



Ohio Association of Pupil Services Administrators

Report of the Executive Director

September 18, 2020

During the time period of mid-March through the end of last school year, all of our lives suddenly turned topsy-turvy in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. A national and a state emergency was declared and a stay at home order was issued in most states including Ohio. Health and safety suddenly became the overriding priority and all of our OAPSA members quickly realized that IDEA and compliance rules were never written for a pandemic situation in which all students needed to receive education in their homes. Even the most experienced special education administrators had never been in a situation like this before. We quickly realized we needed to work together to figure out solutions to problems we never expected to face and we realized we were all in this situation together. Zoom meetings and Zoom webinars popped up unexpectedly on a daily basis while almost every meeting I was scheduled to attend got cancelled. As we moved into summer of 2020 our OAPSA Executive Board was challenged by Corona Virus as we attempted to make plans for the new school year without knowing just what the future would be. Just as we encourage our students to see challenges as opportunities, it was our turn to model that spirit and find new ways to keep our members informed and connected with each other. Fostering connections among colleagues has been one of the hallmarks of OAPSA conferences for over 50 years. However, we decided to move to a virtual conference for our Fall 2020 conference because we felt it necessary for important events to continue to happen during this COVID 19 Pandemic without jeopardizing public health and safety. We also made arrangements for our additional conferences this school year to move to a virtual conference if we couldn't hold it safely on site. We have gone through a lot together this spring, summer and now as we approach the beginning of fall, we are still experiencing the pandemic along with social unrest and protests. We have been forced to adapt to new rules, a new normal, and constant change. Somedays the roller coaster of emotions is enormous with the

changes which happen daily. We need to acknowledge that there will still be emotional ups and downs and changes as we move forward.

However, despite all those challenges, OAPSA made some notable accomplishments during the 2019 -2020 school year.

- Developed OAPSA Twitter Account (335 followers)
- Developed OAPSA Linked In (107 followers)
- Utilized our new online registration process for membership
- OAPSA became the newest CASE Chapter receiving our Charter in October 2019 at the Board of Directors Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky
- Reached our highest number of members ever --over 500 members
- Started the OAPSA Ambassadors Program in some regions of Ohio
- Started first formal mentoring group as a pilot project in central Ohio
- Developed a document with Paul Kidd's help, called OAPSA Presidents Through the Years to Post on our OAPSA Website

The following is a brief summary of the various activities of the OAPSA Executive Director from February 28 through September 18, 2020. Further details are available upon request.

Activities included:

- Prepared and sent a Resolution in Honor of Luann Purcell, Former Executive Director of CASE
- Stayed in close connection with OEC office to discuss various members' concerns and confusions
- Encouraged OAPSA members to participate in a series of CASE webinars in the spring at the start of our "stay at home order" and encouraged members to focus on the 4 priorities that CASE was providing:
 1. Focus on the safety, health, and welfare of students and staff members in your community.
 2. Provide FAPE — Deliver services to as many students as you reasonably can in the best way you know how.
 3. Document your efforts; make sure documentation is focused, consistent, detailed and demonstrates a good faith effort to provide good services.
 4. Compliance during the pandemic — IDEA wasn't built for this.

- Discussed with Perry Zirkel about the mixed messages that we seemed to be getting from ODE, OCE and OSEP which resulted in Perry creating a document titled COVID 19 and K-12 students with Disabilities: Initial Guidance and which he later released for all Special Education administrators across our country. He advised special education directors to do the following during this pandemic: “apply common-sense proactive measures... being creative, constructive and collaborative with due consultation with local legal counsel where needed...”
- Kept OAPSA members informed of initiatives that CASE was doing such as asking for infusion of emergency funds for IDEA in a stimulus bill
- Signed a letter on behalf of OAPSA which was drafted by CASE and NASDE to send to OSEP and OSERS and requesting flexibilities with IDEA due to the pandemic
- Sent a message to OAPSA members on April 3 explaining that our May 1, 2020 conference was cancelled due to Corona Virus but that we would try to schedule a virtual conference with OEC if there was new information to share
- Sent a total of 19 email messages on April 21 to Ohio’s Congressional Staffers requesting that they attend the Briefing by CASE on April 22
- Attended CASE Briefing virtually
- Consulted with other agencies including OSPA, OESCA, OASPA, NAPSA, CASE and ASAE on issues connected to the pandemic during spring months
- Helped to organize OAPSA’s virtual Zoom conference on May 21 with JoHannah Ward and Joe Petrarca providing us information in a conversation format. We had over 300 participants and we thank SST 8 for providing the Zoom Webinar Platform and helping us with security for all of us for that event.
- Graded papers and issued final grades for those participating in Ashland Credit option during 19-20 year
- Posted the following on OAPSA’s LinkedIn Account
 - February 2 day conference photos (Feb)
 - Best Wishes to Dr. Luann Purcell on her retirement & Meet CASE’s New Ex Dir (March)
 - Thanks to OEC for answering our questions so quickly (March)
 - Zoom Photo of our Mentoring Group (March)

