

Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
December 2019 Report to the Howard County Board of Education

SECAC Statement of Purpose:

The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 13A.05.02.13I) requires the following for a Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC):

- (1) Each local school system shall establish a special education citizens advisory committee to advise the local school system on the needs of students with disabilities within the jurisdiction.
- (2) The Department shall annually allocate federal funds to each local school system to support the activities of the local special education citizen advisory committee.
- (3) Each local school system shall submit a budget for the use of federal funds, consistent with §C(1)(a) of this regulation.

Each SECAC is given a grant of \$2,500 each year to support such activities. SECAC has used funding this year primarily to support website design, parent advocacy, speakers and educational sessions for parents to learn more about the process and laws of Special education, reading interventions, etc.

SECAC Purpose: The Howard County Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC) advises the school system on the needs of students with disabilities. We collaborate with other community disability advocacy groups to improve special education and the lives of our students in Howard County, MD.

Background Information: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act states:

“Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home.”

Membership: SECAC has taken great care in creating an environment of inclusion while promoting parent involvement in Howard County. We have had an increase of at least 30 new parents who attend General Membership Meetings. We have been more intentional about creating relationships with the PTA Council of Howard County by attending their monthly meetings and giving reports to PTA representatives. We are continuing to ask the PTA presidents to create or continue a SECAC representative position on their respective PTAs in order to share our information with their schools. We are sustaining membership through utilization of allocated federal funds to provide scholarships to Howard County parents to participate in training workshops on special education advocacy.

Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
December 2019 Report to the Howard County Board of Education

Inclusivity: SECAC has continued to look for ways for families to have access to our general meetings and the resources and information we provide. This year, we have begun to Facebook Live our general meetings in the hopes of reaching more parents who are unable to attend. We are the only organization in the school district doing so. We also moved our monthly general meetings to Wilde Lake Middle School; a school that is centrally located and has access to public transportation. Beth Stolte, SECAC secretary, translated our flyer into the top 5 languages in Howard County: Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Telugu, and Urdu. We have connected with the following community organizations in order to collaborate and share information about the needs of our children: Children and Adults with ADHD (CHADD), Decoding Dyslexia Howard County, and Howard County Autism Society (HCAS).

Within our own district, SECAC had Dr. Gilbert, director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Office speak at one of our general meetings. Dr. Gilbert has pledged to work closely with SECAC and the special education community to solidify the standing of students with disabilities in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion sentence. Dr Gilbert has agreed to identify a self advocate or young adult and/ or a grad of HCPSS to be included on DEI committee and will consider a person with a disability joining his DEI team for employment in the future. The very nature of inclusivity is to act and include people with disabilities in all aspects of life and should particularly be considered in all departments of an inclusive school district as many transitioning youth (TYs) are looking for employment. SECAC has advocated and acquired the inclusion of students with disabilities to be part of Howard County's Youth in Conversation Program, in which at least two students take part.

State of Special Education: Howard County Public Schools follows an inclusive model of education where children with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers as much as possible. Currently there are 6,148 or (10.4%) students in this district receiving special education services from birth to 21 years of age. This is an increase of 430 students from 2018 and a little over 1600 since 2008.¹

¹ Table 1. Maryland Early Intervention Special Education Services Census Data and Related Tables. October 1, 2018.

Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
December 2019 Report to the Howard County Board of Education

# SPED students	2017	2018	Current
PS	569	622	682
ES	2001	2292	2486
MS	1160	1165	1320
HS	1546	1626	1670

Howard County’s population has increased from 49,905 in 2008 to 59,099 as of the student membership counted by October 31st of this year. The number of students with disabilities has risen from 4,501 to 6,158. Howard County has maintained a single digit percentage of students identified with disabilities, hovering around 9-9.9% from 2008, 2013, and 2018. The only other districts with single-digit percentages from 2018 are Dorchester County (4,785 students population, 465 special education, 9.8%) and Garrett County (3,842, 370, 9.6%). The state percentage for special education from 2008, 2013, and 2018 are 12.2%, 11.8% and again 12.2%.²

