With the notion that spring is right around the corner, it is the time of year when we begin to look towards the final months of the school year and we contemplate all that must be done! The idea of all that must be completed can be overwhelming especially, as we think about annual reviews, re-evaluations, transition meetings, end of grade and course tests, and so much more. I recognize the hard work that will have to take place between the month of March and the end of May. With that being stated, what I hope to provide you with is the idea that your attitude means everything! The perception of how those around you view you and the quality of your work and our work as a department depends on you. No words I offer on this page can create within you the desire to strive for excellence except to say that all of our students deserve that.

I challenge you as you move through the rest of this year to demonstrate to others a strong, reflective practitioner who is willing to go the extra mile for students. I challenge you to be all that you can be as a team player and collaborator. I challenge you to demonstrate patience, endurance and perseverance that I know you possess. I challenge you to communicate with parents regularly as the year winds down. What I’m asking you to do is to end your school year on a high note!!!! As a matter of fact, I’m counting on it!!

I’m counting on the special relationships you have with your students. I’m counting on your love of teaching and the learning you foster in them. I’m counting on your understanding of their specific learning needs and how you know them best. Mostly I’m counting on the fact that you know they count on you!

Then come out to Rockingham County Middle School for the 6th annual Community Reading Conference and Festival, sponsored by the Rockingham County Reading Association. This year the EC department is sponsoring a table based on the book “Press Here” by Herve Tullet. The fun runs from 9:00-2:00 on March 16, and we would love for people to take part. If you would like to help work our table, please contact Kristi Harris at kharris@rock.k12.nc.us or 627-2661.

**Special Olympics is scheduled for April 19th at RCHS.**
As we reflect upon our compliance efforts thus far this year, there are several important compliance items to review in terms of our CIPP efforts. First we will be required to provide compensatory education services to students for whom eligibility determination and IEP development exceeded the 90 day or 3rd birthday timeline(s) for the period covering July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013. This is based upon the data we will report for Indicators 11 and 12 in our June 2013 CIPP Submission. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Exceptional Children Division will monitor the corrective actions for Indicators 11 and 12, and each LEA will be required to document specific information regarding these compensatory efforts. More specific information will be forthcoming.

Also, results from our Internal Record Review completed this past summer revealed that out of seventy-five folders, sixty-six were compliant upon initial review. Corrections have been completed for all compliance errors identified within EC records remaining on RCS’s headcount. For the most part this means that case managers have taken steps to correct the errors identified in the individual student records. These corrections occurred mostly through either reevaluations and/or IEP reviews or addendums. This is an improvement in our performance over years’ past. Our target for compliance of our records as set forth by the state remains at 100%. Please review the following chart for the types of errors identified as part of this review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliance Items Errors Identified Through Internal Record Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invitation to Conference contains required components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is evidence that the data requested, consented to, and collected, match.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is evidence of eligibility determination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reevaluation was completed in the past 3 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent was provided with a copy of the Prior Written Notice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Written Notice for latest action is present in folder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most current Prior Written Notice explains why actions are proposed/refused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IEP contains statement of measurable annual goals that address the needs identified in the PLAAFP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IEP contains why the regular testing program (with or without accommodations) is not appropriate and why the selected assessment is appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary aids, services, modifications and accommodations in General Education are appropriately addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is appropriate documentation of required members’ attendance at IEP meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LRE justification (WHY) is addressed on current IEP (ages 3-21).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is/are annual IEP goal(s) related to the transition services needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is evidence that measurable postsecondary goals were based on age appropriate transition assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is evidence that the Handbook on Parents’ Rights was provided during the current school year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compliance Corner Continues on the bottom of Pg. 5
April 1—Headcount

It is that time of year again…..April 1 headcount is just around the corner. You should have already received information from Becky Garrison. It is imperative that you carefully read the memo Becky sent and that you take the time to physically check each and every student on your caseload. It is not enough to look over the list and assume that it all looks right. You know what happens when we assume...

