

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION AD-HOC COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 14, 2017**

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

STAFF: Stacey Heiligenthaler, Interim Assist. Director Specialized Learning/Student Services;
Thomas Hamilton, Finance Director; Kristin Karczmit, Budget Director

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 and noted that any questions on the presentations would be discussed during public comments at the end of the meeting.

Review of January 10, 2017 Minutes

Corrections:

Page 2: Paragraph 2 – replace the with these.

- ** MS. LAMB MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF DECEMBER 13, 2016 AS AMENDED WITH CORRECTIONS AS NOTED.**
- ** MS. ALONSO SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Update on Draft 504 Manual-Ralph Valenzisi, Chief of Technology, Innovations, Partnerships

Mr. Valenzisi provided the background and overview of the 504 procedures, referred to the draft of the Special Education Manual, and highlighted the following charts and fielded questions and comments from the members

The Norwalk Board of Education's Manual was developed to provide educators and parents with general information regarding the implementation of Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) provides:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States.... shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Section 504 is a federal anti-discrimination statute which protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance, including public schools and protects all persons who:

- have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities
- have a record of such an impairment, or
- are regarded as having such an impairment

Section 504 requires a school district to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to each qualified student with a disability, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. Under 504, FAPE is defined as regular or special education and related services that are designed to meet the student's individual needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met. In addition, a student with a disability, as defined by Section 504, is entitled to receive an equal opportunity to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities.

The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) is a component of the United States Department of Education. OCR enforces Section 504. Its role includes receiving complaints from parents and students, conducting compliance reviews and providing technical assistance to parents, school districts and schools upon request. It is important to note that in general, OCR does not review educational decisions so long as the school district complies with Section 504's procedural requirements.

Mr. Valenzisi then highlighted the following charts from the presentation:

Status of 504 June 2016

- Need for consistency throughout the district
- Need for professional development for all stakeholders
- Paper based system needed to be automated
- Need for vertical articulation and better communication when moving from school to school

How Does the District Implement Section 504?

1. Child Find – Referral Process
2. Evaluations
3. 504 Coordinator and Building Level Coordinators
4. Insure Proper Composition of 504 Teams
5. Standards for Eligibility
6. Services and Accommodations
7. Extra Curricular Activities

First Steps

- Get an inventory/ baseline
 - Students with 504's
 - 338 students with 504's only
 - 1,671 students with IEP's
 - Expertise or experienced district personnel
- Build a professional development plan
 - Professional development for Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, Nurses in August and November
 - Initial review of changes with principals
- Develop consistent processes
 - Use of 504 direct
 - Rewrite of process manual
- Update the Procedures Manual
 - Focus Group

Next Steps

- Completion of Procedures Manual and Forms
- Development of annual and ongoing training in Section 504 for all stakeholders
 - Administration
 - 504 team members
 - Teachers
 - Resources for schools to share with parents
- Community Outreach
 - New website
 - Parent workshops to create better knowledge and awareness

Mr. Valenzisi thanked the members of the committee as follows:

Thanks to.....

- Chelsey Docimo
- Christine Brown
- Maureen Sullivan
- Steve O'Connell
- Alissa Erotopoulos
- Shirley Mosby
- Danielle Tagariello
- Christina Guerra
- Medard Thomas
- Donna Patchen
- Marsha Moses

Special Education Budgets - Mr. Tom Hamilton, Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Hamilton provided an overview that this update was in to address issues brought up by this Committee. He noted that there are a lot of moving parts of the budget and reports of spending or not paying providers were not necessarily correct. He explained that they have worked through the management process of billing and he introduced Kristin Karczmit, Budget Director to present the Finance update.

