

March 2008

1. Ross to pilot new SSEM/EMIS implementation plan: SWOCA has chosen Ross Local Schools to pilot this program due to our district-wide use of SSEM. This upgrade to SSEM will include finalization, data flow to EMIS form, error verification and correction, and data import to EMIS. SWOCA will set up training sessions for each building that will guide everyone through the new steps and program operations. We will have more information on this upgrading process in the near future. In the meantime, be sure to use the EMIS form that is part of the SSEM program along with the district EMIS form. One of the major items we will have to be trained in is the appropriate way to enter information into the IEP before finalizing the IEP. Information that entered incorrectly will not register with EMIS. We do not want to finalize any IEPs until they have been double checked for accuracy. Some examples of how to avoid errors are listed below.
2. IEP forms, tips and procedures that will need to be followed with 100% accuracy with the new revisions to SSEM:
 1. Be sure to put only one goal per page.
 2. Under “Student Progress” on goal’s page, make sure the items listed are all MEASURABLE. Progress reports are not a measuring procedure.
 3. Under Step 5 “Identify services” – “Frequency”, you must list the frequency that the services will be provided. Listing as needed is not appropriate (e.g. 40 minutes daily, 120 monthly).
 4. Under “Identify services” – If you are using a separate page to list the accommodations/modifications/supplementary aids, you cannot just list the separate page location in the IEP. You must list each item under this section.
 5. Under Step 5 “Identify services” – Can only list one person who will be providing the service from the drop down menu. Do not type in the service person or service as EMIS will not pick up any typed service providers or services, and the information will be left off of the EMIS data collection. Also, parents and students are not service providers and should not be listed as they are not part of the drop down menu. There are three boxes for listing individual service providers i.e. Specially Designed Instruction, Work Study Coordinator, SLP, OT, PT..... if you need more than three individual service providers you will need to use another page.
 6. Signature Page – Upper left hand corner is where you type in the LRE. Remember it does not appear on the printed copy of the IEP and LRE should not be listed anywhere else on the IEP.
 7. Signature Page – “Summary of special education services.” Do not list LRE or disability of student. Simply state the services that the student is to receive.
3. Proper protocol for sequencing of pages in the IEP is: Cover Page, Transition Page, Goals/Services Page, Special Factors Page Statewide, District-Wide Testing, and Signature Page. This is a point of emphasis by the state this year.

4. Reevaluations; Determining If Special Education Services Should Continue or Not: Procedures for determining if continued special education services are still needed and what those services should be for a student at the end of a three-year eligibility period is broken down into three different options:
 1. No reevaluation is needed: If the IEP team determines that the student still needs specialized instruction and is eligible for special education services then no reeval is needed. The team, including the school psychologist, must place a document in the student's due process file stating that no reeval is needed at this time and the student is eligible for continued special education services. This option cannot be used unless the team has current student work samples, progress-monitoring information and/or peer comparisons available from the student's daily schoolwork as listed in the student's IEP. If you think about it, having this type of information at hand to make a decision regarding services for a student is simply just good instructional practices for all students, that is, instruction and performance is monitored and documented on a weekly basis. Working closely with all of the student's teachers to make sure this information will be available upon request can save a lot of hard and tedious work when it is time to make a determination for continued services or not. One may ask the question, "What if we need some additional information to make such a determination?" The answer, unless the new information is for areas not of past concern, would be, "We shouldn't need any additional information other than what the IEP team has been monitoring and measuring from the student's IEP." There are no designed forms to use when a "no reeval" decision is made. The team must simply document no reeval is necessary and what information was used to make the determinations. DO NOT use the Signature page of the ETR to document this decision. Using the Signature Page of the ETR indicates that a reeval was conducted.
 2. Records Review: The student's records are reviewed to determine what the information is telling the IEP team, and if there is a need for any additional information. As mentioned above, if a new area of concern has developed it may be necessary to assess the student in these new areas before making a team determination. Only the new areas will need to be assessed and then compared with the existing information from the records review. The team will determine who should do the assessments. In this case, the school psychologist and case manager will secure parent permission to evaluate, send out Prior Written Notice, and set up due process proceedings. Using this practice constitutes an official reeval and all timelines are enforced.
 3. A Full Reeval Is Needed: The IEP team determines that a full reeval is needed because the student is not making adequate progress with the current goals and objectives, and/or the team believes that the student's

primary disability has not been identified, or that the student may no longer need special education services. All that is needed to start the full reeval process is the parent permission signed by the parent. Again, this would be a team decision.

5. Reevals Take Priority: Our goal is to have all reevals in compliance by the end of the current school year. Both case managers and school psychologist are to work together in making sure that no student has missed his/her three-year reeval date. We have created a monitoring system in our office to help with this important task. The case manager is the primary person to monitor the reeval date. Make sure that the reeval date is given to the school psychologist at least 60 days prior to the reeval expiration date that is listed on the student's IEP.

6. Budget for 2008-2009: As you have been made aware, funds are being cut next year for special education. We have been fortunate that we have had additional money over the past four years. However, the extra money is no longer a luxury we will have. Additionally, there have been increases in funds being used for aides and special needs students with intense needs, all of which is beyond our control but a reality that we must deal with. New mandates have also been placed on us to provide services and accommodations for IEP students, and most of these mandates do not provide any additional funding. With all this unfortunate news we have developed a new budgeting process. Please read carefully the steps below. Any budget requests that do not follow these new procedures will be discarded without notice and will not be considered for the annual budget.
 1. Budget requests with requisitions are to be submitted to the Special Services Office by **Friday, April 25th**.
 2. Each building will submit budget requests by building listing all items in priority of need. This will require that special education teachers and related service staff work together in developing budget requests. Members of this request team will be all special education staff who work full time in the building making the request.
 3. Each item requested should have a short statement justifying the request. This can be done by creating a master list of requests listing each item by priority and then writing the justification by the item name.
 4. Special education staff serving more than one building will be required to submit an individual budget request by the same deadline.
 5. Mandated services or materials to provide accommodations/modifications MUST be listed at the top of each building's priority list. These are items that must be purchased to meet the needs listed in the student's IEP.

