

## Office of Special Education, Innovation Agenda and WestED Report

This report shares the changes that the Office of Special Education (OSE) has already implemented and will continue to implement over the next 5 years in response to the WestED Report. These changes are divided in three different phases as some may take longer than a year to implement. Below each the recommendation proposed by WestED and action steps are identified. Each recommendation is *italicized* for easy identification.

**OSE Vision: By providing inclusive learning experiences that facilitate success for students with disabilities through educationally appropriate programs and services designed to meet students' learning challenges, as well as collaboration with families, students, school staff and the community, students will develop the necessary skills to be able to access the same educational, extracurricular, and social experiences as their typical peers and achieve at their level of proficiency.**

### *Phase ONE-School Year 2010-2011*

OSE focused on program evaluation, communication and dissemination of findings, decision making based on evaluation results, and the development of an action plan.

Key elements of the Phase One vision included:

- External evaluator conducted an independent program evaluation. WestED completed this evaluation and presented their findings in March, 2011 to the School Committee. The report is posted on the Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) website.
- Recommendations were presented to staff, School Committee, and the community. The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) co- chairs at the time, and the Executive Director met on March 25<sup>th</sup> to answer their questions they might have regarding the WestED Report. We also discussed how we could move forward with some of the recommendations in an inclusive manner where parents would have the opportunity to provide suggestions and recommendations. In an attempt to clarify as many parent questions and include as many families as possible in the process, the following meetings were scheduled. All parents were invited.

Parents' meetings were as follow:

| <b>Date</b>    | <b>Location</b>                                      | <b>Time</b>    |
|----------------|--|----------------|
| March 31, 2011 | Peabody School Library-Regular PAC meeting           | 6:30- 8:30 pm  |
| April 7, 2011  | Superintendent's Conference Room<br>Thorndike Street | 9:00- 11:00 am |
| April 11, 2011 | Morse School Library                                 | 5:00 -7:00 pm  |

The report was also emailed to all OSE staff. The Special Education Advisory group will continue to meet monthly. This Advisory group is composed of special education representation and is chaired by the Cambridge Teachers 'Association president, and the Executive Director. In April, 2011 we met to address the recommendations made by WestED and their implications under the Innovation Agenda. The SPED advisory group meets during the second Wednesday of every month.

After these meetings were completed, parents and staff identified four (4) areas as urgent. Please be advised that parents' priority list is aligned with some of the WestED recommendations. These recommendations were:

- I. **Improve continuum of services for fully mainstreamed students**
- II. **Development of a Language Based Class**
- III. **Improve communication between parents and OSE**
- IV. **Development of a consistent protocol to develop, write and implement Section 504 plans**

### *Phase TWO-School Year 2011-2012*

OSE has been focusing on increasing parent, staff and community participation in the decision process, finalizing decision making based on evaluation results, and the identification of possible new programming to support students with disabilities to be implemented in September, 2012 as part of the Innovation Agenda.

#### **I. Continuum of Special Education Services**

*WestED Recommendation: Expand successful approaches based on data-based decision making and eliminate others where minimal results are demonstrated. For example, co-teaching is being implemented in several schools and feedback from teachers, staff, and some parents has been positive. However, implementing co-teaching with two full-time teachers per classroom on a large scale may be cost prohibitive. Evaluate the co-teaching model that is currently being used to ensure that it is resulting in improved student outcomes before moving to implement the approach on a broader scale.*

*WestED statements included the following statement: "Placement, interview and focus group*

*data, as well as the educator and parent surveys show that potential “gaps” in the continuum of service options in Cambridge include: ... lack of a “language-based” classroom option for students with learning disabilities, and absence of a learning center or resource room option at the high school level”*

*WestEd Recommendation: Evaluate current and newly implemented instructional approaches and programs to assess their effectiveness and impact on student outcomes. Expand successful approaches based on data-based decision making and eliminate others where minimal results are demonstrated.*

