

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION AD-HOC COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 10, 2017**

ATTENDANCE: Dr. Yvel Crevecoeur, Chair, Artie Kassimis, Jacquelyn Lamb,
Jeffry Spahr, Natalie Alonso.

STAFF: Stacey Heiligenthaler, Interim Assist. Director Specialized Learning/Student Services
Dr. Steven Adamowski, Superintendent

OTHERS: Joanna Cooper, Robin Keller, Dr. Lynne Moore

Call to Order

Dr. Crevecoeur called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and stated that Committee members were in attendance as listed above.

He reviewed the order of the agenda would be a discussion on planning of the timeline table for the CREC Report recommendation for special education services.

Review of December 13, 2016 Minutes

Corrections:

Page 2: Correct the spelling of Alonzo to Alonso

Page 1: under attendance, move non-committee member to 'Other'

It was noted that approval of the minutes was done out of order on the agenda.

Old Business

Review/finalize Draft Timeline Table for CREC Report Recommendations and
Discussion of the Status/Progress Recommendations as Related to the Timeline Table

Dr. Crevecoeur noted that the draft is in development will be presented in further detail at meeting for next month, scheduled for February 14, 2017. He added that Tom Hamilton will provide a budget outline and will address issues brought up by parents at the last meeting relative to the spending for this year.

Dr. Adamowski added that there are a lot of moving parts of the budget and reports of spending or not paying providers are not necessarily correct. He explained that they are working through the management process of billing and he will address this further with the steps and priority recommendations toward improving the Special Education areas that are being put into place.

Mr. Spahr reported that the SPED partners met last night and noted that there needs to be a track of the calendar of sub committee meetings. Mr. Kassimis noted that it is on the website and coordinated by Maura Perrottelli.

Mr. Spahr added that with regard to Dr. Adamowski's comment on provider services and billing, he agrees that there are provider issues and multiple providers involved so it is not as simple as it would seem with billing and payments.

Dr. Adamowski reiterated that reports of not paying providers may not be correct, and part of the Special Education Development Fund is the plan to hire someone to monitor services and the payment process. He added that they are working through the management process with improvements based on the CREC recommendations. He noted that he will address twelve steps outlined on improving the Special Education areas that are being put into place.

Mr. Spahr asked to go back to the first item and noted that the minutes were not officially approved.

- ** MR. KASSIMIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF DECEMBER 13, 2016 AS AMENDED WITH CORRECTIONS AS NOTED.**
- ** MR. SPAHR SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Discussion on the November 2015 CREC Report Recommendations

Dr. Adamowski stated that he was here to support and Ms. Stacey Heiligenthaler, Interim Assist. Director Specialized Learning/Student Services, and apologized for the absence of a staff member at the last meeting.

Dr. Adamowski distributed the attached summary for discussion, elaborated on the rationale, and highlighted the details of the recommendations. He gave examples of areas where there would be long-term savings with out placement of services being brought back to the district.

He outlined the following:

- E.D. students at High Roads School have been transferred to Norwalk High School.
- Autism Class has been expanded at Wolfpit to include grades 4-5 for next year.

There was discussion on the NPS staffing and class size, and who was running the program Ms. Heiligenthaler explained that there was a partnership with CREC, and the NPS teacher left, but is being replaced, as it is run by Norwalk Public Schools.

Steps toward Improving the Education of Norwalk's Students with Special Learning Needs: Priority Recommendations of the CREC Special Education Review to be Planned and Accomplished, January – July 2016