- CASE's 4 priorities' for Sp Ed (April)
- Announced Angela MacWhinney is the recipient of the Dr. John Opperman Outstanding Contribution Award (April)
- CASE's Temporary and targeted Flexibilities for IDEA connected to timelines, procedures and fiscal management (May)
- Thank You to Paul Kidd for serving on OAPSA Board for 5 years (May)
- Happy Teacher Appreciation Week – Teachers have always been our heroes! (May 2020)
- Recognizing our 2020 Retirees (July)
- Support Narrow, Targeted and Temporary Flexibilities in IDEA (May 2020)
- Thank you to JoHannah Ward and Joe Petrarca to having conversation with OAPSA, (May 2020)
- CEC's Key Guidelines as Schools Reopen (May 2020)
- Join us for the Legislative Summit in July (June 2020)
- OAPSA Ex Board met virtually to make plans for 2020-2021 school year (June 2020)
- Thank You to all OAPSA Ambassadors for 19-20 school year (July 2020)
- 1400 Special Educators to Gather Virtually for Special Education Summit in July (July 2020)
- Shortages of Sp Ed Teachers (July 2020)
- SWD particularly susceptible to experiencing trauma that negatively impacts learning – especially now – need improved access to mental health (July 2020)
- More money needed for IDEA at this critical time (July 2020)
- Get to know our OAPSA Exec Board for 2020-2021 (August 2020)
- Time to renew or join OAPSA for 2020-2021 School Year (August 2020)
- Join OAPSA Book Club

- Participated in Special Education Legislative Summit as one of the three Ohio state leaders with a group of 45 team members from Ohio (the largest group yet) with 24 of those members being OAPSA members
- Recruited 3 new members for our OAPSA Ambassador Program
- Gathered some new testimonials from OAPSA members to use for marketing purposes
- Prepared PowerPoint Presentation about OAPSA
- Updated our flyer about Benefits of Being an OAPSA Member
- Arranged for Gwenn Spence to take over administration of our OAPSA web site
- Prepared proposals for Ashland Credit (1 credit and 2 credit options) for attending OAPSA Conferences for 20-21 School Year
- Sent email to all SST Directors and some SST staff with OAPSA flyers and OAPSA PowerPoint Presentation and asked them to share with Sp Ed Directors and Special Ed Supervisors in their region
- Emailed each new OAPSA member as soon as they joined to help them feel welcome and explaining steps to get engaged with OAPSA activities
- Emailed members who renewed by September 1 thanking them for renewing their membership and supporting OAPSA
- Confirmed with OEC that the steering committee for Ohio's Plan to Improve Learning Experiences and Outcomes for Students with Disabilities is done with their work and next steps include a final meeting with Superintendent Paolo to review the content and then it goes to Communications Department to turn it into a slick document. They are in process of putting together an implementation team. I thank Donna McCance for representing OAPSA on that steering committee.
- Sent email message to each SST staff member in all 16 SST's encouraging them to join OAPSA
- Had conversations with Lands' End about updating our OAPSA Lands' End Store

I attended the Following Professional Development Trainings

- Participated in Related Service Personnel Network Community of Practice on March 20

- Participated in CASE Conferences March 13, March 20, March 27, April 3, April 17, April 22, April 24
- Participated in multiple free webinars by attorneys related to COVID 19 (March – September)
- Participated in Vendor Training for OCALICONLINE (August 25, 2020) but then later, they decided to not have vendors

In addition, I attended and participated in the following meetings:

- Met with OAPSA Executive Board remotely several times as needed during pandemic and also in summer for lengthier meeting to plan 2020-2021 year
- Met with Joe Petrarca and staff from OCALI to discuss problems with Related Service Staff Videos on ODE's website
- Met virtually with Administrative Staff from Delaware City Schools to officially award OAPSA Member, Angela MacWhinney, the 2020 Dr. John Opperman Outstanding Contribution Award
- Attended and participated in 1 meeting of State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children (SAPEC) (May 7 Virtually)
- Attended and participated in 1 meeting (virtually) with Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities Governing Board. (May 19)
- Participated in 2 meetings of the National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (March 5, 2020 and May 14, 2020).
- Participated in a meeting with Lisa Hickman and Marbella Caceres from the Ohio Coalition and Gwenn Spence and Valerie Riedthaler from OAPSA
- Participated in Cupp and Patterson's Workgroup on Improving Educational Opportunities to Advance Equity in April, May, June and July. (Note: March session was cancelled due to Pandemic) Focus of this group is on solving the digital divide, providing full access to curriculum regardless of what district a student attends and solving the shortage of teachers and related service staff.
- Participated in monthly CASE President and Executive Director Meetings March – August.

I made the following presentations:

- Presented to ODE's Virtual State Support Team August Institute on OAPSA Updates and Benefits of Being an OAPSA Member (August 2020)

Continuous: I have also maintained day-to-day email and/or phone contact with the OAPSA Executive Board members, providing input or taking on and completing assignments as directed, and responding to members and other's contacts.

While none of us are certain what changes we will be faced with during this current school year, be assured that OAPSA will continue to connect and inform you as we all grow and change. Thank you for your continued membership and support of OAPSA.

Please continue to take care of yourself and each other.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna Stelzer, OAPSA Executive Director