Memo

To: Trinell Bowman

From: Janie Payne

Date: May 23, 2024

Subject: Specific actions to address the list of recommendations

 from parents of Prince Georges County Public Schools
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**Background:**

Ms. Theresa Smith, Ms. Alita-Geri Carter, and other parents co-signed a document addressed to the Prince Georges County Board of Education providing concerns, recommendations, and testimony during the Board of Education meeting on April 25, 2024, regarding challenges faced by families of students with disabilities. As a result of this testimony, Superintendent Milliard House II provided a response dated May 1, 2024, indicating PGCPS created a document of responses that outlined current practices and actions PGCPS is committed to taking in response to the recommendations and included that document in his response.

Superintendent Millhouse II also wrote “PGCPS remains committed to collaborating with families and other stakeholders to create more inclusive learning environments throughout Prince George's County.” In the spirit of that collaboration, Trinell Bowman, Associate Superintendent for Special Education, Prince George's County convened a meeting on May 16, 2024, with members of her team, and Janie Payne SECAC Board Chair, Jamie Anfenson-Comeau SECAC Vice Chair, and Pam Talley SESAC Chair to further discuss the actions that would be taken to address the concerns and recommendations presented on April 25th.

As a result of that discussion, the following specific actions to address parental concerns as well as SECAC recommendations were created:

**Actions:**

Recommendation 1:

PGCPS will include the involvement of students with disabilities as part of the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Belonging school year 2025 systemic focus for professional learning. During the school year, students with disabilities will be specifically engaged to raise awareness about special education. Additionally, David Reese, Director of the Office of Equity Diversity and Belonging will attend a SECAC meeting to share the results of departmental efforts to include a workgroup he has been chairing which has parental engagement and involvement.

Recommendation 2:

SECAC will convene four town hall meetings for parents of students with disabilities in October, January, March, and May. Members of the Board of Education (BOE) will be invited to participate and attend. Prior to the town hall meetings, SECAC will create a parent advisory panel to attend each meeting and convene following each meeting to discuss topics addressed and provide recommendations and input. Results of the meetings to include recommendations will be provided in June of 2025 as part of the SECAC’s formal report to the Associate Superintendent for Special Education and the Board of Education.

SECAC through its listserv will raise to parents they may want to consider reaching out to the National PTA to learn about creating a Special Education PTA (SEPTA). This has been done in Fairfax County, and parents in FCPS have offered to guide parents in PGCPS to set this up. More information is available at: <https://www.pta.org/home/About-National-Parent-Teacher-Association/Goverance/Types>-of-PTAs/Start-a-Special-Education-PTA.

Recommendation 3:

The Department of Special Education (DSE) will provide specific information regarding the efforts PGCPS is making to address professional training that applies to staff who interface with a student who has or is suspected to have a disability. This information will be communicated through the SECAC Listserv during SY 2024/5.

Recommendation 4:

SECAC will create and forward an invitation to parents of students with disabilities to participate in a workgroup that will provide advisory services to the DSE as it embarks on the implementation of strategic plan 2.0. The request for participation will occur in June or July 2024. Parental Names will be provided to the DSE for further action.

Recommendation 5:

The DSE will create a survey to be administered to parents of children with disabilities at the conclusion of IEP annual review meetings. The survey will include a few questions currently asked at the state level as well as questions which were recommended in the memo from the parent recommendations presented by Ms. Smith and Ms. Carter. The survey will be shared with SECAC prior to implementation for feedback and launched in September of 2024. The DSE will present the post-IEP parent survey results to the Board of Education, and the SECAC annually.

Furthermore, the SECAC requests that the DSE present results to SECAC either during a regular meeting or by summary via the listserv of the following studies mentioned in their response:

 - 2024 Hanover Research focus interviews of parents of students with

 disabilities.

 -2024 Culture & Climate Survey

Recommendation 6:

The Family Support Center will launch a toolkit for parents in the fall of 2025. The toolkit will support parents with children with disabilities at all grade levels.

SECAC request that links to the toolkit and the resources provided as part of the Welcome Packet given to parents of disabled students mentioned in the Special Education Memo be provided to SECAC membership via the listserv so that parents can easily find this information.

Recommendation 8:

Although there are no formal actions agreed upon as part of this memo, the SECAC wishes to highlight this critically important issue. There are not enough mental health counselors available at each school to support the students in crisis. We encourage the County Council and the PGCPS BOE to consider substantially increasing the funding for these positions county-wide, and to consider adding mental health education as part of the standard curriculum.

Recommendation 9:

DSE will provide a workshop and training for parents of Twice Exceptional Students’ in SY2025.

The SECAC recommends that the PGCPS BOE and DSE consider requiring all teachers (general education and special education) be trained on the characteristics and support needs of 2e students.

Recommendation 10:

CURRENT PRACTICE: Students with disabilities participate in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and PGCPS Specialty Programs if they meet the criteria to enter the program. A student’s IEP Team makes the appropriate determination of the least restrictive environment in which a child’s IEP will be implemented.

The SECAC recommends for future consideration that as part of the PGCPS Blueprint Plan, there are goals associated with ensuring that students with disabilities are aware of the CTE programs including application requirements, and the completer sequences, to better assist students and parents/guardians with choosing college and career options available to them.

**SECAC Statement: The SECAC encourages Prince Georges County Public Schools to consider expanding programming for the `67% of students who will not graduate from college so that they graduate from PGCPS CAREER ready, and not just college ready. College is not an appropriate next step for all students.**

The PGCPS Department of Special Education is currently piloting innovative internships/supportive employment opportunities within the school system for students who may not meet requirements for PGCPS CTE programs. Information gained from this pilot will be used to expand internships/supportive employment opportunities for students with disabilities. SECAC recommends the information shared from the pilot be communicated to parents on the SECAC listserv.

Other Actions:

In addition to the actions cited above, SECAC will ensure during its meetings, there is a minimum of 30 minutes allocated to parental comment. Representatives from Special Education Leadership (Associate Superintendent, Director of Special Education, and other relevant Directors to include Parent Support Center leadership will attend every SECAC meeting to receive this input and provide follow through as appropriate.

The DSE will create a form that parents may use at the conclusion of SECAC meetings to share concerns or issues which parents need addressed at the individual student level. These forms will be directed to the Parent Support Center to provide a response and support to parents to get issues resolved. Data on the types of issues will be tracked and reported as appropriate and determined by the Associate Superintendent to include a report to SECAC in May of 2025.

DSE will support SECAC in creating a survey which will be distributed to parents of children with disabilities to provide input on the topics of interest to be addressed during SECAC meetings for the 2025/2026 SY. The survey will be launched during the fall of 2024.

We agreed to have a follow-up meeting during the second week of June to discuss and report progress.

Part of the SECAC-PG mission is to ensure that parents are actively and meaningfully involved in the educational process. We continue to invite all parents and community partners to voice concerns. As parents and community stakeholders, you play a significant role in engagement and providing meaningful feedback. Your input is valued and needed! The DSE in collaboration with SECAC stands ready to work collaboratively to support students to get their needs met.

We look forward to a year of enhanced parental participation and progress addressing parental concerns.

Cc: Prince Georges County Board of Education

 Milliard House II PGCPS Superintendent

 SECAC Listserv