- Lack of continuum of services was identified by parents and staff as a weakness in our current programming as stated in the WestED report. It was reported that students who are in need of partial inclusion programming and services, but are not in need of a substantially separate class, have limited access to special education services that meet their needs. The current adopted Academic Challenge policy will allow for the implementation of two different programs at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level. For Mathematics, 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes will be taught in a co-teaching model where a content teacher and a special educator will work in collaboration to support all students. Furthermore, the extended block will allow for small group instruction in the classroom where students on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) can address specific goals and objectives written in their plan.
- In addition, the Academic Challenge plan allows for a resource room type of service for students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade in the area of English Language Arts (ELA). The addition of flex time to students’ schedules will allow special educators to work with students in small groups to address goals and objectives in this area as written in their IEPs.
- This year at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS) the Teacher in Charge (TIC) piloted a resource room block for students in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade that needed to be serviced out of the classroom. This resource room was not well received by parents or by the students as the 4 X4 block and the yearlong courses resulted in students missing instructional content time when attending the Resource Room.
- For the school year 2012-2013, we will be piloting a Resource Room class at CRLS for seniors for ELA and Math on an every other day rotation. Students in senior year have a more flexible schedule that will allow youngsters to attend this period to work on post secondary skill development

## **II. Develop a Language Based Class**

*WestED Recommendation based on Parents' Feedback: "Parent focus groups and surveys also indicated that some parents think that a gap exists for students with "language-based learning disabilities." Specifically, responding parents would like to see structured phonics-based programs such as Lindamood Bell, Orton-Gillingham, and the Wilson Reading System used more extensively or consistently with more one to-one tutoring outside the regular classroom. They implied that out-of-district placements for some students might be avoided if these options were more available locally"*

- The OSE administrative team identified several schools (private and public) to visit where parents perceived best practices being implemented. Each staff member visited at least two schools. An observation protocol was developed to be completed at each observation. Each member shared their notes with the rest of the administrative team during OSE meetings. Schools visited included: Newton South High School, Brookline Public Schools, Carroll, Learning Prep, Beacon, and others. These observations were completed during October and November, 2011.
- Office of Special Education partnered with Dr. Jerry Schultz to assist the district with the development of a Language Based class as proposed by the WestED report, a program that guarantees a continuum of services (such as learning center), and to improve services offered in the learning disabilities program. Dr. Schultz observed our programs and interviewed parents, staff, and principals to gather as much data as possible to achieve these goals.

Dr. Schultz's recommendations include:

- Identify ways that we can enhance our current learning disabilities program and services. This may include:
  - Recommendations of specific training that teachers may need
  - Entry and exit criteria for students in the programs, among others
- Explore the possible need of a language based class. If so, this will include:
  - Develop criteria of entry and exit protocols
  - Delineate student profile that may be recommended for such class, etc.
- Explore the possibility of implementing additional services for students partially included. This may include:
  - Learning center/resource room

- Program organization, among others

Dr. Schultz gathered information by visiting and meeting with staff and parents on the following dates:

October 17<sup>th</sup>-Visited Learning Disabilities classes at the Tobin School. Classroom observations and individual interviews with teachers and paraprofessionals were conducted during these classes.

October 28<sup>th</sup>- Visited Learning Disabilities classes at the Kennedy Longfellow School. Classroom observations and individual interviews with teachers and paraprofessionals were conducted during these classes.

October 31<sup>st</sup> and November 28<sup>th</sup> – Staff focus groups in the Superintendent’s Conference Room. Teachers were invited by categories including inclusion specialists and special educators.

November 4<sup>th</sup>- Focus Groups with parents. Two sessions were scheduled.

A survey developed by Dr. Schultz was mailed to all special education parents in mid December to gather more information since very few parents attended the focuses groups offered to them. Over a hundred surveys were returned.

Dr. Schultz also met with school psychologists and two principals that currently offer these classes (Kennedy Longfellow and Tobin). Lastly, he met with school and district coaches as well as selected district administrators.

- Dr. Schultz’s recommendation regarding the creation of a Language Based Class is below and will be implemented this coming school year.

The creation of substantially separate Language Based class for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students with such disability should be opened in September, 2012. Staffing for the class will include one certified special education teacher trained in Orton Gillingham or Wilson and a paraprofessional with a teaching certification, if needed. It is OSE’s expectation that the number of students in out-of-district placement with Language Based disabilities will be reduced in the next couple of years. This class will be the beginning of a program that will develop over subsequent school years. Students assigned to this class will meet the following criteria:

- 1) primary diagnosis of a language based learning disability/dyslexia
- 2) average to above average cognitive ability

3) no other concomitant disabilities

Dr. Schultz continues to work with OSE to improve services for students in the Learning Disabilities Program. Recommendations will follow.

### **III. Improve Communication Between OSE and Families**

WestED Recommendations: OSE should establish a partnership with C-PAC leadership, collaboratively developing plans to improve outreach and support to parents of children with disabilities in Cambridge, with particular emphasis on reaching out to under-represented parent groups. The position of C-PAC Coordinator, which has already been established, is an excellent beginning to a strengthened collaborative relationship.

