

ODE/COSA Fall SPED Conference, 2017

Eugene, OR

# Supporting Students with Special Needs in the Online Environment

*I wish I knew then what I know now!*

## Introductions and Overview

- ▶ What are online schools?
  - ▶ What students are served?
  - ▶ Major Challenges
  - ▶ Guiding Best Practices
  - ▶ Q and A
- ▶ **Aaron Cooke**  
Director of Programs
  - ▶ **Jill Adams**  
Secondary Lead Teacher
  - ▶ **Erin Arnold**  
Lead Speech and Language Pathologist
  - ▶ **Kris Hirschmann**  
Director of Training and Curriculum
  - ▶ **Laura Terrazas**  
Dean of Student Services

# Who's in the room?

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## What are online schools?

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*An online learning program is an organized offering of courses delivered primarily over the Internet.*

iNACOL 2011

- 5 state require at least one online course for graduation
- 30 states plus Washington DC have fully online schools

## Who are the students?

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- 5 million K-12 students have taken at least one online class
- 2013-2014 school year – 300,000 k-12 students attended full time online schools D Samuelson 2015
- Generally reflect the populations of traditional brick and mortar schools
- Growth in some disability categories

## What I Thought

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## Many Moons Ago

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- All Learning Coaches would be happy, excited and engaged to teach
- All students would be happy, excited and engaged to learn
- Learning Coaches and students would know what to expect with independent study
- I instruct and support with learning
- Teachers would know how to support students in this environment

## Reality

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## Major Challenges

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- Not Everyone wanted to be in an online school
- Everyone Needs to be Onboarded
- Educating Parents while supporting students
- Just like brick and mortar
  - DIS providers
  - IEP meetings

## What I Thought

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## IEP Meetings

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- Would be easy to find and coordinate with providers
- All providers would come together as a team
- IEP meetings would be easy to schedule

Reality

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## Holding IEPs meetings & completing evaluations

- Pre-work and coordination of specialists is critical
- Has a high degree of family interaction
- Virtual and/or Face to Face
  - Platforms may vary
  - Visuals help

The screenshot displays a virtual meeting environment. The central focus is a presentation slide titled "Supporting Students with Special Needs in the Online gaps 12.28.16 - P. Hirschmann". The slide content is as follows:

Holding IEPs meetings & completing evaluations

- ▶ Just like Brick & Mortar
  - ▶ Must meet requirements
  - ▶ Has a high degree of family interaction
- ▶ Pre-work and coordination of specialists is critical
- ▶ Virtual and/or Face to Face
  - ▶ Platforms may vary
  - ▶ Visuals help

Surrounding the slide are various interface elements: a "PARTICIPANTS" list on the left, a "CHAT - Supervised" window on the right with a message history, and a "AUDIO & VIDEO" section at the bottom right showing a video feed for "Kris Hirschmann". The presentation software's ribbon (FILE, HOME, INSERT, DESIGN, TRANSITIONS, ANIMATIONS, SLIDE SHOW, REVIEW, VIEW) and a slide thumbnail pane are also visible.

## Assessments

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- LCs don't know unless you tell them!
- Communicating expectations
- Controlling the testing environment
- Trusting assessment results to guide annual IEPs

## Recruiting, Hiring, Training and Retaining Staff

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- It's not just in spring anymore!
- Hiring would look familiar
- Ongoing training is needed to a greater degree
- Teachers will only stay if they build strong relationships and can grow

## Contractors vs in house related services

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- Determining virtual or face to face
- Understanding of the virtual general education program
- When to use your in house staff
- Knowledge of and abiding by Federal and State mandates
  - Standards of Practice
  - Benefit vs. Need
  - Legally defensible assessment and evaluation reports

## Monitoring Progress

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- Is progress being monitored?
- Goals need to reflect the educational setting
- Change in environment vs learned behavior
- What can we observe?
- Behavior monitoring
- Parent reporting

## Educating Parents While Supporting Students

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- Time spent coaching parents to support student learning
- Coaching parents on effective positive behavioral supports
- Coaching parents on separating home from school
- Case manager as case worker

## Communications in the online world

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- Keep communications formal
- Emails are public domain
- There are good times to pick up the phone
- Social media
- Lack of communication breeds speculation

## Guiding Best Practices

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Single points of contact within the system

Staying calm benefits children

Remember many parents are here as the last attempt to help their students

Directors must have clear, deep, and current knowledge of special education law and its application in this environment

## Guiding Best Practices (cont.)

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Collegial relationships support the community

Be cognizant of your digital footprints

Be comfortable with risk-taking as this may be the first time it's happened online

Communication is the key to excellence

Mastery of the many forms of communication

## References/Resources

- Equity Matters, 2016, Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities <http://centeronlinelearning.org/wp-content/uploads/EquityMatters2016Final.pdf>
- Equity Matters, 2015, Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities <http://centeronlinelearning.org/publications/annual-publication-2015/>
- Invited In: Measuring UDL in Online Learning <http://centeronlinelearning.org/publications/invited-in-udl-2016/>
- Virtual Schools Are Booming. Who's Paying Attention? <http://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2015/09/virtual-schools-education-000227>

## Questions & Discussion

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