

SECAC Meeting Minutes
Sept. 15, 2020

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Board members in attendance: Troy Sampson, Chairman; Sarah Wayland, vice chairman; Jamie Anfenson-Comeau, secretary; Ayo Bello...

Others in attendance: see end of minutes.

Troy Sampson opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m., welcoming everyone to the first meeting of the 2020-2021 school year, held virtually. He introduced board members and Prince George's County Public Schools partners, and provided an overview of the start of the school year. He introduced Trinell Bowman, the associate superintendent of special education.

Ms. Bowman said there is a new organizational structure this year – the Department of Special Education is now within the Division of Academics, which is led by the Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Judith White; the school system will not be moving forward with filling the director of special education position formerly held by Dr. Mason, who retired.

Ms. Bowman presented an overview of the report given to the PGCPSS Ways and Means Committee on Sept. 11, 2020.

She said a new special education website was launched on the PGCPSS website and distance learning will continue through January 2021.

For Prince George's, began providing speech services online two years ago through via Dotcom Therapy.

Ms. Bowman said home visits for the early childhood program are being conducted virtually.

Social and emotional supports are infused into lessons.

PGCPSS is providing transportation for nonpublic schools that are open.

She said they are working with school teams to identify adaptive equipment that needs to go home with students.

A distance learning handbook will be coming soon to the school system website, Ms. Bowman said.

Ms. Bowman provided information on Parent Center locations and Distance Learning hotlines.

Ms. Bowman also provided a Year 2 update on the expenditure of Kirwan Commission funds.

Assistive technology - \$626,000

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Expanded autism program - \$300,000 to five additional sites, including sensory rooms.

Distance learning - \$525,283 for materials

Early Childhood - \$1 million

Monitoring and general supervision of IEPs - \$107,650

Office of Transportation and Interpretation - \$200,000

Related services - \$775,000

Summer IEP meetings - \$1.9 mil. for over 800 summer IEP meetings

Professional development - \$2.6 mil.

Student Services 504s - \$104,600

CARES Act funding

Summer IEP meetings

Educational assessments

Masks, face shields, plexiglass, sites for face-to-face assessments

Marsie Torchon, program coordinator for the Family Support Center, said the distance learning hotline is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Parent Centers are open Mondays and Wednesdays from 8 to 10 a.m. and from 6 to 8 p.m.

Ms. Torchon said the parent tech support sites can provide support for Zoom, google, Clever, Internet access.

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System also offers tutoring to students in the 6th through 8th grades and special education resources.

IEP meetings will be scheduled and held virtually, and signatures are requested electronically, Ms. Torchon said.

Educational and cognitive assessments are held either virtually or face-to-face with appointment.

Beth Diate, director of the Family Support Center, said the Parent Empowerment Conference is scheduled for March 20, 2021. Individuals can sign up for the support center newsletter from the PGCPS website.

Ms. Bowman then took questions from parents regarding technology, testing, assistive technology and more.

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Ms. Bowman said the Office of Instructional Technology continues to plug away at the technical issues.

One parent said school personnel working with her child are unaware of the their amended IEP. She said she has gone to multiple staff and feels frustrated. She said she feels special needs students have been “left out of the loop” when it comes to planning distance learning.

Ms. Bowman said central office has supports it can provide to the school team, and that she will follow up with her tomorrow.

Sarah Wayland said the parent’s situation was not an isolated experience. She said parents need to know that students are not getting what’s in their IEPs. She asked when do you “step it up” beyond the school case manager.

Ms. Bowman said Dr. Goldson expects staff to respond to parent inquiries withing 48 hours of receipt. Staff are in school buildings on Mondays and Wednesdays. She said that if someone has not gotten a response from their case manager within 3 to 4 dyas, to go to the assistant principal of the school or the next highest level.

Ms. Wayland said that if a child cannot attend, they’re not present, and if they don’t know their schedule, how can they attend? She asked how are absences being counted, and are parents being held responsible?

Ms. Bowman said that attendance is taken each day at the start of school. She said people can follow up with the student services department.

