

## Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

### History

- Southern Plains has historically provided all of the programs for ECSE including all staff.
- Students were transported to Fairmont or Blue Earth for a “center-based program”.
- Research has strongly supported providing these services in an inclusive setting.
- Gradually we have tried to provide those services in an inclusive setting.
- This past year all Martin County districts provide all services in an inclusive setting.
- Students must continue to be serviced in the least restrictive environment, and for some students that may not be inclusive. However, this is really quite rare in an early childhood student.

### Unique Factors of ECSE

- Licensure is for birth to age 7. Other special education licensures are typically K through grade 12.
- Evaluations don't typically involve school psychologists
- MARSS reporting is more complex, yet a very vital requirement to generate revenue.
- Scheduling is very different in ECSE due to students not being in school the entire day.
- Transportation is more complex due to the scheduling difficulties.
- ECSE students are typically serviced in a wide variety of settings.
- There are caseload requirements in ECSE; one of few areas.
- ECSE students must have evaluations at specific transition points and COSEF reports.  
**This should have said COSF report. This is an evaluation and report completed at specific points for preschoolers. See attached.**
- Birth to three has an entirely different set of laws and paperwork than 3-21.

### Recommendation Based on Conversations with Staff and Administration

- Southern Plains will keep the birth-3 staff under their employment. (To be determined: USC)
- In 2016-17 member school districts will claim students in MARSS.
- As Southern Plains teachers resign, member districts will hire if they have consistent need for a full-time ECSE teacher.
- For districts that need a part-time person, Southern Plains would hire and contract out the services (like speech and language pathologists). If Blue Earth needed 1.5 FTE, they would hire 1 FTE and the cooperative would hire the .5 FTE to be combined with other positions.
- ALL districts will hire paraprofessionals (?? Fairmont). **At the time I wrote this, I thought Fairmont paid their School Readiness paraprofessionals similar to Southern Plains paraprofessionals, so I thought this could be a starting point for Fairmont to hire paraprofessionals. I have since learned this was not the case. However, during**

discussions with Joe Brown, he requested that in the winter we have further discussions about Fairmont hiring paraprofessionals. A similar document to this will be created in December or January.

- Southern Plains currently charges this through tuition billing and then credits or bills on the bill based on minutes of service in the program. This would be changed to be billed based on average minutes of service by the provider. (Like OT, PT, Speech, etc.)
- Facilities and technology support are yet to be determined. This will be brought back at a future date.
- School Readiness programs would bill the serving district for programs.
- Southern Plains will continue to provide ECSE guidance to the unique needs

**Recommendations**

*Birth-3*

Southern Plains will keep the birth-3 staff under their employment. (To be determined: USC)

<u>Pro of SPEC Keeping B-3</u>	<u>Pro of Districts Hiring B-3</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The paperwork is unique, so this provides opportunities to limit the number of providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If districts hired, there would be a greater workload – which would make it easier for the smaller districts to “own” all of ECSE.</li> </ul> <p>If districts had to hire an ECSE 3-5 teacher AND birth-3 teacher it creates a greater opportunity for districts to have enough workload to hire one person. For example, USC has one teacher that fills both, there would not be much need if they hired only a 3-5 teacher.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providers love providing this service, or hating providing this service. This makes hiring easier.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a smoother transition from birth-3 to 3-5.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This takes a unique skill set. This provides opportunities to train to this skill set.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The record keeping is more difficult, so this keeps the headache on staff that are equipped for unique.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling services is easier.</li> </ul>	

*MARSS*

- In 2016-17 member school districts will claim students in MARSS.

<u>Pro of Districts Claiming</u>	<u>Cons of Districts Claiming</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Districts will have a better understanding of upcoming needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is highly important data that must be reported accurately for significant revenue.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MARSS will be reported by the building where the student is located, resulting in less likelihood of pieces being missed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ECSE staff have to deal with multiple MARSS secretaries which could result in missed pieces.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased workload for MARSS personnel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling that Southern Plains is providing less service/paying for less.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Districts will get the ECSE general ed revenue directly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Increase</u> the bottom line of the Southern Plains bill.</li> </ul>

**Why make this change if MARSS is going so well through Southern Plains?** There will be some increase for MARSS secretaries within the districts. Most of these issues are issues that districts currently deal with for kindergarten and shared time students. Although it would be easier to continue the way we are for MARSS personnel, I feel programming for students would be better if the changes were made.

