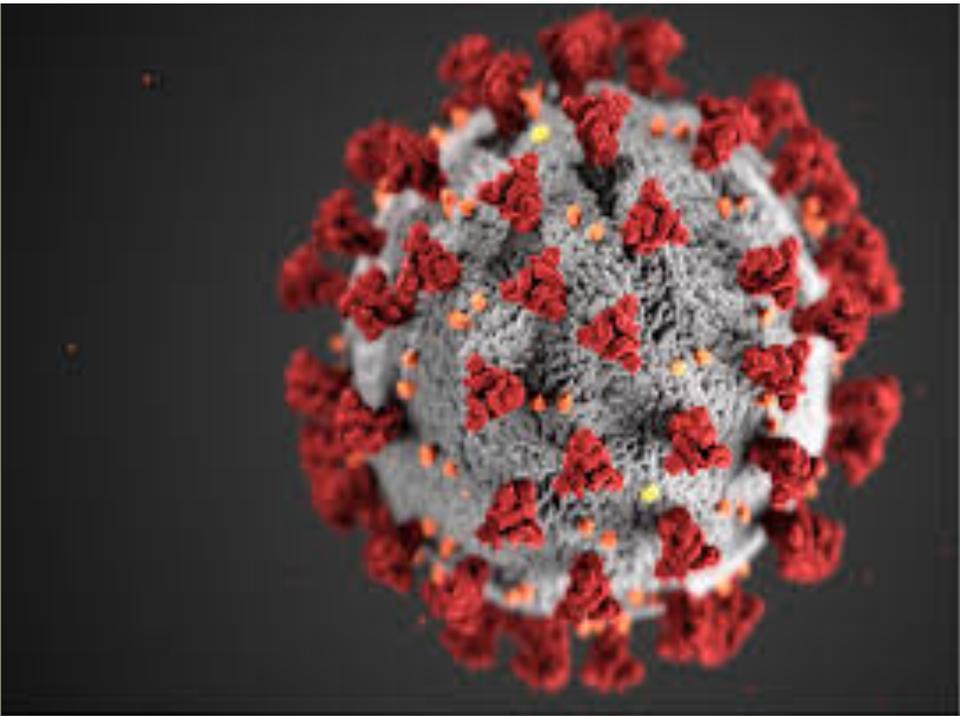




A newsletter for the employees of the East Central Kansas Cooperative in Education



May/June 2020

“What Month is it again?”
Awareness Month

Volume 4 Issue 9

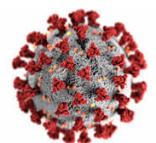


Covid-19 Education Response – We Can, We Have, We Will

Being a writer, I have always had the aspiration of writing a dystopian novel involving a hero who has some connection to the disability world and who rises to meet the end of the world with such bravado and reckless abandon that it would melt even the most callous heart.

Guess I’ll have to come up with something else. Coronavirus beat me to the punch.

Over the last 2 months, we’ve had to adjust everything. No more routine of coming to school, greeting our minions with a smile or a stern admonition when necessary, no more daily adjustments based upon the curricular needs of the kids we support. Everything has changed and we were left wondering what would happen next. Lo and behold, the heroes of this new world arrived in the form of special educators, albeit via zoom. So let me thank each and every one of you for the effort that you demonstrated to make that happen. Now, as we hang on the every word of the leadership of the nation, the state, the department of education and the local health



Inside

Frequently Recently Asked Questions

Questions fielded from you, by you, for you, with answers that may benefit you

2

Para Corner

Things our paras need to know

4

ESY Information

Follow me to Page

3



Frequently (Recently) Asked Questions

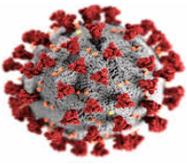
Every month I will include questions that you have asked – others probably need the answers

Q: We are having a difficult time getting a parent signature for services proposed at an IEP meeting we held via Zoom. Parents agreed to services, but we have no signature. Can we implement without it?

A: One of the casualties of this shutdown has been the face-to-face meetings where we can easily obtain signed consent for services that change more than 25%. The good news is that we aren't in school right now, so we don't need to make changes in programming as outlined on the new IEP. The bad news is that we still need to have a signed consent on the PWN prior to implementing those changes. I know that some parents have been able to achieve this electronically, and others have not. If you are struggling with getting a parent to respond, just let me know and I can swing by and obtain a signature. But do not implement services on a newly developed IEP without that signed consent. It's a requirement. One of the most interesting things about the shutdown is that the state directors of special education lobbied the National Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to ease the IDEA requirements in this unprecedented time. She refused to do so, saying that the IDEA could not be altered for such a time as this without legislative action constituting a revision. So until that happens, the timelines surrounding IEP actions still stand, and the timelines in Kansas as statutes dictate are all in place as well.

Q: We have one ESY parent who is saying they are not ready to send their kids back for face to face services. Do we have to do anything?

A: Ordinarily, the answer would be that we acknowledge their concerns and provide them with a letter stating that we stand ready willing and able to provide the services if they change their mind. And, I would still do that. However, due to the unusual circumstances around this summer, please let me know who the parents are and we will try to address it on a case by case basis. While the majority of our students have not done nearly as well as they do in a face-to-face setting, some have derived a good deal of benefit from the virtual instruction that was offered, including related services. If that is the case and the parent is wanting virtual services in the interim, I would be inclined to work out some sort of compromise. After all, for students who qualify for ESY, regression is a very real thing and to not provide them with anything will most certainly exacerbate that regression and put them at a disadvantage in the fall. If a compromise can be reached in delivering something over the ESY period, it would help the student to have something. I realize that this may cause a conflict in the paperwork offering and documentation would need to reflect the change, but depending on the circumstances, and with the RWA letter provided, it may not rise to the need for an amendment. Please let me know the details and we can work through the legalities together to get the students what they ultimately need.



