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# STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Internal Communique • Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled

## Quality IEP Process Checklist: A Tool for Measuring Progress

By Bev Luetkemeyer and Donna Catt, Central Office

The Central Office Leadership Team (COLT) feels it is important to share information about the *Quality IEP Process Checklist*. It is important for Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) staff to understand why this tool was developed, how it has evolved and how the COLT is using data collected from completed checklists.

Those of you who worked for MSSD last year will remember when we began using the first version of the IEP Checklist. It was developed in an effort to measure progress towards meeting MSSD's Professional Learning Communities (PLC) goal number 1: All IEPs written by MSSD teachers will be 100% compliant. This goal was written through a collaborative process by members of the Area Leadership Teams (ALT) and building administrators. Last year's IEP Checklist focused on aspects of the IEP that aligned with the Big Rock professional development modules. The Big Rock professional development topics were chosen because they have a high impact on student performance. We live in a data driven world and we are not doing our jobs if we cannot tell if student performance is improving or not. This is where we are coming from – the first IEP checklist was born from a need to review high-impact areas of the IEP in an effort to help teachers write compliant IEPs and in the context that compliant IEPs are more likely to result in improved student performance.

Each year, through our PLC process, district goals are reexamined and revised if necessary. After the ALT and building administrators determined that we would keep MSSD PLC Goal 1, COLT realized that the original IEP checklist did not provide data that would drive professional development efforts. Teachers, building administrators and area directors were using the checklists to improve IEP compliance so well that each checklist indicated the corresponding IEP met all requirements. It is great to have documentation of the end result and COLT is pleased to see that teachers are helping each other through peer reviews and building administrators are helping teachers produce IEPs that meet checklist requirements, but the checklist was not informing professional development needs because it only captured the end result. MSSD also has a Corrective Action Plan as a result of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) Special Education Program Review which was completed last school year. As a result of the findings of noncompliance and the need to collect data to drive professional development, COLT revised the IEP Checklist to create the *Quality IEP Process Checklist*. Items that correspond with identified non-compliance found in the DESE Program Review were added because they became a priority this school year. The instructions were changed asking the building administrators to preserve their "first look" score. This is the score from the first time they review the IEP. If there is anything that needs to be corrected, the building administrator will work with the teacher to correct it. As with the original checklist, building administrators and teachers will work together until all items meet requirements. When building administrators preserve their first look scores then the area directors have data about which items on the checklist teachers are struggling. This helps area directors and COLT design professional development that targets areas of need based on the data collected from the checklist.



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The current process for collecting data from the *Quality IEP Process Checklist* entails completed checklists to be sent by building administrators to their area directors monthly, and then area directors tabulate the results and share this information with COLT. The tabulated information does not include any teachers' names, but will indicate school and area numbers. COLT analyzes the data for trends. For example, is a particular item on the checklist sent back for correction more times than others? Were particular items meeting requirements on the first review more often after staff participated in professional development on training days? Central Office gets a copy of the checklists in an electronic record; however, no one at Central Office has time to independently tabulate and analyze the data, and there are no plans to add this to the list of things to do in Central Office. Last year we measured progress on the goal by counting how many checklists were completed. Checklists continue to be collected mostly to check that they are being done in sufficient numbers to effect improved compliance.

In summary, the *IEP Quality Review Checklist* is used by building administrators to help teachers write IEPs that meet requirements. There are no plans for COLT to review teacher-level data from the *IEP Quality Review Checklist*. The expectation continues to be that building administrators will be the guiding force in IEP development for students in their schools. When building administrators use the *IEP Quality Review Checklist* and capture their first look score, it will help system-wide professional development efforts focus on relevant and timely issues based on data collection.

COLT thanks all the teachers who have worked on the peer review process and for your continued work to improve quality compliant IEPs.

## **Helen Davis School's Parent Group Works Together with Local Businesses to Acquire Caroline's Cart**

*By Jennifer Burns, Home School Coordinator*

Helen Davis School has organized over the last two years a parent empowerment group that meets up to five times each school year. The meetings are meant to be a stress-free time where parents can get valuable resources to help their families and make connections. The group provides guest speakers and parental support, based upon parent feedback. Guest speakers have included professionals discussing stress management techniques, experts on adaptive equipment and augmentative communication, and support agencies in the community. At other times, the group meets without speakers to discuss and share ideas with one another, as parents have the experience, knowledge and ideas to help one another through challenges or provide a helping hand. The group meetings are held in the evenings at school with childcare provided by Helen Davis staff volunteers. Refreshments and prizes are provided and sponsored by the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO).

