

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF PUPIL SERVICES ADMINISTRATORS

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

May 6, 2016

The following is a summary of the various activities of the OAPSA Executive Director since our February conference. Further detail is available upon request.

On February 19, 2016, I attended the Committee of Practitioners (CoP) meeting in Columbus. Dr. Karen Hall also attended that meeting and I believe will provide more details in her report. The 391 pages of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are really just the changes made to NCLB. You will need to apply those changes to the whole existing law. Signed by President Obama on Dec 10, 2015, it won't take effect until the 2017-18 school year. However, Ohio's waiver ends in Aug of 2016. Much of the activity of the CoP over the next nine months will focus on the development of regulations for ESSA and on the implications of its implementation.

On March 1, 2016, I attended the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) meeting in Columbus. Stakeholder involvement in the SSIP process will continue. The bulk of the meeting was on the SSIP Phase 2 report plan which had to be submitted by April 1st. This report represents the culmination of the first two years of Ohio's SSIP process which will now roll out to school districts in Ohio over the next three years beginning with pilot participation of selected SSTs and school districts. One of the main features of this new phase is LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling). It is based on brain research and the appropriate sequences in which to teach reading skills. LETRS training is powerful and effective. It does not replace the curriculum used in a district but rather provides guidance, professional development and other resources for the district to use in order to ensure fidelity in teaching language and reading skills.

On March 22, 2016, I attended both the Executive Board and the Governing Board meetings of the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) in Columbus. Unfortunately, the long-standing annual grant from the Office for Exceptional Children (OEC) is still held up somewhere in ODE and the status of that grant is unclear. Various steps have been taken to reduce costs at the Coalition because of the significant drop in funding. These steps include reducing rented space, limiting use of supplies, cutting telephone expenses, reducing mailing costs (e.g., using email to a greater extent), and cutting staff (two employees have left and their duties were reassigned rather than hiring replacement staff). Because some of the activities have been reduced based on the lack of grant funding, some staff time has been reduced also. They are working to "rebalance" staff assignments and responsibilities. Margaret has been very involved in a variety of activities. She is concerned about the new Medicaid requirements to have a prescription in order for related services to be Medicaid reimbursed. There are numerous concerns that cause complications and questions. For example, it is the IEP team that makes a determination based on the ETR whether children may need SLP, PT, or OT services. If the rules change, a Medicaid approved physician or PA or nurse practitioner would need to issue a prescription for those services. It is anticipated that this will cause enormous problems for school districts. School districts are required to provide these services regardless of whether Medicaid reimburses the district and the new mandate has the potential to cause potential confusion and disruptions.

On April 20th, I participated by telephone in a meeting of a workgroup that had been set up by Ann Brennan, OSPA Executive Director, to address the shortage of school psychologists in Ohio. (Actually, there are shortages in other related services areas which are also being addressed separately.) A survey of these shortages and a preliminary report was shared with the workgroup members. It is anticipated that the final report will be released in mid-June. Several members of this workgroup represent some of the nine university school psychology programs in Ohio. There was extensive discussion about the school psych intern situation. For

years, there has been an Ohio budget line item that funds 100 internships. The number of internships and the amount per internship has not changed in many years which has caused the program not to keep pace with inflation. Because of this cap on internships, the number of interns available has not been sufficient to respond to the high number of retirements in the last few years and also to situations in which districts have been required to hire more school psychologists for compliance reasons.

Ashland University graduate credit was made available for OAPSA members this year. This involves filling out a several-page proposal to be submitted to Ashland University, tracking participation during the year and then evaluating the “reflection papers” submitted by the participants. Last year, 13 OAPSA members signed up for graduate credit but this year, only four members registered. We will be discussing the continuing viability of this program.

Over the past three months I have remained in touch with ODE/OEC, OSPA, OSBA, OCECD, CoP and other groups and representatives. There are several key current issues and areas of concern and OAPSA maintains a level of participation in each.

It is important to remember that OAPSA’s Executive Board is extremely active and engaged working on behalf of all OAPSA members. There are literally hundreds of emails that go back and forth among the Executive Board and also emails are sent to others such as OEC leadership and consultants. It is my responsibility to be able to stay on top of these developments and to be a resource to the Executive Board either in terms of seeking out and providing needed information or in terms of fulfilling various assignments as directed.

Submitted by Dr. John Opperman
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