Thanks so much for taking your precious time to ensure that our numbers are correct. Correctness equals money, and we all want as much of that as possible.

BIG BANG BOOM! By: Amy Rose

Big Bang Boom is coming to Reidsville High School March 22, 2013! All preschoolers, self-contained, and area childcare centers are invited to attend. Show starts at 9:30. Cost is $5.00 per child, adults are free.

NCPK/Preschool News

NCPK applications should be available early March. The NCPK program targets children that are four years old, at risk for learning, and have had limited early childhood education. Applications are available from the Partnership for Children, online at www.rockinghamkids.org or by calling 336-342-9676 and asking for Adina Thompkins.

Intake sheets for Rockingham County Preschool Program can be found in every elementary school’s front office and with preschool teachers. If you come in contact with a 3-5 year old that could be in need of a speech and language or developmental screening, please refer them to your front office or preschool teacher to complete an intake sheet and to be scheduled for a screening. If you have any questions about eligibility for our preschool program, please call Amy Rose at 616-0263.
Don’t forget that for all of your needed EC resources can be accessed from the RCS Exceptional Children’s Website under Sites in your Google Mail. From there, across the top, look for your EC Handbook for access to a livebinder with additional resources. It is a “ONE-STOP-SHOPPING” experience.
Avoid paperwork goofs at IEP meetings to steer clear of potential litigation

By Jim Walsh, Esq.*

A recent decision from the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals illustrates two key points: 1) paperwork produced at IEP meetings is important; and 2) student progress is the gold standard in determining whether the district has provided the student FAPE. In *R.P. by R.P. and C.P. v. Alamo Heights Independent School District*, 60 IDELR 60 (5th Cir. 2012), the 5th Circuit noted that there was no evidence that district staff members discussed the child's assistive technology evaluation at the fall 2008 IEP meetings. Even after a due process hearing and appeals to federal court and the 5th Circuit, it was still not entirely clear what happened with this evaluation. The case exemplifies the importance of keeping and being able to produce paperwork from IEP meetings.

A paperwork pitfall

In the spring of 2008, the IEP team called for an AT evaluation and scheduled it to be completed by October 1 of that year. Was it? You would think finding the answer to that question would be easy, but it was not. The court scoured the record, but found it inconclusive. But it was clear that there was an IEP meeting held in the fall of 2008 and that the AT evaluation, completed or not, was not discussed. It was not until May 2009 that the evaluation of assistive technology needs showed up in paperwork from an IEP meeting. The court found the October 1 date to be significant: "It is not hard to infer this date, early in the school year, was selected so that the assessment's results could be incorporated into [the student's] 2008-09 IEP. This apparently was not done." Instead, the team waited until the following May -- near the end of the school year -- to incorporate the results of the evaluation into the student's IEP. The court concluded that this delay by the school rendered the 2008-09 IEP insufficiently individualized.

Focus on student progress

The fact that the IEP team waited until the end of the school year to incorporate the AT evaluation results into the student's IEP was not enough for the parent to prevail in the litigation, however. The court applied the four-part test for FAPE that the 5th Circuit has used for years -- a test that you may keep in mind when developing IEPs. It asked:

1) Was the IEP individualized, based on assessments and results?

2) Was the student served in the least restrictive environment?

3) Was there coordination and collaboration by key stakeholders?

4) Did the student demonstrate progress academically and nonacademically?

While the parent prevailed on factor No. 1, the school prevailed on factor No. 4, to which the court gave particular emphasis. Even without the updated evaluation of her assistive technology needs, the student made progress. We must endeavor to keep these 4 questions in mind. Though they sound simplistic in nature, and one might wonder “Doesn’t everyone think about these four questions”? Perhaps, but be diligent in your efforts in order not to face this kind of scrutiny later on.