At one of the final spring meetings in 2014, parents were discussing the challenges of grocery shopping with their children with physical and developmental disabilities. One of the parents shared information regarding Caroline's Cart, a special adaptive grocery cart that provides safety and ease to those shopping with individuals with physical challenges. The guest speaker at that meeting, Mr. Kenton Randolph with Randolph Seating & Mobility, listened to the plight of the parents and wanted to assist. Mr. Randolph contacted the local Hy-Vee store manager, and together they purchased Caroline's Cart. Within a few short weeks the cart was delivered to the store and the parents and students came out to take a test drive. The cart is a tremendous asset in the community and will benefit many individuals with disabilities. More information on Caroline's Cart is available at <http://www.carolinescart.com/>.

We are pleased to have this parent support system in place at Helen Davis School and have discovered that good things happen when we work together.



*Parents with their children and representatives from Randolph Seating & Mobility and Hy-Vee at the local Hy-Vee store for the delivery of Caroline's Cart.*

## Dignitaries Visit Ozark Horizon and Skyview Schools

*by Reta House, Building Administrator*

The Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) at Ozark Horizon and Skyview Schools invited Missouri State Senator Mike Cunningham, Missouri State Representative Shawn Rhoads, Mayor Jack Pahlmann (West Plains) and Mayor Delbert Crewse (Mountain Grove) to visit our schools on October 15, 2014. Other distinguished guests were Donna Catt, Director for Program Services for Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) and Darlene Baugher, Area II Director for MSSD.

These honored guests visited classrooms, observed students at work, observed how students used assistive technology such as iPads, augmentative communication devices and visual schedules, and observed students' work on display. The students presented our visitors with art projects they had made to say thank you for visiting our schools.

Senator Cunningham and Representative Rhoads expressed their admiration to the staff at both schools. They also expressed their appreciation for the invitation and they indicated they enjoyed the visit and would like to visit again.

This has turned into an annual event during the month of October in recognition of Disabilities Awareness Month. The day was enjoyed by all.



*Standing, from left: West Plains Mayor Jack Pahlman, Representative Shawn Rhoads and Senator Mike Cunningham tour Ozark Horizon School to meet the students and staff.*



*Senator Mike Cunningham and Mayor Delbert Crewse tour Skyview School to meet the students and staff.*

## MSSD Student Wins Poster Contest

Tanner Johnson, a student at Cedar Ridge School, recently participated in the annual Missouri Association of Pupil Transportation (MAPT) poster contest and was named the first place winner in the special education category.

Tanner's poster was submitted to the national contest held in October by the National Association for Pupil Transportation. Congratulations to Tanner on his achievement.



*Tanner Johnson's poster won first place in the special education category in the annual MAPT poster contest.*

## MSSD Schools Recognize Disabilities Awareness Month

October was Disabilities Awareness Month. Many of the Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) students and staff participated in activities or events throughout the month. This article demonstrates how some MSSD schools recognized Disabilities Awareness Month.

Ozark Horizon School's Intermediate Classroom participated by creating original artwork. The class created a poster of a flower garden including the statement "Every child is a beautiful flower and all together make this world a beautiful garden!" The class created a timeline using sensory materials to depict the events pertaining to Americans with disabilities throughout the course of history.

The Young Adult Classroom made a bulletin board, with the help from all the students, which positively depicted disabilities. The Young Adult students also made "All About Me" posters which depicted what each student is capable of doing and future goals.

Helen Davis School kicked off Disabilities Awareness Month with a guest speaker for their parent group. Jeff Dunn, Advocacy Specialist with the Division of Developmental Disabilities, shared his personal story on living his entire life with a physical disability and the need to focus on a person's abilities rather than disabilities. Helen Davis School staff asked parents to participate in recognizing their child's abilities by sharing an achievement, progress or task that makes them proud of their son or daughter. Parents shared one word, a sentence or a small paragraph about their child. Those were posted throughout the school to share with all staff, students and parents.

Additionally, Helen Davis School staff took the People First Language Pledge. The pledge is to make changes in how the individual thinks and talks, and to use People First Language, to put the person first, not the disability. Using People First Language is about having respect and following the Golden Rule. The pledge also instructs the individual not to use negative terms or labels that are used as insults or that may be harmful. The signed pledges were displayed in the hallways to spread the word and encourage others.

<b>People First Language</b>	
<b>Say:</b>	<b>Instead of:</b>
Person with a disability	Disabled, handicapped
Person without a disability	Normal person, healthy person
Cognitive disability	Mental retardation
Person with autism	Autistic
Person who uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair-bound
Person with a physical disability	Crippled, lame, invalid
Person with a mental health or a psychiatric disability	Mentally ill, insane
Person communicates with...	Non-verbal
Accessible Parking	Handicapped Parking