

OASNP Issues Report, July 2020

Introduction

The Ohio Association of Special Needs Professionals (OASNP) is a Department of OEA focused on the needs of OEA members serving children and adults with special needs. OASNP has prepared this report to inform the OEA Officers and Board of Directors of issues identified by OEA members associated with our group. The report identifies several OEA Strategic Priorities that may be most relevant to the concerns:

OEA Strategic Priority 1 – Build Locals’ capacity to be more relevant to members, and OEA Strategic Priority 3 – Build OEA as a member resource for professional issues.

The report also identifies what may be the appropriate OEA Standing Committees that may address the issues. The accompanying chart summarizes the findings.

In that news reports regarding Covid-19 and back to school planning for local districts are constantly evolving, this report does not attempt to identify those issues and concerns. Members are encouraged to work with their local association regarding those issues.

This report is the result of concerns expressed at our annual special education conferences, surveys of the attendees and other members, and surveys of delegates at OEA and District Representative Assemblies in Spring 2016, Fall 2016, and Spring 2017. Those concerns lead to the Fall 2017 OEA RA passing a NBI to *“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.”*

The OEA Special Education Workgroup is nearing the end of its work, having submitted reports on OEA Resolutions and Legislative Policy. Reports on Professional Development and Collective Bargaining are being finalized.

OASNP is ready to carry on the work of the OEA Special Education Workgroup and continue to identify issues and concerns of OEA members working with students and adults with special needs. Over the last four months the OASNP Officers, OASNP Executive Board, and OASNP members serving on OEA Standing Committees have reviewed our surveys, the work of the OEA Special Education Workgroup, OEA Resolutions, OEA Legislative Policies, and the ODE proposed rules in 3301-51 Education of Students with Special Needs. This is their report.

Findings

Concerns fell into four broad areas: Classroom/Worksite Issues, Workload/Caseload, Professional Development, and Student/Adult Behavior. The broad areas often overlap or are interrelated, so synergistic effects are common.

Classroom/Worksite Issues

Classroom Issues focuses on the increased demands due to overcrowded classrooms, lack of appropriate materials, and various medical concerns. These concerns align with OEA Strategic Priority 1 and Priority 3 and may be relevant to the work of OEA Standing Committees: Collective Bargaining & Member Advocacy; and Legislative.

Workload/Caseload

Workload/Caseload focuses on scheduling, release time, planning time, and meetings for paperwork related to IEPs, Individualized Service Plans (ISP), behavior plans, assessments, evaluations, testing, and transition services. These concerns align with OEA Strategic Priority 1 and may be relevant to the work of OEA Standing Committees: Collective Bargaining & Member Advocacy; Professional Efficacy, and Legislative.

Professional Development

Professional Development focuses on the need for improved professional development for all staff interacting with students and adults with special needs. Comprehensive professional development and support are needed for the paperwork issues listed above in Workload/Caseload. Foundational general information about people with special needs, special education regulations, accommodations/modifications, and behavioral interventions are needed for all staff, including, paraprofessionals, aides, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, and general education teachers. These concerns align with OEA Strategic Priority 3 and may be relevant to the work of OEA Standing Committees: Professional Efficacy, Collective Bargaining & Member Advocacy; and Legislative. OASNP stands ready to assist and help develop and deliver professional development opportunities.

Student/Adult Behavior

Student/Adult Behavior focuses on the safety of students/adults and staff, training and support for positive behavior intervention strategies, staffing levels, and family mental health support. These concerns align with OEA Strategic Priority 1 and may be relevant to the work of OEA Standing Committees: Collective Bargaining & Member Advocacy; Professional Efficacy, Human & Civil Rights, and Legislative.

Conclusion

The issues identified in this report are perennial concerns of OEA members working with students and adults with special needs. They were expressed by members working at county boards of DD as far back as 1983 when the forerunner of OASNP was formed. Now with county board programs being eliminated or downsized, students served by those programs have been transferred to their local school districts. However, the problems of appropriately serving those students have followed them to their local schools, but without the funding. Estimates are that some 15% of OEA members are directly involved in serving students with special needs. Virtually every staff member of every local district is indirectly affected. Additionally, significant numbers of OEA members continue to do the work of serving adults with special needs in county boards of developmental disabilities facilities and in the community.