Work with the C-PAC to develop parent information materials that are user-friendly and disseminated widely through multiple channels, including the C-PAC and CPS Web sites.

Ensure that all relevant information is available on the district's Web site for special education, that the site is accessible and user-friendly, and that information is available in other languages when necessary.

- School/district/home communication has increased through regularly scheduled meetings with families of students receiving both Section 504 and Special Education services. The Executive Director has meetings scheduled with IEP parents for the following months: December, 2011, January, March, and May, 2012. Meetings with Section 504 parents are scheduled for: October, December, 2011, February, and April, 2012.
- An OSE newsletter was developed to keep families informed of progress toward meeting Innovation Agenda Benchmarks and recommendations presented by WestED. The first newsletter was sent to all students via "back pack express" during the week of October 24<sup>th</sup>; the second newsletter was sent on February 17<sup>th</sup>. The last newsletter is expected to be completed by late spring.
- All PAC meetings and workshops that are offered to parents are posted on the CPS website and "robo-calls" are made on the evening prior to the meetings as a reminder. This has increased the attendance of participants and under-represented families
- PAC representatives attended school open houses to provide information to parents.
- The Executive Director has attended other meetings where parents may be in attendance. For example, the Executive Director attended a meeting for parents regarding Extended School Year (ESY) services which also included private and public summer program options to families. The eligibility process for ESY and those services that are offered in district were presented to the parents. The information was also posted on the CPS website.

#### IV. OSE to Manage Section 504:

*WestED Recommendation: Reorganize/restructure the Office of Special Education (OSE) into a service unit designed to support schools rather than serve students (Honig et al., 2010). For example, the Teachers in Charge positions might be restructured to establish a building-based student support services position for each school. Other current positions, such as school psychologists, also might be reconfigured for this purpose. These building-based positions could be responsible for the coordination of all student support services within the building, including Title I, Reading Recovery, Teacher Assistance Teams, 504 and special education (Ferguson, Kozleski, & Smith, 2001). Ideally, these positions would be based full time in a single building. This would provide a single point of contact for both teachers and parents regarding all support services, including but not limited to special education.*

- OSE has been monitoring compliance and implementation of 504 plans since September 2011; however, 504 plans still ultimately remain the school administrator's responsibility. School principals or their designee are responsible for scheduling and chairing meetings as well as developing and writing 504 plans. In an attempt to create consistency among schools regarding the format of 504 plans, OSE purchased a web based program called Easy504. School administrators and their designees were trained on Section 504 and how to use Easy504 in August, 2011. A second training was offered in February, 2012. At the district level a Teacher in Charge of Section 504 was hired to assist parents and administrators with this process. In addition, the Teacher in Charge of Section 504 is responsible for completing any psychological and/or academic testing needed to develop a 504 plan. She also monitors compliance of Section 504, provides assistance to parents and staff regarding Section 504 and provides technical support to school administrators and staff. A retired school psychologist and the TIC of Section 504 have developed an in- district protocol to assist with the consistent implementation of Section 504. This protocol is accessible to all school personnel through FirstClass. In addition, a Frequently Asked Questions of Section 504 and IEPs for parents was sent to all Cambridge Public Schools families during the second week of February. It is also posted on the CPS website. A workshop for parents describing the CPS protocol regarding Section 504 was offered March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Please be advised that the WestED recommendation listed above includes other areas such as Title 1, Reading Recovery, and others. The decision to create a holistic service unit has to be determined by a team of district leaders.

School year 2012-2015-Vision focuses on full implementation of newly identified programming to support students with disabilities, development of a monitoring system to evaluate new programs developed and their effectiveness, and the identification of any additional services and/or programming that may need to be implemented to continue the support of students with disabilities. This may include expansion of recently implemented programming as well as new programming.

