

SECAC-PG  
Meeting  
27 March 2018

Attendees:

Sarah Wayland, Jamie Brown, Shelley Pree, Janie Payne, Edwin Saunders, Trinell Bowman, Bob Pasternak, Cathy Healy, Rhonda White Yakoub, Dr. Weddington, Rhonda Miller, Karen Andrews, Pamela Talley, Gwendolyn Mason, Takia Thomas, Troy Sampson, Ayo Bello

Introductions

Updates from Department of Special Education

- Parent Survey from MSDE – please participate and provide feedback. The department takes the feedback very seriously and strives to address it. You may have also gotten a mailing from MSDE to your address on file. (<https://www.mdparentsurvey.com/>)
- Thursday April 19<sup>th</sup> – Transitioning and Youth Fair at Largo High School
  - Transition has its own language – start early so you can learn it. Never too early to start.

Updates from SECAC

- LDA-MC Conference – April 28<sup>th</sup>
- Summer Pow Wows with Christina Royster
- SECAC – Technically Speaking Workshop was Saturday – great turnout; useful information.

Dr. Gwendolyn Mason introduced Dr. Pasternak – was responsible for the 2004 Reauthorization of IDEA. Was Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services for the U.S. Department of Education at the time.

**Disproportionality & Equity** – There are disparities in the identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities and students of color in Maryland schools. Please join us for a discussion led by Dr. Robert Pasternack (previously Assistant Secretary for the office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services for the US Department of Education).

[Maryland State Department of Education](#) in partnership with PGCPs is committed to reducing and eliminating disproportionality for students in our school system. This is in response to the December 12, 2016 U.S. Department of Education issuance of final regulations under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). See [34 CFR § 300.646](#) and [300.647](#), and the Maryland State Department of Education's Technical Guidance issued in 2017, below.

[Reducing and Eliminating Disproportionate Impact: Technical Assistance Guide for Local Educational Agencies and Schools to Address Disproportionality in School Discipline](#) (June 2017).

Technical Assistance Bulletin – Memo – Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.08.01.21  
– Reducing and Eliminating Disproportionate/Discrepant Impact

Our district faces some real challenges. Dr. Pasternak has served as a consultant to PGCPs since Dr. Mason came on board.

Dr. Pasternak started by addressing the parents with children with children at Kennedy Krieger parents. What are issues?

- Transition?
- Secondary transition?
- How increase employment of people with disabilities?
  - 56,000,000 people with disabilities (70% unemployed, also largest subgroup of citizens in USA)
  - Senator Kennedy said that “Disability is not inability.” People with disabilities
    - Dependable
    - Attendance is better than non-disabled
    - Attrition is lower
  - How can we encourage businesses about the benefits of employing people with disabilities?
  - (Had son and brother with Down Syndrome – his dad used to say, “They grow old, but they never grow up.”)
- Disproportionality is a challenge in every district in America. In NYC - Chancellor of SpEd and ESOL. 56,000 students with disabilities serve every day.

Dr. Mason

- Disproportionate suspension rate of students with disabilities in PGCPs
  - State is withholding 15% of IDEA funds (3.5 million dollars) – has to be spent on general education side to address processes to address disproportionate suspension rate.
  - In 2015, had been on a plan since 2009, and it wasn’t working. In 2016 – Ms. Bowman, Dr. Mason & Dr. Pasternak asked for permission to revise the plan, and it was granted. New plan is in place.
- Identification and eligibility – Student Support Team – looking at data with principal, counselor, school psychologist, counselor.
  - Have been working with school psychologists to alert staff about awareness regarding disabilities – what are the signs and indicators (e.g., dyslexia, autism)
  - Sometimes timelines aren’t followed during identification process.
    - Maryland Report Card – indicator 11 regarding Child Find Eligibility – 97.5% adherence to timelines
  - A pattern in the past was that PGCPs would do well with monitoring, get off the state monitoring list, then stop being as vigilant, and compliance rates fall. They are aware that we need to continue to be vigilant, even when we are not being monitored.

- Monitor via the MD Online system
- Monitor on a monthly basis – address with Chairs and School Psychologists to address ASAP.
- At beginning of the year, set schedule for monitoring at the beginning of the school year.
- Dr. Mason talked about the fact that disproportionality is not just about suspension – it also about over-identification of students as **having** disabilities who do not. Need to make sure children are being taught well – so children are not identified as having a disability when what they actually need is better instruction.
  - This is not a problem in Prince George’s County
  - Indeed, PGCPs has disproportional identification of white kids as having speech-language disorders.
  - Also, kids learning English as a second language may not have speech-language disorders. Have to be careful about identifying people with disorders, and not people who are just not native speakers of English.

Question from audience:

- When and where do results of MSDE survey get posted?
- SESAC encourages SECACs to host a meeting to go over the results just on that topic.
- Survey response rate is poor statewide. In MCPS – 11-12%, PGCPs – 18% for ages 6-21; “at target” for Infants & Toddlers/ECC

How are we working with students in Charter Schools?

- Case managers
- Staffed with personnel who are provided by the Department of Special Education. Not treated any differently than any other public schools.
- Sometimes Charter schools cannot meet the needs of the child at the Charter School. (e.g., if need crisis intervention teacher, behavior specialist, etc.)