One cannot ignore the fact that increased funding will be needed to properly solve these and many other problems in public education. The issues identified here can only help support the need for additional funding.

OASNP urges the OEA leadership to begin a long process of addressing the needs of this set of OEA members. Addressing these concerns will go a long way to help OEA meet its *Mission Statement – The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve* and the *Vision – The Ohio Education Association is the hallmark for excellence in education.*

Ohio Association of Special Needs Professionals

Concerns Identified by Members

OEA Strategic Priorities:

- **Priority 1: Build Locals’ capacity to be more relevant to members**
- **Priority 2: Leverage the image of education employees to build support for public education**
- **Priority 3: Build OEA as a member resource for professional issues**

Category	Identified Concerns	Possible OEA Committee Assignment
<p>Classroom/Worksite Issues</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OEA Priorities 1 and 3</p>	<p>Increased demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowded Classrooms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health and safety issues ○ Update language: general education, students with special needs • Medical Concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Referral and follow up ○ Availability of onsite nurse ○ Delegated nursing tasks, training, paperwork • Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum, Materials/Reading Materials, Technology, and Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Impossible expectations from administrators for students/adults with low incidence diagnoses ○ Appropriate placement of students with disabilities in inclusion classes ○ Functional and appropriate technology ○ Developmentally appropriate reading instruction for students with disabilities ○ Include daily living skills 	<p>Collective Bargaining Legislative Professional Efficacy</p>

<p>Workload/Caseload</p> <p>OEA Priority 1</p>	<p>Workload, Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload, Caseload <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Working with aging consumers and finding a place for them to fit in ○ Writing IEPs, ISPs, and behavior plans ○ Assessments, multi-factored evaluations, and diagnostic testing ○ Workload/Caseload calculator ○ Inclusion class sizes • Increased paperwork <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programs for documenting progress ○ Release for writing IEPs, ISPs, and behavior plans • Asked to take on additional responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transition services should start earlier and be coordinated by staff whose main responsibility is transition • Scheduling for Staff and Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Release/extra time for meetings and assessments ○ Limit Extra Duties ○ Planning for students to be able to participate in Inclusion classes • Time to provide intervention, complete paperwork <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Release time needed for Individualized Plan writing ○ All staff on team, SLP, OT, PT, etc. 	<p>Collective Bargaining Legislative</p>
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<p>Professional Development</p> <p>OEA Priority 3</p>	<p>Improved Professional Development for ALL staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PD specific to the profession, e.g., PT, functional skills, CEUs for licensure ○ More PD aimed at the arts ○ More technology and help with setting it up and programming for students and adults with special needs ○ Autism awareness and strategies ○ Understanding and working with students and adults with Dual Diagnosis ○ Special Ed law updates ○ Parent Participation ○ PD should be inclusive for all staff and differentiated to general education teachers, special education teachers, related services, paraprofessionals, aides, bus staff, cafeteria staff, and support staff and be advertised as such ○ Staff surveyed as to what is needed 	<p>Collective Bargaining Professional Efficacy</p>
	<p>Inclusion of students with special needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developmentally appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain broad continuum of services, as appropriate, with staff input ○ Sufficient staffing, i.e., Intervention Specialists or Paraprofessionals ○ More aides/assistants in academic classes when students with special needs are included, especially in Math and Science 	<p>Collective Bargaining Professional Efficacy Legislative</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Decision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Co-teaching training necessary ○ Support services for students needing additional help ○ Sufficient substitutes with appropriate training ○ Mandatory training on techniques used with students with special needs for general education staff because of unidentified students needing additional support 	
<p>Student/Consumer Behavior</p> <p>OEA Priorities 1 and 3</p>	<p>Behavioral Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing student/adult assaults, disruptive students/adults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safety for students/adults and staff ○ Understanding and programming for students/adults with mental health issues ○ Family mental health supports ○ Training and PD ○ Sufficient staff • Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff buy in ○ Staff training and follow-up support • Positive Supports vs Restraint <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Crisis Prevention training ○ Restraint vs support 	<p>Collective Bargaining Professional Efficacy Legislative Human and Civil Rights</p>