1. Conclude a search for a Chief of Pupil Services, reporting to the Superintendent.
2. Plan and implement centralization of Inclusive Preschool Classrooms at the Roosevelt Center, effective September, 2016.
3. In partnership with current providers, return students to Norwalk in three out-placed classes for 2016-17: two secondary E.D. classes to Norwalk High School, and one elementary Autism classroom to Wolfpit School.
4. Request a CSDE 'desk audit' of IEPs.
5. Improve a system of financial controls: All District level expenditures and contracts will be approved by the Chief of Pupil Services. The Budget Director will meet bi-weekly with the Chief of Pupil Services to assess and project budgets. (Dr. Michael Cicchetti will perform these roles until the new Chief joins the District.)
6. Plan and implement an elementary school demonstration and training site offering a full continuum of services for 2016-17.
7. Combine and integrate each high school with feeder middle schools for development of a consistent continuum of services.
8. Reconstitute the District Special Education Department – people, positions, roles and responsibilities – to create the capacity to accomplish all priority recommendations of the CREC Special Education Review during the term of the Strategic Operating Plan, 2016-2019.
9. Establish the extra-duty position of Compliance and Quality Case Manager in all elementary and middle schools beginning in 2016-17; Negotiate compensation with NFT.
10. Improve capacity to plan, develop, implement and communicate 504 Plans and the use of adaptive technology beginning in 2016-17.
11. Create the capacity to audit and manage outside placements, coordinate shared services and facilitate return to District when appropriate, to include DCF and Court placements.
12. Request of the City of Norwalk (from fund balance) the establishment of a Transitional Special Education Development Fund - \$1.2M per year, for three years, for the period 2016-17 through 2018-19. Such fund shall be used exclusively for the purpose of implementing the priority recommendations of the CREC Audit to transition from over-reliance on one-on-one para-professional and contracted services to a professional service delivery model for each classification of student need and a full continuum of Scientifically Research Based Interventions (SRBI). Moreover, the fund will be used to develop new roles, programs and systems, and provide training and development to special education staff at all levels to improve the scope and quality of specialized instruction. Items 6-11 are largely dependent upon establishment of the fund in 2016-17.

Attached is a list of Special Education updates of the last six months.

Special Education Updates (last six months)

1. The creation of the Norwalk Early Childhood Center *completed + 2016 update 190 → 220*
2. The creation of the LEAP (Learners Excelling and Progressing) program for students who require an intensive ABA program
3. The creation of the high school program for students with social/emotional needs
4. The improvement of the SUCCESS program for students with social/emotional needs at Roton Middle School
5. The collaboration with Arts for Healing to provide art and music therapy to our Prek, high school and 18-21 year students in their respective programs
6. The creation of the Norwalk Parent Advisory Council to collaborate with families on strategic planning and future projects
7. The creation of the Norwalk Special Ed Policy and Procedure Manual – roll out January 2016
8. The creation of a Parent Handbook and Frequently Asked Questions documents – roll out January 2016
9. The training of co-teaching teams at two model elementary schools and all middle and high schools
10. The establishment of central office administrator office hours for families to drop in and share concerns
11. The financial audit of our accounts payable by Blum Shapiro with recommendations accepted by the superintendent
12. Creation of a new position to handle contracts and accounts payable reporting to the finance department
13. Creation of a true executive assistant position for the chief/assistant directors to handle the day-to-day-running of the department
14. Establishment of monthly mandatory meetings for building administrators/PPT chairpersons with Central Office and SERC consultants to train and address special ed issues
15. Improved communication between families and NPS
16. Improved responsiveness from Central Office staff to families
17. Improved hiring practices to ensure high quality candidates
18. Presentations for families including one on the IEP and PPT process conducted in Spanish
19. Bi weekly meetings with finance and special ed to review budgets and grants
20. Addition of 2 Board Certified Behavior Analysts to oversee programming and training
21. Hiring of a Assistive Technology Specialist to support our students and staff (starting Jan 2017)
22. Review of current budget and reassignment to charges that are not special education to the proper departments
23. Creation of a Teach to One Math special education lab program at Nathan Hale Middle School
24. Creation of IEP Compliance and Quality Control Managers – stipend position – should be in place end January 2017
25. Initial research on gifted and talented models and current instructional methodologies
26. Purchase of and training for special ed staff on updated and new testing instruments – ensuring equity of materials across the district
27. Training on child find for school psychologists and social workers
28. Creation of special ed admin position with primary authority regarding evaluations and assessments/training
29. Utilization of a previous special ed consultant who worked with the district to complete all contracts for tuitions and vendors
30. Training for high school staff on improving transition services
31. Creation of the 18-21 year old program
32. Model School at Fox Run offering a continuum of service
33. Lindamood Bell training for teachers in June and then in January

