



A Tradition of Excellence

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Tammy Prentiss, Superintendent of Schools

DATE: June 23, 2022

RE: Continuum of Student Services: Proposal for NEW district special education program (Building Academic and Social Emotional Skills) BASES

Below is a report from District 86 special education directors Kristin Marks and Andrea Ellexson about the current continuum of services we offer to students with disabilities, and ways we can improve/expand upon those services and the overall educational experience for our students going forward. Administration is recommending the approval of a new district-wide self-contained program to meet the needs of an identified student population. A business case for the program is included in the recommendation.

Expansion of the Continuum of Special Education Services in District 86

The needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in District 86 vary. Accordingly, the services District 86 is required to provide to those students, to meet their individual needs vary. This is commonly referred to as the “continuum of services.” We are recommending the expansion of program options for students with disabilities in District 86 by extending the continuum of services offered by the District. The purpose of this memo is to provide information on the legal requirements for serving students with disabilities and our suggested program expansions.

Serving Students with Disabilities – Legal Background

“Special education” is a broad term to describe the education of children with disabilities. In Illinois, special education is required and governed by a framework of federal and state statutes and regulations that include:

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. § 1400)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) (29 U.S.C. § 794)
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 6301)
- Article 14 of the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/14)
- Federal and state administrative regulations that correspond with these laws

Under IDEA, Article 14 of the Illinois School Code and their corresponding regulations, schools must provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to students with disabilities who reside within the district.

FAPE means special education and related services that:

- Are provided at public expense and administered under public supervision and direction.
- Meet the standards of the State Education Authority (SEA), including the requirements of this part.
- Include an appropriate preschool, elementary school or secondary school education in accordance with state law.
- Are provided in conformity with an individualized education program (IEP) that meets the necessary legal requirements.

LRE means that each school district must ensure that:

- Children with disabilities, including those in public institutions, private institutions or other care facilities, learn alongside their peers in general education classrooms to the maximum extent possible.
- The removal of children with disabilities from the general education environment, including through the use of special classes or separate schooling, will only occur if the nature or severity of the disability will impact or impede the ability to meet the needs of these children in general education classrooms, even with the use of supplementary aids and services.

When a student is found eligible for special education services, their IEP team, which includes their parents/guardians, must develop a plan (i.e., educational program and related services) that is designed to meet their individual needs. This plan may include services such as:

- Individual or small group instruction
- Curriculum or teaching modifications
- Assistive technology
- Transition services
- Specialized services such as speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and social work

Under the principle of LRE, a student must be educated, to the maximum extent possible, with their typically developing peers, and be provided with access to a continuum of placement options that meet their individual needs. This continuum must include a variety of placement options (referred to as “alternative placements” in IDEA and its regulations) that range from the least restrictive to the most restrictive - general education classroom, special classes, special schools (including public/private therapeutic day schools and residential facilities), instruction in hospitals and institutions, and home instruction. It must also include supplementary services (e.g., resource room or itinerant instruction) that are provided in conjunction with a general education placement.

Based on the LRE and continuum of placement option requirements, schools use both in- and out-of-district programs and services to meet the individual needs of students.

High School Programming

The district currently offers a self-contained therapeutic program called Hinsdale Area's Vision for Emotional Needs (HAVEN) that serves students who need academic, emotional and behavioral assistance that cannot be provided in a traditional general education setting with special education services. This district program is housed at Hinsdale South.

HAVEN provides a positive learning environment where students can:

- Develop successful academic behaviors
- Increase their self-awareness and attentional control
- Reduce impulsivity
- Increase emotional regulation
- Improve interpersonal effectiveness

It gives students who have average to above average academic skills access to general education curricula in a self-contained environment. It also offers students a therapeutic approach to learning that is based on Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), which addresses a child's emotional dysfunction by teaching the DBT philosophy and skills in group and individual formats.

DBT therapeutic instruction seeks to:

- Decrease dysregulation and increase mindfulness (focusing skills)
- Decrease impulsiveness and increase distress tolerance (crisis survival skills)
- Decrease volatile moods/emotions and increase emotional regulation (de-escalation skills)
- Decrease interpersonal challenges and increase interpersonal effectiveness (social skills)

HAVEN allows students to stay in their home district and participate in a typical high school setting.