Continued from page 1



departments, we wonder if things will ever seem normal again. Well guess what? I have some good news.

We will have school again. Sooner than later. In fact, beginning June 8, we're holding our Extended School Year programs in the various districts, applying all of the necessary precautions to ensure that our students don't lose any more ground while staying safe. I believe that this will provide us with an appropriate trial balloon for how we will come back to school in August. I know that there is some trepidation about coming back to school, both from educators and parents alike, wondering if they will be putting themselves or their children at risk. I certainly understand that and respect those concerns. Please know that we would not be ready to jump back into the face-to-face fray if I wasn't perfectly comfortable that we could do so safely. We are putting all of the precautions in place to make sure that we can effectively manage student instruction again.

But perhaps it is even more important to look at what this means for education moving forward. As we speak, there is full anticipation that we will begin the school year on time in Kansas. With this week's announcement of decentralization of the reopening plan, it seems likely that the majority of school districts will opt to go ahead and open with an eye on resurgence of the outbreak. I see this as a positive thing, not because I am downplaying the seriousness of the illness or that I recognize that we all know folks in the populations of those most vulnerable to the most severe outcomes. I am most concerned about the catastrophic climate that the fear of the virus has created in the world and the devastating effects it can have on our children moving forward. Given the emotional toll that the lockdown has created, I think we owe it to ourselves and our future to keep our vision to the return of normalcy, however altered that may be, and try to establish routines outside of our homes once again. Surely we will have to do so with caution and taking the precautions necessary to keep ourselves and our neighbors feeling safe. But we have seen the effects that virtual learning alone have on the students we serve and how much they require the face to face interaction that our educational model provides.

There are some wonderful takeaways that this Spring's closures have provided. I think we will look for ways to incorporate the things that worked about virtual learning into our educational model moving forward. I think our documentation and attention to data will receive a greater focus. I think the closure has made us look at the way we collaborate between general and special education. However, I believe the biggest revelation has been that our students rely upon the instruction that we provide more than we as teachers or their parents ever knew. And a close second is that should this pandemic rear its ugly head to the point that we must rely upon virtual instruction for a period of time, don't worry. It's temporary. And you all have proven that it can be done. And if necessary, we'll do it again. Be safe, stay healthy and we'll see you in August!

DOs & DON'Ts

Here are things to consider when reflecting on the virtual learning experience of the 2020 pandemic closures

DO always be on the lookout for new ways of presenting information to kids. Your students need you daily and this experience has demonstrated exactly how much.

DO think outside the box if we end up having to explore alternatives due to a shut down in the future. Becoming more familiar with the virtual formats has been a definite bonus.

DON'T live in fear. Yes, a virus is something that we cannot control and is very disruptive to our lives and those of our students. But we can control how we react to the prospect. Be hopeful.

DON'T think that this is our "new normal". We have an educational system that works for our kids and we will return to it as soon as we can. Because our students need it, and they need you to be able to help them reach their full potentials.

ECKCE Certified Start of the Year Kick-off

Scheduled for August 11

It's still May, so it's hard to think about getting back to school in the fall. Or is it? It seems like forever ago that we were actually in school! Our back to school get together is scheduled for August 11 from 8-3 at the Baldwin Intermediate Center in Baldwin. We will be introducing some of our new employees and honoring those retirees that we didn't get to recognize this Spring due to the shutdown, as well as going over handbook revisions and changes to the law. There will also be breakout sessions to talk about our response to the shutdown and things we may need to put in place to address future needs. So have a fun, relaxing summer and we will see you August 11!

SEAC to Resume in September

Our Special Education Advisory Council, or parent advocacy group is on hiatus due to the shutdown, but will resume in the fall. For more information please visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WEB-of-Compassion-711766132538996/> Hope to see many of you next year!

ESY to Begin June 8

Just a final reminder that ESY programming is in place for those students who qualify, the weeks of June 8-11, June 15-18, July 6-9 and July 13-17 on M-Th from 8:30-11:30. In Baldwin students will be served at the PC and IC, In Eudora at the West administration building, and in Wellsville at both the Middle School and the Elementary. Call if you have any questions!

Para Corner

Please share this newsletter with your paras, just in case they did not receive it via email. If you have questions about paras as a group, don't hesitate to now contact Shelly McCart @ smccart@eckce.com.

As you know, one of the requirements for maintaining employment with us as a paraprofessional is to complete the requisite number of hours of inservice training to remain highly qualified. For those of you who completed your hours in a timely fashion and kept on top of them from the very outset, thank you so much. Paying attention to these details makes our jobs much easier when reporting the numbers to the state. However, if you did not and as a result had multiple contacts from our office to complete them, please look at next year as an opportunity to improve upon that effort. We will be holding our initial inservice for paraprofessionals on August 12 from 8:00 until 3:00, so you can get a good chunk of the hours you need in one training. Until we meet in the fall, have a great relaxing summer, thanks for those of you helping out with ESY, and thanks to all of you for all you do!

Employees Assistance Program Offers Pandemic Resources

During this time of heightened stress and uncertainty, our EAP has been working to ensure that you are taken care of and have what you need to help you through this challenging time. In addition to the EAP COVID-19 site, you can access pandemic resources (through June 2020) from their partner myStrength, at no cost. It's easy to get started:

1. Visit bh.mystrength.com/livongocovid19web
2. Create a free account
3. Choose from over a dozen activities

And as always, you can reach out to the EAP any time. Call 800-624-5544 to talk with a licensed professional, any time of the day.