

ANNUAL REPORT PUPIL SERVICES

The Pupil Services Office oversees services to students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and the homeless. This involves the staffing and supervision of the teachers and related services providers, budgeting and providing the necessary teaching and assessment materials, as well as ensuring compliance to state and federal standards for Special Education, Civil Rights, and English as a Second Language programming.

As of October 1, 2015, the District has been providing special education services to 160 students on Individual Education Programs. Of these, 136 students are in the Hildreth and Bromfield schools. Twenty-four of our students are educated in outside schools, due to the need for more intense special education programming. This is a reduction of 5 out of district students from FY15 at this same time last year. The school personnel have worked diligently to meet student needs in-district, helping to reduce referrals to outside schools and as a result outside tuition costs.

The District also is providing accommodations to 45 students on 504 plans at present. We are presently servicing 13 English Language Learners (ELL). This is three more than last year, and eight more than during the fall of 2013.

The number of special education teachers, related service providers, and learning assistants has been consistently maintained. While we have had some internal transfers, only the Preschool Teacher, Abby Patriquin, and the Behavioral Specialist, Tessa Piantedose, are new to the district. We did increase the number of hours for our ESL Teacher, Margaret Serpa, in order to address the increase in ELL students. Her work with the ELL students is supplemented by a Learning Assistant. In addition, the Massachusetts requirements for teachers of ELL students, has changed and goes into effect on July 1, 2016. Our teachers have risen to the challenge. During the 2014-2015 year, five of our teachers have become certified as Sheltered English Immersion Teachers (SEI) through coursework or through studying and passing the MTEL in this area. Currently, another 18 teachers are taking the SEI course. Supervisors of teachers must also get a new credential. Principal Fredericks had already done so when she joined Hildreth in the Fall of 2015. In 2015-2016, four other administrators will also complete the coursework for the SEI Administrator's credential.

The report of the Coordinated Program Review by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was received in the fall of 2014. In it, 98 program standards were reviewed: 17 for ELL, 25 for Civil Rights, and 56 for Special Education. The district fared well, and was only found to have 5 areas for improvement. As part of our

corrective action, we agreed to conduct two formal program evaluations, as none had been done in the previous six years: one in the area of Civil Rights, and one in Special Education. The District was also required to modify and draft revised procedures in three areas for Special Education. All corrective actions were completed and subsequently approved by DESE by August of 2015.

This past year, through the use of grant funding, we were able to sponsor professional development in two topics identified by staff and administration as areas of need. Our teaching faculty, who work with the youngest of our students, participated in a short course on Early Literacy with noted trainer, Sally Grimes. To address working with students with behavioral issues, several approaches were initiated. In the fall of 2014, approximately a dozen staff from the district participated in a 4 day course in de-escalation techniques and restraint training. We also funded a “train the trainer” for Guidance Counselor Christine Reale with the Crisis Prevention International curriculum. In this way, we immediately prepared teams to address issues in each building, but also ensured continued courses for new staff and periodic refresher courses conducted by our own district trainer.

Other grant funding was utilized for educating all personnel about the challenges of working with students with mental health and anxiety issues. We brought in speaker, consultant and author, Jessica Minahan, M.Ed., BCBA. Her two part series presented in April and June focused on “Effective Strategies” and was well received. We were also able to purchase and distribute copies of her book, The Behavior Code, co-authored with Dr. Nancy Rappaport, to all staff. Follow-up activities have occurred in the schools this year, including a “book group”. More professional development along this area is planned-- that of working with social-emotional and behaviorally challenging students. These are the students at greatest risk for dropping out, school failure, and out of district placements. Already, another grant request has been written to continue session in the spring of 2016. We hope to increase our repertoire of skills and strategies, to enable us to better support both a student’s academic achievement and, at the same time, his or her realization of a sense of well-being.

Respectfully submitted,

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Director of Pupil Services