Mr. Sampson said he hears from parents that people are going to special education for school-related responses. He said we need some sort of way to make schools more accountable for school issues. School teams have more accountability and responsibility for implementing IEPs, etc.

Another parent said that not everything has been horrible, and teachers are working hard to get things done. She said she is concerned that it is very challenging to give grades to special needs children in distance learning. It is hard for them to participate, particularly in a general education classroom. She said it is difficult for parents to follow up. She said she thinks we need to find a way to reconnect between parents and teachers. She asked how do we assist in making sure children in middle school and high school stay on point?

Ms. Bowman said it is taken into consideration that some students need a parent or caretaker to be there. She offered to follow up, and said there are options that can be explored, possibly modified assignments. She said every special education student must have a case manager who knows what is in the child’s IEP. She said it begins at the school level. Every school also has a designated administrator to oversee special education. Ultimately, the authority rests with the principal for what is going on in that school.

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She said to communicate at the school level first, before bringing it to the special education department's attention.

Mr. Sampson asked how to get data from IEP evaluations, progress reports and data.

Ms Bowman said any time, parents can request copies for that information as part of a student's official record.

A parent asked if there was a no homework policy this year.

Ms. Bowman said changes were made to the grading policy. Homework is no longer referred to. IT now refers to independent work tasks.

Mr. Sampson asked if there was a nonpublic listserv. Ms. Bowman said yes there is.

A parent asked if high school students should be working on independent work tasks at the end of the school day.

A parent said not all Chromebooks have the software for testing taking place this week, and that the information about testing needs to be given ahead of time.

Ayo Bello asked what the idea of Wednesday is.

Ms. Bowman said it is individual to schools what the schedule looks like, Wednesday is intended for small group and one-on-one instruction, as well as differentiated instruction. Some students may go on extended periods on that day and what is included in the IEP. Wednesdays are intended to promote additional enrichment, specialized instruction and small groups.

Mr. Sampson asked about technology – what is the best way to address technology issues? The tech centers? Follow up? Communication?

Ms. Bowman said yes, the tech centers are the best way, and communications should be followed up within 48 hours.

Someone in the chat box asked about manipulatives.

Ms. Bowman said the department is providing manipulatives, but that some are on back order. A list of materials were also provided as part of math kits.

Mr. Sampson shared a question asking what parents should do if their child is not learning anything in a virtual environment.

Ms. Bowman said they are obligated to think about recovery services, to look at in the spring or next fall to address any regression or educational impact due to distance learning and to offer parents proposals to address that, also additional things that can be done for all students.

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Mr. Sampson thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Next month the topic will be technology in a time of quarantine. He said he looks forward to next month, and talking about technology.

Ms. Bowman thanked everyone for attending, for suggestions and for feedback, and said she will follow up with individuals accordingly.

Ms. Torchon said the speaker in October will cover executive function issues.

Mr. Sampson said he looks forward to a great school year despite the ongoing pandemic. He said teachers, parents and students are doing the best they can under the circumstances, and that communication is key.

Mr. Sampson closed the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Attendance Screen Shots:

LW LaTonya Wesley Ward			SW Sarah Wayland (me)		
L Lily			Marsie Torchon (Host)		
LG Lisa Gottman			beth (Co-host)		
Mi Meeka's iPad			Karen Andrews (Co-host)		
MD Michael D			Trinell Bowman		
MP Mikhail Piper			Troy Sampson		
PT Pamela Talley			Akosua Martin		
Pi Pamela's iPhone			Alexis Russell		
QB Quanita Bost			Andria's iPhone		
R Reeshemah Speaks			BELLOA		
SG S. Gaskins			Beth Ann Hancock		
SM Sandi Morton			Catherine Curtis		
S Selina			Darlene Bush		
SN Shee New			dcain		
S Sheila			Dr. James		
S ShelbyAC			Dr. Weddington		
SV Sydney Valentine			Dwight Thomas		
TH Tasha Howland			Janie Payne		
TH Tiffany Hemans			Jo'ell		
Tosheka Leslie			Kathryn		
YY Yvette Young			Kim Tart		
EB Evelyn Brooks			LaTonya Wesley Ward		