



ECKCE

Focus

*A newsletter for the employees of the
East Central Kansas Cooperative in
Education*



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Communication is the Key to Effective Transitions

One of the benefits of having an active parent group is the opportunity to interact with parents on a regular basis and hear them interacting with one another. After 3 decades in special education, the one consistent lament from parents at every level is that they wished they had more communication from the people working with their children. Whether that takes the form of a daily or weekly electronic communication, a back and forth log, or simple coherent progress notes quarterly, all parents want to know what is happening with their child’s educational programming. When it happens, life is generally good. When it doesn’t...

There are lots of reasons why communication breaks down. There simply aren’t enough minutes in a day to get everything done that could possibly be done, and when time runs short, priorities shift and the communication with parents slides farther down that list. After all, things are going well, right? If they weren’t, I would certainly let you know. The problem is that a pattern of communication gets established about the negative only, which creates a relationship that is less than ideal. This time of the year is very stressful, and there



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Frequently (Recently) Asked Questions

**Every month I will include questions that you have asked
– others probably need the answers**

CORRECTION: In the last issue the question was posed as to whether or not a related service could stand on its own as a disability and I errantly went with my previous experience in a state that follows federal regulations. I need to amend that upon further research. While it is true that the IDEA doesn't recognize those students, the IDEA also has a provision that allows states to make their own regulations regarding eligibility. Some time back, the Kansas School Board redefined the eligibility criteria by expanding the definition of specialized instruction to include related services. So the answer to last week's question is incorrect—in Kansas you may indeed have a related service such as OT or PT stand on its own as specialized instruction on an IEP. That distinction from federal law is going to be highlighted in the next iteration of the Kansas Special Education Handbook, due out later this month.

Q: We have a student whose parents are saying they are going to homeschool next year but want to still receive related services. What are their options?

A: Homeschooling for students in Kansas is relatively easy for parents, although there

are some caveats. The first requirement is that they register their home as a non-accredited private school through KSDE. That information is on their website. However, for kids who qualify for special education there are a few more considerations. By Kansas statute, parents must provide the services on a student's IEP if they do not make them available to receive those services at school. The complication there is that the school district may have stipulations which require ½ time enrollment for any homeschooled kids to access extracurricular activities at school, which means that students with disabilities may have the same requirement. This is determined at the district level, so it's important to find out what the board has set as a requirement for all students before applying it to individual situations. In the case where a district allows access to homeschooled students, parents are entitled to bring their student in to the school to have access to the services that are on the IEP. The district is responsible for them to the extent that the parents make them available—because they are not there full time, the obligation to provide them is lessened. Also, if parents choose not to provide the services for their student, they risk violating the law, but it is not stringently enforced. Some parents opt to withdraw students from special education but we discourage this as we know that most homeschoolers return at some point.



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Are myriad things that must be accomplished, which usually means things get shuffled and some things forgotten. One of the most important things that happens this time of year, however, doesn't even happen now—it happens in the fall. I'm talking about the transitions that happen between now and the next school year. There is nothing more important than communicating with all parties about students that are leaving you and heading to another teacher, another level, another school. And yet, because of the business of the year, often the planning fails to happen. Don't make that mistake.

While it's getting later in the season, it still isn't too late to plan your transition meetings appropriately. However, I want to mention that anytime you have a student that is transitioning to another level or another school, the planning should start in the previous fall. If you have students with IEPs due in the fall and they are at the PS level moving to K, the 5th grade moving to 6th, and the 8th grade moving to 9th, the next year's case manager should be invited to every IEP that student has that year. I know that most of you do this for kids who are having IEPs in the Spring, and for those in the fall you just plan to have transition meetings in April or May for the following year. But you really shouldn't be waiting that long. Every student in these grades should have the following year's case manager invited to the meetings regardless. You can even avoid the Spring transition meetings with a little foresight and planning. Remember that the IEP must span the full year, even if you think you might be holding multiple meetings before the transition happens. It's much better to err on the side of inviting and possibly just needing one meeting than fatalistically thinking that another meeting is inevitable.

