

SECAC Meeting Nov. 16, 2014

Call to Order

Welcome and Introductions of Attendees:

Mary Bell	Grace Harness	LaTonya Ward
Joan Rothgeb	Sherry Walker	Shawn Lauf
Sarah Wayland	Karen Lee	Mary Bautista
Beth Ann Handcock	Dr. Cooper	Karina Medrano
Pamela Talley	Chris Casey	Nadimma Omoike
Lisa Brooks Wilkins	Amani Karma	Jeannette Copeland
Beth McCrackin Harness	Sheila Jackson	Abila Tazana
Joi Moorer	Grace Harness	LaTonya Ward
Wendy Johnson		

Update from the Department of Special Education:

Joan Rothgeb is just returning from State Conference on Special Education. Approximately 300 participants attended. There were many breakout sessions including managing challenging behaviors, etc. PGCPs is well represented and did deliver a session on the partnership with One World Center for Autism and our Pre School Office.

In the last two weeks, Joan presented to all principals and assistant principals. Access, Equity and Progress was the theme of the presentation. We emphasized access to the general education curriculum and the presentation lasted for an hour. Data was examined with regard to the Least Restrictive Environment for students with disabilities at their schools. The law does provide for a continuum of services. Special Education is a service not a place!

We concluded our presentation by showing a you tube video entitled "Don't Limit Me."

Department representatives have also been attending collaborative planning teams with schools to ensure students with disabilities are included in discussion and planning for improvement.

****Request for the Partners for Success Parent Center Brochure available at SECAC meetings!**

Announcements:

SECAC participated in the ARC resource fair last Saturday and also participated in the Board Special Education Listening Sessions where challenges and successes were shared.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes were approved from the October meeting

Questions to Dr. Joseph

Dr. Joseph at last month's meeting invited us to submit questions. They included the following:

Professional Development for teachers, para professionals and aides was inquired about.

Other questions are still in the works with regard to answers.

SECAC Brochure and Poster

SECAC has been working hard on a poster that will be distributed at all schools. A copy was provided at the meeting. The poster includes a QR code. Participants were asked to send an email to Pam Talley, Sarah Wayland or Amani with suggestions/corrections. Suggestions were made to add that SECAC is supported by MSDE, translated in Spanish, added to School information that is distributed or sent via list serve and information provided through the PGCPS **Daily Dispatch**.

Budget-updated

MSDE allocates \$2500.00 each year. Last year we had SECAC website 110.00 This year 135.00.

Last year we had 2 speakers Mary Funk and Rose Blutcher 150.00. 1040.00, which had been allocated for food, could not be used for refreshments. We used the money to bring LeDerrick Holmes as a speaker, plus 700.00 from this year's budget. We are left with 700.00 and are using this to bring Ross Green, along with Partners for Success Parent Center, to a Parent Empowerment Conference on March 21. The remaining money is in printing. We recently printed 500 brochures

Secretary Voting

Enid Williams had to step down from the secretary position. Pamela Talley thanked her for her work and dedication.

We asked for volunteers through the list serve and we got two people to volunteer.

Lisa Brooks-Wilkins was nominated and voted in as secretary and Joi Moorer who was nominated and voted to be the assistant secretary.

Presentation: Sheila Jackson, Director of Family and Community Engagement

Ms. Jackson reviewed the PGCPs Strategy Map, which can also be found on the PGCPs website.

If we focus on culture, data and performance, with an emphasis on literacy, we will have outstanding academic achievement for all students.

The vision of the Department of Family and Community Engagement: envisions a student-centered community of adult stakeholders who collaborate in a productive and meaningful manner to foster academic, social and personal development as they create and nurture highly literate achievers. Lifelong learners, productive workers, responsible citizens, and thoughtful participants in relationships, families and the global community are also targets. We are aligned with one of the pillars of Dr. Maxwell's vision.

Ms. Jackson shared the organization of her department. Work is driven by an annual action plan with quarterly assessment, analysis and reflection. The major focus of activities include coaching, mandatory professional development and supervising and evaluating assistants.

The department assists all schools to develop exemplary parent, family, community and business partnerships inclusive of a strong and vibrant PTA/PTO/PTSA.

Targeted training will be offered to schools where they will become familiar with COMER philosophy.

Dr. Jackson also shared the Ten Truths of Parent/Family Involvement and Participation by James Comer:

1. All parents/families have hopes and goals for their children
2. The home is one of several spheres that influence a child
3. The parent/family is the chief contributor to a child's education
4. Parent/family involvement must be a legitimate element of education
5. Successful parent/family involvement and participation strengthens bonds between home and school, parent and education, parent and child, and school community
6. Effective parent/family involvement requires a vision, a policy, a framework, and a consensus of understanding
7. Parents' interactions with their own children is the cornerstone of involvement and participations
8. Barriers to parent/family involvement are found within school practices, not within parents.
9. Parent must be approached individually; they are not defined by gender, ethnicity, family situation, child/rens ability, education or income level.
10. Parent/family involvement and engagement is a process, not a program

Schools that have a Community Outreach Assistant (COA) have a high population of ELL students, unaccompanied minors, and also low achievement levels-particularly in literacy. Beth Diaite, from the Partners for Success Parent Center, has presented to the COAs with regard to Special Education and the services at the center. Currently, each COA is assigned to one school. There are 65 hired now.

Professional Development is important as well as ensuring that the same message is being given to all schools. Our office works with the Office of Constituent Services to follow up on parent concerns and questions.

An example was given by a parent of understanding autism and that some school staff need training. Some parents feel they know more than staff. This year more time was built into the calendar for PD.

PD for the COAs is provided and a question was asked as to how this is prioritized. Customer Service is at the top. Communication and IEPs (Spanish Speaking Parents) getting IEPs translated.

The Parent's Place of Maryland has training for advocating for their children and was suggested for the COAs. A copy of the flyer was provided.

A website and Google site are being developed.

A question was asked as to what are the priorities of the Department of Special Education so that parents can advocate for us: Building Capacity and getting the appropriate services on your IEP and that people know that process. This is not just a special education issue but a systemic issue. Gen.Ed teachers need to know what is interfering with a child's learning and what specialized instruction do they need? This goes beyond needing more teachers or para but looking at the service delivery model. We need to build capacity for general education and special education.

The PGCPS Master Plan was just approved by MSDE and there are 28 strategies. The county's 5 pillars were referred to with the main goal of Academic Achievement for All Students!

The listening sessions that were hosted by board members brought to light concerns and issues, and all parents were called who filled out a concern form. Currently we are looking at the themes along with the 504 Office, transportation and ADA (no office at present.) Our culture is really being looked at in the school system. We need to be transparent and welcoming to parents. COAs would serve as facilitators with regard to special education but defer to Special Education Specialists.

CAOs can only be in one school, as per union and we are looking at the budget for the system and criteria for expansion. The budget currently is asking for 10 positions but they may not be funded.

Questions?

Is there a way to have strategic goals tied to special education? Will there be performance evaluations? Are there clear goals? How can we advocate for money to support the programs and utilize parent energy to mobilize for change?

There are state performance indicators that monitor special education. We also monitor LRE. Training comes in as an important part at the school house level.

We need to mobilize and measure. Parents want some data and to look at the themes from the listening session and MSDE survey. What happens at the school is the key.

Adjournment

Ms. Talley thanked those who came, for their ideas and visions, and that parents need to be engaged. The culture of respect is so important. If we lose the parent, it may be so hard to get that trust back.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm.