

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH ORANGE AND MAPLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY
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TO: Peter P. Horoschak, Superintendent

FROM: Patricia M. Barker

SUBJECT: BUDGET DEVELOPMENT REPORT: CHILD STUDY TEAM (CST)
RESOURCES; SPECIAL EDUCATION RELATED SERVICES; UPDATE OF
NEW IN-HOUSE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Board of Education requested an analysis of the CST resources necessary to appropriately and sufficiently staff Special Education and what cost savings might this approach generate over time. The Board also requested an analysis of the related services necessary to appropriately and sufficiently staff Special Education, specifically those that were outsourced and what cost savings might be realized by bringing some or all of these services in house. The Board further requested an update of the six special education programs, which were started in the District during the 2003-2004 school year. The following report was prepared from information gathered by Linda Bowles, Director of Special Services, Maria Eppolite, Assistant Director of Special Services, Ellen Bass, In House Counsel and Patricia Barker, Director of Planning and Assessment.

The report is divided into three sections. Each section is related to one of the above requests of the Board.

SECTION I. CHILD STUDY TEAM RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Special Services is mandated to provide services to students who have been classified. These students, based on their needs as written in their IEPs, may require modifications to the curriculum, modifications to the learning environment, including out of district placements in both day and residential settings, and/or related services necessary to the delivery of a free and appropriate education to them.

Providing services to special needs students in an effective and efficient manner is the goal of the department. The number of students requiring services and the types of services needed by students fluctuates not only from year to year, but also throughout the year. The department management should use historical information, current case law and trends to project resources needed, in order to develop a budget appropriate and sufficient to service these students effectively and efficiently.

CHILD STUDY TEAM SERVICES

1,092 students receive special services from the district. Eighty-three (**83**) of these students are speech and language students only, requiring an IEP developed and implemented by a speech therapist. One hundred and twenty one (**121**) of these students are placed out of district. Their IEPs are developed by in house CSTs, services are provided out of district but monitored by in-house CSTs to ensure appropriate delivery of mandated services. There are

currently **888** students receiving special services within the district. This group comprises the bulk of the work of the CSTs.

There are currently five full 3-member CSTs. Each child study team is comprised of a psychologist, a social worker and a learning consultant. There are also two additional psychologist spots, one is filled and one is vacant. Currently, a budgeted learning consultant position is also vacant on one team. Those 17 people, conduct student evaluations and assessments, oversee IEP development, assign services as dictated in IEPs and provide some direct services to special needs students, teachers and parents. The CSTs work in nine school buildings. Team psychologists respond to psychological emergencies of general education students within these buildings, in addition to assignments related to special education students. Learning consultants could be a resource for teachers in terms of instructional strategies and accommodations. However it appears that the high number of cases they carry prevent them for doing this part of their job effectively.

CHILD STUDY TEAM CASELOADS

The Essex County average caseload for a child study team member is 45 for elementary students and 55 for secondary students. Our district's averages exceed these numbers with 51 being the elementary student caseload average and 68 being the secondary caseload average. These averages do not include out of district students and the testing and referral activities performed for students who are not classified. If these numbers were included, the district averages would be much higher. The number of cases actually assigned to child study members along with the average for that team is displayed below.

TEAM	ASSIGNMENT	AVERAGE CASELOAD PER TEAM MEMBER	AVERAGE CASELOAD BY GRADE CLUSTER
Team 1	Jefferson and Marshall	62	
Team 2	So. Mountain/Annex and Tuscan	46	
Team 3	Clinton and Seth Boyden	45	
Elementary Average			51
Team 4	Maplewood Middle and South Orange Middle	65	
Team 6	Columbia	70	
Secondary Average			68

The Director of Special Services oversees the administration of these services at the high school while the assistant director oversees these services at the elementary and middle schools. Each team determines how cases are handled and which member of the team has oversight of a particular case.

DIFFICULTIES WITH THE PRESENT SYSTEM

There is some unevenness in assignment of cases. Due to large caseloads teams do not always have the capacity to handle the caseloads efficiently and effectively. In other situations CST services are outsourced, piecemeal, so there is, in fact, no "team" working together. When services are provided this way problems may occur.

CST services can be outsourced for different reasons:

- ◆ Caseloads are too high
- ◆ Vacancies occur in a CST
- ◆ CST members are used for crises, particularly in the middle and high school with general education students manifesting serious psychological problems such as suicidal ideation. This can cause slippage in the handling of those team members' cases.
- ◆ Compliance with regulations (90 days).

Each of these factors fragments the CSTs and contributes to the erosion of their effectiveness and efficiency.

SUGGESTIONS

Following are some suggestions for the future effective and efficient deployment of CSTs.

- ◆ CSTs must have a manageable number of cases in order to work effectively and in the best interest of the children they serve. The addition of another team (2 additional members are needed to complete a 6th team) would give the teams needed manpower to manage their caseloads more effectively, enabling them to develop positive interactions and relationships with parents of the students they manage. It should also result in reducing the number of lawsuits brought against the district with a cost savings of over \$100,000.00 **COST of two team members: \$148,000**
- ◆ Common protocols for assignment of cases within teams must be developed.
- ◆ New members should be trained and given a lighter caseload until they acclimate to the team.
- ◆ Crisis psychological services should not be provided by CST members, but rather by a separate psychologist in place for that purpose only. This will prevent specific team members from being pulled from their primary job, which places a greater burden on the other team members or keeps parts of their job from being done effectively.

