

Special Education Board Report 3-6-18  
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Another school year is rapidly coming to an end. We are very busy getting ready for our monitoring for compliance by OPI. They will be here next week for three days. We will also be having a refresher course for new teachers on March 14<sup>th</sup> that will help to support staff in writing solid IEP's. The monitoring process is changing quite a bit, moving away from a punitive model for mistakes, to a model of support to better meet the needs of students receiving special education services.

Several teachers and myself attended the MCEC conference in Missoula last week. The teachers who attended focused on seminars on writing transition plans. Transitions plans are part of the IEP for students who are age 14 and older that lays out a plan to help them successfully transition to life after high school. There have also been changes to our IEP form that includes a document called a prior written notice. All staff will be trained on how to use this document. This form is utilized to actively involve parents in the IEP and to also inform them of changes prior to their implementation.

We have hired an additional special education paraprofessional to support our speech pathologists. We have had an opening for a speech pathologist for over two years, due to a shortage of speech pathologists. The qualification for this job requires a Master's Degree along with 400 hours of supervised clinical practice. We currently have our speech pathologists on teacher contracts. Most school districts pay speech pathologists on a separate salary schedule at a higher rate. In order to be competitive and to retain high quality personnel this is a change that we need to consider. We have close to 250 students who are qualified for speech services who are serviced by three speech pathologists two of whom are part time, and six paraprofessionals.

We have contracted additional days with our consultant Diane Black who is a communication and behavior specialist. Staff this year have continued to receive training in the Picture Exchange Communication system (PECS). This is a communication system that teaches non-verbal students how to communicate through the use of pictures. She has also been busy helping us with students who have tough behaviors. Several students have participated in Functional Behavior Analysis (FBA), which is an in-depth look at student behavior and targets the function or motivation for the student to engage in negative behaviors. After this is generated she works with the special education teacher to develop a behavior intervention plan (BIP). Next year we are going to increase her contract days, since there is a huge demand for her services. We have seen a positive impact from her services and have had a dramatic drop in suspensions for special education students.