Compliance Corner—Continued from Pg. 2—Correction of these errors within the individual records completes the first component of our correction efforts. The second component will be to provide training to our special education personnel which will occur during our next zonal meeting. We are also gearing up to begin our next CIPP Internal Record Review which will occur in three stages prior to the school year ending. This will completed prior to the year ending to facilitate corrective actions that may be required. Information will soon be forthcoming regarding these efforts. For now, please continue to finalize forms and send in audited folders of initial placements or reevaluations for review within 30 days. Don’t forget your Becky forms! Thanks once again to all of you for all that you do to help keep our records compliant. Compliance is important as it allows us to receive and keep necessary funding for our EC program!
At IEP meetings, the term "least restrictive environment" is discussed when determining the placement for students with disabilities. Many times, parents or their attorneys equate this to the general education setting and presume the school district is required to place the student there.

Many due process hearings occur in which parents challenge the appropriateness of their child's placement. Each time, the court looks at whether the placement is the child's LRE. Thus, it is important for your IEP teams to make appropriate LRE determinations.

The IDEA requires each public agency to ensure that:

1. To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and

2. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

The LRE mandate works hand in hand with the FAPE requirement. If a more restrictive program is needed to confer a "meaningful benefit" to the student, the child should be placed in that more restrictive program, as that is the student's LRE.

These tips can help IEP teams make appropriate LRE determinations:

- **Consider general ed placement first.** IEP teams should first consider placing the student in a general ed setting with supplementary aids and services designed to meet the student's needs. These may include the addition of a classroom aide or personal aide for a student, curricular modifications, use of specialized strategies, assistive technology, integrated speech, occupational and physical therapies as needed, and consultative services.

- **Know factors against placement in general ed classroom.** Sometimes, the pace of the general ed class is too fast, the size of the class is too large, or the student's needs are so significant that progress would not be attainable in a general ed setting. When students with disabilities will not receive an educational benefit from the general ed setting regardless of the supports put in place, the general education setting is not the LRE and the IEP team should consider a more restrictive setting.

  For example, in *Ka.D. by Ky.D. v. Nest*, 112 LRP 17263 (9th Cir. 04/06/12, unpublished), a 4-year-old girl's documented difficulties with transitions and large groups helped her parents demonstrate that the part-time general education placement proposed by her IEP team was inappropriate. Despite having evidence of the child's difficulties, the IEP team recommended a part-time placement in the general education inclusion class. Concluding that the proposed placement did not reflect the child's unique needs, the 9th Circuit held that the district failed to offer FAPE and was required to pay $6,100 for the child's private preschool program.

- **Don't let student's diagnosis drive placement decision.** For example, a student with an autism diagnosis may be appropriately educated in the general ed setting with supplemental aids and services. It would not be appropriate for the IEP team to recommend placement for such a student in a self-contained autism class, merely based upon the diagnosis.

- **Base decisions on child's needs, not parents' desires.** Districts must offer a child FAPE in the LRE, even when parents believe the LRE is a different setting than what the district recommends. Placing a student in any setting other than what the IEP team recommends can potentially compromise the district's ability to defend itself in a due process hearing. Imagine for example that a district places a student in a general ed setting merely because the parents requested that setting and that the student does not make progress, causing parents to file for due process. The district,
In an effort to build local capacity for educating students with autism, district wide training on autism and effectively dealing with behaviors and characteristics that accompany this diagnosis have begun. The number of students with autism is rising every year. Statistically now 1 in 88 children are diagnosed with Autism and the rate is even higher among boys at 1 in every 55. Educators are seeing more and more students with autism in general education classrooms as well as in separate settings. Students on the autism spectrum present with a unique set of behaviors and learning styles that must acknowledged and dealt with on a daily basis.