Dr. Mason mentioned that she can name problematic schools and good schools. Specifics are much more helpful than generalities about “PGCPs”.

She also said that how Special Education should be implemented at Charter Schools is unclear in the law. Rather than addressing it at this meeting she would like to bring in experts who can accurately address this issue at a future SECAC meeting. She also noted that the Public School system is responsible for educating all students, but they may not be able to provide services at every school.

Dr. Pasternak talked about support for kids at Charter Schools – 1/3 of charter schools do better than public schools (at educating all children), 1/3 are same, 1/3 are worse. Charter schools enroll fewer percentage of kids with disabilities. When they do take kids with disabilities, they take kids with mild disabilities because they do not have services in the building.

Dr. Pasternak talked about vouchers in Florida (McKay Scholarship) – if parents are unhappy with the education their child is getting in a public school, they can get a voucher to enroll their child in a private/parochial school. Parents do this, but then related services (PT, OT, audiological, mobility, AT, SLT, etc.) are not available at the private, parochial and charter schools and the parents want their kids to go back to regular public schools. But what they don't realize is that when they transfer their child out of the public schools, they give up their services. Furthermore, when they transfer back mid-year, the voucher money stays with private school – the prorated money doesn't go back to public school even though the public school may decide the child qualifies for extra services.

Dr. Pasternak also talked about the Endrew F. vs. Douglas County – Supreme Court Decision that found that kids with disabilities are not getting the education to which they are entitled. Have to improve outcomes for kids with disabilities!

He talked about the fact that teachers don't get training on effective behavior management in the classroom, so the school system administration has to provide the training.

Why don't parents respond to the survey?

- No feedback that it matters.
- Bad information from some public school employees reduced hope that responses would make a difference
- Information not passed back to school systems from the state in the past, so no follow up
- Form is very long.
- Apathy – don't see results, so don't see the point.

How can parents increase knowledge about how to navigate the system?

- Wrightslaw, Procedural Rights and Safeguards, educate yourself about the process.

Will work to be more aggressive about getting information to parents about the SECAC. Dr. Mason says she really appreciates the interaction with parents and will work to serve them in the best way possible.

Early Intervention – the health department discussed the fact that they focus on the relationships between parents and educators as paramount, they call their parents to encourage them to respond. That's probably one reason their response rate is so good.

Partnering with everyone on the team is critical.

Administrators can fail to respond effectively. Parents get very frustrated.

Central Office staff have to strike a balance between supporting principals and parents.

Dr. Mason – Majority of principals do not have a background in Special Education. Central Office staff have to support them.

Sometimes parents are right, sometimes are wrong.  
Sometimes administrators are right, sometimes are wrong.

Need to talk about specific cases – not in generalities.

Ms. Talley - Relationships are key. Her son participated in a research study at CARD. Parents had to show up weekly for parent training. Made a huge difference.

Parents should be treated as partners at all levels.

Dr. Pasternak – there are a lot of grandparents raising grandchildren with special needs.

Cathy Healy was Executive Director of Virginia's Parent Training and Information Center; she observed that parents are not homogeneous – and they don't come to school meetings with the same levels of training. Parent-teacher training is critical. Everyone is a team. Must give parents tools - e.g., how to give an observation about a child that is neutral.

It's also important to identify how to give parents the tools they need. Look for your allies in the school. They may need your help.

Dads often don't show up to the meetings. Both parents really do need to be involved. Ms. Healy urged the moms in the audience to educate their husbands because they need the support. Infants and Toddlers personnel encourage both parents to be involved. See it more often in younger couples.

Dr. Pasternak made several observations:

- Michigan supports family ages 0-26! All other states are 0-21.
- 13 categories of disability under IDEA - SLD is most common (40.7%). Yet no parents from that category were at our meeting.

Dr. Pasternak now works at the National Center on Teacher Quality – evaluating the quality of teacher training. Nationwide, Special Education teachers get less training on how to teach reading than general education teachers. We are lucky here in Maryland that this is not true.

From: <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DEE/Certification/Reading-Requirements.aspx>

### **Required Reading Course Work**

In July 1998, the State Board of Education increased the number of reading credits for teachers at all educational levels.

Certificate holders with certification in early childhood education, elementary education, and special education Infant-3 and 1-8 are required to complete 12 semester hours in reading, which shall include:

- Processes and acquisition of reading skills
- Methods of teaching reading
- Reading assessment
- Materials for teaching reading

Certificate holders with certification in a secondary content area, special education 6-Adult, PreK-12 disciplines and library media specialist are required to complete 6 semester hours in reading, which shall include:

- Types of reading
- Reading assessment
- Reading instruction
- Strategies for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for reading
- Teaching students to learn from text
- Processing multimedia information and strategies to connect reading with study skills
- Integrating content area goals with reading goals

Quality of teacher is best predictor of outcomes.

Special Education teachers quit at a higher rate than General Education. Why?

1. Too much paperwork (IEPs are about CYA, not best instruction)
2. Too many meetings – getting pulled out of classroom to go to meetings
3. Lack of administrative support (principals don't know anything about special education)

Need teachers who know how to do effective behavior management.

Strong instructional leader is required (good principal)

A parent talked about how it is impossible to hold the Special Education department responsible, when it's the principal who determines who gets raises and promotions. Dr. Mason said that the Central Office is supposed to support principals.

Meeting ended at 8:05pm