Key elements of Phase Three vision include:

**Restructure of OSE Administration and Other Staff**

*WestED Recommendation: To create more coordination and consistency in OSE interaction with and across schools, use the Teacher in Charge positions to oversee special education in the schools and to supervise staff in assigned schools. Support to schools should be done in a holistic manner, not categorical as currently organized. Supervision of Teachers in Charge could be divided between the Executive and Assistant Directors; however, both should meet regularly with all Teachers in Charge to ensure consistency in communication.*

- Restructure of Teachers In Charge Positions: In response to the WestED recommendations and the upcoming Innovation Agenda, the OSE Administrative Team will be reorganized as follows for September, 2012.

| Robert Kelley  | Kati Donlon   | Rebecca Altepeter   |
|--|---|---|
| All Upper Campuses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambridge Street</li> <li>• Vassal Lane</li> <li>• Putnam Avenue</li> <li>• Rindge Avenue</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amigos</li> <li>• Baldwin</li> <li>• Peabody</li> <li>• Haggerty</li> <li>• Graham &amp; Parks</li> <li>• Tobin</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King Open (not including the ASD program)</li> <li>• Fletcher-Maynard (not including the ASD program)</li> <li>• Cambridgeport</li> <li>• Kennedy-Longfellow</li> <li>• King</li> <li>• Morse</li> </ul> |

Each administrator listed above will be responsible for the evaluations, supervision and support of all OSE staff assigned to the schools. This will include: related services, special educators, substantially separate teachers, and other associated staff. They will also be the primary contact person for families and administrators. The re-organization will reduce the number of staff that families may need to contact if they have any questions about their child’s IEP.

Some exceptions apply. The Executive Director and assistant special education director will remain district-wide. The assistant special education director will also directly supervise and evaluate all school psychologists and school adjustment counselors.

The Teacher in Charge of the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) program will manage, support, and supervise the following:

- All Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Substantially Separate Classes
- District-wide consultant to ASD – students fully mainstreamed
- All Applied Behavior Analysis Specialists and Behavior Specialists

The Teachers in Charge of Special Start and CRLS will remain with the same job responsibilities as this school year.

Lastly, during this school year, the whole OSE Administrative Team has met every week on Tuesdays from 9-11am. This has helped the team to work more collaboratively and to improve communication among its members.

*WestED Recommendation: Rethink and repurpose the role of Inclusion Specialist. Instead of the Inclusion Specialist position, create building-based instructional support positions where the individual could provide consultation to classroom teachers, direct services to students in or out of the regular classroom, and supervision to paraeducators at their assigned grade levels, serving students on a cross-categorical basis with a range of disabilities.*

- The Inclusion Specialist’s job description has been reviewed and will be changed starting September, 2012. **SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WILL REMAIN AS WRITTEN IN THEIR IEPs.** All special education teachers servicing partially included students for inclusion services or academic strategies will be called Special Educators. Therefore, one teacher will be responsible for providing inclusion support and direct instruction to a student. This will reduce the number of staff that the parents may need to contact to learn about their child’s progress and will allow for better communication between the general and special education teacher.

### **Special Education Substantially Separate Programs**

*WestED Recommendation: Continue to maintain the option of sub-separate classrooms for children who demonstrate the need for that type of highly structured placement. However, locate program strands (e.g., ASD classrooms) in one school building to minimize the transitions the individual children need to make as they move up through the grades.*

- Develop strands for students in substantially separate classes where students do not have to move more often than typical peers. With the approval of the Innovation Agenda, creating these strands was possible. Classes are assigned as follows for the school year 2012-2013.

### SPECIAL START PROGRAM

| <b>Name of Classroom</b> | <b>Number of Paras assigned to class</b> | <b>Current Location</b>  | <b>Proposed Location September 2012</b> |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|---|
| Integrated               | 2  | Peabody                  | Peabody                                 |
| Sub-separate             | 3  | Peabody                  | Peabody                                 |
| Sub-separate             | 3  | Tobin                    | Baldwin                                 |
| Autism integrated        | 3  | Tobin                    | Cambridgeport                           |
| Integrated               | 2  | Tobin                    | Baldwin                                 |
| Sub-separate             | 3  | Fletcher-Maynard Academy | Morse                                   |
| Integrated               | 2  | Fletcher-Maynard Academy | Baldwin                                 |
| Sub-separate             | 3  | Upton Street             | Kennedy Longfellow                      |
| Integrated               | 2  | Upton Street             | Morse                                   |
| Integrated               | 2  | Morse                    | Cambridgeport                           |
| Integrated               | 2  | Kennedy Longfellow       | Kennedy Longfellow                      |

Please be advised that some classes have been relocated to another school based on the students that are expected to be in need of services in September, 2012.

### AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (ASD) PROGRAM

| <b>School</b>   | <b>Grade Level</b> |
|---|--------------------|
| Fletcher Maynard                                      | Kindergarten       |
| Fletcher Maynard                                      | Kindergarten       |
| Fletcher Maynard                                      | Kindergarten -1    |
| Fletcher Maynard                                      | 2                  |
| Fletcher Maynard                                      | 3, 4 and 5         |
| Fletcher Maynard-Resource Room                        | Kindergarten-5     |
| King Open   | 1                  |
| King Open   | 2-3                |
| King Open   | 4-5                |
| King Open/Cambridge Street Upper Campus Resource Room | K-6                |

This program is growing to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level for the school year 2012-2013.

**DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY PROGRAM**

| School                  | Grade Level  |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Morse                   | Kindergarten |
| Morse                   | 1            |
| Morse                   | 2-3          |
| Morse                   | 4-5          |
| Putnam Ave Upper Campus | 6-8          |
| Putnam Ave Upper Campus | 6-8          |

**LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM**

| School                   | Grade Level |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Graham Parks             | 2-3         |
| Graham Parks             | 4-5         |
| Vassal Lane Upper Campus | 6           |
| Vassal Lane Upper Campus | 7           |
| Vassal Lane Upper Campus | 8           |

**EMOTIONAL FRAGILE PROGRAM**

| School                   | Grade Level |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Baldwin                  | K-2         |
| Baldwin                  | 3-5         |
| Rindge Ave. Upper Campus | 6           |
| Rindge Ave. Upper Campus | 7-8         |

**INTEGRATED KINDERGARTEN**

*WestED Quote from the parents: The integrated classrooms for preschool children through Special Start were also mentioned as an exemplary placement option, and a number of responding parents would like to see this option extended into Kindergarten and elementary school.*

| School   | Grade Level  |
|----------|--------------|
| Haggerty | Kindergarten |

We must note that, in September, 2011 this class was moved to the Haggerty School where they have been well supported by the community. However, we are facing a dilemma since no typical peers are opting to attend this integrated class.

This class is only supporting students with special needs.

## **Professional Development**

*WestEd Recommendation: Continue to develop in-district capacity to serve students who are currently served in out-of-district settings, particularly for secondary level students with Emotional Disabilities.*

Dr. Nancy Rappaport continues to work with the district. In the spring, she will be providing professional development to all school psychologists in regard to working with emotionally fragile and behaviorally challenging students. She will share her experiences that are currently written in her new book, *The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students*. She will also be providing professional development to all teachers and related service staff in August, 2012. Three hundred books were bought by the district for the staff.

*WestED Recommendations: Provide integrated professional development opportunities where general and special education and other specialized staff are learning together about academic content and the general education curriculum as well as differentiated instruction, RTI, and PBIS.*

- General and special education teachers in the middle grades have been invited to attend a two-day Co-Teaching Conference on April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup>. Some sessions include:
  - Five co-teaching choices that work
  - Practical strategies for differentiating instruction in a co-taught class
  - Strong communication strategies that support collaboration
  - Get the most from flexible groups, centers and stations in a co-teaching class, etc.
- Crisis Intervention Training: School Year 2011-2012
  - OSE has three certified instructors on staff. Two are master's level having completed over 200 teaching hours and attained certification in two additional advanced CPI courses (Autism Spectrum Disorders and Life Space Crisis Intervention). The other instructor is at the senior level having completed 80 teaching hours and attained certification in one additional advanced CPI course (Life Space Crisis Intervention).
  - Four district wide training sessions have already been held: August, 2011 (2 sessions), October, 2011 and January, 2012.
  - One more district wide training session is planned for May, 2012.
  - One school-based training was held at the Cambridgeport School in November, 2011.
  - Three district wide refresher trainings have been held: November, 2011 and March, 2012 (2 sessions).

- Two more district wide refresher trainings are planned for June, 2012.
  - Two school based refresher trainings will be held in April, 2012 at the Baldwin School and another at the Tobin School.
  - About a hundred and fifty (150) staff, including both special and general education are currently trained in the district. All schools have at least 2 staff members trained, with numbers rising to 24 staff in schools that host more intensive programs such as ASD and Emotionally Fragile Students.
- Autism Spectrum Disorders Inclusion Workshop
    - This workshop was developed and taught by general and special education teachers from the Fletcher Maynard where they are mainstreaming ASD students into the general education settings. It was offered to all King Open school staff as they will be hosting the rest of the ASD classes in September, 2012.
    - The objectives include: introduction to Autism and typical profiles of students on the spectrum, applied behavior analysis and effectiveness of behavioral strategies, general and special teachers collaboration and, the logistics of scheduling, planning and teaching in an inclusion classroom.
- Achieving Fluency: Special Education and Math: Looking at ways to support our students with special needs in learning math in our Jr. K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms.
    - This 10 hour workshop was offered to all general and special education teachers. About 40 teachers are currently participating in this workshop. The purpose is to have general education teachers learn how to implement accommodations and modifications of students' IEPs in math classes and for special educators to learn more about math content.
- EmPOWER Writing Program:
    - EmPOWER™ is an instructional method for teaching expository writing to students in all grade levels. The approach was developed by Bonnie Singer, Ph.D. and Anthony Bashir, Ph.D. during the course of many years of working with students, teachers, and schools. The goal of EmPOWER was to demystify the writing process so that teachers in all grades and all content areas could use the same instructional methods and strategies for teaching students to write. Our aim was to provide teachers and students with a common language and core set of strategies that reveal how expository writing works, thereby enhancing instruction and improving student performance. This course was offered to all CPS staff. About 50 people will be fully trained by the end of this spring.
- Orton Gilligham Training:
    - Selected OSE staff have been attending the first OG course. Orton Gillingham is a specialized instructional program that focuses on the development of the following skills: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary Development, Fluency and Comprehension Strategies.

- Positive behavior interventions in the classroom: Promoting student’s success in supportive environments workshop. Two separate workshops were given in the fall 2011. The first workshop was for Special Start paraprofessionals and selected preschool teachers. The second was offered to Peabody paraprofessionals (K-5). The training focused on understanding and identifying the various functions of problem behavior. The instructors discussed function based behavior strategies and preventative ways to manage behavior challenges before they occur. The workshops also had a significant focus on strategies to teach and reinforce functionally equivalent replacement behaviors.
- A Sensory Processing workshop was provided to all preschool special education staff in the winter 2012. This workshop provided an overview of Sensory Processing, discussed differences between modulation and discrimination, looked at Sensory Diet, features, guidelines for usage and possible environmental changes that can be put into place.
- School Psychologists’ trainings included:
  - Executive Functioning-Diagnostic Analysis and Interpretation
  - National Association of School Psychologist (NASP) Conference
  - Central Auditory Processing
  - Response to Intervention (RTI)
  - Specific Learning Disabilities-Identification
  - Autism Evaluations—Qualitative Interviews
  - Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)
  - School Mental Health Conference—Harvard Medical School
  - Trauma’s Impact on Learning
  - Special Education Law in Massachusetts
- School Adjustment Counselors/School Social Workers
  - Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS)
  - Suicide and Suicidality in School Age Children
  - Gay and Lesbian Youth
  - School Mental Health Conference—Harvard Medical School
  - Trauma’s Impact on Learning
  - Middlesex Partnerships for Youth, Inc.
  - Rethinking Challenging Kids
  - Dealing with Death in Schools
  - Executive Functioning—Intervention Strategies
- CRLS -Social Dynamics Description (2011-2012 school year): Social Dynamics is a course that teaches social cognition and social thinking skills. During this course, students work on social understanding, which is the precursor to being able to use

social skills in real life situations. The class follows the social thinking curriculum using the ILAUGH model created by Michelle Garcia Winner.

- CRLS- Social Dynamics Application (2012-2013 school year): The Social Dynamics Application course continues to teach social cognition and social thinking skills with an emphasis on applying the knowledge to real life situations and scenarios within the school and the community environments. Students will practice using social skills in a variety of real life situations to demonstrate social understanding. This Social Dynamics Application class will continue to follow the social thinking curriculum using the ILAUGH model created by Michelle Garcia Winner.

The I LAUGH model components include:

- Initiating novel activities
- Listening Actively
- Abstracting and Inferencing
- Understanding Perspective Taking: Thinking About Others and How They Think About You
- Gestalt – the big picture
- Humor and Human Relatedness

- Physical and occupational therapists attended a training focused on the importance of sleep provided by Dr. Jo Solet. She is a Clinical Instructor at Harvard Medical School and a member of the Division of Sleep Medicine and Faculty of Medicine at the Cambridge Health Alliance.
- Occupational and Physical therapists attended a two day training on Bal-A-Vis-X provided by Candi Cosgrove, M.Ed. Bal-A-Vis-X is a series of Balance / Auditory/ Vision exercises, of varied complexity, most of which are deeply rooted in rhythm. These exercises consist of thousands of physical/auditory/visual midline crossings in three dimensions, crossings that are steadily rhythmic and auditory based. These exercises encourage full-body coordination and focused attention. The program utilizes beanbags, racquetballs, balance boards, and multiple principles and activities from Educational Kinesiology. It demands cooperation and promotes self challenge.
- Speech and language therapists attended a training regarding the educational and social- emotional implications of hearing loss. The speakers were Lauralyn Chetwynd and Kevin Nolan from Children's Hospital Boston. It was a follow-up to the presentation last year which focused more on the technical aspects of hearing aids and FM systems used to support children with hearing loss.

