

ECAT- Early Childhood Assessment Team – The team assesses children who are between the ages of 3 and 5 to help determine the special education services needed to support the children. These children come either from our district screenings or from Early Intervention services through DHS.

Currently SEDOL provides assessments at no cost to member districts. SEDOL will start charging districts \$4000 per assessment starting next year as a part of the new funding model. Millburn averages 16 assessments per year. This means that Millburn would need to come up with an additional \$64,000 to meet these needs. Millburn will be able to retain more Federal SPED dollars to help offset this expense with the new model.

Elizabeth has spent a significant amount of time looking at alternatives to the SEDOL assessment. We examined several options:

1. Continue to use SEDOL and spend \$64,000 to complete the mandated assessments. Even with this option, we still must attend our own transition meetings (previously done by SEDOL), it will not be part of the \$4000 contract fee.
2. Create an agreement with local school districts to complete the assessments.
3. Do our own assessments with our own personnel.

Option 2 is not available at this time, so we are looking at option 3. Here is what we need for option 3.

- We need personnel available to complete the play-based assessments
 - School Psychologist
 - Occupational Therapist
 - Speech Pathologist(s)
 - Early Childhood teacher(s)
 - Social Worker
- We need personnel trained to complete the assessments.
 - We have already started training staff to do the assessments since we needed to know what was involved.
- We need more time for the SPED director to attend the additional meetings and facilitate the assessment process

In meeting with the EC team, it has been determined that this can be done by shifting caseloads and responsibilities around for SW and speech, and by adding a .1 FTE of OT services costing about \$7,000. The biggest impact is upon the psychologist's caseload responsibilities. In order to absorb doing 16 additional evaluations and the paperwork that it entails, we recommend shifting the oversight of 504's away from the school psychologists and back to an administrative position. We will not be able to take on the responsibility without additional administrative support.

The staff is excited to take on this challenge. We feel we can do a better job of assessing our children and it will allow us to form relationships with the parents at an earlier stage in the process than before. We are suggesting that we complete the assessments in-house contingent on the addition of an administrative position. Our choice is between spending \$64,000 for SEDOL to complete the testing, or hire more staff to take on the challenge ourselves.