In our district we are currently working with five elementary schools to establish teams in each school. These teams comprised of general and special educators as well as administrators are in the process of receiving training, and developing plans for meeting the needs of the students in their schools. Over the next three years we anticipate developing teams at each school in order to meet the needs of this growing population. Other districts across the state are also joining in this effort. We are hopeful that with additional information and understanding that we can continue to meet the needs of these students and help them make the successful transition into adulthood. You can learn more about autism by going to http://nationalautismassociation.org/

· Know when residential placement is appropriate. In some cases, the student has medical, emotional, and behavioral needs that are so inextricably intertwined that they cannot be separated from his educational needs. In such circumstances, it may be the district's responsibility to residentially place the student to offer FAPE if and when that setting is the only environment where the student would be expected to make meaningful educational progress.

In T.R. and D.R. ex. rel J.R. v. Cherry Hill Township Board of Education, 112 LRP 19672 (D.N.J. 04/17/12, unpublished), for example, a 12-year-old's severe behavioral challenges kept him from learning in a special day class, so the District Court affirmed an ALJ's order requiring the district to fund a residential program for the student. The court rejected the New Jersey district's argument that the student with autism could be satisfactorily educated in a special day class. The court noted that the student had a moderate cognitive impairment that did not prevent him from acquiring life skills and progressing academically. But because of his behaviors -- which included hitting people, screaming a hundred or more times during the school day, noncompliance, throwing instructional materials, and self-stimulatory behavior -- he would obtain skills only if he had the consistency of instruction that a residential placement would provide.

*Robin S. Ballard is counsel at Schenck, Price, Smith & King in New Jersey, and has a doctorate in psychology., May 14 2012, Copyright 2012© LRP Publications
Rockingham County, NC - Twelve RCS Schools were recognized by the NC Department of Education Positive Behavior Support (PBIS) Recognition Ceremony on Monday, February 18th, 2013 in Durham, NC.

Draper Elementary, Monroeton Elementary, and Western Rockingham County Middle earned Green Ribbon status for outstanding progress and implementation of PBIS with fidelity. Schools recognized as Green Ribbon Schools earned at least 80% in teaching behavioral expectations to their students and staff, and 80% or higher overall on the Schoolwide Evaluation Tool (SET).

Dillard Elementary, Huntsville Elementary, Central Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, South End Elementary, Douglass Elementary, Holmes Middle, Reidsville Middle, and the SCORE Center/BTWLC earned Model Banner status for outstanding progress and implementation of PBIS with fidelity. Model Banner schools have completed all of the requirements for Green Ribbon Schools in addition to Model Banner requirements. These schools have completed Module 2 and/or Module 3 training and have implemented universal and targeted behavioral interventions for students. They have also achieved a Level 2 or higher on the Implementation Inventory for teaching behavioral expectations and 90% total SET score for teaching behavioral expectations and overall implementation.

Dr. Shotwell, Superintendent; Dr. Nakia Hardy, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Jean Steverson; Assistant Superintendent; and Dr. Cindy Corcoran, Executive Director of Exceptional Children’s Services, and Stephanie Austin, PBIS Coordinator/Lead School Psychologist were all in attendance in support of the schools. Mrs. Austin, RCS PBIS Coordinator/Lead School Psychologist, stated, “I am extremely proud of Rockingham County Schools’ implementation of PBIS. We have a phenomenal group of leaders in our district that make implementation of PBIS possible. This system of supports is clearly impacting our students in RCS in a positive manner. Increased academic achievement and positive school climate is observed when this system of support is implemented with fidelity.”

June St. Clair Atkinson, State Superintendent, and Mary N. Watson, Director of Exceptional Children Division for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), began the celebration by commending all of the schools for their hard work.
and dedication to PBIS. The state superintendent commended PBIS schools for their implementation of this research and evidence based system of supports. The PBIS initiative requires support at all levels of administration: Superintendents, Central Office, and School administrators to be successful.

Joe Simmons, Positive Behavior Support Section Chief, and Heather Reynolds, PBIS Consultant, Cayce McCamish, PBIS Regional Coordinator and other regional coordinators recognized all of the schools in all regions of North Carolina who earned Green Ribbon, Model, and Exemplar School status. The state superintendent presented the awards to individual schools.