### **WestEd Recommendations Regarding Special Education Cost Containment**

*WestEd Recommendations: Work toward increasing the capacity of each school to address the diverse educational needs of all its students using an integrated, coordinated model of service*

*delivery that emphasizes early intervention and support to students prior to referral to special education. This type of school wide approach to early intervention and support might coordinate resources from a variety of source including special education, Title I, Reading Recovery, or other building based support services. The Response to Intervention (RTI) framework that the district is considering is a good example of this type of coordinated, early intervention approach that will benefit all students. This approach may also help to reduce referral and special education identification rates and may impact the need for both sub-separate classrooms and out-of-district placements.*

*Develop a coordinated system of tiered interventions and supports in each school that draws from resources other than special education to form a flexible, integrated, and well coordinated system of services and supports to which any/all students might have access.*

The OSE administrative team believes that the items listed below make a great impact on the Special Education department’s budget. Some of these items are aligned with WestEd Recommendations.

- A full implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) is expected that will reduce the number of students referred to special education.
- Last school year data shows that of 17 (all elementary schools, Learning Communities C, R, L, S and the High School Extension Program) nine (9) sites had an increase in their referrals when compared with the previous year. Four (4) schools had around 100% increase or more in their referrals.

| <b>Grades</b>    | <b>Total Referral SY 08-09</b> | <b>Total Referral SY 09-10</b> | <b>Total Referral SY 10-11</b> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Jr. Kindergarten | 11                             | 19                             | 19                             |
| Kindergarten     | 24                             | 29                             | 50                             |
| 1                | 30                             | 34                             | 43                             |
| 2                | 28                             | 39                             | 51                             |
| 3                | 21                             | 27                             | 37                             |
| 4                | 20                             | 19                             | 20                             |
| 5                | 16                             | 19                             | 26                             |
| 6                | 4                              | 6                              | 8                              |
| 7                | 4                              | 2                              | 9                              |
| 8                | 7                              | 13                             | 14                             |
| 9                | 10                             | 10                             | 9                              |
| 10               | 9                              | 8                              | 16                             |
| 11               | 3                              | 3                              | 13                             |
| 12               | 1                              | 1                              | 6                              |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>188</b>                     | <b>229</b>                     | <b>321</b>                     |

- Additional professional development opportunities for staff with regard to cultural awareness and cultural responsive teaching are needed. Referral rates demonstrate

more males and minority students continue to be referred across the district. The following trends were identified:

- Out of 17 (all elementary schools, Learning Communities C, R, L, S and the High School Extension Program) nine (9) sites had an increase in their referrals for the SY 10-11 when compared with the previous year. Four (4) schools had around 100% increase or more in their referrals.
- The High School Extension Program, Learning Community R, Fletcher-Maynard Academy, King and Tobin were the only schools that did not refer more males than females for the school year 2010-2011.
- The Haggerty, Learning Communities L, S and the High School Extension were the only schools that did not refer more minority students than white students during last school year.
- First and second grades had the highest number of referrals in at least half of the elementary schools.

|                                     |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Total Males Referred SY10-11</b> | <b>Total Females Referred SY10-11</b> |
| 195                                 | 126                                   |

**Total Referral Rates by Race of Students**

|       |                  |          |       |       |
|-------|------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| White | African American | Hispanic | Asian | Other |
| 113   | 104              | 50       | 22    | 32    |

*WestEd Recommendation: Evaluate current and newly implemented instructional approaches and programs to assess their effectiveness and impact on student outcomes. Expand successful approaches based on data-based decision making and eliminate others where minimal results are demonstrated. For example, co-teaching is being implemented in several schools and feedback from teachers, staff, and some parents has been positive. However, implementing co-teaching with two full-time teachers per classroom on a large scale may be cost prohibitive. Evaluate the co-teaching model that is currently being used to ensure that it is resulting in improved student outcomes before moving to implement the approach on a broader scale.*

This school year, the principal at the Haggerty and the Executive Director have met to discuss the need for a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the co-teaching model at this school. During the summer of 2012, we will meet to develop this protocol. The goal is, that by mid school year 2012-2013, we will have determined whether to expand, keep as current, or modify the current program. The recommendation will be based on accurate data of students' achievements, monitoring of progress and the needs of the students in the program.