And for those case managers on the receiving end—communicate with those reaching out to schedule these IEP meetings to let them know your availability when they are planning. Parents really fear the unknown, and when you make time for the students that will be yours in the future year, you set the tone for a relationship of communication and planning that will carry you through when things may not go perfectly. Come to the meeting prepared to say a little bit about what the day at the new school will look like and what kind of communication they can expect to have with you once their student arrives. Bring things from your counselors or admin about extracurricular activities that parents may want their kids to be involved with and class options or a course catalog so that parents can become familiar with the school. Whenever possible, try to have a general education teacher or counselor accompany you to help the parent be able to see the kind of partnerships that exist where their child will be spending the next few years.

Overplanning is always better than underplanning. While things may change by the time the student is ready to transition, at least you've established contact and put faces with names so that the relationship can begin. That kind of communication is what parents are craving and needing to feel comfortable. You owe them, and yourselves, a good start to a long healthy relationship.



DOs & DON'Ts

Here are things to consider when making sure that you are planning appropriately for student transitions

DO always share information with future classroom teachers, paras and staff regarding accommodations and modifications that the students need to be successful

DO make certain to invite the students next year team to each transitioning team starting in the fall so that they can decide who would be best to attend the IEP meeting

DON'T dismiss invitations to IEP meetings for students you may not see for months just because you are feeling overwhelmed by your own caseload. The bridges you build are incredibly important.

DON'T forget to bring questions about the students abilities and preferences to the transition meeting regardless of when they are held. Parents need to know that you are wanting as much information about their child so that they can be successful when you receive them.

News and Notes Around the Interlocal

SEAC Parent WEB April 23 Meeting in Eudora

The ECKCE SEAC, Parent WEB will meet on April 23 at the West Administration building in Eudora, with a focus on family supports. A flyer will go out a week prior to the meeting with more details. Check out our Facebook page using the URL below.

https://www.facebook.com/WEB-of-Compassion711766132538996/?modal=admin_todo_tour

ESY Paperwork Overdue

The dates for ESY are Monday- Thursday the weeks of June 10 and June 17, with two weeks off for Independence Day and resuming the weeks of July 8 and 15.

If you have students that you believe will be eligible for ESY, we need to have a list of those students with the accompanying paperwork immediately, as they were due last Friday March 29th. I will notify all those who have applied to work ESY by April 20th, but I can't know the need until I have the kids.

PARA CORNER

Happy Paraprofessional Appreciation Day!

Wednesday April 3 is Paraprofessional Appreciation Day—please let your paras know how important they are! I hope to come around and do that personally!

Just a few reminders-- please remember that the training hours that you are required to have (for most of you this is 20) must be completed in a timely fashion and submitted to Shelly McCart in our office. While the actual deadline is March 15, I have tried to come around and speak with you or your supervisors and will continue to visit.

Also, remember that there is an incentive to not use all your discretionary days. Our kids need you in school so keep this in mind!!!

Opportunities for Students With Disabilities

The KU Neurobehavioral Development Research Laboratory is interested in finding out more about brain development and how it relates to thinking abilities, movement abilities and sensory processing in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Tourette Syndrome. They are seeking individuals from the ages of 10-35 to participate in a study. Participants will be compensated for their time. For more information about this project, please email ndrlab@ku.edu or visit the website at mosconilab.ku.edu.

Requests for Movement and Lump Sum Payment Deadline Approaching

If you have taken additional classes or received advanced degrees and would like to move across columns in the schedule, please submit that paperwork to me by April 15th. If you would like a lump sum payout for summer, that request is due no later than April 1st. The forms can be found on the website.

Para Evaluations Overdue

Teachers are responsible for evaluating the paraprofessionals they supervise by March 31st using the form found on the ECKCE website. If the evaluation shows areas of improvement to the extent that the employee may not be asked to return, that notification needs to be given to the para no later than April 30. We need all of you who supervise paraprofessionals to make sure you fill out the evaluation asap. I will be coming around to remind those of you who have not yet done so.