

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY

INFORMATIONAL REPORT

PRESENTATION ON THE CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

OCTOBER 27, 2014

Background Information:

The Special Education Citizen Advisory Committee (SECAC) works in conjunction with the requirements of the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in supporting an advisory council for parents of students with disabilities (SWD) and with the Board of Education as one of their Advisory Committees. Each year, the Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) recommends to the Board of Education an area of study to be pursued by each of the Citizen Advisory Committees.

The areas of study for the 2013–2014 School Year for SECAC included exploring the continuum of programs for students with disabilities in HCPS and providing suggestions for enhancements, as appropriate. The committee also focused on providing information and resources for parents and guardians through educational presentations. Through this endeavor, SECAC empowered parents and guardians to support and advocate for their children with disabilities. Topics included: bullying/harassment, health planning and health services, new brain-based research in the area of attention and learning, and the Common Core State Standards and PARCC Assessment.

Both the area of study and the committee focus aligned with the SECAC Mission Statement:

- *To enhance partnerships of students, families, community leaders, organizations, educators and administrators through discussions that focus on the enrichment of services and opportunities for students with disabilities and their families.*

Discussion:

To reach a greater audience of parents of children with disabilities, 2014–2015 SECAC committee focus will continue to be on building parent and guardian knowledge. The tentative topics for committee meetings include: IEP Development, Social Skills, Communication Competence, National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) assessment. Additionally, the committee will focus on broadening parent and guardian participation on the committee. The committee has outlined several strategies in order to meet this focus:

- Create a communication plan for increased outreach to parents and guardians.
- Collaborate with Department of Special Education Staff to post meeting minutes

with embedded meeting resources on the HCPS Citizen's Advisory Committees Web page available at: <http://www.hcps.org/boe/CAC.aspx>

- Post meeting announcements on the Harford SECAC Facebook Web page available at: <https://www.facebook.com/HarfordCountySECAC>
- Utilize online survey tools to obtain feedback on the meetings and to obtain information regarding members' ideas for future meeting topics.
- Provide print brochures and customized pens with SECAC Web page URL to conference rooms where IEP meetings are held in each school.
- Engage with parents and community members through two Parent Forums; one occurred on October 2, 2014 and the other is scheduled to occur in March 2015.

At the October Parent Forum, parents had the opportunity to participate in eight small group discussions in order to share their ideas. The discussion topics included: Successful Inclusion, Assistive Technology, Intervention, Transition to Middle and High School and Beyond, Behavior Intervention and Supports, Transportation, Speech/Language/Communication, and Addressing Medical Issues and Physical Disabilities.

Overall, parents made positive comments about the on-going communication and collaboration between the schools and the families, inclusive opportunities for students with a range of disabilities, and the outreach by SECAC to include all parents of children with disabilities.

Feedback from the Parent Forum indicates a continued need to enhance the implementation of a continuum of supports and services for SWD. Based upon this input, SECAC recommends the following:

- Explore and investigate options for participation and achievement in the general education curriculum by all students.
- Promote the development of a Social Skills component across learning settings.
- Establish a partnership with the Coordinator of Accelerated Learning and Intervention to address the diverse needs of students who are twice exceptional.
- Enhance programming options for the expanding population of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- Build the capacity for district personnel and stakeholders to address the diverse needs of SWD.

The committee appreciates the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Board of Education and the Department of Special Education for supporting students with disabilities and their families and invites you to attend a SECAC meeting this year.