

# Calvert Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes: March 19, 2019

### Attendees

Alicia Chubb, Joseph Cormier, Sue Rafalowksi, Kara Muffley, LaShonda Scott, Christy Harris, Marcy Gruver, Guy Stephens, Kathleen Porecki, Janet Stephanson, Angela Uliano, Inez Claggett, Joy Eason

### Approve January 2019 meeting minutes

The January 2019 minutes were approved.

Joe Cormier, SECAC Chairperson, welcomed and thanked newly appointed CCPS Board of Education member, Inez Claggett, to the SECAC meeting and thanked the Board of Education for their support of Calvert SECAC.

### **Presentation Testing Accommodations Overview and Addressing Test Anxiety -Marcy Gruver, Supervisor of Special Education and Amelia Blackwood and Alexis Nadeau, School Psychologists**

Marcy Gruver began the presentation by sharing the Maryland Assessment, Accessibility & Accommodations Policy Manual. This manual defines all accommodations that are available to students with disabilities for use in classroom instruction as well as statewide and district assessments. Marcy reviewed and defined three levels of accommodations: features for all, accessibility features identified in advance and accommodations. She explained that all students can access features for all, or accessibility features identified in advance but only students with disabilities or English language learners can access the third level of accommodations. Accommodations provide: Equitable access, mitigation of disability, unaltered construct, integrity of the assessment, valid test results, do NOT reduce learning expectations. Accommodations bridge the gap between what students can do independently and the demands of the general education setting.

Amelia Blackwood and Alexis Nadeau, School Psychologists from CCPS Student Services Department, presented on Test Anxiety. Two forms of anxiety were defined: Trait Anxiety and State Anxiety. They explained that students of all ages can experience anxiety. Some are more likely to withdraw and avoid anxiety-producing situations and other students may act out as a way of avoiding the risk of being embarrassed or failing. Examples of cognitive, behavioral and physiological responses to anxiety were shared. High testing anxiety affects 16-20% of students and another 18% experience moderately high testing anxiety. Students who experience anxiety in other areas, have poor self-esteem, take multiple tests in the same time frame, have an ADHD diagnosis, who perceive the test as "high stakes" or history of poor test performance are at a higher risk of experiencing testing anxiety. The physiological breakdown and impacts of testing anxiety were reviewed as well as what parents can do when their student is preparing for tests.

Powerpoints of both presentations were provided to attendees. A parent in attendance asked if this information has been provided to educators in our county. Ms. Nadeau shared that this presentation had not been done for all educators but some of the information has been shared with teachers and staff with a focus on the importance of self-care, knowing when they are feeling a higher level of stress and then managing their stress so they can be effective with students.

## **Budget Update**

Christy Harris, Director of Special Education, shared some of the Special Education local budget requests she has made for next school year. Christy requested an additional physical therapist for ages 3-21 because currently CCPS has only 2 physical therapists to provide legally required services. She has also requested another behavior specialist to assist with students with challenging behaviors. Christy Harris and Melissa Morris, Supervisor of Student Services, have been working with the College of Southern Maryland to offer a class for registered behavior technicians (RBT) in order to help support students struggling with behaviors. The newly requested behavior specialist would oversee the RBTs. Christy also asked for several shifts of positions from the Medicaid budget because prior year Medicaid funds will be exhausted by FY 2020. Christy asked for nine positions to be shifted to local budget from federal funds. An additional \$130,000 in contracted services was also requested due to contracting a BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst), SLPs and other related service providers as needed. Christy's main goal is to keep current staff to maintain a high quality of services and to be able to provide legally required services.

## **Update on Significant Disproportionality for CCPS**

Christy Harris, Director of Special Education, explained that after a formula adjustment was applied to how disproportionality is determined this year, 18 out of 24 Maryland school systems were determined significantly disproportionate. These systems will be required to spend a percentage of their special education funds on addressing this disproportionality. These funds must be used in part for general education. When one student group has a much higher risk of being suspended than students from other groups, disproportionate suspension is identified. Calvert County Public Schools was found to be significantly disproportionate in 3 areas: the identification of African American students with Specific Learning Disability (SLD); Out of School Suspensions of African American students with disabilities less than/equal to 10 days; and Summative Disciplinary Total (Out of School Suspensions and In School Suspensions) of African Americans. To address the identified areas of significant disproportionality related to SWDs, approximately \$470,000 is being reallocated from overall federal passthrough funding that pays staff salaries. Christy is working with the finance department on budget proposals, which will ultimately go to Dr. Curry for final approval.

## **SECAC Awards Nomination Form and update on April 4, 2019 SECAC Award Ceremony**

Joe Cormier shared an update on the SECAC Staff Appreciation Awards. The winners in each of the 4 categories will receive a plaque and all nominees will receive a certificate at the ceremony on Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at Calvert High School.

## **Treasury Report**

SECAC voted to provide books for an Executive Functioning parent workshop. This Amazon purchase is noted on the budget spreadsheet provided to attendees. The current budget balance for 2019 is \$1,515.67. Speaker or conference requests can be sent to Kara Muffley at [muffleyk@calvertnet.k12.md.us](mailto:muffleyk@calvertnet.k12.md.us).

## **Upcoming Meetings and Events Announced**

April 3<sup>rd</sup> - How to Get SSI & Medical Assistance, Go to Work and Live to Tell About It; Prince Frederick Library 6:30-8:30pm

April 4<sup>th</sup> - SECAC Awards at CHS 6:30pm

April 5<sup>th</sup> - Transition Expo for high school juniors and seniors; CSM 9am-1pm; contact Paul Reilly or your student's high school for more information

April 23<sup>rd</sup> -Guardianship; Jesus the Divine Word Church, 6:30-8:30pm

May 2<sup>nd</sup> -I Know My Community Resource Fair; Calvert High School, 6:00-8:00pm

May 29<sup>th</sup> - Puberty and Sexuality Workshop; CCPS BOE, 6:30-8:30pm

## **Feedback & Comments**

Mr. Guy Stephens, parent of a student with an IEP, shared that he has personal connection to seclusion and restraint and has been researching the use of seclusion and restraint in Calvert County. He indicated concern that CCPS policy does not align to the COMAR regulations. CCPS policy does not state that restraint is only to be used when there is threat of imminent danger as stated in COMAR. He reported that based on a December 2018 report, Calvert County while 14<sup>th</sup> in enrollment size is 2<sup>nd</sup> in the use of seclusion and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the use of restraint. He added that students with disabilities are subjected to seclusion and restraint at a higher rate than students without disabilities. Please see below the links Mr. Stephens agreed to share:

[Restraint and Seclusion Data Collection. Findings, and Recommendations \(MSAR #11125\)](#)

[Seclusion and Restraint as defined by COMAR](#)

[United States Office for Civil Rights Dear Colleague Letter: Restraint and Seclusion of Students with Disabilities](#)

[Classrooms in Crisis: Examining the Inappropriate Use of Seclusion and Restraint Practices \(Recent Congressional Hearing\)](#)

Christy Harris shared that she had recently seen the report Mr. Stephens shared. Christy will request for David Ring, Behavior Specialist, and a representative from the student services department to attend the April SECAC meeting to share additional information and respond to questions. She explained that this year changes were made to the CPI training model which should reduce the use of restraint. She shared that CCPS staff may also be reporting transports as restraints and non-seclusionary time-outs as seclusion, which would impact data collection results. CCPS recently implemented an online data collection system for instances of restraint and seclusion. Christy shared that the policy and procedures on restraint and seclusion practice will need to be reviewed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm.

The next SECAC meeting will be held Tuesday, April 16th from 6:30-8:00PM.