After analyzing the results of the special education needs assessment survey we administered during the 2021-22 school year and reviewing our out-of-district student profiles, we believe our students would benefit from having access to a program similar to HAVEN that will target those with significant social and emotional needs who require a more comprehensive self-contained learning environment.

Recommendation

The District 86 special education department recommends creating a therapeutic program that will meet the needs of students who have various academic, social and emotional deficits. This program, which we would call **Building Academic and Social Emotional Skills (BASES)** and house at Hinsdale Central for the 2022-23 school year, would provide educational services to students who would typically be placed in a more restrictive academic setting outside the district. The classroom would be capped at 13 students who would be supported by a full-time Learning Behavior Specialist, two paraprofessionals, and full-time interventionist (social worker or school psychologist).

Potential benefits of the program include access to:

- Opportunities for students with significant behavioral and emotional needs to focus on/develop appropriate pro-social skills and become increasingly independent and successful in a public school setting.
- Supports in a small classroom setting that will help students meet the academic, social and emotional goals that are spelled out in their IEP, while also enabling them to engage in coursework that will meet the district's requirements toward graduation.
- An optimal learning experience that includes a well-structured, safe, engaging and responsive environment with increased therapeutic support that is offered by a team of highly trained staff members who are well-versed in social and emotional learning (SEL), understand special education best practices, and regularly work with students who have a wide range of academic and special education eligibilities.
- A therapeutic approach to learning based on the DBT philosophy that will teach skills (e.g., mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotional regulation and interpersonal effectiveness) in individual and group formats.

Historically, students with this learning profile have exhausted all of the in-district resources we have available through our current continuum of services. This has resulted in students being placed in more restrictive learning environments, which helps meet their needs but limits their access to their home high school and community.

Through the annual needs assessment survey they completed this year, our staff identified the need for more SEL training, as well as additional mental health supports and social work services for students. There is also a significant cost to the district. For the 2022-23 school year, eight students who met this level of need were outplaced. Additionally, the SESST (special education problem solving teams) teams have approximately 8 current students that may benefit from this level of support.

BASES FTE needed: 1 LBS1 teacher, 1 Student Interventionist (Social Worker or Psychologist) and two classroom paraprofessionals.

Costs: Projected fully loaded cost (salary and benefits)

Social Worker/Psychologist: \$109,104 (1.0 FTE MA Step 8)

LBS1 teacher: \$91,693 (1.0 FTE MA Step 3)

Paraprofessional: \$98,744 (2.0 FTE)

No renovation of classroom space will be required for this program.

Total FTE Costs: \$299,541

Approximately \$23,041 per student (based on 13 students)

Costs associated with outplacement of 13 students under consideration for this program are forecasted for 22-23 SY to be: Median tuition cost per outplaced student of \$41,778 for 179 days of school at an approximate total academic cost of \$543,114.

Per the chart below, the district needs to staff the BASES program with 7 students to break even with associated new FTE costs. Every student added after student 7 would be cost avoidance for the district. The program can serve up to 13 students. The additional 6 students would generate \$250,668 savings in outplaced tuition costs.

| Outplaced Tuition Cost Compared to Staffing Costs for SOAR Program | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of Students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | Total |
| BASES Per Student | \$299,541 | \$149,771 | \$99,847 | \$74,885 | \$59,908 | \$49,924 | \$42,792 | \$37,443 | \$33,282 | \$29,954 | \$27,231 | \$24,962 | \$23,042 | \$299,541 |
| Outplaced Per Student | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$41,779 | \$543,122 |
| Outplaced Cumulative | | \$83,557 | \$125,336 | \$167,114 | \$208,893 | \$250,672 | \$292,450 | \$334,229 | \$376,007 | \$417,786 | \$459,565 | \$501,343 | \$543,122 | |

Summary:

During the board meeting on June 23, we will bring forth a recommendation to create a therapeutic classroom for the 22-23 SY and staff it according to the plan outlined in this memo. Additional recommendations related to this proposal will be presented to the board as needed.