



Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)  
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services  
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*Kelly Meissner, Chair*  
*Kathy Kaufman, Vice-Chair*

# Maryland SESAC

SPECIAL EDUCATION STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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## Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC) General Meeting March 8, 2018

Attendance/Members: Kelly Meissner-Chair, Sarah (Sally) Farr, Pamela Talley, Jill Pierce, Leanne Carmona, Samantha Carter, Ty Blackwell, Rachel London, Marjorie Guldán, Valerie Ashton-Thomas, Kathy Barazotto, Elisa Hartman,

Guests: Audrey Levering, Karla Marty, Christy Stewart, Ken Hudock, Sheila Billups, Michelle Grant-Thornton, Ashley Biggs

Absent: Joyce Abbott, Gaston Gamez, Maura Taylor, Martha Goodman, Neal Lichter, Brian Fausel, Audra Charbonnier, Tiombe Olumiji, Peaches Wilson, Kathy Kaufman-Vice-Chair, Vittoria Aiello, Jamie Stoner

- I. **Welcome/Introductions** – Kelly Meissner, Chair opened the meeting, provided an opportunity for introductions, and welcomed all members as well as guests. Minutes from January were reviewed and approved with the edit of adding Leanne Carmona as present at the January 11 meeting and absent from the call.
  
- II. **Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped** – Ashley Biggs presented about the LBPH. LBPH provides accessible reading materials for children and adults who are visually impaired (including diagnosis of dyslexia, print disability, etc.). She emphasized how the services provided would be for accessing the material and not for comprehension. Services include braille, large print material and audio format. Ashley demonstrated the use of the audio format player, along with the application for the iPad. The device is able to have volume control, bookmarks, speed variation, voice change and a thirty-hour battery life. The benefits of the services provided by LBPH is that users do not age out and that the program is free when a certified medical professional signs off that the services will benefit the individual who has a visual impairment. The LBPH can be used in school, but Ashley strongly suggested that students get their own account, as it is transferable to anywhere a student may move. It is also of benefit to students in colleges, as LBPH can provide converted college textbooks at no cost. Federal and State funding is provided so that services can remain free to patrons.

**Discussion:** Questions and discussion occurred in regard to the application process within the school system. Ashley confirmed that a print impaired verification needed to be confirmed by a medical professional to receive services, but that the account will be in the student's name.

**III. High School Graduation Task Force Update**—Kelly Meissner is the SESAC representative on the High School Graduation Task Force.

**Discussion:** Kelly provided a summary of the Task Force discussions to date. SESAC discussion included the possibility of having a tiered diploma system for Maryland. Discussion also revolved around how credit requirements varied within the state and how Maryland could work towards a more cohesive model. The question was raised about what it means to earn a diploma, and where the incentives were for students on the certificate track. Concerns were shared that there is an emphasis on inclusion in many school systems but that there doesn't seem to be a proper amount of support in the general education classrooms for students receiving special education services. There was also concern about a lack of accountability for what students receiving a certificate were learning in general education classes.

**Recommendations:** The SESAC recommended that the committee create a cohesive model in terms of graduation/credit requirements which includes standardization across school systems. There should also be some way to make the certificate of program completion more meaningful including documentation to show areas of expertise/skills a student with a certificate of completion can demonstrate. Kelly will share this feedback with the taskforce. **[DONE]**

**IV. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Update**—Kelly Meissner confirmed that the plan for ESSA in Maryland was approved and moving forward. The climate survey is due by the end of March and the plan can be located on the MSDE website.

**V. Legislative Letter**—Not discussed. Kelly will share information at the next meeting.

**VI. Secondary Transition Manual Overview**—Christy Stuart, Secondary Transition Specialist, MSDE DSE/EIS updated SESAC on the new Transition Planning Guide for Individuals with Disabilities. Christy confirmed that the guide has been finalized and should now be given out at IEP/Transition meetings.

**Discussion:** The SESAC emphasized the importance of improving outcomes for students after leaving the school system. Christy confirmed that a focus will be placed on indicators 13 and 14, and how a checklist and best practices guide will be implemented. SESAC members discussed the importance of systemic change if Career Technology Education (CTE) is available at the table from the very beginning and the need to change the mindset around a certificate of completion to employers. Christy discussed the importance of back mapping reports. She will later provide SESAC members with the Transitions Discussion Tool for IEP meetings.

**Recommendations:** The SESAC recommended that MSDE DSE/EIS consider offering a timeline for parents for each year to chunk information based on age brackets as preparation for the IEP meeting. (like the doctors used to give at well baby checkups to help parents understand developmental milestones)

**VII. Parent Survey Overview and Response Rates**—Ken Huddock, the Section Chief for Family Support at MSDE DSE/EIS informed the SESAC that the Parent Survey is currently out and will be available to complete from February-May. Since this is his first time implementing on his own, he wanted to discuss strategies to increase

parent participation and responses to the survey.

**Discussion:** Questions and discussion occurred about changing the window of completion. There was some thought about reducing the window of completion to create a greater sense of urgency, while others discussed the need for frequent reminders. There was also discussion about using partner groups, agencies, local SECACs, etc. to help share information about the survey rather than just going through the schools.

**Recommendations:** The SESAC recommends that MSDE and LEAs should purposefully share the results of the surveys and any actions that would be taken as a result. The parents on the SESAC feel that if parents understand how the information is being used and what changes are made as a result of the surveys they will be more motivated to complete the surveys.

**VIII. Maryland's Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)**—Karla Marty met with the SESAC to discuss looking at two format options for the English Language Arts and Mathematics MSAA reports that will be shared with parents.

**Discussion:** Most members were in favor of option 2. It was easier to digest the information when subject scores/results were on separate pages. In regard to option 1, it was recommended that the use of green not be used to highlight a scoring section (specifically one that fell below expectations), as green often indicates passing/success. It was recommended using one standard color to represent score levels. Members also discussed how the use of the thermometer to gauge subscores was not helpful, and that the table format would be better. Discussion also revolved around MSAA testing in itself, specifically as to whether or not it is as challenging for students as it should be.

**Recommendations:** SESAC recommended option 2 be used for the reports for parents. If students are consistently scoring within Level 3 and Level 4, IEP teams should be advised to consider the possibility of moving those students to regular assessments and instruction versus instruction in the alternate education framework and core content connectors.

**IX. Public Comment**—Comments from guests/members in attendance were welcome throughout the meeting. There was a brief follow-up discussion on prioritizing SESAC initiatives when looking at the budget for the following year. An emphasis was placed on the CTE conversation and how students with disabilities needed to be included. Members were reminded that new officers are needed for the next year, and that Carmen should be contacted if anyone is interested.

**Next Meeting:** June 7, 2018, 9am-12pm  
JHU/CTE