

MEETING NOTES: SECAC-PG Executive Board Meeting

Meeting Created: December 17, 2014 at 6:00 PM

PARTICIPANTS

Shawn Joseph, Sarah Wayland, Pam Talley, Lisa Wilkins, Sheila Jackson, Mary Bell, Joan M. Rothgeb

The meeting was opened with welcome and introductions of attendees.

Ms. Joan Rothgeb began meeting by reiterating the precise reason she called the SECAC Executive Board into session. Her reason being, she wanted to share accountability metrics that are in place for monitoring the delivery of services to students identified as having disabilities, and to explain the Department of Special Education's work related to monitoring of State Performance Indicators. Furthermore, Ms. Rothgeb wanted to share with the board some of the categories of issues gleaned from the Special Education Listening Sessions. Abila Tazanu of One World Center for Autism took excellent notes at the first of those meetings on the common themes amongst the parent respondents.

Review MSDE Survey Results and Responses: Ms. Mary Bell stated concerns that despite numerous efforts, the return rate by parents with students in PGCPS for surveys conducted by the MSDE are below the State's level as a whole. It was further stated that even the State's rate is terrible. The same survey has been utilized for the past 10 years. It will be revised next year. Sarah Wayland attended the State SESAC meeting and as a result she learned that many parents do not respond because they feel that despite their efforts, their voice remains unheard and problems continue to persist. In response to this, Sarah said that the state had not previously shared individual concerns (written in response to the open-ended questions) with the local districts, but that they had planned to do so for the 2013 surveys..

Identify Common Themes from Listening Sessions: Participants agreed that the format of the last two listening sessions was much more conducive to improvement than the format of the first. Next, Ms. Joan Rothgeb proceeded to review the data. An overview of Topics and Concerns was provided to all in attendance. For your convenience, a brief sampling is stated below:

A total of 27 parents submitted surveys for both 11/6 and 11/10. Of the total respondents surveyed, the majority rated the event as good, indicated that they were pleased with the venue, felt the amount of time allocated for the event was sufficient for their needs, and thought the overall content of the event was helpful.

Sarah Wayland shared that certain schools come up over and over again when parents were citing problems. Joan responded by stating that she is meeting monthly with the principals at certain schools and providing them with more data on Special Education, time-line issues, and discipline issues. This data is also shared with the instructional specialists for each school.

Mary Bell further iterated that these issues aren't being taken lightly, they are working at the school-house level to impact change. Joan Rothgeb went on to share that her department is doing learning walks in the early childhood centers. During these walks, teams walk around and observe happenings within the school and then share insights with the principal.

Role of SECAC: Ms. Pam Talley shared that SECAC is the State mandated Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee for Prince George's County Public Schools. In this capacity SECAC's role is to work towards positive changes in special education services within the Prince George's County Public School System. However, attendance at SECAC meetings has dramatically increased after the recent Special Education Listening Sessions. The group further discussed complications that many families faced that could possibly be a hindrance to coming out. We also learned that the Arc's Educational Trainings, organized by Jessica Neely, was put on hiatus due to lack of parent turn-out.

Mary shared that she and Melonee Clark have a meeting coming up in January to discuss working collaboratively for Education Trainings. During brainstorming Sarah Wayland stated that Parents Place of Maryland recently started utilizing webinars to combat the lack of parent turn-out. Parents Place uses a type of Lunch & Learn process whereby parents, families school employees, etc. can gain access during their lunch hour. She herself facilitated one such webinar and the turn-out was good – around 40 people. Mary Bell further stated that her department has been busy facilitating IEP training weekly/monthly at the Judy Center. This is done in both English and Spanish.

Ms. Sheila Jackson suggested that marketing be more interactive. PGCPs's website is very laborious and consequently many parents have difficulty locating services or happenings facilitated by the school system or SECAC for that matter. Ms. Jackson further informed us that an analyst is looking into cleaning up the website and making it more accessible and relevant. Ms. Jackson was unable to provide us with a concrete date, but wanted us to know that revamping is in the process.

Ms. Pam Talley offered an excellent idea of utilizing PGCPs-TV to host Special Education training. This would be an extraordinary venue that many parents already have access to and it is being under-utilized. Piggy-backing off of this, Mary Bell shared that Ms. LaRhonda Owens is working on IEP training for teachers that is video-based. All participants agreed that this would also be great if it could be broadened to include access by parents.

State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators Audited by MSDE: Ms. Joan Rothgeb shared that PGCPs receives federal funds to help implement some of its programs, because of this PGCPs has to undergo a lot of auditing (fiscally and programmatically). SPP Indicators can be found on the SPP Quick Reference Card (the red sheet, also at <http://mdideareport.org/>). The last audit data in the report is from 2012. 2013 data is to be released soon. Areas in need of improvement are the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Discipline Discrepancy Data. PGCPs continues to have to many students who do not have

access to students who are in regular education classrooms. PGCPs is working to build capacity of schools for students. In regards to the Discipline Discrepancy Data, Sarah Wayland mentioned that the Parent Empowerment Conference that the Partners for Success Parent center is hosting on March 21st with Ross Greene as the keynote speaker could really help minimize the challenges in this area. Moreover, she suggested that providing CEU's to teachers who attend would be a huge motivator for educators to come hear Ross Greene's message

In closing, even though we already discussed the role of SECAC, Sarah Wayland asked for further clarification on the SECAC's role regarding oversight for the school system with regards to how well students with disabilities are being served. Sarah discussed the SPP indicators and asked that regular updates be provided to SECAC on how the issues identified as problematic by the SPP are being dealt with. In addition, Sarah asked if it was possible to create a set of measurable objectives based upon the list created based on the feedback from the parents at the listening sessions. Mary Bell stated that she would update SECAC on areas of progress at every SECAC meeting. Her department is working to address the issues identified but many of the discussions and remediations cannot be made public because of privacy concerns.

Sheila Jackson stated that she is working on bullet #1, Effective Communication. She is doing this by giving presentations to educators to give them ideas about how to better support parents. Lisa Brooks-Wilkins shared that she is working with Marie Braymen on increasing access of parent-to-parent support. This would be one mechanism in reducing bullet #5, Parent/caregiver Stress and Strain. It would also go a long way in improving bullet #4, Parental Knowledge and Understanding about Special Education, and their children's rights under federal and state law, as well as key transitions in their child's educational journey.