

Introduction by Special Education Director of Special Education Coordinators

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Early Childhood Coordinator: Kathleen Lockyer
Elementary Coordinators: Chris Carlson & Jill Parkin
Middle School Coordinator: Benjamin Helfat
High School Coordinator: David Dempsey

Good evening Mr. Chair and School Committee members. We'd like to thank you for this opportunity tonight and hope to use this time to briefly highlight our priorities for the upcoming 2015-16 school year and answer any questions you may have about these identified areas of need.

We'd like to begin by reiterating our support for the priorities set forth by the elementary principals on November 20th. In particular, we have recognized through our own hiring process the increasing difficulty we have with our ability to recruit, hire, *and* retain qualified instructional assistants, which include both teaching assistants and behavior support personnel. We believe, along with the elementary principals, that an increase to these salary categories is necessary.

We also support the maintenance of a full-time social worker at each elementary school. We know that students need to be not only physically present, but emotionally available for learning in order to engage in the learning process. The school social worker plays a vital role in creating safe and supportive schools that can respond to the ever present and growing behavioral health needs of *all* of our students.

In alignment with the elementary principals' stated priorities, we support the maintenance of the three district-wide Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) and three behavioral support personnel (BSPs) associated with these roles. Ms. Parkin will speak in greater detail in a few moments to this need.

In addition to the priorities shared above, we have also identified needs in the areas of psychological services, speech & language services, as well as other contracted services, specifically home services and a dually certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Orientation and Mobility Specialist (O&M). Ms. Lockyer will also speak to the needs of the Menotomy Preschool.

School Psychologist:

As our enrollment continues to increase, not surprisingly the number of students assessed by our school psychologists has been increasing. This is particularly notable at the secondary level (middle and high school) level where we currently have 2.5 FTEs dedicated to these services. The caseloads within Ottoson Middle School and Arlington High School is on the rise given the increase stress and demands in school and the growing concerns around transition. During the 2013-14 school year, we completed 257 evaluations at the secondary level. As of January

last year, we had completed 113 evaluations; currently we are scheduled to complete 151 evaluations by the end of January this school year. To quantify this demand, a typical evaluation takes approximately ten hours to complete, excluding sharing this report at a Team meeting.

While the demand for evaluation has risen, the need for a psychologist attached to each school has been noted to help *all* struggling students. Currently, the secondary psychologists travel between both schools and the Germaine Lawrence program, leaving the school psychologist little time other than to “drop-in” to assess the student and then attend the TEAM meeting. If a full-time psychologist were attached to each school, this would allow for greater *pro-active* involvement in the day-to-day concerns that arise for students and have a greater influence on the Student Support Team (SST) process, which works to identify and intervene with students *prior to* a special education evaluation. This need is clear given the growing school refusal cases we are experiencing and psychiatric hospitalizations (already at 14 this school year) among both the general and special education students at the secondary level. **This would require an additional .5FTE to make this support available on a full-time basis at the middle and high school.**

Contracted Services:

After examination of our contracted services, we recognize a considerable expense in these required supports. These services are mandated through our Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and combine both direct services to students and consultation to teachers and families. Our TVI and O&M contracts are projected to total over \$160,000 this school year and if we were to bring these positions in-district we would realize, at the very least, budget neutral additions of needed FTEs, creating the ability to redirect resources to other identified needs. Similarly we spend close to \$140,000 in contracted home services. By creating new positions with flexible hours, we could provide this service through our own staff at significantly lower rate and also create a greater home/school connection.

(Ms. Parkin will now speak a bit more about the role of BCBA's and why the need emphasized by the principals is critical to our schools and department)

Board Certified Behavior Analyst:

There are currently three Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) in the district. These are district-wide positions covering ten schools (Menotomy Preschool, 7 elementary schools, the middle school and the high school). Two BCBA's work in three schools and one BCBA works in four schools.

Our BCBA's have the following responsibilities:

- Supporting members of the Supported Learning Center (SLC) staff.
- Consultation service providers on Individual Education Programs (IEPs) including consults to teachers, related service providers, teaching assistants, and/or parents.

- Coordinate the development of Positive Behavior Support Plans for students and data tracking methods to assess the effectiveness of the plans.
- Supporting member of the Student Support Team (SST) process.
- On-going collaboration with building principals and social workers.
- Crisis Intervention, as needed.
- Complete consented evaluations
- Attend IEP team meetings
- Supervise the district-wide Behavior Support Personnel (BSPs)

Their work during the first three months of this school year has found the BCBA's doing the following to address behavioral programming for:

- 74 students in the Supported Learning Center classrooms (Preschool – high school)
- 68 students in the Inclusion Sessions (19% general ed.; 81% special ed. students)
- Completed consented evaluations as follows:
- 36 Consented Evaluations:
 - 42% Functional Behavior Assessments
 - 30% Home Assessments
 - 28% Behavior Observation Screenings

We are currently supporting five schools with intensive needs by using the district-wide Behavior Support Personnel (BSPs) in a general education inclusion setting. The support has facilitated data tracking to assess student needs, implementation of Positive Behavior Support Plans, and collaboration with general education and special education staff in the building. BCBA's currently provide home services for eight families as designated in the students' IEPs. If we were to bring our currently contracted services back in district we would need to hire an additional BCBA to oversee these services. This addition would be budget neutral given the savings we would realize through this shift in allocation.