Ms. Karczmit delivered the presentation and outlined new procedures and processes:

Purpose of the SPED Development Fund:

- The Special Education Development Fund shall be used exclusively for the purpose of implementing the priority recommendations of the 2015 CREC Audit/Review of Norwalk Special Education Services.
- The Fund will enable the development of new service delivery models and programs for specialized instruction necessary to provide Norwalk students with special needs a full continuum of Scientifically Research Based Interventions (SRBIs).
- Current services are skewed toward over-reliance on one-on-one paraprofessional services (Aides and AB As) and contractual services (out-of-district placements). It is necessary to create a continuum of professional services within the District and a service delivery model for each placement category before students can be transitioned from their current IEP mandated placements.
- The Fund entails a greater investment in special education teachers while paraprofessional services and contracted expenditures are reduced and repurposed over a three-year period of time

New Procedures: Current

- Vendors payments are current
- Contracted Services template created - Contracted Evaluations template created
- OOD Placements template created
- Independent Educational Evaluation template created
- Settlement Terms Summary form
- Moved all positions to the correct departments from the SPED budget, including moving the Nurses to Operations and moving Guidance Counselors to the school based budgets
- Weekly meetings with SPED and Finance scheduled to review SPED budget
- ST weekly meetings with SPED and Finance scheduled to review contract process
- Date stamp employed for all incoming invoices and signed contracts
- All billing to be handled by Finance SPED Account Specialist
- Use of SASID # (State Assigned Student ID) on all correspondence, tracking and billing
- Vendors required to now include SASID #, invoice date, unique invoice # and service date on all invoices submitted for payment (notice sent to vendors)
- Hired a dedicated Finance Account Specialist responsible for all SPED expenditure tracking by student, service and institution/vendor. Responsible for filing SEDAC-G (excessive cost reimbursement); paying/auditing of all invoicing timely/maintaining accurate records/vendor relationships
- Will soon hire a dedicated administrative professional responsible for the management of student contracts, invoices, services, and payment

The following updates of the budget were presented:

SPED Development Fund Budget

Year 1: 2016-2017 Account 15652000

Description	Object Code	Object Description	Location/Project	Original Allocation	Recommended
0.5 FTE Tracey ES	117	Salaries	45	\$	31,814
0.5 FTE Brookside ES	117	Salaries	22	\$	31,814
1.0 FTE NHS	117	Salaries	05	\$	38,000
Enrollment Growth: (elementary to middle grades) necessitates increase of IEP-related professional services (4)	117	Salaries		\$ 200,000	\$ 101,627
Special Education Teacher: Teach-to-One Math Program at Nathan Hale, Grades 6-8	117	Salaries	14	\$ 100,000	\$ 69,890
Professional Development	330	Consulting Services	56	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Contracted services: High Roads for NHS ED program (8 students) & CREC for Wolfpit Autism Program (7 students)	330	Consulting Services	05/49	\$ -	\$ 294,305
Total Spending FY 2016-2017				\$ 1,200,000	\$ 1,127,255
Carryover to FY 2017-18: Enrollment Growth Funding				\$ -	\$ 72,746
Total SPED Development Funded for Year 1				\$ 1,200,000	\$ 1,200,000

Footnotes:

(A) Carryover to fund for next school year

SPED 2017/2018 Budget Changes: SALARIES

Excludes SPED Development Fund	2016-2017 BUDGET	2017-2018 BUDGET	VARIANCE	% CHG
AIDE	\$ 5,322,392	\$ 5,702,037	\$ 379,645	7%
ASST SUPERVISORS/CENTRAL ADMIN/NON-CERT HOURLY/SECRETARY/CLERKS	\$ 1,367,959	\$ 1,337,984	\$ (29,975)	-2%
CERTIFIED	\$ 7,716,044	\$ 5,203,846	\$ (2,512,198)	-33%
TEACHERS	\$ 7,903,205	\$ 8,878,173	\$ 974,968	12%
PHYSICAL THERAPIST	\$ 43,889	\$ 44,937	\$ 1,048	2%
NURSES	\$ 1,430,948	\$ 14,000	\$ (1,416,948)	-99%
SUBSTITUTES	\$ 95,000	\$ 95,000	\$ -	0%
TOTAL SALARIES & SUBSTITUTES	\$ 23,879,437	\$ 21,275,978	\$ (2,603,459)	-11%

Footnotes:

-Reduction in Certified Salaries is due to a transfer of the Guidance Counselor positions from the SPED budget to the School based budgets in FY 2017-18.