*Begin the budget process at the building level, based on an agreed-upon minimal level of*

*staffing per school. Then build “bottom up” from there, adding staff based on the needs of students placed in that building and establishing sub-separate classrooms or programs only when student needs within their buildings cannot be met satisfactorily.*

OSE staff has contacted about 20 different districts to try to identify a location where this recommendation is being implemented. We also contacted WestED staff to identify a district that builds its budget as they recommended. We were unable to identify such a district.

Some local districts that were contacted include:

|             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| Brookline   | Newton     |
| Amherst     | Braintree  |
| Worcester   | Framingham |
| Lynnfield   | Brockton   |
| New Bedford | Boston     |
| Burlington  | Watertown  |
| Canton      | Weston     |

Districts that were contacted outside of Massachusetts include:

Arlington Public Schools  
Arlington, VA

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools  
Chapel Hill, NC

Evanston Township High School District 202 -  
Evanston, IL

Farmington Public Schools  
Farmington, MI

Green Bay Area Public Schools  
Green Bay, WI

Madison Metropolitan School District  
Madison, WI

Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200  
Oak Park, IL

Shaker Heights City School District  
Shaker Heights, OH

Windsor Public Schools  
Windsor, CT

*The OSE administrative team should continue to collaborate with building principals in budget development for each school. This collaboration is important in order to establish building-based responsibility and accountability for special education students at the building level. However, it will be important for OSE to retain the flexibility to move staff between schools if needed to adjust to changing needs or enrollment patterns.*

Currently, the district gathers teachers and staff schedules three times a year to review their workload. New students' eligibility for special education, transfers of students and other facts may change the workload of staff. If OSE identifies an inequity of workloads, staff may be reassigned to other schools, or may be added to support students, etc.

*To increase consistency and equity across schools, develop criteria or guidelines for decision-making about level of services and placement decisions. Further, to address perceived idiosyncratic and variable decision-making across schools with regard to the nature and extent of IEP services and staffing, provide district-wide training to IEP Team Chairpersons with regard to IEP services decision-making. The document, Guidelines for Making Decisions about IEP Services (Giangreco, 2001) may be a useful resource. (See Appendix L.)*

*Create protocols to clearly establish when and how services and supports should be recommended. For example, create a protocol to establish when a student may be in need of a 1:1 paraprofessional so this determination is consistent across all schools in the district. Regarding paraeducators assigned to individual students, develop an individualized plan to gradually phase out paraeducator support as the student demonstrates greater independence.*

We have contacted all Urban Districts to ask for any entry or exit criteria they might have to determine eligibility of services. Only one district had Exit and Entry Guidelines for Related Services and Adaptive Physical Education. The OSE administrative team will continue to work on the development of possible criteria for services over the summer months.

This school year 2011-2012 ten (10) paraprofessionals positions were converted to teaching positions to increase the level of support for students.

### **WestEd Recommendations with District-wide Implications**

*The following are recommendations made by WestED that need the support from the district administration as they involved other departments and staff beyond OSE.*

- Firmly establish that responsibility for all students is shared across general and special education, that the responsible "unit" is each individual school, and that building principals are responsible for all of the children in their schools,*

*including those receiving special education services (Sailor & Roger, 2005; Sailor & Roger, in press).*

- Provide job-embedded professional development and expert consultation and coaching to schools as they begin to implement an RTI framework.*
- Regular meetings with building principals should also include school psychologists, again to ensure consistent direction and communication. Develop a coordinated system of tiered interventions and supports in each school that draws from resources other than special education to form a flexible, integrated, and well coordinated system of services and supports to which any/all students might have access.*
- Provide job-embedded professional development and expert consultation and coaching to schools as they begin to implement an RTI framework.*
- Include all members of the OSE administrative team in the Superintendent's Cabinet and/or other meetings of district leaders so that they are aware of and can participate in discussions regarding school improvement initiatives in the district, including curriculum development and professional development for general and special education teachers.*

The district leadership team is committed to continue to explore the possibility of implementing some of these district-wide WestED recommendations. CPS administration, staff, and families are invested in the inclusion of all our children.