(Mr. Carlson will now speak to role of the SLP and this area of need)

Speech & Language Pathologist:

Speech and Language Therapists (SLPs) provide direct services with focus on the areas of language usage including vocabulary, grammar concepts, written expression, social pragmatic language skills, and the ability to communicate effectively. Speech and Language therapists may also address voice, fluency, stuttering, and articulation issues when these areas cause an adverse impact on learning. Speech and Language therapists administer screening tests and diagnostic assessments, participate in team evaluation meetings, write goals and objectives for educational plans, and also provide consultation to parents, teachers, and other educational staff.

Currently, at the elementary level 6.4FTEs maintain an average caseload of 33.2 students. SLPs currently provide an average of 28 hours of direct service (in and out

of the general education setting) and consultation for IEP students. SLPs also support an average of 1.7 hours per week of evaluation for students in referral. A major role of the Speech and Language Therapist is to serve as supporting member of the Student Support Team (SST) process and provide direct support services/consultation/screening for student as part of the Response to Intervention (RTI) plans at buildings.

In reviewing our speech and language service model at the elementary level, we have noted important factors related to our needs. One significant factor includes the rising enrollments at the kindergartens with increased special education needs of students transitioning from the preschool level. A second factor includes our efforts to increase and support a consistent model of Response to Intervention, given the increased role of our Speech and Language therapists.

As a district, we have adopted the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum, which focuses on important developmental skill acquisition. Our SLPs are specially trained to support classroom teachers in understanding language development and providing intervention early on to support the consistent instructional strategies and accommodations.

This past year we assigned individual SLPs to support multiple schools due to increase caseload and service demands. This has created a significant limitation on the therapists' ability to support our inclusion model and the SST process (providing important services for our general education students) especially at the kindergarten level.

We are seeking an increased FTE allocation in this department for the elementary level.

(Ms. Lockyer will now speak to the needs identified at the Menotomy Preschool)

Menotomy Preschool:

Menotomy Preschool is the program charged with providing services of referral, evaluation and programming for all students 2.9 - kindergarten entry, residing in the District. Students are referred by multiple sources: parents, community providers, Early Intervention Agencies, Pediatricians, and any other service agency. The APS is charged with screening, child find, evaluation, and provision of services to students with diverse needs.

We have experienced, this year, an increase of students moving into the District with IEPs formulated by previous Districts, the following is provided as an example to elucidate the needs as they are emerging. Currently we have 8 students who have moved in to the District with identified needs. Three of these students were placed in classrooms with a fourth currently evaluated, but with a significant diagnosis. During that period of time, from September to November, three students from Early Intervention were placed. Last year only 10 students were placed in classrooms

from September through June 30. Each inclusion classroom is limited to a maximum of 7 special education students. Substantially separate classes are limited to 9 students. Inclusion is the least restrictive setting and a priority for all students as part of their daily programming.

Given these circumstances, we predict the need for a new preschool classroom, which we will give us 6 classrooms that run a variety of models and schedule. At the present time, we are hopeful that with creative planning and allocation of students and staff, we will be able to provide excellent programming for our preschool students through this school year. However, the increases district-wide seem to apply proportionately to the Preschool needs.

The planned new classroom is presently seen as a supportive inclusion setting with partial inclusion and opportunity for increased specialized instruction within that classroom. Identified needs are in the area of developmental disabilities, and/or social and emotional needs with response to attention and behavioral programming. The current BCBA assignment and our social worker position have been instrumental in responding to this area of need.

The Early Childhood Coordinator, Team Chair, Lead Teacher and .5 administrative support staff provide an effective coordination vehicle to run this small school, provide parent outreach and oversee planning, staff evaluation, day to day school management for all preschool aged programming. My recommendation is the ECE Coordinator becomes a full-time with transitional responsibilities to the seven elementary school teams. The Team Chair position, currently .5 will function appropriately with a .6 position. The rationale for that increase is system-wide coordination, parent outreach and orientation to the district. Other specialists and staff have in-take responsibilities as well.

Thank you for your attention to the needs of Menotomy Preschool and the excellent work of the staff of this program.

We again thank you for your time and consideration and would like to provide you an opportunity to ask questions.