

Meeting the Needs of All Students



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Overview of Special Education Process...The Basics

- A referral is made by school personnel or parents based upon a student's suspected disability.
- An evaluation consent form is sent to parents for signature to begin the evaluation process.
- When the signed parent consent form is returned, the district has 30 school days to complete the evaluation and must hold the TEAM meeting within 45 school days.
- The TEAM includes parents, TEAM Chairperson, special education teacher, general education teacher and appropriate other members such as: school psychologist, speech/language therapist, occupational therapist or physical therapist, depending on the suspected disabilities being evaluated.

Special Education Process continued...

- After reviewing the evaluation results, the TEAM answers 4 questions to determine eligibility through a state constructed flow chart that leads the TEAM through the process.
 1. Does the student have a disability?
 2. Is the student making effective progress in the school?
 3. Is the lack of progress due to the student's disability?
 4. Does the student require specially designed instruction?

Special Education Process continued...

- If the answer is yes to all questions, an IEP is developed based on the student's disability and areas of need.
- The IEP is reviewed annually. Progress reports are distributed at the same time as the students in general education receive report cards.
- Reevaluations occur every three years to determine continued eligibility.

Disability Types

- Developmental Delay
- Intellectual
- Sensory – Hearing, Vision, Hearing/Vision
- Neurological
- Emotional
- Communication
- Health
- Specific Learning Disability
- Physical
- Multiple Disabilities
- Autism

What does special education look like in Northbridge?

- The number of students, ages 3 to 21, that receive special education services is a “snapshot in time”. The numbers change on a daily basis due to when TEAM meetings are held, who moves in and out of the NPS District, who ages out before their 22nd birthday, who graduates, and who is referred for special education prior to turning 3 years of age.

Disability Type ~ Number of Students

● Developmental Delay	56
● Intellectual	28
● Sensory – Hearing, Vision, Hearing/Vision	3
● Neurological	9
● Emotional	30
● Communication	181
● Health	36
● Specific Learning Disability	46
● Physical	4
● Multiple Disabilities	7
● Autism	43
● Total	443

Number of Students Receiving Special Education Services by School & Grade

School	Grade	Grade	Grade	Grade	Total
NES	PK 46	K 42	1 st 33		121
Balmer	2 nd 38	3 rd 27	4 th 45		110
Middle School	5 th 27	6 th 27	7 th 35	8 th 23	112
High School	9 th 27	10 th 30	11 th 21	12 th /PS 19/3	100

Transportation Costs

Anticipated cost for next year:

In District = \$191,250

Out of District = \$639,975

● Total = \$831,225

Out of District Transportation

- Since students travel to many different towns across the state for out of district school placements, the school district contracts out these transportation cost in a variety of ways. These include:
 - sharing runs with other towns
 - collaborative transportation
 - private transportation companies

Out of District Transportation continued...

- The cost of students' transportation varies depending on the distance/mileage.
- The district incurs additional costs when a students' Individualized Education Program requires monitors, wheelchair accessible vehicles, or a limited number of students on the vehicle.
- Runs range from \$99 per day to \$240 per day.

Out of District Tuitions

- Why do we need out of district placements?
Some students' needs are so unique and significant, the public school setting is unable to provide the student with the intensive specialized instruction that is needed for the student to make effective progress in his or her education.

What is an Out of District Placement?

- Program in another Massachusetts public school.
- Program in a collaborative within a public school or school run by a collaborative.
- Program in a private day setting.
- Program in a private residential setting.
- Program in an out of state setting.

Out of District Placement Costs

- 30 students as of 12/8/2009.
- Cost for out of district tuitions:
\$1,791,551.
- Transportation for out of district runs:
\$642,975.
- Total ODP cost per year : \$2,434,526.

Thoughtful Program Planning Can Reduce Costs Over Time...

● Total program cost of therapeutic program	\$256,932
● Tuition from returning students	\$128,140
● Tuition from students retained	\$105,025
● Transportation savings	<u>\$102,080</u>
	\$335,245
 Savings	 \$335,245
Cost	\$256,932
 Net Savings	 \$78,313

Cost of Out District Placements Over Time

- Some examples:

- $\$25,902 \times 4 \text{ years} = \$103,603$
- $\$26,564 \times 9 \text{ years} = \$239,085$
- $\$49,680 \times 8 \text{ years} = \$397,440$

Trends in Special Education

- Job Coaching – Employee vs. outside agency (Horace Mann Educational Association)
 - Transition planning requires the school district to look at how well the student is prepared for life after graduation or when turning 22. Some students require job training/coaching to determine their needs when they enter the work force.
 - We plan to explore all related costs including transportation. Our goal is to enhance our students' school and community job opportunities.
 - We will conduct additional assessments to determine students' transitional needs.

