

Special Education Parent Partnership Committee Meeting Minutes
April 14, 2023
1:00 - 2:00 PM

Members Present: Corinna Graner, Molly Meyer, Jessica White, Erica Swenson, Ali Howe, Erin Murray, Jessie Stratmann, Jacqi Schultz, Emily Bremner Forbes.

Agenda: Relate Counseling Center School Services

Molly Meyer introduces the meeting and presenter Jessica White from Relate Counseling Center School Services. Introductions by all.

Jessica White, District coordinator for the Orono District, also serves Wayzata School District. The agenda is shared and Jessica asked the group to please feel free to interject with any questions as she would like this to be a conversation, rather than presentation only. Jessica shared what she would like the takeaways to be. This includes trends that they are seeing in students in the mental health field.

Relate has served the district for over 8 years and Jessica has worked with Orono since 2020. Relate has been serving the twin cities for 51+ years. Relate has served 14,000 individuals and families. Outpatient therapy, and additionally, co-located therapy in schools and local food shelves. This provides therapy at school which removes barriers, and provides increased opportunities for collaboration and meeting kids in EC/K-12th grade.

Parent asks how this process happens. The support staff will be the first to alert the staff through a referral process. Families can opt-out too. Student assistance teams will be involved. The team will have a process to circle back with the students after six weeks. The school social workers are also on the teams.

Relate serves seven districts. The school based team has 50 employees. This is funded through the State of Minnesota and they work with individual's insurance and if the family does not have insurance they help the family get insurance. There are no income guidelines for financial assistance. They served over 600 students last year. Range of issues include anxiety, depression, trauma, grief and loss, family stressors and more. Staff is trained in art therapy, and other types of therapy needs.

This summer support/offerings: Camp Emoji will be offered this summer aimed to assist and teach students how to manage and identify emotions. They are working on a high school program offering. It will be offered through community education, and will be more of a drop-in style. Possible options will include yoga, adult coloring. Therapeutic group using art therapy techniques. They are working on the curriculum and it is still in process. A parent asked what this looks like for what the kiddos will do and Jessica said that they will be using art as therapy. This is still in its design phase.

EC School based services - they have staff that are trained in ages birth - 6. Evidence-based EC services are provided to districts but they don't service Orono school district, currently.

Chemical Health Services - they have a licensed therapist for this.

Trends: 2022 Trends Report

Covid-19 Pandemic = 2 years of crisis mode, unpredictability, online learning

Impacts on mental health

Increase in need for mental health supports

24% increase in mental health related emergency room visits for 5-11 between March and October 2020

Long wait for outpatient care

School psychologists in short supply

Anxiety: Mood, internal

Worries

Irritabilities

Difficulty concentrating

Clinginess

Avoidance

Disruptive behavior

Racing heart

Sweaty

Fidgeting

Chest pain

Shortness of breath

Needing to go to nurse or bathroom frequently

Depression:

A slide was shared that shows the overlap with depression and anxiety.

Executive Functioning: signs, symptoms, and observations. Difficulty sustaining attention, making careless mistakes, forgetful, easily distracted, lost train of thought, poor time management, excessive talking, fidgeting, acts without thinking, difficulty concentrating.

Other signs: Sensitivity to sensory input.

Behavior is communication = What's being communicated

Child runs away during a class = possible anxiety due to the transition

Left vs Right brain: Left logical, likes order, likes words, lists, literal. Right brain is body based.

Upstairs vs Downstairs Brain: responsible for basic functions, keeping you safe. Upstairs brain is about making decisions, executive functioning and is under construction and not fully developed until mid to late 20s.

Because the upstairs brain is under development, the connection does not communicate with the upstairs brain. The downstairs brain may react the same way to a hard question, a test and a bear in the classroom. Kids with mental health struggles may have a harder time with communication between the upstairs and downstairs brain.

Why do we lose control of our emotions? Video was going to be shared at the end of the presentation. <https://youtu.be/3bKuoH8CkFc>

Impacts on Functioning: When functioning is impacted socially, relational, or educational.

You are not their therapist - meaning that you are not alone there are resources within school to help.

Jessica brought a few books to share with the group. Titles are listed below.

Consider the left and right brain when you see responses from your kiddo. Connect to redirect. Look at how you see the behavior and respond calmly, allowing for flexibility. Praise behaviors you want to see. Use breaks, calm down corners, fidget tools, develop rules and expectations, model using it, create a coping skills list together as a class.

Books shared as resources: The 5 love languages of Children by Gary Chapman.

The Whole-Brained Child by Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson.

Balanced & Barefoot by Angela Hanscom.

Mindfulness for Kids Who Worry, For kids ages 6-9, by Katie Austin.

Some exercises for kids who are experiencing school refusal. Problem-solving scenarios were shared.

The group was thanked for attending and was also asked to share ideas for future presentations, fields of interest and other topics that might be of interest.