

SECAC meeting 9/24

Board members in attendance: W. Troy Sampson, chair; Jamie Anfenson-Comeau, secretary; Janie Payne, treasurer; Bonnie Razler, social media manager; Pamela Talley, community outreach manager; Ayo Bello, listserv and website manager.

Others in attendance: See attendance sheet.

Mr. Sampson opened the meeting at 6:32 p.m. He introduced other board members in attendance. Mr. Sampson explained the purpose of SECAC as a community organization in partnership with the school system to ensure students with disabilities are getting the best possible education they can get and to serve as a voice for parents in regards to special education concerns.

Mr. Sampson noted that the vice chair position became vacant during the summer and opened the floor to nominations. Mr. Sampson motioned to move to a special election; Mr. Anfenson-Comeau seconded. Mr. Sampson nominated Sarah Wayland as vice chair; Mr. Anfenson-Comeau seconded. No other nominations were made, Ms. Wayland was elected vice chair.

Trinell Bowman, executive director of special education, introduced her team members. She told attendees they were free to discuss concerns with team members at the end of the meeting and they would follow up.

Ms. Bowman said the special education dept. is working on its strategic plan, focused on three goals: 1) all students receive a free and appropriate public education; 2) Establish monitoring and accountability systems; and 3) strengthen the quality of instruction and expand opportunities for college, career and community pathways.

Ms. Bowman said that as of Sept. 30, 2018, 2,448 children had Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), 329 had Extended IFSPs and 15,701 had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

She said that the Kirwan Commission is providing an increased \$53 million to PGCPs, which includes \$10 million for special education. She broke the funding down as follows:

- \$1.66 million for assistive technology
- \$850,000 for related services (speech, OT, etc.)
- \$2.8 million for professional development
- \$147,488 for monitoring and general supervision
- \$320,000 for autism programs, sensory rooms at 8 elementary schools
- \$3.8 million for evidence-based interventions
- \$210,000 for Family Support Center
- \$180,000 for Office of Translation and Interpretation
- \$104,500 for student services in support of students with 504 plans

Ms. Bowman took questions and concerns from parents about Extended School Year, professional development, CSEP phase-out and IEP issues in relation to a Spanish Immersion school.

Marsie Torchon, coordinator at the Family Support Center, said they are using some of the additional funds to create outreach videos, and provided a demonstration of one. She said the FSC provides information on disabilities, increases awareness of community services, assists families in resolving concerns, connects families with resources and strengthens collaborative relationships with community partners. The FSC is housed in the John Carroll building, room 3.

Ms. Torchon said that of the questions the FSC receives, most relate to general info about IEPs and FAPE. The second most common relates to complaint procedures.

Dr. Beth Diaite discussed the results of the Parent Involvement Survey. She said the county met the state target in five areas. Areas that need improvement include providing information to parents about programs and resources. She said the response to the survey was about 7%.

Dr. Diaite noted there is a Special Education Parent Empowerment Conference on Saturday, Oct. 19 from 8 a.m. to noon at the John Carroll Building.

Dr. Rudolph Saunders, director of transportation, said the school system has over 1,100 bus routes, and transports over 85,000 students, having to work with every traffic pattern imaginable. He said his department works closely with Special Education to ensure students' needs are being met.

The school system has 12 bus lots throughout the county. Lot phones are routed to the Skyline office if the foreman and/or assistant foreman are out filling in for drivers. Two lots also have supervisors.

The central phone bank number for transportation is 301-952-6570.

Dr. Saunders said the department looked at how it operates, and one of their struggles was in understanding the needs of special education students from the role of educators. As a result, the department added two new positions, special education transportation coordinators, and staffed them with special education instructors Alemnesh Allen and Charles Mcauley. Their role is to increase the collaboration between Special Education, Transportation and community partners and families, and to make sure that all students are transported safely and their IEP accommodations are met.

Ms. Allen and Mr. Mcauley can represent the transportation department at IEP meetings, and work closely with the transportation department.

Ms. Allen said any discussion of transportation of students should include pick-up and drop-off, length of ride to and from school, additional personnel needed for transport, specialized equipment needs and other supports as needed.

Ms. Allen and Mr. Mcauley took questions from the audience regarding transportation times, late buses and bus sharing.

Ms. Allen said most special education students do not require accommodations for transport. Special equipment can include car seats, safety vests, orthopedic lifts and wheelchairs.

A large number of buses in the fleet now have air conditioning, and all new buses will have AC.

Transportation services are provided to students in nonpublic placements even on days when PGCPs is not open.

Mr. Sampson said there is a lot of confusion in regards to nonpublic transportation on short school days and unplanned delays. Dr. Saunders said that they are working with nonpublics to try and improve communications.

Ms. Talley said that she has sometimes had to be the one to inform a bus driver that school has been delayed or cancelled.

Mr. Mcauley said, in regards to a question regarding concerns or complaints, to begin at the school level and then follow up the chain of command.

Ms. Allen said they are providing training to drivers and aides on how to support students with special needs, with anti-bullying training, equipment training, Crisis Prevention Institute training, and bi-annual evacuation training.

Ms. Wayland asked when to call the bus lot in the event a child is sick. Mr. Allen said that ideally, parents should call between 5 and 5:30 a.m.

Ms. Bowman said there has been an increase in students with IEPs and 504 plans dual enrolling at Prince George's Community College, and they are working with students to help them understand disability self-disclosure and how to request accommodations.

Mr. Sampson said the next meeting, on Oct. 22, will be on Special Education Clinic Q&A on the IEP Process. Mr. Sampson closed the meeting at 8:08 p.m.