education Programs with Upcoming School Construction Projects

Mr. Geist is currently in charge of oversight for capital projects involving special education programs. These projects vary in size from small maintenance issues to new buildings; special education projects are a small but important piece of the pie. There are many levels of approval before projects even begin – the time from conception to completion can be very lengthy, and things constantly change. All new facilities must meet the unique needs of the target student population, especially the students with the most significant cognitive and orthopedic disabilities. Buildings must also be designed to meet the goals of the Special Education department, including transitioning students who are currently in separate day placements to comprehensive schools.

Duties include laying out program considerations, reviewing completed projects, and considering priorities for future projects.

Considerations for the new construction for students currently at the regional schools include insuring that the primary entrance to facility is through or adjacent to the main building entrance, and that students have convenient access to the food service facilities, gym, health room, and media center. There are two model projects, one at Panorama Elementary School (with 7 classrooms), and another at Surratsville High School (with 5 classrooms). The classrooms serve a small number of students (6-8) but require large classrooms to house the necessary adaptive and mobility equipment. The facility needs bathrooms with shower and changing areas, a dedicated health suite, and large storage areas for adaptive technology.

The population of students served at the regional schools is increasing (from 75-80 at CE Reig when Scott Geist first started, to over 100 now). PGCPs needs more classrooms, especially in the northern part of the county. There are three types of programs – in the first, all services are together in one separate day placement. The second type of program serves students at comprehensive schools, but doesn't have things like aquatics or a sensory integration room. Plans for the future include regional programs housed at two comprehensive high schools, three comprehensive middle schools, three comprehensive elementary schools, and one separate day placement (regional school). The plan is for the comprehensive schools to incorporate the supports required for most intensive programs.

They are not eliminating separate day placements, just moving to having more students at comprehensive schools. The IEP team will decide who qualifies for regional schools based on the needs of the student. The answers to certain key questions will determine placement. These questions include whether students can be included in a regular ed classroom, whether they are medically fragile, and how long the bus ride will be. Other relevant considerations include whether the school has a uniform policy, and determining the impact that will have on the students.

Currently, the Special Education department is planning for a 5-7 year phase in process, though it's important to remember that priorities change, so exact timing is hard to predict. PGCPs will

have meetings at each school to let the parents know what will be happening with their children and their placements.

Moving these children into comprehensive schools will require a cultural shift for regular education students as well as for the students who have many disabilities. The department is particularly concerned about nonverbal students, and the impact this will have on them. It will be important to prepare staff and students.