Meeting of informal OT workgroup on 11/6/15 at OSBA

Attending: Jon Richards (OSSA), Mark \_\_\_\_ (OESA), Margaret Burley, Craig Burford (OESCA), Brenda George (OOTA) and me.

This summary should be accompanied by a document prepared by Brenda George, “Supportive Information needed for school administrators”.

The secondary principals association has a membership of approximately 2,000 and the elementary principals association about 1,700. Brenda provided information about the Ohio OT Association which includes all types of settings for OTs, not just school-based services. Brenda’s role with the association involves her providing a number of training opportunities around the state.

OTs based in schools have been saying to her that it would be beneficial to have school administrators involved in discussion, dialogue, etc. There have been huge changes in the field and with education in general and it is difficult for some people to keep up with these changes. For example, workload vs. caseload, consultation services, embedded services, etc. Principals often do not know what the implications of these issues are…and there is a question about how much they should be expected to know, especially in view of the wide range of responsibilities have within the school setting. The role of the special ed / student services administrator is important within this process.

It was noted that OTs are involved in a much wider range of service delivery than PTs. OTs are involved with students with ADD/ADHD, autism (even high functioning autism), and other areas. OT services are not as well understood as speech/language services, especially when OT services are embedded within the regular ed classroom compared to the emphasis on pull-out in the past.

Jon said that any related concerns among the secondary administrators vary greatly, especially based on the size of the district. Mark said that most of the elementary administrators would probably say they are not fully up to speed, but would question whether they need to be. They often are “Jacks of all trades, master of none”.

The elementary and secondary associations have about 15 conferences around the state each year and send out monthly newsletters so there are vehicles for getting the word out related to OT. However, both said that attendance rates at these conferences are relatively low because of limitations placed on out-of-district travel and superintendents usually wanting principals to remain in buildings during the school day. An interesting comment was that the “open rate” for emails sent by the elementary association was 30% but that is considerably higher than the typical email open rate of 19%. Sending out emails provides no assurance they will be opened and read.

There seems to be a lot of confusion regarding consultation services, embedded services, etc. and where they are listed in Section 7. There were concerns expressed about pre-determination and the implications of preparing draft goals, or even a draft IEP in advance of the IEP meeting. There is a lack of guidance from OEC on many of these issues and there have been long delays in getting a guidance document approved and distributed.

It appears to be feasible for OAPSA to work more closely with OESCA in that while the focus of OESCA seems to be largely on superintendents and curriculum, there is also a large factor with special ed administrators and ESCs hiring large number of OTs and other related services personnel.