
The Bulletin

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New IEP forms coming soon to school system

In the past, families of special education students and students with disabilities had to complete a new Individualized Education Program (IEP) if they moved to a different county in Maryland.

That situation is changing now, as the Maryland State Department of Education is preparing for use of standardized forms statewide, and MCPS is responding by developing a new web-based program to make using IEPs easier.

MCPS will implement the state-mandated IEP in January 2007, using basic Adobe Acrobat software to start with—an interactive paper form that will allow users to type information on the computer and then print it out for signature.

But the school system also has been working to develop a new, web-based, integrated IEP program. The web-based IEP will be finalized and field tested between March 2007 and May 2007 and implemented systemwide in January 2008.

When it's completed, the web-based program will allow teachers to key in information on the computer, with all information saved on an Encore system in a central depository. "For our teachers, that will be a tremendous savings of time because they won't have to enter information into different databases after they've completed an IEP," explained Paul Bruening, instructional specialist with the Department of Special Education who has been working to get the new program up and running.

When it's in place, the new program will be able to hold data in addition to IEPs, such as Section 504 accommoda-

tions, ESOL and early interventions. That means MCPS can have a historical record of students that can be used when they start to receive special education or other services. The school system also will use the program to start tracking disproportionality—in particular, too many African American students showing up in special education with no other interventions done beforehand, Bruening said.

Special education staff members are receiving training this fall on the new state IEP. A training plan has been developed to implement both the paper-based and web-based IEP.

The first component of the training was completed during the week of Aug. 14-18. More than 470 "super users"—local school experts for this multiyear project—received a half-day training to support the project and to provide direct support on using the new IEP at their schools.

Training sessions will continue throughout the fall. All special education staff and related service providers who did not attend the August training are required to attend one of these sessions. Substitutes for classroom teachers will be provided. Registration for this training is on the Professional Development Online (PDO) system. (For assistance, call the Help Desk at 301-517-5800.)

To support the use of the new IEP system, the Office of Special Education and Student Services is providing one Dell laptop, one Panasonic LCD projector and supporting technical equipment to each school so the IEP team can see the new form being completed as decisions are made during IEP meetings. □