



NEWTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Assistant Superintendent for Student Services

April 22, 2014

To: David Fleishman
From: Judy Levin-Charns, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
Maura Tynes, Director, Elementary Special Education
Re: Update on Administrative Restructure of Elementary Special Education

We look forward to presenting the background and move to the current administrative structure of elementary special education to the School Committee on Monday, April 28th. Below is a brief summary of the presentation.

Background/Process

During the 2012-13 school year, a committee of central staff members, principals, special education administrators, and special education teachers were charged with developing a proposal for improving the operation of elementary special education. The committee gathered information from surrounding districts, conducted a number of focus groups with various stakeholders in Newton, and explored the pros and cons of the NPS model. Until 2012, there had been two co-directors who oversaw approximately 80 teachers and 1180 students on IEPs in our 15 elementary schools. In 2012, the elementary administrative structure was changed to one director and one interim assistant director.

Over several months, the committee learned that areas for improvement centered on consistency, compliance, and building-based supports to improve the operations of elementary special education. With this information, the committee proposed adding one assistant director (to the already existing position of interim assistant director) and team specialists to allow buildings to build capacity in each school for student, teacher, and parent support.

Current Structure

The current administrative structure of elementary special education includes: the director of elementary special education, two assistant directors of elementary special education, and 13 team specialists, who support inclusion facilitators, special educators (co-teachers and teachers who teach in learning centers as well as city-wide programs), and related service providers (for example, speech/language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, school psychologists, social workers).

The director is responsible for long-range planning and program development at the elementary level, oversight of all elementary extended school year programming, supervision and evaluation of the assistant directors and team specialists, planning professional development, providing input into planning the budget, and hiring new staff. In addition, the director consults and collaborates with curriculum coordinators, elementary principals, and central staff. The director also meets weekly with the team specialists and assistant directors.

Two assistant directors allow for focused professional development and staff guidance and supervision. These positions manage complex and unforeseen situations. The assistant directors meet monthly with the elementary special education teachers.

The addition of the team specialist position has ensured a more consistent and systemic approach to the development of IEPs. The responsibilities of the team specialists include: IEP meetings, IEP procedures and compliance, IEP writing (in coordination with service providers), read, review, and sign IEPs, IEP meeting scheduling, liaison to families, weekly building based business meeting, and transition from Pre K to K and from 5th to 6th grade. The team specialists also attend the director's weekly meeting to be fully updated on regulation changes and district practices.

Information Gathering/Next Steps

In early April, elementary staff (including inclusion facilitators, special educators, and related service providers) were surveyed regarding the impact of the addition of the team specialist. Overall the results indicate a positive impact on staff with suggested areas of improvement. In addition, a focus group was held with principals to hear their feedback. We look forward to sharing what we have learned on Monday night.