

# OEA Special Education Work Group

## New Business Item for the OEA Representative Assembly

**“Create an OEA Special Education Work Group to develop recommendations for professional development programs, sample contract language, OEA Resolutions, and OEA Legislative Policies that would address the needs of OEA members involved in or supporting education programs for students with special needs.”**

**One time action: 10 - 12 members, 3 - 6 meetings over 1 - 2 years**

### Who, What, When, Why, How:

OEA members in all settings, especially the roughly 15% that identify as working in special education, report they face critical challenges obtaining and providing additional supports and accommodations for students with special needs to be successful.

The overwhelming concern is for more professional development for teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff—especially in the areas of appropriate IEPs and classroom/behavior management.

Critically important are the issues of staffing, case load, and planning time. Members state that they are stretched too thinly to adequately meet the needs of their students. Local contract language needs to be reviewed. Sample contract language is needed.

Furthermore, the OEA Resolutions and Legislative Policies should be reviewed to assure that they adequately address the needs of members involved with special education.

An OEA Special Education Work Group would be able to quickly assess needs and develop recommendations from a statewide perspective. Perhaps some of the recommendations could result in options for the OEA Summer Academy. Other recommendations could be passed to the appropriate OEA committee for further action.

The OASNP (Ohio Association of Special Needs Professionals, formerly OADDP) has expanded its focus to advocate for the needs of PreK-12 Special Educators. For information on the Annual Spring Conference visit [OASNP.ohea.us](http://OASNP.ohea.us).

### Short list of issues reported by OEA members:

#### Professional Development:

Teachers; Paraprofessionals; Support Staff  
Art, Music, and Physical Education  
Administrators; Parents

#### Advocacy for Students:

Identify and Provide Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations; Unidentified Needs  
Assistive Technology  
Nonacademic Issues; Physical and Emotional  
Functional Daily Activities  
Graduate with Class or Continue Until 22  
Post-Secondary Planning

#### Appropriate IEPs:

Assessment, Planning and Preparation Time  
Alternative Assessments and State Tests  
Student Placement and Referrals  
Least Restrictive Considerations  
Expectations and Follow Through

#### Classroom and Behavior Management:

Student and Staff Safety

#### Staffing Decisions; Roles and Responsibilities:

One-On-One Personal Aides  
Paraprofessional Assistants  
Specialist Case Load

## Background

This new business item is the result of discussions among special educators in local school districts and county DDs that began in 2016 when the OADDP distributed a special education survey at the spring 2016 OEA RA.

Subsequently, NEOEA formed a Special Education Work Group in March 2017 to consider ways to address the concerns of these special educators and work within OEA to effect change. The group held three meetings and felt that it was time for OEA to take serious steps to address the needs of OEA members involved in or supporting education programs for students with special needs.

As county DD programs continued to be phased out and privatized, students with DD have joined their peers with special needs in the local school districts. Many PreK-12 special education members are experiencing the same challenges of obtaining adequate and appropriate supports that DD staff has faced for the past thirty-five years.

OADDP was the only OEA affiliate or associate organization involved in special education. Since 1983, OADDP was primarily concerned with OEA members in County Board of DD programs. Few PreK-12 special educators had been involved, mostly because they identify more strongly as PreK-12 special needs education than with the term developmental disabilities.

The OADDP leadership recognized the need to change the name, expand the scope, and focus on the needs of PreK-12 special educators. At its March 2018 statewide conference, members approved a name change to OASNP (Ohio Association of Special Needs Professionals) and a revised mission focused on supporting all special needs professionals.

OASNP appoints a member to each OEA Standing Committee and invites PreK-12 special educators to join the new group (add \$9 to your OEA dues) and work to develop an inclusive organization. Sign up at <http://oasnp.ohea.us/> and visit the Special Education Work Group page to review our work and sign up for the email list.