There was discussion on the NPS staffing and class sizes. Ms. Heiligenthaler explained that there was a partnership with CREC, and the teacher left, but is being replaced. She further explained that the class size for K-3 is eight, and it is district placement through the PPT process, and the goal is to use the NPS Behavior Specialists where there are adequate trained personnel.

Dr. Adamowski explained that there are specific programs designed to target the varied levels of ability with returning out placed services. He outlined that one of the pilot programs in development for the summer is a Dyslexia Clinic. There was discussion on the rationale based on areas where the district is not equipped to handle the higher level of sophistication involved with diagnosis and instruction. Dr. Adamowski explained that this could be a regional center with partnerships with other out placed service providers such as Pinnacle.

There was discussion on Compliance Administrator and Assessment Coordinators. Dr. Adamowski outlined that this would be a stipend position where building personnel would check IEPs, and perform a desk audit to tabulate resource needs and personnel requirements. In response to questions and comments, he explained that this would be a dual-reporting position similar to the CISDs at would report to both the building principals and Director of Specialized Learning and Education.

Dr. Adamowski elaborated that one of the missing links in the Special Education area is that there is no centralized coordination of assessments or test protocols and a compliance person would improve communication and bring together all the groups involved in the process.

Dr. Adamowski added that there would be an Assistant Technology Specialist and asked Ms. Heiligenthaler to elaborate on how this important element of instruction would provide services required as part of the IEPs. There was discussion on 504 plans and case load levels, and it was noted that this is being worked on as there are no precise guidelines from the state to refer to.

Public Comments

Dr. Crevecoeur asked to keep within the three minute time limit in order to have enough time for questions/answers and public comments.

1. Joanna Cooper said she had corrections to the minutes and noted that at the last meeting she did say she was optimistic but did not say we may need for a state interim to come and run this SpEd department.

Mr. Kassimis noted that members of the public could not make corrections to the minutes, but her comments would be noted.

Ms. Cooper continued and spoke on the areas that she liked from Dr. Adamowski's recommendations and in particular liked the list of new hires for overseeing management of services and assessments. She said that this drives the whole system and outside evaluations are really key. She hopes they find a Board certified person trained in psychology. She asked about transition services for 18-21 year olds.

Dr. Adamowski answered to say that there was no such program until now and asked Ms. Heiligenthaler to provide an overview of the program in place at Norwalk High. She spoke on that students have a separate entrance to distinguish that they are no longer at high school, it is district run with afternoon job placements at local businesses.

Dr. Crevecoeur thanked Ms. Cooper for her comments and that she could continue but next time she would have to adhere to the three minute time limit in consideration of the meeting time.

Ms. Cooper continued likes the concept of a Dyslexia Clinic. She shared examples of how her son was diagnosed and the gaps in services that she experienced. She added that gifted and talented programs are equally important. She thanked the Committee for allowing her to speak, and she thanked Dr. Adamowski and the Interim Assistant Director for their work in addressing issues with the comprehensive list.

Dr. Crevecoeur asked if Committee members had questions or comments to those members of the public that spoke. Mr. Spahr asked for the status of the manual, and Ms. Heiligenthaler noted that it was nearly completed or being printed.

It was noted that included in the packet was a list of items addressed by Special Education as updates of the last six months. (See attached page 4)

Dr. Crevecoeur thanked all for their attendance and that there was a Finance Committee to follow at 7:00 in room A333.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Knox,
Telesco Secretarial Services