

Calvert County Public Schools Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes: March 8, 2022

Attendees:

- Christina Harris -Director of Special Education
- Joseph Cormier- Chairperson
- Michelle Shifflett – Vice Chairperson
- Ashton Nelson, Parent and Special Education Department Employee
- Camille Khaleesi – Parent and Board of Education candidate
- Lisa Grenis – Retired Teacher and Board of Education candidate
- Susan Dudley – CCPS Physical Therapist
- Laura Rivers – CCPS Adaptive PE Teacher
- Janet Stephanson – Supervisor of Special Education
- Samantha Mathieson – Parent (in person)
- Chris Gadway, CCPS County Commissioner candidate
- Damien Villanova, Board of Education candidate
- Tina Hall – Parent and Board of Education Candidate
- Shelley Baden – Parent
- Nicole Maldonado – Parent
- Catherine Grasso – BOCC Candidate
- Frank Grasso – Community Member
- Sue Rafalowski - Partners for Success
- Mike Rafalowski – Community Member

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Cormier opened the Meeting at 6:30PM. The meeting is being held in a hybrid format as this is the first in-person SECAC meeting since the beginning of the pandemic. Some members attended in person and others virtually through TEAMS.

Director Update – Christy Harris, Director of Special Education

- Staffing Plan Preview – Dr. Harris shared the current staffing plan which can be found on the CCPS website by accessing the following link:
 - [Staffing Plan - Calvert County Public School District \(calvertnet.k12.md.us\)](https://calvertnet.k12.md.us).
 - Specific components of the plan:
 - CCPS uses a hybrid census staffing model to determine special education staffing which is based on total student population in a school and is directed towards providing the appropriate services and supports to meet the needs of students with IEPs. The current staffing ratio is 1 teacher to every 175 students. For most schools this equates to:
 - Elementary – approximately 3 teachers
 - Middle School – approximately 5
 - High School – approximately 7-8.The staffing ratio is a starting point as the individual IEP needs are also a key consideration. Regional programs are staffed separately from this formula as indicated on the staffing plan.
 - In addition to the CCPS local budget we receive restricted IDEA funds as well which are used for staffing.

- SECAC members are asked to review the staffing plan and provide input prior to the May 10th SECAC meeting when the proposed staffing plan will be reviewed. Feedback can be provided to: SECAC@calvertnet.k12.md.us. The staffing plan will be presented at a Board of Education meeting in June.
- A question was asked as to why there wasn't a special ed. teacher for each grade level. Dr. Harris explained that this is not necessary because there may be very few students or no students at a particular grade level who require special education services. In regard to staffing, CCPS has responsibility to ensure that all legally required services on IEPs are able to be provided.
- It was shared that over 70% of students with IEPs receive the majority of their instruction in the general education setting.
- A comment was made suggesting that school redistricting may better support students with disabilities. Dr. Harris explained that school redistricting is not a responsibility of the special education department and suggested bringing the consideration to the board of education. The special ed. department staffs to fulfill legally required services regardless of the districting boundaries.
- Questions were posed asking if CCPS has a teacher shortage and if Dr. Harris feels the staffing plan is appropriate.
 - Dr. Harris explained that with the current staffing, we can meet the legally required services for all students with disabilities and the IEP needs of students are being met.
 - When asked if she would like more teachers, she indicated that of course we would like to increase teacher staffing for special education; in a perfect world a 1: 150 ratio may help to even better serve students.
 - Dr. Harris explained that over the last several years increases to staffing have been made and additional positions will be requested:
 - An additional Physical Therapist was hired this year as well as some additional assistants
 - The Behavioral Support Staff has been increased over the years and we now have 4 behavior specialists and 4 behavior technicians assigned regionally to schools, and one Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).
 - A request for an additional Occupational Therapist (OT) is being made for the upcoming year
 - The Infants and Toddlers Program (ITP) and the Child Find Program are staffed to serve the children and families in the program in accordance with IFSPs. An additional part time social worker was just contracted for ITP and some other small increases to service children in this program will be needed.
 - A fourth inclusive programming specialist has already been hired for the upcoming year to further increase the support for all educators to provide instruction for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.
- A discussion occurred regarding the collaboration and partnerships with colleges and universities that CCPS is conducting to recruit more special education teachers:

- CCPS recently formed a partnership with Bowie State University for general and special education teachers to obtain a master's degree in special education.
 - The TAM (Teacher Academy of Maryland) program offers CCPS high school students the opportunity to work in educational settings while they are in high school, apply for a scholarship and then after they graduate from college, they come back and teach in CCPS.
 - Feedback on special education in CCPS was provided by SECAC participants either virtually through a "padlet" or in person using a poster system. The questions/feedback items posed:
 - What is working with Special Education in Calvert County Public Schools?
 - What could be improved with Special Education in CCPS?
 - Please provide feedback on Parental participation in the IEP process
- The feedback will be compiled and distributed to the SECAC distribution list.

Treasury Report

- At this time, SECAC has not spent much of our budget this year – currently have \$2,368.50 remaining.
 - Some ideas for the use of funds:
 - Scholarships for parents and / or vested community members to attend conferences/workshops to better understand and support children with disabilities
 - Purchasing books
 - A presentation by the Parents Place of Maryland. Mr. Cormier explained that he has been talking with them about possible presentations. At the next SECAC meeting, possible ideas will be presented.

Community Events

- Books are available for parents to take from Parent Connections. The books available are: Smart but Scattered by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare; Smart but Scattered Teens by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare; Smart but Scattered and Stalled by Richard Guare, Colin Guare, and Peg Dawson; The Whole-Brain Child by Daniel J. Siegal; From Chaos to Calm by Janet Heinger and Sharon Weiss; and the Explosive Child by Ross W. Greene. If anyone is interested in obtaining a book, email Sue Rafalowski: Parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us.
- A proclamation for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month will be presented at the next Board of Education meeting.
- The following events will be coming up:
 - On April 7th Calvert County Partners for Success will be joining with Pathfinders for Autism and Talbot County Partners for Success to present a virtual webinar: When They Wander or Run Away. This webinar should be of interest to anyone who has a child who tends to elope. There is a ton of information in this webinar. Please register by emailing Sue at parentconnections@calvertnet.k12.md.us The Microsoft Teams link will be sent out the evening before the webinar to those who register.
 - March 24th we will be holding an organizational meeting for a parent/caregiver group for children with disabilities. On the 24th we will be doing both an in-person meeting at Harriet Brown Community Center at 1:00

pm. We will also be holding a virtual meeting on March 24th at 6:30 pm. Please register for either meeting with Robin Sanders at sandersr@calvertnet.k12.md.us The link for the virtual meeting will be sent closer to the meeting day.

SECAC Awards

- Nominations for the 2021-2022 Annual SECAC Staff Appreciation Awards are now available! The information and nomination forms have been shared with multiple school venues, CCPS Parent Connections. This is the opportunity for parents to celebrate the dedication of their child's team. The nomination deadline is March 11th, and the awards will be held April 20.

Adjournment and Final Points

- Please provide feedback/input regarding the staffing plan.
- The next meeting will be held on May 10, 2022 from 6:30-8:00.