

FAQ Hopewell Changes

Hopewell is making changes to the way supports are provided to children attending Hopewell school for two main reasons: increased quality and increased effectiveness of supports. The new model will move from a classroom that had a teacher, a teacher assistant and multiple aides from various school districts to a team model of a teacher and an appropriate number of teacher assistants to meet the needs of the children as outlined in their IEP. The change in title from aide to teacher's assistant is necessary for the position they will be holding within Hopewell union, but their duties will be much the same. These changes will not remove any services from the Individual Education Plan (IEP) for any child attending the school. If a child's IEP calls for 1 to 1 assistance children will still have that 1 to 1 attention with a primary person that will be accountable for that child. In addition the team will work cooperatively to ensure a continuum of care for each child.

Increased Quality:

- This is a best practices model that is being used by other schools serving children with developmental disabilities. Hopewell has also utilized this model in the past and seen its ability to be executed effectively within their school.
- Coshocton county board of DD wants to ensure that they have the ability to require the highest quality training of all professionals working with children at Hopewell school and that they have the ability to hold all professionals to not only the standards of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) but also to the often stricter standards specifically designed to support individuals with disabilities created by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Under the previous model aides, hired through each individual school district, could not always be held to DODD standards nor held to the training standards desired.
- Additionally the new model of support will allow us to require that all classroom professionals be trained on the needs of every child so that not only the primary person but every other person in the classroom knows and can effectively meet each child's needs.

Increased Effectiveness

- The new model allows us to create a cohesive and cooperative environment. Each professional will be better supported in having a team familiar with the needs of the child to back them up as well as to provide new observations, insights and suggestions on how to best support each child. Training as well as goals and objectives will be consistent within the classroom and there is less likely to be a gap in supports due to one professional's absence or personal needs.
- The new model will allow children to have more flexible and dependable supports. Instead of only one professional aware of and able to support a child's needs the whole team will be able to step in to assist or provide relief to a professional should the need arise. The team will be able to move with the needs of the classroom, providing additional support when a child needs it.
- The new model will provide the Coshocton County Board of DD the ability to provide the teacher assistants a standard of wages and benefits that they were not able to previously receive, which supports the retention of high quality staff. The previous system meant that aides may have large wage gaps for doing the same work based on which school district they were hired through.

Parent's Questions

We know parents of children already attending Hopewell have unique questions and our doors remain open to discussion. Below are some questions we have heard from parents answered.

Will My Child Be Safe?

- Yes. Safety is a high priority for Hopewell and we work diligently to ensure that our staff are trained on and held to high safety standards and your child is safe in all environments throughout the school day. It is our belief that the new model will increase the safety of your child as it means not only will someone be primarily responsible for your child in all activities but additional eyes and hands will be ready and able to support your child ensuring that their needs are met.

Is This Somehow About Money?

- No. Financials were never a consideration in this decision and Hopewell does not stand to benefit at all financially from the shift in model. Hopewell far exceeds any funding allotted per student in serving children with high needs. We are investing in serving these children in a unique environment with specialize expertise and supports because we believe that is what is best for the children.

Are You Just Trying to Get Rid of the Aides?

- No. We are encouraging the quality professionals that have been working with children at Hopewell as aides to apply to join our team as teacher assistants. We feel that with more equitable salary and employment benefits both the employee and the children will be rewarded as there will be more secure staff and better staff retention.

I Have Heard That Hopewell is Just Going to Do Preschool, is That True?

- No. We have no intention of growing our Preschool program. We appreciate the opportunity it provides to integrate typical children with children with disabilities, but we recognize that our most important role is supporting individuals with disabilities. Not all counties have a school like Hopewell that is especially designed to educate children with disabilities and we are proud that Coshocton can continue to offer this service.

What Will My Child's Room Look Like?

- If your child has 1 to 1 in their IEP you will still have someone who is primarily responsible for your child at all times throughout the day. We will also have a schedule of activities for your child in the classroom so you can see what their day entails. We are also working on implementing a new curriculum that will benefit the children and young adults we serve in the classrooms.

I Want My Child to Have Someone That They are Close to, Can Count on, and Knows My Child Well.

- We want that too. Your child's circle of support will be growing with more people that know and can support them, but it is our hope to continue to foster a close bond of trust and support for your child. We want each child to have a primary person of support as well as a team of people that the child is familiar with. If a child feels especially drawn to or does especially well with a particular professional we are going to work to support that because we want the best outcome for your child. We hope that they will come to rely on and be comfortable with more than one person but it is our desire, as always, to ensure that your child has the relationships they need to feel safe and supported.

Was this all Hush-hush?

- No. We saw some concerns with the previous system of support throughout the past year and moved to address them as quickly as possible at the end of the year. When we made the decision to make the change we tried to deploy it as respectfully as possible by first discussing it with the aides impacted and then individually with parents impacted before communicating about it more widely.

We Heard One Thing and Then Another, Why is the Story Changing?

- The original proposal was shared with parents and many concerns were expressed. We listened to parent concerns and adapted the team approach accordingly. We then contacted parents and invited them to meet with us as a group to both address the rumors and provide the details about the adapted model. We strongly believe that the team model will provide the best quality supports for children and we want to work with parents to ensure the quality and effectiveness of supports for their children, therefore creating the best opportunities for success.