



HOWARD COUNTY AUTISM SOCIETY

HCAS Education Advocacy Committee: 2016 Summary

2016 was another busy year for the HCAS Education Advocacy Committee. I would like to thank all of our committee members, and the HCAS Board and Staff, for their efforts to advocate for all our children navigating the school system. Listed below are some highlights from our advocacy efforts in 2016. This is only a snapshot of what we worked on in 2016. If you have any feedback or questions, or would like additional information on our other advocacy efforts or how to get involved with the committee, please do not hesitate to reach out to me!

Thank you,
Roger Thibaudeau, Chair, HCAS Education Advocacy Committee.
roger.thibaudeau@howard-autism.org

2016 HCAS Committee Members:

- Beth Benevides (FAPE Lead)
- Linda Boit
- Marlon Guinn
- Christi Hanks (Board Member)
- Nora Hart (Board Member)
- Nutan Mathur
- Laura Norgart
- Nitya Ramanan
- Madhu Thibaudeau
- Cheri Truett
- Lisa Wilson

See next page for the 2016 Accomplishments.

Howard County Autism Society

Education Advocacy Committee Accomplishments: 2016

2016 Year-round Activities:

- Held committee meetings in January, February, May and August to plan efforts, discuss task status and provide everyone an update of committee activities.
- Various committee members met with DSESS leadership to discuss collaborative ideas and systemic community concerns. Meetings held in March, May, June, August, October and November. A sampling of topics included standards-based IEP goals, Collaborative Funding Agreement status and renewal, paraprofessional training, MINC-EL program modification, MINC-PL program extension, accommodations vs modifications, monitoring of non-publics, the Cornerstone program, and HCPSS special education strategic plan status.
- Implemented ‘The Lions’ Den’; a “Best Buddies” like program at Murray Hill Middle School. Program still going strong with solid administration support. Looking for opportunities to spread to other schools.
- Completed the Middle School Workgroup, a 2+ year effort focused on improving the educational experience of those in middle school. WG was co-led by HCAS and HCPSS, and included DSESS staff, regular education teachers, special education teachers, principals, and other school staff, as well as 10 parent representatives from HCAS. Report provided to DSESS leadership late November for review.
- Administered the ‘Family Advocacy and Parent Education (FAPE) Grant provided by the Howard County Department of Citizens Services. This 4-pronged program allows for:
 - The upkeep of the Special Education News Center (<http://special.ed.howard-autism.org>)
 - An annual conference featuring a national speaker
 - HCAS to provide advice, guidance and assistance to parents related to special education questions and issues they are having.
 - HCAS to provide a parent with an initial consult with a lawyer from Disability Rights Maryland for concerns related to potential legal issues with HCPSS.

2016 Specific Activities/Events:

- January: Packaged up Sesame Street Autism books and distributed to all elementary schools and RECC programs, as well as other key HCPSS locations.
- February: Signed on to several statewide letters of support for legislative issues affecting special education. HCAS participates as part of the statewide Education Advocacy Coalition.
- March: Sponsored our annual DSESS meeting open to community as the monthly HCAS general meeting. Nancy Fitzgerald provided an introduction and had breakout sessions by age group with multiple
- April: Jointly organized the 2016 April BOE Primary Election Candidates Forum on special education. Partnered with SECAC and The Arc of Howard County. 8 of 11 candidates attended, and over 70 participants were present. First hour of forum was recorded and uploaded to YouTube. An HCAS representative moderated the forum.
- May: In partnership with RISE for Autism and HCPSS, held a day-long workshop as part of the FAPE grant. This year’s workshop featured national speaker Carol Kranowitz and was focused on sensory processing issues for those on the spectrum.
- July: Various committee members served on a parental input workgroup to support the development of the 2017 DSESS Strategic Plan.
- September: Sat down 1-on-1 with several of the BOE candidates to discuss HCAS priorities and concerns related to HCPSS.
- November: Provided a brief to Worthington Elementary PTA on IEP implementation (at their request).
- December 20th: Will provide a resource overview to the parents of the younger Cornerstone program (at the request of the teacher).