

SECAC meeting 3/21/23

Executive Board Members in attendance: Troy Sampson, chairman; Sarah Wayland, vice chairwoman; Jamie Anfenson-Comeau, secretary, Pamela Talley, community outreach liaison.

Others in attendance: See attached screen capture.

Board chairman Troy Sampson opened the meeting virtually at 6:35 p.m. via the Zoom online meeting platform. Mr. Sampson welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced the attending board members and Prince George's County Public Schools Department of Special Education partners.

Marsie Torchon, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) program coordinator, family engagement, provided an update from the Parent Empowerment Conference. This year's theme is "Collaborators Working Together for Equity and Access."

Ms. Torchon presented a schedule of presentations for the conference. She noted that the conference runs virtually from now until June.

Ms. Torchon also said that for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the school system will be hosting an in-person Autism Summit at the John Carroll Building on April 15.

Mr. Sampson introduced the presenter, Joan Green, a nationally-known speech and language pathologist, author and presenter. Her website is <https://innovativespeech.com>.

Ms. Green spoke on the topic of Technology Tools for Students: Supports for Communication, Learning and Executive Function.

Ms. Green said the key is to match individual student needs with the correct technology features.

Ms. Green discussed a number of free and available tools and applications.

Ms. Green defined assistive technology as any technology that a student needs to use to show what they know.

Ms. Green said that accessibility features can be found through the following sites:

Google: <https://www.google.com/accessibility/>

Apple: <https://www.apple.com/accessibility/>

Microsoft: <https://www.microsoft.com/accessibility/>

For students with reading challenges, Ms. Green said there are a number of technology features that can make text more accessible.

At this point, the meeting was interrupted by a “Zoombombing” disruption lasting several minutes.

Once the meeting was able to resume, Ms. Green said that bookshare.org is free for everyone who has a disability, and that the school system should have someone who is a point of contact for getting access.

Families may also set up individual accounts, Ms. Green said.

Ms. Green said that Google Lens is another app that can read and translate text.

For students with writing challenges, Ms. Green said there are speech to text apps, and programs to synchronize notes and audio. She said that all current computers and mobile devices can convert speech to text, and that Google Docs allows voice typing.

For students with executive functioning challenges, Ms. Green said there are timers and alarms, as well as smart assistants, such as Alexa and Echo devices, which can be used to set reminders.

Ms. Green said that Google Calendar is particularly useful, and calendar items can be color coded, you can set reminders, set chores and share calendars. For students with access to Google Classroom, Google Drive or One Drive, folders can be created for a variety of different purposes.

If you are using Gmail, there is a snooze feature, which can have a mail item reappear later when you have time to work on it, Ms. Green said.

For students with comprehension challenges, Ms. Green said there are a number of useful tools, including captions for meetings, which can be found in Google Meet, and Zoom if the person who set up the meeting has established captions. In Chrome settings, it is possible to turn on live captioning to instantly caption audio and video.

Ms. Green said it is important to be mindful of communication challenges as well. Students may have communication challenges for a variety of reasons. There are a number of programs for assisting with communication.

Ms. Green said that artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT is also an emerging technology for assisting with communication challenges.

Ms. Green said that she provides one-on-one technology advice and coaching.

Ms. Green said it is important to model good technology habits in front of children, and parents and children can learn to use new technology together.

Mr. Sampson agreed that it is good to model good technology behavior.

Board Vice Chairwoman Sarah Wayland recommended the website <https://www.healthykids.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/How-to-Make-a-Family-Media-Use-Plan.aspx> which provides a visual tool for time usage.

Mr. Sampson apologized for the earlier “Zoombombing” interruption and thanked Ms. Green, the language interpreter, board members, parents, community members and school partners for attending.

Mr. Sampson announced that next month is Autism Awareness Month, and next month’s speaker will be a representative from the Autism Self Advocacy Network (ASAN). [Note: Next month’s meeting will be held on April 25 at 6:30 p.m.] Mr. Sampson told everyone to have a safe weekend. Mr. Sampson closed the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

