

Prince George's County SECAC Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2020

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Held virtually via Zoom meeting platform

Executive board members in attendance: Troy Sampson, chair; Sarah Wayland, vice chair; Janie Payne, treasurer; Jamie Anfenon-Comeau, secretary; Pamela Talley, community outreach manager.

Others in attendance: See attached.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. At the top, there are three small icons: a minus sign, a square, and an upward-pointing arrow. Below these is a dropdown menu labeled "Participants (26)". Underneath is a search bar with the placeholder text "Find a participant". The main area contains a list of 26 participants, each with a profile picture or initials, their name, and icons for mute, video, and chat. The participants are:

- ShelbyAC (Me)
- Marsie Torchon (Host)
- Takisha Ubiera (Co-host)
- Beth Diaite (Co-host)
- Jacquelyn Gordon (Co-host)
- AJ
- Andria's iPhone
- Camille Johnson
- Dmitri
- iPhone
- Janie Payne
- Jo'ell
- karen.andrews
- LaDonna Dingle-White
- Nix family
- Nordia Gordon
- Pamela Boozer-Strother
- Pamela Boozer-Strother
- Pamela Talley
- Peggy
- quinn wood
- Sarah Wayland
- Sheila
- Tosheka Leslie
- Trinell Bowman
- Troy Sampson
- Yvette Young

At the bottom of the screen is a control bar with the following icons and labels from left to right: Raise Hand (hand icon), yes (green checkmark), no (red X), go slower (left arrow), go faster (right arrow), more (three dots), Raise Hand (hand icon), yes (green checkmark), no (red X), go slower (left arrow), go faster (right arrow), more (three dots).

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Mr. Sampson introduced members of the SECAC executive board and the topic, supporting children with reading resources they can use at home, at 6:35 p.m.

Karen Andrews, coordinating supervisor for the Prince George's County Public Schools Department of Special Education, provided an update. She said that the department had to cease face-to-face assessments due to Prince George's County returning to Stage 1 because of the spread of the novel coronavirus. Ms. Andrews wished everyone in attendance a wonderful, safe holiday.

Information on the Transitioning Youth Information Session will be posted on the website.

Mr. Sampson said the presentation portion of the meeting only will be recorded, and not the following questions and comments portion.

Mr. Sampson introduced the speakers, Jacquelyn Gordon, school psychologist, and Takisha Ubiera, resource support teacher.

Mr. Sampson also welcomed PGCPSS school board member Pamela Boozer-Strother (Dist. 3).

Ms. Gordon noted that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ensures a free and appropriate public education for all students and ensures the rights of children with disabilities and their families are protected.

There are 13 categories of disabilities listed. In addition, children between the ages of 3 and 9 (3 and 8 in Maryland) can qualify under developmental delays, Ms. Gordon said.

Ms. Gordon said Specific Learning Disability is a disorder in which one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, either spoken or written, that may manifest as an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, write, spell or read.

Ms. Gordon said criteria include:

- 1.) Not achieving at the appropriate grade level in one or more areas.
- 2.) Exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses as they relate to basic psychological processes.
- 3.) Must not be secondary to visual, auditory or other related problems.
- 4.) Cannot be due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading, or lack of ability to access instruction.

Ms. Gordon said dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin.

It is characterized by difficulty with accurate and/or fluid word recognition.

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Specific learning disability also has a high rate of co-occurrence with other disorders, such as ADHD.

Difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language, finding it difficult to break down words into their simplest phonemes and to manipulate those phonemes into forming new words. The core deficit can impact all areas of reading, Ms. Gordon said.

Brain imaging shows that those with dyslexia have a different pathway to reading, Ms. Gordon said. Dyslexia affects about 15-20% of the population and approximately 80-90% of those individuals with learning disabilities have dyslexia.

Ms. Gordon said that earlier research showed a 3:1 or 5:1 boy:girl ratio, but more recent research shows more comparable rates. Most dyslexia is diagnosed from school referrals, usually due to acting out in school, and results in more boys referred than girls.

