

# FOCUS on Special Education

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## A Matter of Perspective in Giving Thanks

November is not typically a relaxing time in life, let alone the life of a teacher. Ironically, the time of year we have set aside for the season of Thanksgiving can give us more reasons for anxiety than for gratitude. So as teachers, with the first quarter behind us and the second screaming past, I think we need to take a step back to gain a little perspective.

For most of us, these past two years have been a challenge. I don't think it's just me, but it has felt similar to walking through a foggy marsh, with the ground giving way under each footstep forward, covering our



already heavy boots with gloppy muck that makes it impossible to make any progress, even if we could see clearly where we were headed. It's times like these when we need to stop, close our eyes, and remember what pulled us into teaching in the first place.

I know that student anxiety has never been higher, but I sometimes wonder if it is partly because they feel it in the adults around them. I'd like to challenge each of you this month to find just a moment in your day to stop and focus on just one of the students  
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## UNIFIED BOWLING TEAMS END THEIR FIRST SEASON

Unified bowling teams from all three districts competed in their final matches on November 9 in Lawrence. While none of the teams qualified to participate

in the state competition there was a lot of fun had by all who bowled. Stay tuned for additional unified sports opportunities coming up in the

upcoming weeks, and don't forget to tell all of our unified sports members how proud we are to have them represent our districts in competition!

*Often in Special Education, questions arise which you may need the answer to and others may benefit from that answer as well. Each month we will include a few of these questions, so please don't hesitate to ask.*

### FREQUENTLY (RECENTLY) ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** Can we refuse an initial evaluation when a parent requests it if we see no educational impact?

**A:** Yes, we actually can under certain circumstances, but we need to be very careful about these kinds of requests. If the parent has made a similar request within the past calendar year, we do not have to grant the request unless we feel that it is appropriate due to a change in circumstances, but in certain cases, if a student has not been involved in interventions prior to the request, or if there doesn't appear to be any educational impact and the school doesn't believe the student would meet the second prong of the criteria, the school may refuse. In either case, prior written notice must be given within 10 days of the request to document why the school is refusing.

**Q:** We had an IEP where the parents were notified several times of the meeting but never responded. We called, emailed and sent the notice but on the day of the meeting they never showed. Because the student was making great progress, we wanted to decrease services by 25%. We sent home the prior written notice but the parents never sent it back. Can we reduce the services without consent?

**A:** As always, this doesn't have a really straightforward answer, but in short, yes, just not right away. There are a number of ways this could be achieved, so we'll walk through them. First of all, the Kansas regulations requires parental consent if there is a material change of services which is 25% or more, Because you are reducing by 25% exactly, consent is required. If you feel like the parents would refuse, you can always reduce by 24% if the team feels that is in the best interest of the child. However, there is a difference between refusal and ambivalence. If the parent is simply ambivalent, we could send the parent notice that they have 5 days to respond before we implement the changes as recommended. If they fail to respond to that notice as well, we can begin to implement the IEP as changed. If they respond with refusal, we will have to resort to option A. This is an issue specific to our state, as federal regulations allow for changes to the IEP at the teams discretion without a signature required. Under federal regulations, a signature is only required to evaluate or for the initial provision of services. But as long as the Kansas regulations stipulate, consent for such a change is required prior to beginning services unless we notice parents as mentioned.

**PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION (CONT. FROM PG. 1)**

in your field of vision in any given day and remember what it is that brought you into their life in the first place. No matter what banter about public education goes on in the media or in the social circles you travel, being a teacher is the most rewarding profession that you will

ever be a part of and it isn't even close. Don't let the economy, the funding debate in the legislature, or the negative attitudes of those ignorant to the helping professions be the voice that takes hold in your head. Let it be the voice of that student you interact

with right after you read this and remember that you are the one that student counts on to have that voice heard. You may even want to kick off those mud-caked boots and try walking just a little lighter, just for a bit. Remember that you are worth it, because they are worth it.

*Thank you to all of our service providers for helping us get this year off to a great start. Your efforts are greatly appreciated and do not go unnoticed!!!*

**Crisis Prevention Intervention Training and ESI**

If you are currently certified in CPI, please make note of when your certification expires and take advantage of the recertification trainings that are available to you. Our next CPI refreshers will be held on December 12 from 11:30-3:30 and December 15 from 8:30

to 11:30, both at the West Resource Center in Eudora. Don't forget that if you let your certification expire, you may be required to take the full course over again, which is longer. Also remember that if you are in a program where ESIs are a likelihood, such as the

WEBS program or Life Skills, this certification is required, as state regulations around the use of emergency safety interventions prohibit you from engaging in a restraint or seclusion if you do not have current certification in CPI or another alternative.

**DON'T FORGET INPUT FORMS PRIOR TO EVERY IEP**

Just a reminder that in order to provide the best foundation for your students' upcoming IEPs, the parent input form and teacher input form well in advance of

the IEP meeting. Because meaningful parental participation is required under IDEA, this parent input form is also a requirement for all ECKCE IEPs, as this

provides us with documentation of that participation. Also, please don't forget to have a draft IEP prepared and sent out to parents 5 days prior to the meeting.



## ECKCE

600 High Street  
Baldwin City KS,  
66006

Daniel Wray, Director

Loralea Hubert, Asst.  
Director

Kim Bergan, Personnel

Shelly McCart, Para  
Support

Tristan Normile, MIS  
Clerk

**Phone** 785 594 2737  
**Fax** 785 594 6815  
Email: [dwwray@eckce.com](mailto:dwwray@eckce.com)

We're on the Web!

[Eckce.com](http://Eckce.com)

## Be Safe at Work—Avoid Worker's Comp Accidents

With the onset of colder weather, we often see more slips and falls as ice and snow become the norm and footing becomes more treacherous.

Periodically we will be sending out bulletins from our KASB worker's compensation group about how you can protect yourself from injury while keeping our visits to

the urgent care to a minimum. This month's focus is on making sure you choose appropriate footwear for the job. In special education, it is important to wear comfortable, functional flats with no open toes or heels, as we know that sometimes we are pressed into action to encourage a little one to return to their work area. Also remember

that as the weather turns colder, we can sometimes be in more of a hurry to get in out of the cold and forget obstacles that might be in our path, or overlook wet or icy patches on the sidewalks or linoleum floors. Please take care to be observant of the conditions and spare yourself the pain of an unnecessary fall. We need you in one piece!

## PARAPROFESSIONAL NEWS AND NOTES

As a part of your job duties, you need to turn in inservice hours to Shelly McCart. While many of you do this regularly and have all of your hours completed, we are still looking for many of you to turn in your first hours. Please do so ASAP. Also, please remember that when you are assigned to working with students in the classroom,

you should not be on your phones. Please be mindful of distractions that will take away from your ability to help our struggling learners to be successful. And we have heard your requests for a way to save time on clocking in and out for lunch and are currently exploring options for addressing this concern. Stay tuned.

Finally, don't forget that we appreciate you as much as the students that you support do. Without your dedication we could not provide our students with the things they need to be successful. I hope each of you have a great rest of the year, and remember that we are still giving out gift cards to folks who refer friends to be paras too!