



A Community of Learners

Informational Memo - Department of Student Services Year in Review

To: School Board
From: Beth Martin, *Director of Student Services*

May 19, 2015

Overview

The following is a highlight of DSS accomplishments to date this year. The department has implemented new practices to improve communication, outreach and procedural practices while keeping our focus on what is best for our students. Improved relationships among all stakeholders have been realized as a result of the following:

Making connections

As a means to establish rapport and build relationships, steps have been taken to improve overall visibility within our school buildings, our local preschools and our local private/parochial schools. Steps have included responding to requests for direct support from staff, increasing availability to parents, and collaborating directly and regularly with administrative colleagues. Overall response time to school or parent requests has improved over the course of the school year where needed supports to either parents or their children have been provided.

Committee Meetings

Work has continued within the RtI Committee where focus has been on continued efforts to refine what interventions are being implemented across the District and to refine entrance and exit criteria for student participation in our RtI program.

The Department of Student Services (DSS) Committee has worked to streamline our referral process such that information collected through any student referral can be

accessed throughout a student's time within The Winnetka Public Schools. Going forward, this work will be completed within the RtI Committee as the DSS Committee will disband. DSS processes and procedures will be addressed during release days, institute days and during departmental meetings. Focus of the DSS department will continue to include:

- IEP eligibility and documentation
- 504 Plan eligibility and documentation
- Student records compliance

New this year has been participation of the Director in curriculum committees including the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment committee (CIA) and the Curriculum and Instruction committee (C&I). The goal is to continue to regularly collaborate with District facilitators and principals to further address differentiation and curricular supports for our students with special needs. One goal is to insure that interventions or curricular replacement materials utilized for special education instruction are directly aligned to the general education curriculum.

NSSSED

We continue to work with the township's special education cooperative, NSSSED, for coaching support and limited LEA support for speech therapy services to our Extended Resource Program (ERP) program. Coaching needs for specific areas have modified over time and have included support for RtI, Autism and Behavioral Coaching. Each school building has access to receive coaching support in the above areas. Going forward emphasis will be on Autism and Behavioral Coaching.

NSSSED also provides specific programs for students within the township. These include Early Childhood classrooms, Educational Life Skills classrooms and therapeutic day support through North Shore Academy. District 36 currently has students in all three of these programs and continues to collaborate with administrative staff at NSSSED to make sure we are meeting the needs of all of our students within their programs.

New Practices and Programs

- Early Childhood Screenings -
We have implemented new processes where families can register for monthly Early Childhood Screenings. Previously screenings were only completed one time a year in the Spring. One part of the new registration process is proof of residency. This ensures that only Winnetka residents are participating in our screening process.

- IEP Eligibility and Annual Review meetings for students -
We are working to streamline practices so annual review dates align with eligibility dates when possible. This will result in an overall reduction in the number of meetings for any one student over the course of the school year. This will also decrease the number of meetings for staff.
- New Programs (2015-2016) -
 - Social, Organizational and Academic Readiness (SOAR)
We are in the process of hiring staff for the new SOAR program, which will be implemented next school year at Skokie and at Washburne. To date this program has been well-received by parents and we are in the process of transitioning four students back to district from placements at North Shore Academy.
 - Learning Lab Plus (LLP)
This is a re-image of our Extended Resource Program (ERP) and will be transitional in nature for the 2015-2016 school year, as the program will bridge between Crow Island and Hubbard Woods Schools.
- Departmental Bridging -
The DSS department continues to collaborate with The Curriculum and Technology departments as a means to streamline our service delivery to all students. It is crucial for collaboration to continue such that the three departments can supplement each others' efforts and provide an increased level of support to staff and students.

Departmental Goals

- Maintain a child-centered focus while completing any State or Federal mandated tasks and when planning appropriate service delivery for students with special needs.
- Continue to improve home-school relationships at all levels (teacher, administration, central office).
- Maintain and establish proactive communication with parents.
- Continue to expand our continuum of service for our students.

Next Steps

- As part of the revised strategic plan, develop a three-year plan for DSS that will include response to intervention, special education, and possibilities for new program implementation.

- Align all programs and processes with Strategic Plan initiatives.
- Determine the best ways to support faculty and staff with appropriate professional learning opportunities as they relate to supporting students across the continuum.