Dyslexia is a spectrum, ranging from mild to severe symptoms, Ms. Gordon said. She said that dyslexia is a lifetime disorder, and that early intervention can result in significant improvement, but difficulties are life long.

Ms. Gordon said that reading is a complex task, involving a number of skills, and it is the integration of the composite of these skills that results in successful reading proficiency.

Mr. Sampson asked if there is a link between dyslexia and expressive or receptive language delay.

Ms. Gordon said that there is some overlap between expressive language delay and dyslexia.

Ms. Ubiera said that reading is composed of five key areas: phonetic awareness, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and word recognition.

Ms. Ubiera said that phonological awareness is a broad skill that includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language. She said that phonetic awareness is the ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds.

Ms. Ubiera provided some strategies for supporting phonetic and phonological awareness, including:

- Help the child to think of a word sheet
- Start with the same sounds
- Use sound boxes
- Have students tap out sounds with fingers

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Ms. Ubiera said that phonics is the relationship between letters and sounds in words. Ways to support phonics include:

- Phonetic letter tiles
- Organize spellings and vowel letters
- Assign gestures to /ch/ and /sh/
- Create word chains
- Paddle Pop – card stock on pop sticks, hold up paddle containing letter cluster
- Sounding out words

Ms. Ubiera said that 90% of words in children's and adult books are of 5,000 words. Ways to help children recognize sight words include:

- Point out sight words
- Sight word games
- Use magnetic tiles
- Incorporate sight words in writing
- Create a word wall
- Encourage child to visualize sight words

Ms. Ubiera said strategies to assist children in reading fluency include:

- Recognize when the child is frustrated
- Model fluent reading aloud
- Practice reading fluency phrases
- Have the child practice reading to self words, passages and books several times
- Remind the child to pause

Ways to assist in the development of vocabulary include:

- Engage child in conversation
- Read to and with the child every day
- Help build word knowledge

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- Help build the child's understanding of language by playing verbal games.

Strategies for reading comprehension include:

- Rereading
- Building background knowledge
- Use context clues
- Draw inferences
- Think aloud
- Summarize story
- Locate key words
- Make predictions
- Use word attack strategies
- Visualize
- Use graphic organizers
- Evaluate understanding
- Discuss books
- Help child make connections
- Help child monitor understanding

Mr. Sampson thanked the speakers for providing a very informative session with lots of resources.

Ms. Wayland asked how to work with deaf and hard of hearing students to help them learn to read.

Trinell Bowman, associate superintendent of the PGCPSS Department of Special Education, said there are a number of different approaches used for deaf and hard of hearing students.

A parent commented in the online chat that their seventh grader does not like to read, and asked how can they help him to read more.

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Ms. Ubiera said to get them what they like to read and use it to draw them in, such as graphic novels, and then gradually slip in the things they need to read. She said to look at their foundational skills first and then make sure they hone their basics.

Mr. Sampson said that combining print books with audio books has also been very helpful for his son.

Ms. Payne asked if there were any other thoughts on how to build comprehension in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and ADHD.

Ms. Ubiera said to break the text into chunks and to annotate texts to build comprehension. She said that visualization can also be a very powerful tool.

Ms. Gordon said that Reader's Theater has been shown to be good at pulling students into reading.

Mr. Sampson thanked everyone for coming to the meeting, and said he has learned a lot about dyslexia. He thanked the speakers, school system partners, executive board members and especially the parents who attended the online meeting.

Mr. Sampson said it is very important to have parents on the call to work to do what is best for children.

Mr. Sampson said there is no December SECAC meeting, and that the next meeting will be held January 26, 2021. The topic will be transitioning into the spring school semester, whether that is virtual, in person or hybrid.

Mr. Sampson wished everyone a great Thanksgiving and Christmas and reminded everyone to wear masks, wash their hands frequently and to stay safe and well-protected during the pandemic.

Mr. Sampson also thanked school board member Boozer-Strother for attending the SECAC meeting.

Mr. Sampson closed the meeting at 8:06 p.m.