

SECAC Minutes 11/19/19

Board members in attendance: W. Troy Sampson, chair; Sarah Wayland, vice chair; Jamie Anfenson-Comeau, secretary.

Others in attendance: See attached sign-in sheet.

Mr. Sampson opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m. He announced that he is the SECAC representative on the Prince George's County Public Schools transportation advisory committee, which meets monthly to look into ongoing issues with school bus transportation.

Trinell Bowman, executive director of special education for PGCPSS, read "Thankfulness is the Beginning of Gratitude."

Mr. Sampson informed the group that due to Yahoo closing its Groups, the SECAC PG listserv has migrated to Groups.io.

Mr. Sampson introduced Desann Manzano-Lee, instructional specialist in the PGCPSS Department of Student Services.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said she is the parent of three children, the oldest of whom was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, now part of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said that bullying happens most often in school hallways, on playgrounds, on the bus, in the locker room, in the cafeteria and online.

She said that bullies can be either male or female, can be any race, and come from any socioeconomic background.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said that bullying is defined as threatening, intimidating behavior that occurs repeatedly over time with the intent to cause harm. Bullying is unwanted behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated over time with the intent to cause harm. Bullying behavior may include making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and deliberately excluding someone from a group.

She said that bullying is not a single incident of teasing or aggression. While those may be inappropriate, they do not constitute bullying unless it is repeated and ongoing.

She said bullying can happen face-to-face or behind the victim's back, and can be physical, verbal or relationship.

Bullying includes indirect bullying, which is when a bully gets someone else to bully the victim for them.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said cyberbullying is defined as: "bullying that takes place using electronic technology, which includes devices and equipment such as cellphones, computers and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites. Examples of cyberbullying include posting slurs on websites where students congregate or on web logs (personal online journals or diaries); sending abusive or threatening instant messages; using camera phones to take embarrassing photographs of students and posting them online; using websites to circulate gossip and rumors to other students; and excluding others from an online group by falsely reporting them for inappropriate language to internet service providers."

Different forms of cyberbullying include masquerading, flaming, outing and trickery.

Ms. Manzano-Lee suggested strategies for preventing cyberbullying, including placing the computer children use in a common area, set guidelines for cell phone and Internet use, teach Internet etiquette (Netiquette), explain why personal information shouldn't be

posted online, get to know your children's Internet friends, monitor their chatroom use, check their browser and use filters.

She said it is important to take reports of cyberbullying seriously. Identify your child's cyberbully, block them, Google your child, tell the cyberbully to stop, alert school and law enforcement as needed, save evidence, particularly in the form of screen shots, and do not retaliate against the cyberbully.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said children at higher risk of bullying include children with disabilities, those that identify as LGBTQ, those who are part of a minority group and any child that is perceived as "weak."

Ms. Manzano-Lee said that PGCPs strategies to prevent and handle bullying are laid out under Administrative Procedure 5143. Administrative Procedure 5143 defines how schools are to respond to reports of bullying. Schools are required to develop a bullying prevention plan, including visual reminders, such as #StopBullying posters, bullying prevention assemblies, Unity Day, online resources and professional development training for staff and community collaborations.

The school system receives reports of bullying on its Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation form, which can be found on the school system website, at www.pgcp.org/antibullying/.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said it is important to fill out as much information on the form as possible, to give investigators more to work with.

Once a report is submitted to the school, Ms. Manzano-Lee said it is required to begin an investigation within 2 days. Investigators will meet with the victim, the alleged offender and witnesses, and document their findings, including whether the accusation was substantiated or not substantiated.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said that the investigations are conducted at the school level by the principal or vice principal, or sometimes a School Resource Officer or school counselor. The school will notify the parents of the victim and the offender of the investigation's findings, and log the incident in SchoolMax. They will submit a copy of their notes to the Department of Student Services within 5 days of the investigation's conclusion, Ms. Manzano-Lee stated.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said that if parents disagree with the investigation's findings, they can appeal it. She said every reported incident is investigated.

Actions taken can include appropriate disciplinary actions, ongoing remedial actions to prevent a recurrence, emotional and psychological support and teacher training, she said.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said PGCPs is currently piloting an online reporting app at 6 schools. She said school counselors go into classrooms and with the teacher, provide lessons on being kind, being respectful and respecting diversity.

They may hold lunch bunch groups, do roleplaying exercises, provide books and lesson plans.

Ms. Manzano-Lee took questions from attendees.

Ms. Manzano-Lee said she can be reached with questions, comments or concerns at desann.manzanolee@pgcps.org.

Mr. Sampson said there is no meeting scheduled for December. The next meeting will be held on Jan. 28, 2020. The topic will be School Transitions – Lessons Learned Panel.

Mr. Sampson closed the meeting at 7:38 p.m.