George Sugai, Professor at University of Connecticut/Center for Behavioral Education and Research Associate, spoke to PBIS schools and provided professional development on sustainability and innovation of PBIS implementation. Dr. Sugai is also the co-director of the national Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (www.pbis.org). Dr. Sugai also congratulated schools on implementing this system of supports with increased fidelity rates.

The North Carolina Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) initiative is part of the North Carolina State Improvement Program funded through IDEA. PBIS is a 3-5 year process that impacts the learning environment in the schools in order to support growth in academic achievement and a reduction in behavioral problems. Schools implementing PBIS are working to integrate their Safe Schools Plans, Character Education efforts and strategies, and discipline efforts in order to make schools caring and safe communities for learning. Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support is a systematic approach that establishes and reinforces clear behavioral expectations for students and staff. The entire school staff adopts a common approach to discipline that is proactive, instructional, and outcome-based. Data is collected regularly to help teams make decisions about effective implementation. Data is also reported to the state annually to monitor progress in each county and individual schools. The goal is to help educate all students, even those with challenging behaviors. PBIS also incorporates an instructional approach that focuses on systematically teaching social behavior using effective instructional methodology. Systematically teaching and implementing behavioral interventions for the most difficult students is also a key component.

This school year continues to be successful as RCS has several more schools who are PBIS schools and are working toward implementation of PBIS with high fidelity and these schools include: Reidsville High School and RCS Early College. Bethany Elementary and Moss Street Elementary were recently trained in the initial phase of PBIS and are beginning their implementation as well.

Congratulations to RCS’ 2011-2012 Green Ribbon and Model Banner Schools!

EC Department Contributes to Collaborations in 2012-2013 By: Kristi Harris

Collaboration Workshops provided to elementary, middle and high school teachers this year saw a contribution by our very own EC teachers. At the first two collaborations for each level, Kristi Harris focused on inclusive practices and co-teaching opportunities. At the third collaboration workshops, Beth Ewing from McMichael High School and Jennifer Hankins from Morehead High School presented on Blooms Revised Taxonomy and 21st Century Learners. At the fourth and final collaboration workshop, a session will be presented by Melissa Fulcher, Wentworth Elementary School, Debra Shamshoum, Dillard Elementary School, Gretta Broadnax, Reidsville Middle, Gwynne Kallam, Holmes Middle School, Tara Stratton, Booker T. Washington Learning Center and Kristi Harris on vocabulary strategies. Next year our EC department will provide sessions again at every collaboration for elementary, middle or high school teachers. We want regular education teachers to know that EC teachers have outstanding teaching skills and expertise to offer to others. If you are interested in presenting, please contact Kristi Harris, our EC K-12 Curriculum Coordinator.

ZONAL MEETING #4 –Our last Zonal meetings will held on Monday, March 25th at Reidsville Middle School for the Reidsville/Rockingham Zone and on Wednesday, March 27th at Western Rockingham Middle School for the Eden/Western Zone. Each of these meetings will begin at 3:30 in the media center of the schools and will end at 5:00.
In Honor of Dr. Seuss and Read Across America Day!

Do You Like These IEPs?

I do not like these IEPs
Do not like them, dear Louise
We test, we check
But nothing ever seems complete
Could you, could you like the form?
I do not like the form I see
Not page 1, not 2, not 3
Would you, could you like the form?
I do not like the form I see
Another new box
I think we all
Have lost our rocks
Could you, could you meet here or there?
We could not all meet here or there
We cannot all fit anywhere
Not in a room
Not in the hall
There seems to be no space at all
Could you, could you meet again?
I cannot meet again next week
No lunch, no prep
Please hear me speak

I almost like these IEPs
And I will practice, you see
Tell them they got it right

Author Unknown