

SECAC-PG Meeting: February 24, 2015

The following people attended the February 24, 2015 meeting:

Pamela Talley, Mary Bell, Diane Bonanni, TjaMeika Davenport, Sharon Laufer, Claudia Guzman, Shee' Fells, Trudy Biddle, Laini Pettyjohn, Charles Pettyjohn, Carolyn Tucker, Liz Burley, Amani Kharma, Kim Tart, Troy Sampson, Pamela Alston, Patricia Roberts, Jamie Brown, Karen Lee, Dr. Cooper, Beth McCracken-Harness, Lisa Brooks-Wilkins, Candy Davis, Joan Rothgeb, and Joi Moorer

The meeting was opened by welcome and introductions of attendees.

Mary Bell gave a brief overview of the upcoming Parent Engagement Conference w/ guest speaker Ross Greene. Mary informed all in attendance that the conference venue has been moved to Roosevelt Senior High School. This was done to accomplish accommodating more people. Mary also stated that the first 200 people will receive free food. Prospective participants can register with Beth Diate, Partners for Success Parent Center. A registration page will be going up on their website. In addition, information will be going out through the SECAC listserve, PGCPs website, Special Education page, Partners for Success listserve, Arc listserve, Parents' Place, etc. Attendees at the conference can expect to participate in breakout sessions, many dealing with behaviors & discipline. They can also expect to hear from guest speaker, Ross Greene, author of *The Explosive Child* and *Lost at School*. Families who have already purchased these books can bring them in and have them signed. Moreover, it's quite possible that books may also be on sale for purchase.

Joan Rothgeb, Director of Special Education, introduced a video presentation entitled, "Don't Limit Me!" This was a very informative and inspiring video that was told from the point of view of a teen with diverse abilities. It spoke volumes about not limiting a student/person simply because of a diagnosis, and it detailed ways in which independence, real world life skills, self-determination, etc. can be nurtured for successful transition.

After the video, Joan shared with attendees that this very video is shared with all of the teachers.

The meeting then proceeded further into the topic of transition, beginning first with ECC transition to Kindergarten. Presenter, Diane Bonanni, shared that in order to prepare readiness for kindergarten, a plethora of activities take place to aide the process. For instance, Diane stated that PGCPs hosts a Kindergarten Parent Night. This 90 minute session delves into topics such as:

- ~What is Kindergarten
- ~How do I register
- ~How to prepare for Kindergarten

- ~What does instruction look like
- ~Recess/lunch/specials
- ~A day in the life of

Some parents shared that this did not occur for them and their child. A PGCPs staff member stated that this is the third year on occurrence, so it's being tweaked every year based upon parent feedback.

Video presentation continued, areas of focus included:

Professional Development for Teachers

- ~Where is the child coming from
- ~What experiences have they had
- ~Child expectations
- ~Teacher expectations
- ~Strategies to address individual student needs
- ~Transition is a major life change
- ~Transition activities consideration

Matriculation Process

- ~Collaborate with Kindergarten itinerant
- ~Joint observations
- ~Early Childhood transition points
- ~Content and prerequisite skills
- ~Successful communication and behavioral strategies/tools

After the presentation, a parent expressed her concern regarding her child's transition. She further made the suggestion of having the old pre-school team, and the new elementary school team meet with the family/child prior to transition, this informal meeting can then be utilized to share what works and what doesn't in regards to the child.

The presenter responded by stating that, "parents can always call the receiving school and set up a meeting."

Mary Bell then continued on our topic of transition with a discussion on transition from Elementary to Middle School. Mary shared that there is a great deal that takes place behind the scenes. For instance, the special education chair meets with the new special education chair, and they share any particular needs. In addition, the guidance counselor for middle school comes to the elementary school and discusses any particular changes the child might encounter, i.e., using a locker.

Joan Rothgeb went on to share more precise details that occur behind the scenes. A parent attendee then requested documentation to ensure that this is indeed being im-

plemented, her reason being that despite these measures problems surrounding this issue continue to persist.

Tameka Davenport, another parent attendee, shared how she started herself early and made sure her concerns were documented under the parental concerns section of the IEP document.

Liz Burley, Transition Specialist, spoke on the topic Transition from Middle to High School. Liz stated that students begin receiving transition services at age 14. Liz further shared that participants in this meeting can include anyone the parent/student wishes to invite. Topics that are considered include Entitlement vs Eligibility, the transition from child to adult services, etc. Many parents are unaware that their child cannot access adult services until they reach 21 years of age. Also, no student can start a new school year once they turn 21.

Liz further delved into helping parents understand self-determination, the ability to make one's own choices. Liz stated that parents should begin this process at home by providing their child with choices and responsibilities, using hand-over-hand, letting one's child choose what he/she would like to eat, etc. Liz suggested that other ways in which parents can assist their child with successful transition is by staying involved, learning about various services and agencies, keeping a home file, providing opportunities for students to make choices and give responsibilities and exposing students to a variety of activities, environments, people, etc.

Liz ended her presentation by advising parents to teach their child to self-advocate. She stated that once a student leaves high-school and continues on to post-secondary schooling, it will be up to them to go into the college disability services office, disclose their disability and offer suggested accommodations they may require. She further stated that as parents, we must be mindful not to place our own fears upon our children.