



Work Load Plan

For

Southwest Cook County Cooperative Association for

Special Education

Legal Mandate

In accordance with 23 Illinois Administrative Code § 226.735, the Southwest Cook County Cooperative Association for Special Education (“SWCCCASE”) is required to develop and implement a work load plan for its special educators. Such plan is to be based on an analysis of the activities for which the special educators are responsible. The purpose of this legal mandate is to ensure that the students with IEPs are provided with services necessary to afford them their right to the free, appropriate public education to which they are entitled.

Development History

On October 29, 2008, members of the SWCCCASE administrative team met with union officials to review and discuss the legal mandate for the development of a work load plan. (See Attachment 1) Included in this discussion were ways in which the various special education disciplines would be represented.

On December 18th, 2008, approximately twelve (12) employees were identified as having volunteered to be members of the Work Load Committee. The volunteers represented a significant cross section of the various program offerings at SWCCCASE.

On January 14, 2009, a Work Load Committee meeting was held. The SWCCCASE administration met with the Work Load Committee members to review the legal mandate and discuss activity analysis. (See Attachment 2) The members were asked to reflect upon and problem solve ways in which to gather data accurately with as little disruption to the programs as possible.

On March 10, 2009, the Work Load Committee reconvened to review the responses to the request for data according to the special education disciplines. Comparisons were made between the types and amounts of information obtained. Discussions were held with regard to interpreting the available data and bringing closure to the data collection process.

On or before April 30, 2009, summaries of the data collected by each special education discipline were submitted to the Assistant Director. (See Attachment 3) She identified both common threads of concern and challenges experienced by staff. She also identified issues that were unique to certain groups of special education disciplines. A document synthesizing the information was developed in draft form and presented to the Workload Committee on May 21, 2009.

On June 3, 2009, the Workload Committees' suggested revisions were incorporated into the final draft of the Work Load Plan.

On June 10, 2009, the Work Load Plan was submitted to the SWCCCASE Board of Directors. Implementation of the Plan, pursuant to 23 Illinois Administrative Code Section 226.735 (a), was scheduled to take effect for the 2009-2010 school year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following SWCCCASE staff members made significant contributions to the development of the Work Load Plan. Their efforts truly exemplify the educational mission and philosophy of the Southwest Cooperative.

Sharon Day
Chris DeLong
Colleen Geary
Lynn Knight-Cody
Shirley Lamping
Theresa Long
Kathy Matushek
Alison Mensing
Carol McCudden
Diane Perini
Jan Petru
Val Rosenberg
Beth Sullivan
Deb Tengerstrom
Sharon Thoma

Activity Analysis

I. Individualized Instruction

Individualized Instruction is the amount of instructional services needed to meet the unique needs of each student and/or the unique instructional delivery system in each program.

Staff identified that a number of factors contribute to challenges in this area. Due to the district student populations served throughout the Cooperative, as well as the number of educational locations involved, scheduling and communications were identified as the most critical factors for successful student programming. The adaptation of materials, preparation of individualized lessons/IEP goals and objectives, and equipment/curricular issues were also identified as activities that were central to implementation of the instruction outlined within the IEP. Without exception, staff shared that their dedication to instructional planning often took the form of expending additional time outside of the work day.

Regardless of the student population served, the amount and variety of tasks completed by staff to secure appropriate individualized instruction was extensive. A strong commitment toward providing instruction that is meaningful, relevant and compliant with the IEP was apparent.

II. Consultative Services

Consultative services may be indicated on a student's IEP and refer to the amount of minutes delineated for a special educator to consult with service providers to effectively deliver the student's IEP. Consultative services also refer to the amount of time needed to discuss a student's instructional program with staff members, administrators, parents, and private providers on behalf of the student. Additional collaboration may include but not be limited to, weekly team meetings, modeling and training with team members, and instructional service modifications and accommodations.

Staff indicated that both the time and scheduling factors have the greatest impact on their ability to effectively deliver the appropriate consultative services. Especially for those staff members who are delivering services within a general education environment, collaboration/consultation time is at a premium. The coordination of staff as well as parent schedules can be a major impediment to the full integration and follow through of IEP goals and objectives.

Because of the number of Cooperative locations within the eleven member districts, many service providers have the added challenge of traveling from site to site. This requirement takes an additional toll on available consultative time and spontaneous opportunities for staff interaction.

The staff feedback on this issue stressed the importance of the necessity for technology as a tool for communication. Through the use of tools such as email and the Easy IEP system, collaboration on student needs and progress can be achieved. However, it was clear that staff desire increased opportunities to consult and collaborate with other IEP team members in order to provide a more thorough understanding of the student.

III. Attendance at IEP Meetings and Other Staff Conferences

SWCCCASE staff members are required to participate in student IEP conferences including annual reviews, reevaluations, Domain meetings, Manifestation Determination Reviews, intake staffing and problem-solving meetings as may be required for student programming. Staff is expected to adequately prepare for such meetings, often entering information in to the Easy IEP system at least 48 hours in advance of the conference.

SWCCCASE staff is also required to attend both team and professional development meetings. Team meetings are necessary for specific department collaboration with the program supervisor. Professional development is a contractual obligation for full time staff. The combination of both student-centered and staff-centered meetings requires both time and flexible scheduling. Staff identified these components as challenges. Cancellations of meetings or impromptu meetings often compound those challenges.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, staff input indicated a high level of professionalism in IEP team participation and the necessity of preparation for each meeting. The challenges that were identified are clear evidence of the high professional standards maintained by SWCCCASE staff.

IV. Paperwork and Reporting

The analysis of this activity encompassed a variety of tasks. Staff members are expected to collaborate and compile the information required to complete each student's IEP, including any evaluations. Thorough completion of all paperwork/reporting regarding the development of the IEP and a student's progress toward achieving their goals and objectives are legally mandated requirements. Flexibility in this regard is not an option. Other tasks include, but are not limited to, lesson plan development, outside agency communication, data collection on behavioral techniques and student response, Easy IEP data entry and daily classroom-related paperwork.

SWCCCASE staff indicated that the time involved for paperwork and reporting was a universal challenge. Many disciplines shared that time outside of the work day were used for the completion of many paperwork tasks. Other identified challenges were more specific as to equipment, space and staff availability needed for the completion of the paperwork. A common thread amongst all disciplines was the acknowledgement that student needs in the classroom had priority over paperwork thus explaining why many staff utilized their personal time for the completion of required paperwork.

The SWCCCASE staff input regarding challenges involved for paperwork and reporting was the most universal, when compared across all special education disciplines and workload activities. Staff is actively aware of the importance of thorough record keeping and the need to expend the time necessary for an accurate account of what has been done toward student success.

Work Load Plan Commitments

1. All members of SWCCCASE, in cooperation with their member districts, are committed to ensuring that the students that they serve are afforded their right to a free, appropriate, public education.
2. The SWCCCASE Work Load Plan represents the best efforts of the administrative, teaching and related services teams toward appreciating and recognizing the commitments of time and energy made on behalf of those serving students with special needs.
3. The mandates prescribed by the Illinois State Board of Education relative to the delivery of instruction to students with special needs shall continue to be followed.
4. Workload plan concerns identified by staff or supervisors will continue to be addressed initially at the Program level by the staff member and his/her Program Supervisor. If the issues cannot be resolved at that level, consultation with SWCCCASE administration will be utilized.
5. The SWCCCASE Work Load Plan shall not be used to supersede or replace any of the terms or conditions as contained within the applicable Collective Bargaining Agreement.
6. The SWCCCASE Work Load Plan shall not be used as a vehicle for, or subject to, the grievance procedure as outlined in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.