From the census data of October 2018, the breakdown of those disabilities in the district are as follows: Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is at 22.33%; Speech Language Impairment(SLI) is 16.88%, Autism is 16.20%, Other Health Impairment (OHI) 13.93%, Developmental Delay and Developmental Delay with extended IFSP is 14.30%, Emotional Disability is 6.49%, Multiple Disabilities at 4.85%; Intellectual Disability at 4.09%, and collectively those identified with Hearing Impairment, Deafness, Visual Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Deaf- Blindness, and Traumatic Brain Injury at 1%³. Howard County’s numbers coincide within 1-2% of the states except in the areas of SLD (5% below the state), Autism (4.8% above) , and OHI (3.3% below). Of these disabilities, 69.3% are male and 30.7% are female.⁴

There are two areas to note in the breakdown of students with disabilities in relation to the general education population for non-white students. Twenty-four percent of the general education population are designated Asian but only make up 11% of the special education population. African American students make up 22.8% of the general education population, and 35.7% of the special education population.⁵

² Maryland Early Intervention Special Education Services Census Data and Related Tables. October 1, 2018. Table 1.

³ Ibid., Table 2

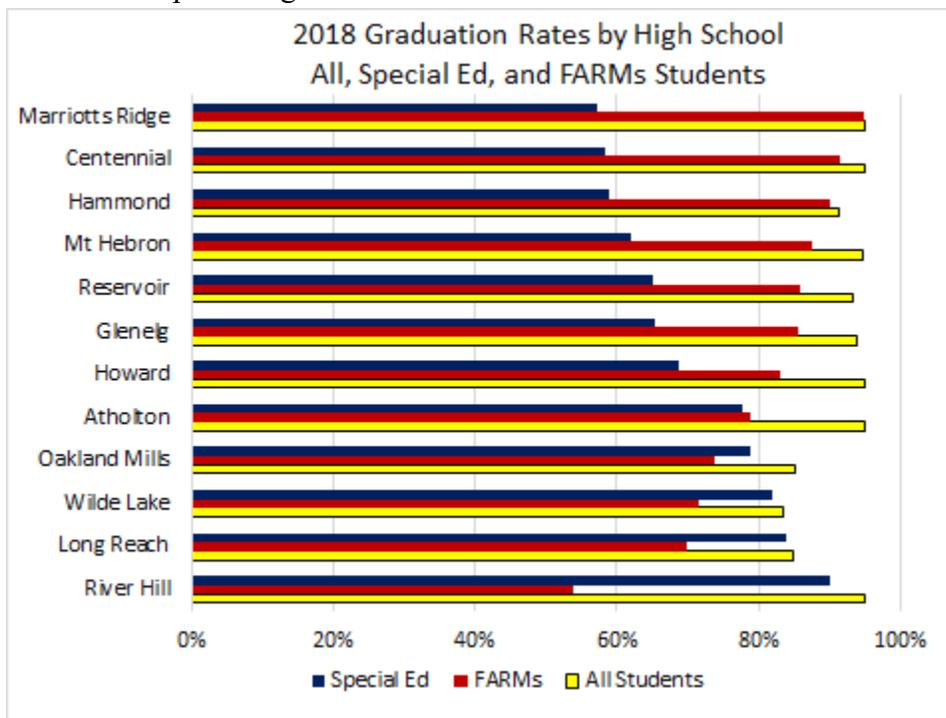
⁴ Ibid., Table 8

⁵ Ibid., Table 10

Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
December 2019 Report to the Howard County Board of Education

Howard County’s 2018 graduation rate was 91.95%. Students with disabilities (SWD) had an overall graduation rate of 67.41%. The highest graduation rate amongst SWD was Hispanic females at 84% and the lowest at 58% is for Asian males. (It is to be noted that SWD who are female and Asian had a 0% due to being <5% of population).⁶

In delinating graduation rates according to high school, SWD are comparative to all students at Wilde Lake and Long Reach High school. When compared to students receiving free and reduced meals (FARMS), SWD are similar to that category in graduation rates at Atholton High School. There is not a high school where SWD and students receiving FARMS graduated at or within a few percentages as the rest in 2018.⁷



