

DRAFT

Strategic Plan of the Carroll County
Special Education Citizens' Advisory
Council

July 10, 2003

MISSION

The Carroll County Special Education Citizens' Advisory Council is a partnership between parents, families, community leaders, educators and administrators, working to enhance services available to students with disabilities and to advocate for positive changes in special education in the Carroll County public schools.

The strategic planning group agreed that the key principle that supports their efforts is the belief that we should have high expectations for all children.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

The strategic planning group listed the following external factors that will affect their work over the next 3 years:

- The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Changes to special education regulations in COMAR, in response to the reauthorization of IDEA
- The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and its emphasis on adequate yearly progress (AYP) and highly qualified teachers
- State and federal budgets
- New state regulations governing behavior supports
- The Bridge to Excellence in Public Education Act
- New state assessments (Maryland State Assessment and High School Assessments)
- Staffing shortages and the number of teachers entering the field unprepared to teach children with disabilities

INTERNAL FACTORS

The strategic planning group listed the following factors internal to the Carroll County Public School System as affecting their work over the next 3 years:

- Increased staff as the result of additional special education staff and contract employees
- A supportive Board of Education
- The increasing number of special education teachers eligible for retirement
- The Carroll County Public School System's Master Plan
- The limited amount of time and funding available to provide staff development
- Employee contract groups (impacts contract days, hours per day, etc.)

STAKEHOLDER INPUT AND PRIORITIES

The Carroll County Special Education Citizens' Advisory Council (SECAC), in partnership with the Carroll County Public Schools Department of Special Education, developed and widely distributed a Special Education Needs Assessment to families of children currently receiving special education services (see attachment A). The results of the survey were compiled and used by the SECAC to identify and prioritize areas in need

of improvement. In addition, at the June general SECAC meeting a strategic planning session was facilitated to identify and prioritize areas in need of improvement. The results of these two efforts were broken into four categories and priorities identified:

Policies

The most important issues identified by the SECAC in this area were:

- 1) Accountability
- 2) The partnership between general and special education
- 3) High stakes testing
- 4) Inclusion in extracurricular activities
- 5) The need for year-round programming

Other issues identified by the SECAC were:

- The need for IEP goals to be meaningful and measurable
- The need for increased special education funding
- The need for an alternative high school diploma

Services

The most important issues identified by the SECAC in this area were:

- 1) High school programming
- 2) Early Identification
- 3) Social skills training
- 4) Reading Programs
- 5) Technology

Other issues identified by the SECAC were:

- Extended School Year Services
- Transition Services
- Technical and vocational training
- Self-advocacy

Training

The most important issues identified by the SECAC in this area were:

- 1) Training for remediation/specialized instruction
- 2) Educator training
- 3) Paraeducator training
- 4) Administrative expectations
- 5) Social skills – Circles of Friends, acceptance, friendships
- 6) Parent training

Other issues identified by the SECAC were:

- Student advocacy
- Disability awareness/orientation
- Collaboration training
- Sexuality
- Teaching strategies

- Recognizing the struggling child (early identification)
- Collaborative teaching strategies
- Mentoring

Outreach

The most important issues identified by the SECAC in this area were:

- 1) Celebrating Success
- 2) Disability Awareness/Orientation
- 3) Communication to all types of families, including foster families, blended families, extended families, and families experiencing separation and divorce.

Other issues identified by the SECAC were:

- Student advocacy
- Promoting high expectations for all
- Budget/funding

From the issues and priorities identified by the survey and the SECAC, the strategic planning group developed the following priorities, goals, and objectives.

STRATEGIC PLAN

SERVICES				
Goal: The Carroll County Public School System will 1) increase the number of students with disabilities who graduate with a diploma and 2) increase the number of students with disabilities completing high school with a career or post-secondary school focus.				
Objective 1:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will 1) improve transition services for students with disabilities, 2) incorporate self-advocacy training and practices into transition services and 3) increase the availability and accessibility of technical and vocational training for students with disabilities.				
Objective 2:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will work to increase the variety of programmatic options for reading instruction.				