Trends in Special Education continued...

- Expansion of autism program

Due to students moving from NES to Balmer, the addition of a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst special education teacher with an instructional assistant is required for the extension of the programming.

Trends in Special Education continued...

- Reorganization of the therapeutic program
 - Promotion of students across grade levels indicates the need for reassigning staff.
 - Caution...we can not predict who moves into our school system nor can we predict how mental health issues will play out with our students.

Therapeutic and Autism Program Update

December 2009 -2010



Balmer and Middle School Pathways Programs

- Currently 4 students with a teacher and behavior technician at Balmer School.
- Currently 6 students with a teacher and two behavior technicians at the Middle School.
- Weekly sessions with adjustment counselor.
- Daily morning meetings emphasizing social skills required for appropriate school behavior.
- Opportunities for inclusion as students work through the level system.

Role of Adjustment Counselor

- Provides contact with outside agencies such as DCF, probation officers, MASS Health ~ Behavioral Health Initiative.
- Promotes contact with families in a continuous manner as appropriate for each student.
- Maintains positive communication between families and school, students and teachers.
- Counsels students in groups and on an individual basis to use appropriate strategies in school to communicate with peers and staff.
- Participates in the Early Intervention Teams to help prevent student crisis.
- Interacts with each of the three programs on a daily basis and is “on call” when emergencies arise in a building.

What is different about a therapeutic classroom?

- The focus is on a student's social emotional health and well being which impedes a student's ability to access the curriculum.
- Teachers have specialized training in understanding the different diagnoses students may have and how that diagnosis impacts their ability to learn and work in school.

What is different about a therapeutic classroom? ... continued

- Many of the behaviors are handled within the program so students are less likely to be suspended from school.
- Teachers are able to utilize a “toolbox” of strategies to de-escalate emotional situations and get a student back on track.
- All staff within the programs are trained in non-violent ways to interact with students. This is a three day training for new staff and the one day refresher for previously trained staff.

Program for Academic/Vocational Excellence ~ P.A.V.E

- An innovative program aimed at providing students with academic & vocational success at NHS.
- Currently 12 students are accessing the program. There are 3 students pending.
- The program is staffed with a special education teacher, content area special education teachers and two behavior technicians.
- New students are evaluated for suspected disabilities when entering into the program.
- Emphasis is placed on how academic concepts are relevant to vocational tasks with real world applications.

Autism Program – Bright Beginnings

- Provides students with autism the language based learning they require for success.
- Discreet trials are provided for students with recommended times per their IEP. These are completed in cubbies with a one to one staff to complete the programs written in the student's program book.
- Programs correspond directly to IEP goals and objectives. Data is collected for each program to determine the success level and mastery of the program.
- When students have mastered the program, a new program is written by the special education teacher for the student. Data collection is essential to determine level of needs.

Bright Beginnings ...continued

- Approximately 21 students in PreK to 1st grade participate in the Bright Beginnings program with varying amounts of inclusion into the general education classrooms. Each student's IEP is individually designed based on unique needs of students.
- The number of students change as students are identified at age 2 and one half years of age. Students identified prior to age 3 are evaluated. If eligible, students will begin services on their 3rd birthday.
- Inclusion opportunities are provided in preschool, kindergarten and first grade classrooms with staff providing the support students require.
- Staff include a special education teacher, co-teacher, and instructional assistants.

Where do we go from here?

- Each Therapeutic and Autism program provides an intensive approach required for our students to access the general education program.
- Providing high quality educational experiences and programs in our district enables students to develop friendships with their peers, access the curriculum in the least restrictive environment and receive educational services from highly qualified and well trained teachers and staff.

Where do we go from here?...continued

- Developing programs as students move from school to school is critical to maintain services across the grade levels.
- Reflection/assessment of what works and doesn't work is needed to design programs that meet the needs of our students as they grow and develop.
- We will continue to use Stimulus money to fund cost savings programs and add appropriate services as students are promoted.
- The Southern Worcester County Collaborative provides cost effective special education programs to local communities.
- We will accept students from other communities as the need arises. We are working to determine space and tuition.

I hear and I forget.

I see and I remember.

I do and I understand.