-Reduction in Nurse salaries is due to these positions being transferred from the SPED to the Operations budget in FY 2017-2018.

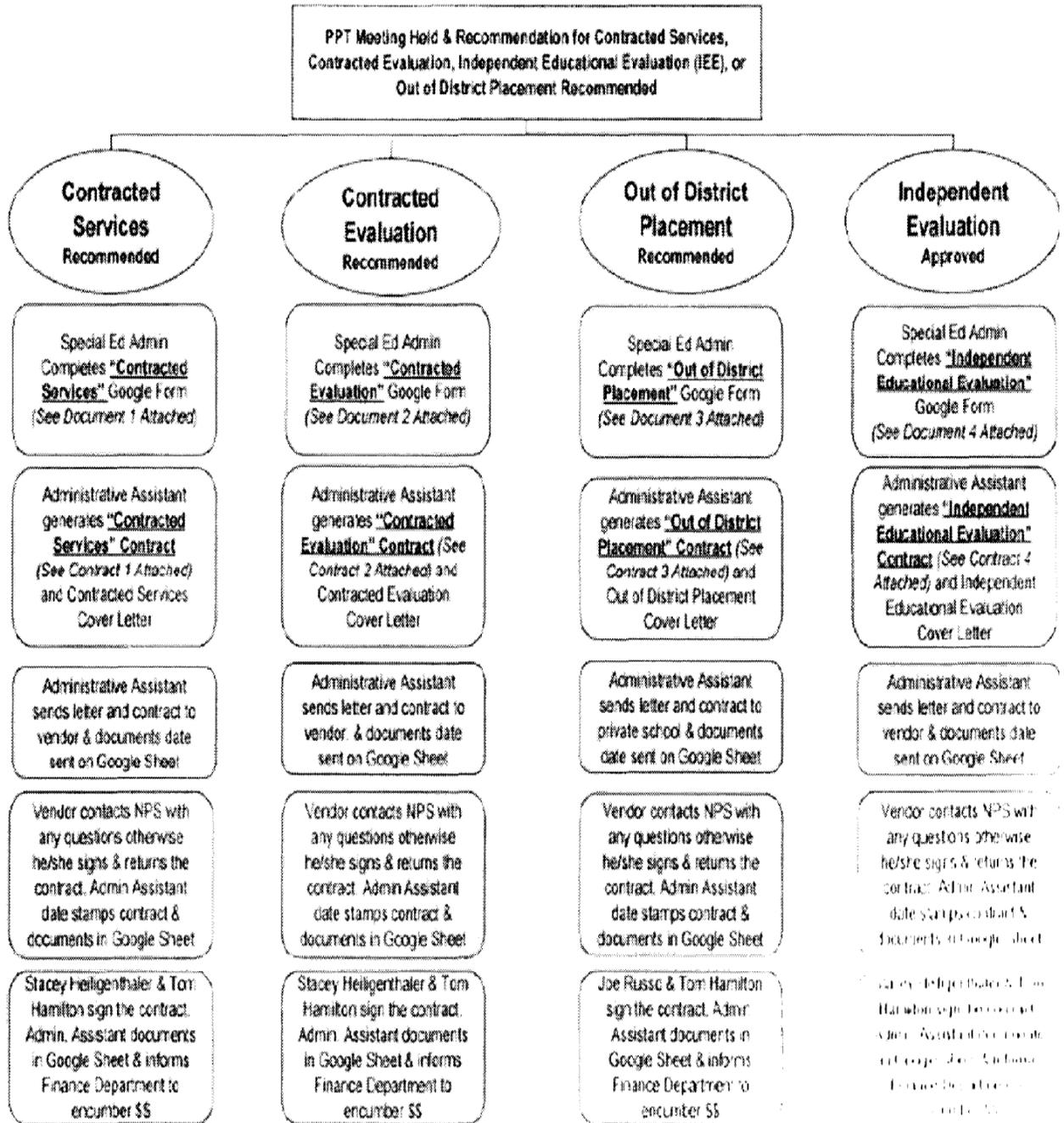


SPED Development Fund Budget Year 2: 2017-2018 Account 15652000

Description	Object Code	Object Description	Location/Project	Original Allocation	Recommended
Hearing Impaired Start Up Costs (Sound Bridge PK-5)	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$ 175,000	\$ -
Autism Program at Wolfpit School (continuation from 16/17 CREC)	330	Consulting Services	49	\$ -	\$ 490,988
Training & Transition costs Norwalk Teachers (salaries & Benefits) to assume responsibility for NHS "High Roads" E.D. classrooms	117	Salaries	05	\$ 200,000	\$ -
Implement MS demonstration & training site offering a full continuum of services (defer implementation)	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$ 200,000	\$ -
SPED School Compliance & Quality Case Mgr in ES (1)	117	Salaries	12 ES	\$ 200,000	\$ 60,000
Evaluation / Assessment Coordinator (3/4 funding)	114	Salaries	56	\$ 75,000	\$ 81,166
0.5 FTE (Tracey ES is the current 16-17 location)	117	Salaries	45		\$ 31,814
0.5 FTE (Brookside ES is the current 16-17 location)	117	Salaries	22		\$ 31,814
1.0 FTE (NHS is the current 16-17 location)	117	Salaries	05		\$ 63,627
1.0 FTE (location TBD)	117	Salaries	TBD		\$ 63,627
0.5 FTE (location TBD)	117	Salaries	TBD		\$ 31,814
Enrollment Growth: (elementary to middle grades) necessitates increase of IEP-related professional services	117	Salaries		\$ 100,000	\$ 222,695

Description	Object Code	Object Description	Location/Project	Original Allocation	Recommended
SPED Teacher Teach-to-One Math Program, 6-8 (2nd teacher)	117	Salaries	14	\$ 100,000	\$ 72,726
PD - 3/4 funding	330	Consulting Services	56	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,172
