

UPPER PERKIOMEN SCHOOL DISTRICT
2229 East Buck Road
Pennsburg PA 18073
Special Education & Pupil Services Committee Meeting
MINUTES

April 22, 2019 – 7:30 p.m.

CHAIR: Judy Maginnis

Ex-Officio: Dr. Kerry Drake, President

MEMBERS:

Melanie Cunningham
James Glackin

Superintendent – Dr. Alexis McGloin

Interim Director of Special Education & Pupil Services – Dr. Marykay Feeley

In attendance: Judy Maginnis, Dr. Andrea Farina, Melanie Cunningham, Chris McCloskey, James Glackin, Allison Stephens,

Dr. Marykay Feeley provided an update on mental and behavioral health supports. We are looking at what we are doing for mental health needs and looking at forecasting for next year and assisting with immediate needs. We are no different than other districts as far as an increase in mental health needs.

Power Point presentation by Dr. Feeley, Dr. Farina and Mrs. McCloskey:

- The supports that have been added to the district include full time district Behavior Specialist and social worker and a part-time psychologist.
- We have a licensed counseling office in each building through Creative Health and have added curriculum resources (Systems 44 and Read 180, Saxon Math and Wilson).
- Montgomery County has approved a grant for us to provide the Second Step program beginning next school year.
- Professional development for staff includes: QBS certifications and re-certifications, SAP training, MTSS training and implementation, Trauma Informed Care training for psychologists and counselors, mindfulness training, expanded para training, Act 126 Mandated Reporter training, Chapter 15 and Spec. Ed. Law overview PD and ALICE training.

The program proposal for 19-20 for Hereford, Marlborough and the 4th and 5th Grade Center

- We have reduced student numbers at each building.
- At each building there is a counselor, math interventionist and reading specialist.
- A specific special education staff member will be identified to provide emotional support.
- Move Life Skills class from Marlborough to Hereford and have a combined Autistic Support/Life Skills Support classroom.

Dr. Farina stated that the reorganization of the elementary schools takes the population in line with recommended guidelines for counseling etc. In reviewing total numbers of Learning Support students at Hereford and Marlborough we are recommending to the Board that we maintain 2 Learning Support

teachers at each building even with 21 LS students at Hereford and 13 LS students at Marlborough. These teachers will not be providing services to regular education students. The recommendation from the administrative team to provide this support at these building comes at a consequence at the secondary level as High School has caseloads of 30. We feel this is necessary to provide support and get the process in place.

Question: What will be provided as far as behavior support? What does the process look like for a regular education student? Is the behavior support provided to those students? Dr. Farina answered that elementary teachers look for coaching and guidance on how to handle situations and having the ES and extra LS teacher is huge to provide that support.

Question: Why is it a choice between High School and elementary? Dr. Farina answered that other recommendations are being made to run core programs and be fiscally responsible.

The 2019-2020 restructuring provides each elementary with a principal, counselor, math specialist/MTSS, reading specialist/MTSS, Emotional Support teacher, daily psychologist assistance, a full continuum of support services.

Considerations for the Board include:

- Additional K-5 Student Assistance and Family Outreach Counselor
- Train 8 district paraprofessionals as RBTs (Registered Behavior Technician)
- Consider increasing psychologist at Marlborough from .5 to 1.0

Dr. Farina stated that there is the need for direct, therapeutic, family contact and we are looking at maximizing that recommendation for trauma and therapeutic counseling; and have an at risk counselor at K-5 and 6-8. Dr. Teller would be a compliment to those direct services for behavior. The May 2nd budget meeting will be the iterations of the impact each of those will have on the budget.

Dr. Feeley also stated that there are discussions about reallocation of staffing at the secondary level.

Question: When will the 8 people be trained? Dr. Feeley answered that it would be in the 2019-2020 school year as the Board has to agree to recommendations.

Question: How long will training take for RBT? Mrs. McCloskey answered that specific guidelines require 40 hours of training over 6-8 weeks and an exam at the end. Biggest chunk of training can be done on-line. Dr. Farina followed up by stating that we will have to open the paraprofessional agreement and look to compensate them at a different level. We selected 8 because of low incidence classrooms and they will be district wide.

Question: Between additional counselors, RBTs and psychologist, which would have the greatest impact? Dr. Farina stated she believes the best solution is to provide direct service to kids and teachers on the ground by having a K-5 counselor. That is the most expensive addition, but we can see the impact that this kind of counselor has made on the High School. They would have the most impact on the district as far as helping all students.

Question: How would that position differ from social worker? Dr. Farina answered that the social worker can be part of at-risk services. We would look to reallocate foster and homeless. K-5 counselor

will cover all 3 buildings. The goal would be to have a time and place at each building, but would attend a crisis if needed.

Question: What are you expecting from the RBTs? Dr. Feeley answered that the role is direct intervention as well as working with regular education teachers as far as navigating the success of the student. Ultimately the oversight will be for PTS to supervise but Chris McCloskey will be overseeing them. Missy Teller will be part of the linkage and consult and check in with them. The ultimate responsibility is with Chris because they have to have direct supervision by a BCBA.

Question: Are RBTs working with only kids in special education? Dr. Farina answered that ultimately they are for kids with disabilities.

Question: When can the coaches work with the teachers when there are no students around to teach the teacher how to handle these behaviors? Dr. Feeley answered that during an event modeling will occur as the RBT is handling the crisis. Also look at before and after school.

Question: Will teachers receive training on de-escalation strategies? Dr. Farina answered that we will have teachers participate in the training. At this time we don't know how it will work, will need to look at schedules. We have to have a debriefing time between teachers and kids after a situation.

Question: What about parents who see these behaviors? Mrs. McCloskey answered that we currently offer parent trainings and we could look to offer behavior trainings with strategies that parents can use at home. As we begin to develop our calendar for next year we will look to provide those types of trainings.

Question: Is it possible to train more teachers in QBS and would they be expected to be a part of the crisis team? Dr. Farina answered that there is a concern that the restraint part of QBS isn't appropriate for all staff, but the de-escalation techniques can be offered.

A few audience members stated that they felt better after the meeting about the outline of potential services as being real solutions.

Dr. Farina stated that recommendations will be presented at a May 2nd meeting and the final budget meeting is May 9th.