Meeting of informal School Psych shortage workgroup on 11/5/15 in conjunction with the OSPA Fall Conference in Columbus.

In attendance were about a dozen people from various entities including university school psych preparation programs from several parts of the state, several ESC people, Mike Petrasek of OEC, Ann Brennan (E.D. of OSPA) and me. Sue Zake had been invited to the meeting but was unable to attend because of a conflict.

Background: During the summer, Donna Stelzer and I had several email exchanges regarding the shortage of school psychs that she was experiencing in her position. She had also heard that there was an estimate of 140 open positions in the state as of August. I contacted Ann Brennan and Mike Petrasek among others to see what they knew about this apparent shortage. Ann was aware of the shortage in general and was concerned both for the short term and the longer term. Mike did not have any details about open positions as of August. We kept in touch via email and also talked in person at the OEC Leadership Conference.

Ann also talked to other people in the state including university school psych preparation program contacts. She organized a meeting to be held in conjunction with the OSPA Fall Conference.

At the start of the meeting today, it was agreed that getting accurate data was crucial. Ann had sent out information prior to the meeting that pertained both to OSPA data collected several years ago projecting retirement dates by year. Another document was from the Speech/Language Therapy association that was an extensive and detailed study of the shortage in that area and proposals to address it both in the short term and the long term.

I shared information about the results of the OAPSA survey that was conducted several weeks ago. It was interesting to note the reasons why openings occurred in school districts. As expected, retirements were a big factor but there were several other factors that had an impact. Although the survey results were interesting, they only represented 48 responses so a much larger data base will need to be obtained.

There are 100 school psych intern placements funded each year in a separate line item in the budget. There is no assurance this funding will continue and the amount has not increased for many years. If more school psychs are needed and therefore must go through the intern year, additional funding from some source will need to be found. Some universities have reduced the size of their school psych preparation programs because of university budget limitations and one university has eliminated their school psych program. It was agreed that university leadership people need to be aware of the critical importance of school psych preparation and the negative impact that budget cuts can have. It was suggested that there be more consistent intern sites (e.g., through ESCs) and better communication between university preparation programs and the locations where interns are placed.

Ann will work with others to further develop and refine the survey to be sent out and will share that information with the group. It is anticipated that Muskingham Valley ESC will facilitate the survey once it is ready to go and will analyze and report out the data. It would be desirable to work with OEC on this but it is felt there are too many factors affecting OEC at this time and they would not be able to move forward in a timely way.