

## 2010 Schools Caucus Results

Thanks to all who emailed before hand and, all who attended our Schools caucus in March at OSLHA! We had a great turnout with great suggestions and discussion about three main areas of concern for school-based speech-language pathologists. It will come as no surprise to those in the schools that we focused most of the meeting on Medicaid, Shortages and the Caseload/Workload issues. Below is a summary of the topics and discussion that occurred:

Topic 1: Medicaid – When can SLPs bill for initial evaluation and further evaluation? Presently, you can bill an evaluation as initial or the yearly re-evaluation, but anything in-between is part of the plan of care and so cannot be billed. The other main question/concern among school SLPs is who is doing the billing? This is individual to the school district and who they contract to do this service.

**ACTION:** Participants would like OSLHA to assist in tracking, collating and analyzing the data regarding how much money SLPs in Ohio are bringing into their school districts by billing for Medicaid.

Topic 2: Shortage – The discussion of the continued shortage of SLPs in Ohio began with the good news.:

Thanks to the OMNIE initiative and the hard work of Lou Staffalino, Nada Allender and the many others on the committee we have seen an increase in enrollment to our graduate programs. Twenty-three students received \$12,000 sign on bonuses to work in the schools for a minimum of three years. Fifty-two received \$2000 for accepting positions in the schools.

The distance learning cohorts have grown every year – with 22 students in the 2007 cohort and 34 in 2010. This will give us a total of 154 completing their graduate programs and accepting school based positions between 2009 and 2012 if all complete their programs!

For more good news about the creative ways that the OMNIE initiative is helping Ohio to meet the growing demand for school based SLPs, please visit Omnie's website – [www.omnie.org](http://www.omnie.org)

The discussion and concerns from those present at the caucus were on the seemingly limited enrollment in graduate programs at the Universities. Some points of discussion included the points that faculty resources may be limited to educate larger and larger classes and budget cuts across the educational landscape have an effect on resources as well.

**ACTION:** Caucus members were urged to contact media outlets for Better Speech and Hearing Month to educate the public on the ways SLPs contribute to students' education  
Working with the Unions to advocate hiring part-time people. Cleveland was able to do this effectively. Consider a Sponsored Silence event at a local college, high school or even middle school in your area as a way of increasing public awareness of communication.

Topic 3: Caseload/Workload – though this item was discussed last and is appearing last in this column, it was by far the 'hottest' topic and the most important on 90% of school based SLPs lists of things that need to change! Below is a summary of recommendations from the ODE provided by Barb Conrad.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** ODE will incorporate a review of the service provider ratios currently in use by school districts, county boards of developmental disabilities and other educational agencies into its existing monitoring process.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** Allow school districts, county boards of developmental disabilities and other educational agencies to apply for the opportunity to participate in a study of alternative processes for calculating the full time equivalency (FTE) of service provider ratios within the ratios established by current rule.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** Conduct further study and evaluation regarding service provider ratios and the workload of intervention specialists and related services personnel, and the calculation of ratios.

**Upcoming steps:** A public hearing will occur in April, followed by a presentation to the State Capacity Committee to be voted on in May by SBOE. The executive summary was just released and does not take into account type and intensity of services needed. The OEC Director is disseminating this information to the State Board of Ed. Which will then be sent to members via email blast, and posted at OSLHA and OSSPEAC websites. These recommendations do not apply to Early Childhood.

**ACTION:** As soon as the proposal comes out, information will be forwarded via e-blast or blog. **We will have to propose participation of our districts and be advocates for our own profession!**

Talk to people that you know that can affect things. Go to the Legislative Breakfast and talk with the legislature about these issues! GAC has been part of this effort to change the rules, and is well aware of how OSLHA members view this issue. Presently, OSLHA's stand is to support OEC's direction. When results come in regarding which proposals have worked and which haven't worked, there may be opportunity to move in a different direction.

Finally, after a great discussion of the many important issues that are facing school-based SLPs at this time, those in attendance agreed that on-going discussion/ communication with OSLHA and each other would be beneficial. In this electronic age, there is no reason to have only once a year to share ideas, concerns and success stories! The new OLSHA website is up and running with pages for each professional practice representative to blog and have on-going dialogue. Please look for threads related to updates of the topics discussed here so that OLSHA may further support you as you serve children every day. We also agreed to use the web site forum to share clinical ideas of successful collaboration, classroom interventions, and advocacy! And, as always, please feel free to email me with questions, concerns or ideas at [combssg@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:combssg@ucmail.uc.edu)

Have a great "end of the school year!!"