The strategic planning group identified the following as potential indicators of success:

- Improved performance of students with disabilities on high school assessments
- Increased graduation rates of students with disabilities
- Decreased drop-out rates of students with disabilities
- Increased numbers of students with disabilities meeting post-secondary requirements as outlined by the University of Maryland
- Increased numbers of students gaining and maintaining community-based employment (utilize data from adult serving agencies)
- Increased number of students in technical and vocational training programs
- Increased reading scores on CTBS, MSAs, and HSAs

OUTREACH				
Goal: The Carroll County Public School System will promote high expectations for all students.				
Objective 1:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will partner with the Department of Special Education to plan and implement an annual forum on special education.				
Objective 2:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will work with the Partners for Success Center to provide disability awareness activities.				
Objective 3:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will partner with the Department of Special Education to plan and implement an annual “Celebrating Success” event to recognize outstanding educators and other staff.				

The strategic planning group identified the following as potential indicators of success:

- Increased and broadened participation of families, educators, administrators and community members in SECAC efforts and activities
- Number of disability awareness presentations and trainings
- Number of families nominating a staff member for recognition

TRAINING				
Goal: Professional development and family training will result in better outcomes for students with disabilities.				
Objective 1:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will work to provide training on remediation and specialized instruction for staff and families of students with disabilities.				
Objective 2:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will work to provide training on social skills for staff and families of students with disabilities.				
Objective 3:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will work to provide training on recognizing struggling students for staff and families of students.				

The strategic planning group identified the following as potential indicators of success:

- Improved performance of students with disabilities on assessments
- Increased graduation rates of students with disabilities
- Decreased drop-out rates of students with disabilities
- Increased numbers of students with disabilities meeting post-secondary requirements as outlined by the University of Maryland
- Increased numbers of students gaining and maintaining community-based employment (utilize data from adult serving agencies)
- Increased number of students with disabilities educated in the general education classroom
- Increased quality of life (need quality of life/social skills evaluation tools)
- Changes in special education referral data, including information on who is referring and at what age students are being referred
- Increased use of alternative staffing (ie. co-teaching) and differentiated instruction

POLICIES				
Goal: The Carroll County Public School System will work to provide a high quality education for students with disabilities, evidenced by a seamless service delivery system.				
Objective 1:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will highlight schools using best practices, and explore ways to expand and utilize them as models.				
Objective 2:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will assist in identifying ways to provide staff development through school-based training, technical assistance and other means, as a way to supplement the staff development calendar.				
Objective 3:	Year 1 Strategies	Year 2 Strategies	Year 3 Strategies	Individual Responsible
The SECAC will research and evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of extending the 180-day calendar over a longer period of time.				

The strategic planning group identified the following as potential indicators of success:

- Lower percentage of students receiving special education services
- Increased percentage of students with disabilities in general education classrooms
- Increased screening of students
- Increased use and evaluation of team teaching

NEXT STEPS

The strategic planning group brainstormed on ways to get broader stakeholder involvement in the strategic plan and generated the following ideas.

- 1) Stephanie Savar, Supervisor of Special Education, will take the completed plan to Dr. Fogle’s meeting with senior administrative staff (Harry’s cabinet).
- 2) Completed plan will be distributed to PTAs and SITs
- 3) Completed plan will be distributed to the Curriculum Council.
- 4) Completed plan will be shared with the Board of Education.
- 5) The document will be distributed at the State of Special Education forum in September.

It was further decided that the State of Special Education forum will be used to generate ideas about strategies. Attendees will be asked to go to a table of interest to them at which an individual goal area will be discussed. At each table, the group discussion will be facilitated by special education staff and SECAC members, in order to model educator/parent partnership. The SECAC will then use the strategies to complete and approve the strategic planning document. Further discussion of strategies will also take place at the next SECAC meeting.

Attachment A
Results of the Special Education Needs Assessment