**Why would the bill for Southern Plains INCREASE?** Southern Plains collects a significant amount of money through tuition billing from the member districts due to ECSE. This is more revenue than what Southern Plains utilizes for services. As a result, the ECSE line on the bill is a credit. This line would now be a bill, and districts would also note an increase in occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy. However, districts would also note a significant decrease in tuition bills and an increase in general education revenue.

### *Hiring Staff*

- As Southern Plains teachers resign, member districts will hire if they have consistent need for a full-time ECSE teacher. For districts that do not have full-time need, Southern Plains will contract out the services (like speech and language pathologists).
- Southern Plains currently charges this through tuition billing and then credits or bills on the bill based on minutes of service in the program. Teachers would be changed to be billed based on average minutes of service by the provider. (Just like OT, PT, Speech, etc.)

<u>Pros of Districts Hiring</u>	<u>Cons of Districts Hiring</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easier sharing of ECSE teachers with Kindergarten as licensure allows.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The principals will <b>now</b> need to take on teacher evaluation for ECSE teachers they hire.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principals will have greater “ownership” and control of ECSE.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principals will need to be involved in determining summer programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There will be clearer understanding of responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>

**What is the time involved for principals for teacher evaluation?** This would be phased in over time as districts hire their own staff. I would not imagine it would be more than one or two teachers.

- Districts will hire paraprofessionals (?? Fairmont).

<u>Pros of Districts Hiring</u>	<u>Cons of Districts Hiring</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize paraprofessionals already in the district.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is hard to fill these positions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater connections in the community to fill the positions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased workload for principals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater continuity of care and communication from E through grade 12.</li> </ul>	

**Current Paraprofessional Staffing:**

This varies depending upon student needs:

Dawn Rademacher	Blue Earth Area	4 days per week
Shelly Tomforde	Blue Earth Area	4 half days per week
Carol Pierce	Fairmont Area	4 half days per week
Julie Ricard	Martin County West	2 half days per week
Julie Ricard	Fairmont Area	2 full days and 2 half days per week
Traci Schultz	Truman	2 half days per week
Traci Schultz	Fairmont Area	2 full days and 2 half days per week

*Facilities/Technology*

- Facilities and technology support are yet to be determined. This will be brought back at a future date.

<u>Pros of Changes</u>	<u>Cons of Changes</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairmont has been getting phone bills paid by federal dollars. This is no longer allowed</li> </ul>

**It would increase workloads for various district employees, perhaps even requiring us to hire additional staff. How would our bill from SPEC be reduced for this shift of workload?**

Southern Plains bills on actual expenditures. Although, Southern Plains would notice a slight reduction in workload due to these changes – this would not be enough to justify any changes in staffing (just as Southern Plains has not increased staff with recent increases in workloads). So, in general, there would not be a significant change in the bills. However, I also don't feel this would be a significant change in workload for any individual staff member within a district.

## **What is the workload increase going to be?**

### *Principals:*

- Increased awareness of early childhood programs (this varies at the current time)
- Hiring/scheduling paraprofessionals (anywhere from 0-3 a year)
- Hiring teachers and conducting performance reviews (after teachers retire). At the most I picture that being two at Fairmont and one in Blue Earth.

### *MARSS:*

- Adding the students.
- Working with ECSE staff to enter attendance and membership hours

### *Secretaries:*

- Getting substitutes for paras

## **AH HAH Moments**

*During the course of discussions about these services, there have been several “ah ha” moments:*

- Even our own ECSE staff did not understand we were created by the school districts to support the most unique needs of students.
- Staff do not understand that we bill back to districts for services. We have no money of our own.
- People are shocked the number of staff involved in ECSE services. (OT, PT, ECSE Birth-3, ECSE 3-5, ECSE coordinator, S/L, etc)

## **Transition Plan**

- October: Superintendents will ponder this information and discuss with MARSS, principals, and business managers.
- October/November: Final Decision
- November: Training for Early Childhood Staff
  - Southern Plains purpose
  - Attendance
  - MARSS reporting
  - Billing for placements
  - Making determinations of service amounts
  - IEP placement vs Parent placement
  - Paraprofessional Roles
- April: MARSS (Business Managers, MARSS, ECSE)
  - Southern Plains general purpose and billing
  - Attendance, membership, evaluation hours