

Minutes - Prince George's SECAC meeting 1/23/18

SECAC Board members in attendance: Pamela Talley, vice chair; Sarah Wayland, treasurer; Jamie Anfenson-Comeau, secretary.

Vice Chair Pamela Talley opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Ms. Talley announced a number of upcoming events, including the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Parent Empowerment Conference will take place March 17 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the John Carroll Elementary School. Keynote speaker is Rick Lavoie, author of "It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success".

In addition, "Developmental Disability Day at the Legislature" in Annapolis, to champion the rights of the disabled community during the General Assembly session, will take place Feb. 19.

The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore will be hosting a Sensory Morning, for those with sensory processing disorders and their families, Saturday, Feb. 24 at 9 a.m.

The ARC of Prince George's County also has camp funding, up to \$500, available beginning Jan. 29.

Diane Bonanni, coordinating supervisor for early childhood education, spoke regarding the transition from pre-kindergarten or preschool to kindergarten.

Ms. Bonanni noted that kindergarten is provided in many different locations, and schools are identified based on boundaries. Students must register at their boundary school or boundary IEP program. Applications are accepted online for students to attend non-boundary specialty and charter schools.

Ms. Bonanni said special education services are provided on a continuum, from monitoring and consultative services in a general education setting, through to public separate day schools, depending on the needs of the student.

Kindergarten instruction covers Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies, with whole group instruction, small group instruction and one-to-one instruction.

Assessments in kindergarten include the Kindergarten Literacy Assessment, the Directed Reading Assessment and the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

Ms. Bonanni said that in May, Early Childhood Education Centers meet with receiving schools to discuss IEP present levels, health and behavioral concerns. Some schools also offer a Transition to Kindergarten Parent Training in the spring.

Camille Johnson, acting coordinating supervisor for K-12 special education instruction, spoke on elementary to middle school transitions. Ms. Johnson said the transition tends to be a very emotional one, particularly with a student with disabilities.

Transitions are internal at many charter and specialty schools, as well as K-8 academies, where elementary and middle school grades are in one building, Ms. Johnson said.

Middle school offers a similar continuum of services as elementary school, ranging from monitoring and consultative services in a general education setting, through supported inclusion and co-taught classes to public separate day schools, depending on the needs of the student. One of the major differences, Johnson said, is that students are likely going from having one or two teachers to five or six subject teachers.

Johnson said it is particularly important to encourage middle school students with disabilities to be as independent as they can be.

Schools will hold articulation conferences where the elementary school IEP team will meet with team members at the receiving school.

Ms. Wayland asked if a middle school staff member could attend the elementary school IEP meeting. Dr. Gwendolyn Mason, associate superintendent, said that is a practice in neighboring school districts, but not PGCPS. Ms. Johnson said a representative could accompany the parent to an IEP pre-meeting at the middle school, where the parent could ask questions

of the receiving IEP staff.

Ms. Johnson said some schools have Community Days during which fifth graders can visit the middle school to which they will be transitioning.

Parents can also contact and make their presence known to middle school teams, Ms. Johnson said.

Ms. Johnson said incoming sixth and ninth graders start a day earlier than other students to allow them an opportunity to get acclimated to their new building. She added that sometimes students with autism may have an orientation visit to their new school the week before; schools with an autism program have a specific orientation for autism students incorporated.

Toni Brooks, secondary special education instructional supervisor, discussed the transition to high school.

Ms. Brooks said that by the age of 14, students should be involved in their own IEP process, understand their disability and IEP and advocate for themselves, particularly with their teachers, guidance counselor and case manager.

Ms. Brooks said that one of the big differences at the high school level is that there is no longer an IEP team, but a case manager, and parents and students will have to work with a number of different subject teachers.

Ms. Brooks said it is important for parents to assist in developing organizational skills that work for their child and assist with their child's development of study skills.

At this stage, it is particularly important to help promote your child's independence and self-determination, Ms. Brooks said.

Ms. Brooks said that in the spring prior to transition, middle and high school special education chairpersons share information regarding IEPs and student needs. High school guidance counselors and the special education chairperson visit feeder middle schools and meet with students. Parent Nights are offered in the spring at some schools to special education parents to get an overview of the programs, and Back to School Nights in the fall offer an additional opportunity for parents to meet with individual teachers.

Ms. Brooks said it is also important to be aware of a student's graduation requirements, and that necessary supports are in place to help students with disabilities meet those requirements.

Liz Burley, transition specialist, discussed the transition to post-secondary education. Ms. Burley said that COMAR requires all students with a disability to have a transition plan prior to turning 14 which should answer where student is planning to go after high school and how they will get there.

Ms. Burley said students with disabilities attend college all the time, but the nature of services changes. Through high school all students are entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education under federal law. In post-secondary education, a student must disclose their disability and apply to be found eligible for services.

Another difference, Ms. Burley said, is that at the post-secondary school level, the student must grant permission for their parent to speak with the college regarding their disability. Ms. Burley said that students should be encouraged to discuss accommodations with their professors themselves.

Ms. Burley also discussed service providers, including the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, which provides short term assistance, the Developmental Disabilities Administration, which provides long-term and lifelong support for individuals 21 and over, and the Behavioral Health Administration, which provides support for Medicaid-eligible individuals with emotional disabilities, but for which they must self-report.

Ms. Burley said that when a child turns 18, they are considered a household of one, and only their own, personal income is considered in regards to SSI and Medicaid benefits.

Ms. Burley said a Transitioning Youth Fair is tentatively scheduled for April 12.

Ms. Burley stressed the importance of promoting independence, including appropriate use of cell phones, safety issues, preparing simple meals or snacks and appropriate social behaviors, all of which she said are critical to functioning in the community.

Ms. Burley encouraged parents not to limit their expectations for their children based on their disabilities, and said there is a job out there for everyone.

Ms. Talley said the new DDA Community Waiver is for those ages 21 and under.

Ms. Talley also said the next meeting will be held Feb. 27 and will share information on the topic of Career Readiness and Advocacy.