The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program, MCAP, is the state-standardized assessment that measures students’ progress toward college and career readiness. The English Language Arts/literacy (ELA/L) assessments focus on reading and writing effectively when analyzing text. In looking at the comparison of proficiency rates for ELA 3, ELA 6, English 11 assessments, SWD scored almost 40% points below students without disabilities for the ELA 3

⁶ 2019 Maryland State Schools At a Glance. Retrieved from <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#!/AtaGlance/Index/3/17/6/99/XXXX>

⁷ Ibid

Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
December 2019 Report to the Howard County Board of Education

and 6 assessments and scored the same as students without disabilities for the English 11. For the third grade ELA MCAP, 86.1% SWD are not reading and writing proficiently.⁸ According to the ELA MCAP for sixth graders, 91.3% of SWD are not reading and writing proficiently. Ninety-five percent of all students who took the English 11 MCAP are not proficient in reading and writing.⁹

	Graduation Rate	Proficiency Rate ELA 3	Proficiency Rate ELA 6
All Students	91.95%	51.40%	53.40%
All SWD	67.41%	13.90%	8.70%
SWD AA M	61.76%	7.90%	5%
SWD AA F	75%	5%	5%
SWD ASIAN M	58%	19%	15.80%
SWD ASIAN F	0%	0%	0%
SWD HISPANIC M	75%	15.20%	5%
SWD HISPANIC F	84%	5%	5.60%
SWD WHITE M	75.76%	20.80%	12.20%
SWD WHITE F	59.52%	18.20%	28.30%

Inclusive model: Howard County follows an inclusive model where students with disabilities are educated with their nondisabled peers. Roughly 76% of students with disabilities are educated in the general education classroom. SWD are educated in their Least Restrictive Environment or LRE which is discussed in regulations §§300.114 through 300.120 of IDEA’s provisions that address “State Eligibility”. In each school, children with disabilities are to be

⁸ MCAP Score Report Interpretation Guide. Retrieved from <https://md.mypearsonsupport.com/resources/reporting/MCAP2019ScoreInterpretationGuide.pdf>

⁹ MSDE Report Card. MCAP. Retrieved from <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#!/Assessments/ElaPerformance/1EL/17/6/3/1/99/XXXX>

Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
December 2019 Report to the Howard County Board of Education

educated with nondisabled children which includes children in public and private institutions or other care facilities.¹⁰

Not every child with a disability is able to meet success within the general education classroom and therefore the child's LRE is divided into an A, B, and C classification. A child in LRE A will spend 80% or more in the general education setting; LRE B 40%-79% in general education; LRE C less than 40% in general education. According to IDEA, special classes, separate schooling be it private or non-public, or removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment happens "only if the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily."¹¹

In 2018, Howard County had 320 students, 6.8% of the special education population, receiving services in separate facilities identified as Home, Hospital, Public Separate Day School, Private Separate Day School, Public Separate Residential, and Private Separate Residential.

#SPED by LRE	2017	2018	2019*
LRE A	3682	3694	3868
LRE B	575	647	761
LRE C	91	123	119

* 2019 reflects numbers up until November

Below is a chart describing the LRE for students identified with Other Health Impairment, OHI; Autism Spectrum Disorder, ASD; and Specific Learning Disability which are three of the top four disabilities being serviced in this county. The chart is further delineated according to school level. The highest number of children in each category for school and disability are in LRE A from 2017 to this year. Students diagnosed with SLD makeup the largest number of SWD in LRE A through all 3 school levels. Students diagnosed with ASD are the highest number in LRE B and LRE C at all 3 school levels from 2017-to this year.

¹⁰ Key Definitions of IDEA. Retrieved from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/fapebrief-ref-list-lre/>

¹¹ Ibid.

Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
December 2019 Report to the Howard County Board of Education

#Students by LRE, Level, & Disability (OHI, SLD, ASD)	ES OHI	ES SLD	ES ASD	MS OHI	MS SLD	MS ASD	HS OHI	HS SLD	HS ASD
LRE A 2017	225	342	182	186	398	114	256	459	140
LRE B 2017	18	11	85	7	6	46	10	11	77
LRE C 2017	5	0	22	2	0	7	0	0	13
LRE A 2018	254	337	176	192	411	111	262	477	150
LRE B 2018	31	12	107	7	5	44	12	18	78
LRE C 2018	7	1	23	0	0	10	1	0	22
LRE A 2019*	261	361	181	258	434	101	259	483	146
LRE B 2019*	43	9	114	10	11	42	14	22	97
LRE C 2019*	10	4	21	3	0	10	1	1	18

*2019 reflects numbers up until the month of November

Along with the numbers designated from elementary to high school, students from birth-5 receive services as well. In 2018, there were 920 children ages 3-5 receiving services through the district across different settings. Maryland State Department of Education lists 10 hours as the prerequisite number for a childhood program and the following were the top three locations for children receiving services. Out of 920 students, 768 or 83.48% received the majority of services in their childhood program setting. One hundred and four or 11.3% were receiving services all through a service provider (speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, physical therapist, etc). Lastly, 30 or 3.26% were in at least 10 hours of a childhood program but were receiving their special education services elsewhere.¹²

Budget and SECAC Priorities

- 1) According to the HCPSS BOE Requested Operating Budget, we support the implementation of budget increases to support the need for the increased allocation of staff. According to the Requested FY 2020 Operating Budget, Special Education School Based Services show an increase of 24 teacher positions from 496 in FY 2019 to 520 in FY 2020.¹³ There is also an increase of 31 paraeducator positions from 417 in FY 2019 to

¹² Maryland Early Intervention Special Education Services Census Data and Related Tables. October 1, 2018. Table 12

¹³ Board of Education's Requested FY 2020 Operating Budget. Page 512.

Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
December 2019 Report to the Howard County Board of Education

448 in FY 2020. These numbers do not include school psychologists who are the driving force behind identification and evaluation, nor do they include social workers who are needed in schools to mitigate behavior concerns. We support the budget to reflect more school psychologist and social worker positions.

- 2) SECAC also supports the continued professional development of educational staff working with students with disabilities. With the passing of the Ready to Read Act, Howard County will begin screening kindergarteners in 2020. One of the next steps is to train not only reading specialists, but all elementary general educators, speech language pathologists, and special educators in the science of reading. A second step is to train secondary general education teachers in the lingering reading problems children identified with SLD (Dyslexia, Dysgraphia in particular) have, how Executive Functioning skills interact with Dyslexia, and the comorbidity between other disabilities such as ADHD. Appropriate behavior and safety training for all applicable staff particularly a safety care class completed by those who work in self-contained classes and/or with our most vulnerable students who display behaviors. Educating staff members on how to de-escalate a situation and know how to provide proper restraints is imperative for the safety of our students as well as staff members.
- 3) Concerns have arisen over lack of substitutes and the need for additional funding in this area. Teachers and paraeducators miss instruction time due to various reasons, one being professional development, yet paraeducators are left without designated substitutes which leaves teachers without support. Long-term substitutes, primarily those in classes with a high concentration of special education students, are still responsible for specialized instruction and therefore need to be certified and highly-qualified.
- 4) Mental Health/Trauma - We are thrilled that HCPSS has partnered with NAMI Howard County. While we understand that NAMI will conduct mental health awareness presentations for 9th grade students, we hope that you will also engage all middle and high school students under this new service provider. We encourage you to listen and to look at the data that NAMI brings to the table as they service as a member of HCPSS advisory groups addressing mental health services and supports, and will assist HCPSS in its outreach efforts regarding mental health awareness and suicide prevention initiatives.
- 5) SECAC is concerned about schools having the appropriate staffing to support students with disabilities due to the redistricting process. An open dialogue between incoming families and the school's staff and administration ensures the student will be supported. We look forward to hearing from the BOE and Department of Special Education on how redistricting has/ will affect students with IEPs.