SPED Office Support Staff (Contract Secretary)	126	Salaries	57	\$ 75,000	\$ 85,000
OOD Coordinator	114	Salaries	56	\$	\$ 85,000
Professional Development (3/4 funding)				\$75,000	
Special Education Office Support Staff				\$75,000	
TOTAL				\$1,200,000.00	

SPED Process flowchart Example



There was discussion on the staffing and class sizes. Ms. Heiligenthaler explained that there was a partnership with CREC, and 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.

There was discussion on Compliance Administrator and Assessment Coordinators. There was also 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.

1. Joanna Cooper thanked the staff and Committee for all the improvements that were much needed and essential for the district for special education system and procedures. She asked about legal fees and training/transition costs. Ms. Heiligenthaler explained the rationale, case loads and support procedures. Ms. Cooper again thanked the Committee for allowing her to speak, and she thanked the Interim Assistant Director and staff for their work in addressing issues with the comprehensive list.
2. Robin Keller introduced herself as an attorney and offered suggestions on the procedures in relation to the CREC recommendations. She asked about the number of teachers, encumbrances and budgeting Medicaid payments. She explained that there is a loss of thousands of dollars in Norwalk by not including Medicaid payments. There was discussion about forms and signatures and suggestions to increase the parent trust by assisting in the forms completion.

Dr. Crevecoeur thanked all for their attendance and noted that further questions can be addressed at the April meeting that will focus on the CREC report.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox,
Telesco Secretarial Services