

FOCUS on Special Education

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When Disability Is NOT Special Education

Well, we're off and running so we might as well start the year with a classic. The debate between IEP or 504.

I know that we've addressed this before, but because the issue is a nationwide debate and continues to be a conversation in most of our schools, let's talk 504 plans. There has always been confusion that this is a special education responsibility, mostly because 504 plans are in place because the student has a disability. But not all students with disabilities are in special education, as we know. The only time that a student with a disability



receives special education services is when the team that determines eligibility or lack thereof finds that the student needs specialized instruction in order to access the general education curriculum. A very common example is in the circumstance

where a student has been diagnosed with ADHD from their primary physician. A disability which impacts learning, to be sure, but what kind of specialized instruction is necessary to allow the student to access school? Usually the (continued on pg. 3)

“THE REASON I JUMP” SPEAKS FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT

If you have ever had a hard time explaining to friends or colleagues the manifestations of the condition of ASD, or Autism Spectrum Disorder, you need to

watch this Sundance Film Festival Award winning film, currently on Netflix. It is based on the book of the same title written by a nonspeaking 13-year-

old boy with ASD and captures the frustration of living without a voice. Please enjoy and share with others this truly moving film.

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: How do we determine when social work services should be included on the IEP?

A: All students can access social work services at their building on an as needed basis, and we have WRAP workers and district social workers who have always been able to serve students on IEPs. However, when the level of need for social worker intervention, counseling or monitoring rises to the level of educational impact in terms of a student being able to be successful in the general education environment, the team must decide this and add the minutes to the IEP. If there are social work minutes listed on the students IEP, that should be carried out by one of our ECKCE social workers as those minutes are usually not able to be served by building social workers.

Q: We have a student with multiple disabilities who has a health care plan which addresses what to do in case of an emergency. Who is responsible for reviewing this for her safety?

A: Great question, and one that caught us by surprise in this situation. Because the majority of students on health care plans are NOT in special education, the review of those plans ultimately is done at the building level by the health care professionals who administer them. However, the beginning of the school year is full of responsibilities for everyone, and because the likelihood of each of those plans being reviewed by the health care professional prior to the year starting is not high, each case manager should check their caseload for kids on HCPs so that we don't miss informing all of the folks who may have contact with that student about things that may be critical in their classroom. When there are parts of the HCP that require training of new staff to keep that student safe, we need to ensure that training is requested and provided immediately.

What we discovered in the situation that you reference is that there is no consistent plan in place to review HCPs prior to the school year actually starting so that we don't miss informing all members of that student's team so that the student's safety is never in question. To that end, we have communicated with the superintendents to come up with an annual response plan to ensure that we have a consistent address of reviewing these plans moving forward. For all casemanagers at this time, please review your caseload and check to make certain there aren't any HCPs that have not been reviewed with all staff who interacts with that student during the school day to ensure their safety.

WHEN 504 IS NOT ENOUGH (CONT. FROM PG. 1)

recommendations include medication and accommodations for learning, such as a quiet environment or preferential seating, but those are not special education. And while most teachers will accommodate those without having a 504 plan in place, it is

always recommended that the needs be documented on a 504 plan so that when questions arise, the school has a defensible document in place to show that it is doing what the student needs to succeed. There are many other examples of times when

accommodations alone are enough to support a student's disability, and we have a responsibility to the student to make sure we are not using special education too quickly, as that can be harmful to the student, both in terms of fostering independence and creating need.

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!!!

New Webkidss Design Includes Several Updates

As you have all by now noticed, the Webkidss changes in the new look are more than just cosmetic in some cases. For example, the most commonly used forms in Webkidss have been renamed to include an asterisk at the beginning of their name and will now

appear at the top of the list to make them easier to find. Because the changes are so plentiful an email detailing the bulk of the changes will go out to you along with this newsletter. While we know that changes to any system that you have become used to are sometimes hard to

get used to, the changes were long overdue and in the long run will provide us with the continuity that we need in an electronic IEP system, Thank you for your patience as we enter this new era with Webkidss for the end goal of planning better for our students.

TRANSITION GUIDANCE FOR IEP PLANNING NOW HERE

For all secondary staff working with students who turn 14 or older during this IEP cycle, Sheila VanderTuig has developed a template which will help you fill

out the redesigned transition pages in Webkidss. The information is largely the same, but the places to plug it into the IEP has changed some,

so look for the document in your email. Sheila will be coming around to provide staff development on how to use it for those of you who need it.



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

We're on the Web!

Eckce.com

New Employee Assistance Program in Effect

Welcome to the 2022-23 School Year!!!

With the start of the new school year, often we make some changes that affect all of our employees, hopefully in a good way. This year we adopted a new employee assistance program through Guardian, which offers all manner of assistance, from

financial planning to mental health support and everything in between. To access the program, simply go to their website at worklife.uprisehealth.com. When prompted for your user access code, use the word worklife. That will get you into the website so you can check out the myriad things they have to offer. I will attach the flyer from

Guardian on the new EAP to this email that the newsletter is attached to so that you can access that as well.

Remember that the EAP has a toll-free confidential hotline that you can always use to talk with someone if you are experiencing difficulty in any of the areas they cover. Hope you take advantage of this great benefit!

PARAPROFESSIONAL NEWS AND NOTES

Just a few notes for the beginning of the year. Remember to check your timecards in Meta for accuracy, as that is the only way you can get paid what you have worked. If there are discrepancies, please contact Shelly McCart and she will help you fix them. 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!