An in-depth study of the Child Study Teams should be conducted. This should include:

- A review of criteria to classify and declassify students
- A review of students who are newly classified in high school.
- The optimal number of cases for a team member
- A plan to offload some cases when a CST member is unable to manage his/her caseload due to extenuating circumstances.
- A determination of the amount of time required by CSTs to handle out of district students and speech and language only students
- A study of the curriculum services in special education, which CST members think, could be offered in district (such as a sensory reading program).
- A review of the involvement of the learning consultants in the ongoing educational process of all classified students.

SECTION II. SPECIAL EDUCATION RELATED SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Related services include speech therapy, counseling, occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT). Other services such as transportation and aides are also considered related services but will not be addressed in this report.

Providing related services to children with special needs in an effective and efficient manner is a goal of the department of special services. The number of students requiring services, and the types of services needed by them fluctuates not only from year to year, but also throughout the year. The department management should use historical information and trends to project resources needed, in order to develop a budget appropriate and sufficient to service these students effectively and efficiently. All one hundred and twenty one (**121**) students placed out of district receive all related services through their out-of- district placement. They are not included in the following discussion.

RELATED SERVICES

The eighty-three (**83**) of the students with special needs in speech and language only receive this service from in-district employees. Two hundred and eighty-five (**285**) receive speech and language as part of their full complement of services. There are currently six (6) full time and 2 part time speech therapists budgeted as employees of the district. One of the full time positions remains unfilled and is contracted outside the district.

One hundred and thirteen (**113**) students receive the services of an occupational therapist and thirty-two (**32**) students receive the services of a physical therapist. This year the district contracted the services of four (4.2) OT and one (1) PT with outside agencies. All OT and PT services are delivered through outsourcing. On the average students require OT or PT services for 1 hr per week.

Our district as well as other districts throughout the state has been seeing a rise in autistic students. Students with this classification often require an extensive range of services at an intensive level. For instance, the district currently has some autistic students who require out of district placement and additional intensive home therapy.

One hundred and fourteen (**114**) students receive counseling services as part of their program. The district employs one social worker (.6), within the special services department, who delivers services to elementary students, three days per week. This counselor is supplemented by an outsourced.6 therapist (PhD) for the behaviorally involved elementary students and the overflow of other elementary students. Middle and high school counseling services are provided through an outsourced agency an equivalent of one 8 FTE.

AREAS OF FURTHER STUDY

The Special Services Department current system of delivery of related services is functional, but not necessarily efficient. The provision of these services results from the unanticipated needs of students.

- The feasibility of hiring 1 in-house OT person should be examined. The fact that there is no official job description would require guidelines and salary recommendations to be developed before a review of the job market can be conducted.

- Counseling services may be an area where in-house hiring could provide some efficiency. However, the nature and intensity of the services to be provided has to be examined. The feasibility of using CST members to fulfill some of these requirements should also be examined.
- A long-range plan for the management and delivery of these services will be developed.

SECTION III. UPDATE OF NEW IN-HOUSE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Six additional special education self-contained programs were developed for the 2003-2004 academic year: an Integrated Kindergarten program at Marshall; two (2) Language Learning Disabilities programs (Marshall and Jefferson); a Behavioral Disabilities program at Jefferson; and two (2) Multiple Disabilities programs (Clinton and South Orange Middle School).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Language Learning Disabilities Programs are provided for students who demonstrate a severe delay in receptive and/or expressive language and at least average or potentially average nonverbal intellectual capacity with verbal skills that are significantly below the average range. Programs are taught by teachers with special education qualifications in conjunction with a Speech and Language Specialist who determines the speech and language needs of the student and works with the teacher to integrate the goals into the curriculum.

The Behavioral Disabilities program is designed to accommodate students whose emotional needs negatively impact their educational progress. Students are instructed by a certified teacher of the handicapped, and given behavioral strategies and counseling by a Behaviorist/Counselor.

The Multiple Disabilities programs educate students whose education is impacted by two or more disability categories. These students require specialized instruction coupled with curricular modifications.

The Integrated Kindergarten program provides full-day instruction to students who require additional support provided by a certified teacher of the handicapped. Students are included in a morning Kindergarten session and transfer to a self-contained setting in the afternoon where a certified teacher of the handicapped provides supplemental instruction.

Related services (OT, PT, and Speech/Language Therapy) are provided as needed by certified personnel to all students who are classified eligible for special education and related services in these programs.

Program	School	Enrollment	2004-2005 Projections
Integrated Kindergarten	Marshall	9 students	8 students
Language/Learning Disabilities	Marshall	7 students	5 students
Language/Learning Disabilities	Jefferson	12 students	10 students
Behavioral Disabilities	Jefferson	3 students	2 students
Multiple Disabilities	Clinton	5 students	4 students
Multiple Disabilities	SOMS	5 students	5 students

All programs will continue in 2004-2005 except the Behavioral Disabilities classroom at Jefferson, which will be discontinued due to projected low enrollment. One of the three current students will progress to the middle school. The remaining two students will be transferred to the Behavioral Disabilities Program located at Clinton School or remain at Jefferson and transfer into the Language/Learning Disabilities Program. All programs are working well and all children are making progress. Programs will be modified as needed.

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