



New Special Education Director Call

Office of Enhancing Student Opportunities

December 9, 2021

Today's Agenda

- Welcome/Introductions
- Things I Wish I Had Thought to Ask As a New SPED Director

Land Acknowledgement

I'd like to acknowledge the many tribes and bands who call Oregon their ancestral territory and honor the ongoing relationship between the land, plants, animals and people indigenous to this place we now call <insert city/region>. We recognize the continued sovereignty of the nine federally recognized tribes who have ties to this place and thank them for continuing to teach us how we might all be here together.

Oregon Department of Education

Education Equity Stance

Education equity is the equitable implementation of policy, practices, procedures, and legislation that translates into resource allocation, education rigor, and opportunities for historically and currently marginalized youth, students, and families including civil rights protected classes. This means the restructuring and dismantling of systems and institutions that create the dichotomy of beneficiaries and the oppressed and marginalized.

OESO Support

- Brad Lenhardt
 - brad.lenhardt@state.or.us
- Your County Contact
- OESO Staff
-  Follow us on Twitter! @ORDeptEd





Things I Wish I Had Thought to Ask As a New SPED Director

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Disclaimer

- This is general guidance and NOT to be treated as specific legal advice. For legal advice, please speak to Rich, Joel, Graham, Robin, Elizabeth, Brian, Andrea, or whoever your school district's attorney happens to be.
- This was originally going to focus exclusively on “legal traps” that I wish I had known about at the time I became a SPED director. However, I quickly realized that the legal traps were generally a direct result of the topics I ultimately decided to include.

Administrator Competence/Interest

How much do district-level administrators know about special education? How much do they prioritize special education? What does the organization chart look like – do I ultimately have any authority over building administrators?

This is critical. Most non-special education administrators do not really understand special education, as it's highly specialized and doesn't really impact them other than staffing and discipline.

Now, ask the same questions with respect to building administrators. You will generally get the same answers. This is especially important with respect to discipline procedures.

Supervision/Professional Development

- Who supervises special education staff members?
- Who evaluates special education staff?
- Who provides staff development for special education staff?
- How much access to I have to special education staff for professional development?

Supervision/Professional Development (cont.)

- Do I have access to general education staff for professional development?
- How experienced/competent is existing staff?
- How are special education staff members treated in the district's collective bargaining agreement?
- Can I force general education teachers to participate in IEP meetings beyond the standard workday?
- Is your special education software program functional? Do your staff members know how to use it appropriately? Do you have adequate technological support? Very important with respect to compliance issues.

Budgeting

- How much control do I have over IDEA funds?
- How much access do I have to general funds?
- Do special education classroom needs get funded from building funds or district funds?

IEP Meetings

- Which administrators are attending IEP meetings? Am I expected to attend all of them?
- If I'm the district rep, do I have sufficient authority to commit resources? How far does this authority go?
- How do I ensure that I have sufficient authority to commit resources without potentially pre-determining placement, 1:1 assistants, etc.?

District Culture

- Is there a collective culture across the district or is each building different?
- Does the district believe in and practice PBIS?
- Does the district believe in and practice inclusion?
- Is there collaboration between general education and special education?
- Is parent input actively solicited?
- Is special education isolated or is it considered to be an essential part of general education?

Closing

- Ultimately you will be one another's best resource.
- Find a kind veteran director and contact them frequently.
- Reach out to your county contact with questions.
- If you have general legal questions, don't hesitate to contact me (although I generally re-route questions about specific situations to county contacts, since I don't want to become involved in matters that might ultimately be the subject of state complaints).
- **HANG IN THERE!** You've chosen to do the most difficult job in school administration. It feels extremely difficult because it is.