Some things to remember when developing your budgets:

1. Basic and general classroom supplies are to be ordered through your building principal and you will need to follow the process your building principal has set up.

2. Each individual building will receive a priority item before a second requested item is received for any one building. The shared staff requests will also be in this rotation of granting requests.
 3. Sharing items with other staff members in your building will stretch your budget dollars.
 4. Items such as copier maintenance, IGA purchases, etc. must be built into your building budgets.
7. Focused Monitoring: ODE is using focused monitoring to ensure compliance with federal and state laws applicable to students with disabilities. In addition, ODE will use focused monitoring for improved performance for all students not just students with disabilities. Currently ODE is selecting districts throughout the state to analyze their instructional practices and research-based interventions that impact student learning. These selected districts will have to develop action plans for identified areas of improvement for instructional practices. Some interesting things regarding the state's efforts with focused monitoring is that most of the items that the state considers essential elements of focused monitoring is directly related to our efforts over the past two years with our revised CSP. In particular are universal screening/assessments, data analysis, focus on root causes for poor student performance, student outcomes as related to instruction for all students, accountability for progress which forces districts to define "specialized instruction and intervention for all students with emphasis on access to the general curriculum.
8. Ross Provides Services Not Programs: We are seeing an increase in IEP writing and team discussion using the term "program." Using the term program gives the impression that we have predetermined services for students and are looking for a place to put students to receive their IEP services. The best way to avoid this is to remember that, "Ross is a needs-based service provider" for students with special needs and the use of common terms helps us emphasize this practice.
9. Scribing: As most of you are aware, the use of a scribe for state testing has once again taken on a new definition. Each of you should have already received a forwarded email outlining the guidelines for use of scribe for state tests.
10. Anticipated Numbers: As we prepare for next year for providing services to our IEP students, we need to get an estimate of how many students will be receiving special education services by building and grade level. Each building needs to put together an anticipated caseload list for each teacher and have ready to submit to the Special Services Office by April 18th. Please work with your building principals and CSP case managers to provide a separate list of the possible number of students who may be referred for testing for special education services in the next 12 months.

11. Excused Members From IEP Meetings: Remember when there is going to be an excused team member from an IEP meeting that a Prior Written Notice must be sent to the parents, and the notice must be prior to the IEP meeting date. Informing parents just before or during an IEP meeting is not allowable. Four people that cannot be excused from an IEP meeting are: 1) District Rep, 2) General Education Teacher, 3) Special Education Teacher, and 4) Parent. When a team member is excused, be sure to fill out the proper paperwork and have the parent sign it at the IEP meeting.
12. Scheduling ETR and IEP Meetings: Be sure to schedule meetings far enough in advance that if the meeting needs to be rescheduled that it doesn't create a compliance timeline problem. If parent continues to cancel or reschedule meetings and compliance timelines are going to be violated, we are only required to have made a "good faith" effort to conduct the meeting within the appropriate timelines. After our "good faith" effort, we may conduct the ETR/IEP meeting without the parent. A "good faith" effort is two or more attempts to contact parents. Following these practices, we should never have an ETR/IEP meeting become a compliance issue. The state will not allow any excuses in this area for not being compliant.
13. Prior Written Notice: At our state conference, ODE shared that use of PRO-1 (Prior Written Notice) must be documented and placed in the student's due process file. ODE has identified the most frequent reasons complaints are filed for not following due process procedures of providing prior written notice:
 1. Any disagreement for services requested by parents.
 2. Conducting a reeval.
 3. Pursuing different areas of concern from the concerns the meeting was originally scheduled.
 4. Any possibility for change of placement.
 5. Refusing to evaluate.
14. ODE's Corrective Action Plan Team: As I have shared with you before, ODE is putting an emphasis on proper writing of IEPs. Over the past two years districts have been asked to bring the writing of IEPs into compliance. As part of the State Review process, ODE has created a Corrective Action Plan Team to work with districts that are not properly writing IEPs. To avoid this unpleasant possibility once again let me encourage each of you to get an **"IEP Buddy"** to work with in reviewing your IEPs before you have an IEP meeting and before you finalize your IEPs.
15. Present Levels of Performance (PLOP) Will Be Checked For Specific Descriptors: ODE provided this hint for writing compliant PLOPs: Be specific and descriptive. For example, a student reading at the 4th grade level, what does this mean to a non-trained 4th grade educator, or the parent? State why the student has been determined to be reading at a 4th grade level... because documented by..., assessed by..., frequency of using short cycle assessments..., as related to

the state content standards..., standardized tests..., criterion reference assessments..., etc...

16. New Transition Plan Writing: As you are aware, Ohio has adopted the age of 14 to begin writing transition plans for students. The new forms will be released (hopefully) next month. One of the big changes is that, once the student or his parents consider a career path, we are responsible to make sure that course work is appropriate for the career goal based on the grade level curriculum. Work-study services will remain the same by beginning at age 16.
17. A Good Change: As of July 1, 2008, Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) will only be required if the behavior in question is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability.
18. Alternate Assessments: Only students who have a severe cognitive disability, TBI, multiple handicaps or incapacitating disabilities will be considered appropriate for taking the Alternate Assessments. Any student with an SLD label will not have their Alternate Assessment graded. This was re-emphasized at last weeks state meeting for Parent Mentors.