

Questions and Answers/November 5, 2008, Webinar

1. Can you talk about the changes with special education directors and the public school retirement payments? We have received an email from another school saying that starting in 2009 special education directors will no longer pay into the teacher retirement and be paying in to social security?

Answer: On October 22, 2008, the State's Office of Administration (OA) sent out a memorandum to all school districts discussion social security withholding for school employees who have participated in Public School Retirement System. We have received questions about whether special education directors and speech implementers are required to have social security withheld. This is not a special education issue it is an issue being handled by the state social security administrator out of the Missouri Office of Administration. They are making all the decisions/determinations on this area. They have a Q&A on line and will take questions about specific positions. See web site: <http://oa.mo.gov/acct/faqs.htm>.

2. I still find making an eligibility determination for Other Health Impairment due to ADD/ADHD to be confusing. Any advice on how to know when the student truly needs special education for these conditions?

Answer: The key is looking at how the eligibility criteria on "limited alertness" addresses kids with ADD/ADHD. I don't have any words of wisdom; however, if you need help as you work through this on a student, feel free to phone one of our compliance supervisors or a special education compliance consultant at one of the Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs) for help.

3. For 4th Cycle MSIP, must we still use the old "weekly schedule" form in student special education files? It seems outdated and time consuming when current services summary pages on IEPs state exactly what service they receive.

Answer: These are not required but are a way to document implementation. The IEP provisions on services can't document implementation; it just tells us what services the child is supposed to receive. You can use other methods if you desire.

4. Are students who receive a certificate of attendance upon graduation instead of a diploma, considered "drop-outs" for data purposes?

Answer: Yes.

5. Can you mention a few districts considered to be good leaders or models on three-tiered models of intervention/RTI implementation?

Answer: Yes. Please go to our web site and click on the "RtI button." Three-tiered Models are under our Effective Practices Section webpage (and are also on the Division of School Improvement's web page, too). We have identified many schools that are successfully implementing three-tiered models of intervention.

6. Can you provide us with the district names that are being showcased?

Answer: In October of 2007, at the MSBA conference, we showcased the Eldon School District for its Professional Learning Communities implementation, the North Kansas City School District for its Response to Intervention implementation, and the Columbia Public

Schools for its School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports implementation. In April of 2008, at the MASA conference, we showcased the Ritenour School District for School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports work, and the Carthage School District for its implementation of Response to Intervention. We are going to showcase more schools/districts at the MNEA student (teacher training program) conference on February 28, at the Pathways conference in March 2009, and at the MASA conference in March 2009.

7. End of year testing: If a junior is not enrolled in algebra I, Biology, CAII, would they have to take the EOY exams before they graduate?

Answer: No.

8. Can special education teachers ever serve students who are not identified as disabled?

Answer: Yes. Funding issues are involved. If you have a more specific question, please contact our Compliance Section.

9. Could you be more specific about how the class within a class minutes are counted - are they considered special education or regular education minutes for purposes of placement/caseload?

Answer: CWC is regular education modified. So a child receiving this is placed in regular education.

10. How do we count a student on Child Count that our district is sending to another public school district and paying full tuition?

Answer: If a district is paying full tuition to another district, the attending district reports the student. The student's hours of attendance will be moved back to the district of residence for ADA purposes, but we do that here. The resident district won't report anything via MOSIS.

11. 102108: Which surveys does DESE recommend for students requiring transition? Is there a recommended number of surveys a student should complete?

Answer: We don't have a list of DESE recommended transition assessments. However, you can use Missouri Connections, which is available free of charge to all Missouri public school districts. And you can access the Transition Coalition web site where you can find links to information about transition assessment and links to transition assessments. See web sites listed at the end of this answer.

As for a recommended number of surveys, there is no such thing. What IEP teams have to do is make sure that they have done enough transition assessment to be able to help the child write meaningful postsecondary goals. Transition assessment is an ongoing process. It is similar to doing a review of existing data. If the team takes stock of the transition assessment that they've done (which could be anything from a battery of interest inventories and aptitude assessments to an interview with the child's parent) and decides that they have enough information to help the child write appropriate postsecondary goals, then they don't necessarily need to do more assessment. If the goals that they are writing are pretty broad the team should consider what information they need to narrow down that goal so that services can become more targeted towards helping the child reach the desired outcome.

Some districts take a conservative approach and conduct some kind of transition assessment prior to each annual IEP meeting.

Here's a link to the Transition Coalition home page. People who want to access it will have to create an account, which only takes two minutes and they send a user name and password within an hour: <http://transitioncoalition.org/transition/index.php>.

This will get you to Missouri Connections:

<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouriconnections.htm>.

12. How close is the state to moving away from using the discrepancy model and requiring RTI? Like Illinois??

Answer: We have no plans to require RtI at this time. We are not close to that point.

13. Previously the alternate caseload was 60; I understand that we are not required to report alternate case loads, but does DESE have a number that is considered too high? Do CWC minutes count toward a teacher's case load?

Answer: Bottom-line is that you have to implement the student's IEP. There are no longer caseload requirements (except for ECSE). There are guidelines in the state regulations; however again, the issue is implementation.

14. Using professional judgment, could a preschool child qualify as YCDD in the area of physical if they do not have any medical diagnosis that would qualify them as orthopedically impaired?

Answer: Yes.

15. If districts see declines in December 1 census counts due to RtI, better interventions, etc..., will this impact Part B funding for the district?

Answer: The calculation of Part B funding is not based solely on child count anymore, there are other factors including poverty issues. It is unlikely that a decrease of students identified, due to RtI, will impact your Part B funding significantly any time soon.

16. What is your recommendation for alt caseloads at this time at elementary and secondary level?

Answer: There is a chart in our state regulations that can help you figure this out (state plan). But really, the bottom-line is whatever caseload works to allow implementation.

17. What can be done to provide services for students needing high minutes, but not self-contained, when co-teaching model restricts the time available for special education teachers to be in the resource center?

Answer: The student's needs and IEP drives the minutes. If implementation of co-teaching is interfering with this, you probably need to rethink how co-teaching is being implemented in your district. You may want to consult with a consultant at the Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) near you.

18. In reference to the DESE email regarding child count information and MOSIS - please clarify how we handle our students that attend a state school (ex: MSSD). Also, what MOSIS code do we use when a student moves from our district to MSSD?

Answer: The state operated programs report the students who attend there; the home district does not report those students. If a student starts attending a SOP, the resident district should report the student as having transferred to the SOP.

19. Are API numbers actually required on the IEP?

Answer: No.

20. As we move to a response to intervention model and the incidence rate declines is the state beginning to look at "caseload" numbers in relationship to LEA staffing?

Answer: No. We have eliminated caseload requirements except for ECSE.

21. Do you foresee the new presidential administration having any immediate impact on special education law/policy?

Answer: No, I do not think we will see an immediate impact. However, we may see an impact later on in connection with the reauthorization of NCLB and IDEA.

22. Do I understand this correctly? If a student graduates with a certificate of attendance--counts as a drop-out. THEN, student who graduate by meeting IEP goals rather than graduation requirements...These are not counted as drop-outs? Is this thinking correct?

Answer: Correct. The issuance of a regular diploma is what affects the status; if the student meets his IEP goals and graduates under that method, he receives a regular diploma, and thus would not be reported as a drop-out.

23. Does the LEA need to evaluate a child attending the local head start if the child has leg braces...is ambulatory...walks on tiptoe. Parents took child to the doctor but did not follow up with PT. Is this part of Child Find?

Answer: It is not possible to answer this because there is not enough information about the student. The fact he is in leg braces does not tell me whether he may be in need of special education. The question is whether you suspect a disability under IDEA. I think you would want to get more information about the student's condition before you could decide whether to grant or deny a referral on this child.

24. Is the Department going to change to use the new graduation calculation formula now required on the federal level? (percent of students who graduate in 4 years)

Answer: I have checked with our Chief Accountability Officer, Division of School Improvement, and she indicated: For AYP purposes, we will be required to change the graduation rate calculation to comply with the new regulations. However, as it will be 2010-2011 before we have the four years of data necessary to use the new calculation, we will have to make an appeal to ED to use our existing graduation rate until then. As for our MSIP graduation rate, ideally, we would use the current calculation throughout Fifth cycle MSIP and consider changing to the NCLB rate in Sixth Cycle in order to be consistent. I emphasize that because our method may more accurately reflect district's graduation rates than the NCLB method.