

Special Education Committee

January 18, 2023

Attendees: Dr. David Goldblatt, Carla Perez, Dr. Shivoyne Trim, Tameka Stafford, Jennifer Finnerty, Tina LaGala, Melanie Deyscher, Yvonne Bouknight, Allison Silverstein

1. Grant funded position to begin district wide program review. Initially, the idea began with the desire for an ABA program review but has expanded to include review of all programs and interventions in place for students (this should become a 5 year cycle of review). An independent consultant, Suzanne Olimpio, has been hired to start on February 1, and the position is funded through June of this year. Ms. Olimpio's background includes working as a Director of Pupil Services and as Superintendent and she has done similar reviews for Morristown, Sparta, and a few other districts. The consultant will work in tandem with Pupil Service and ECI. This is an excellent opportunity to address some of the audit items: ECI and Pupil Services working in partnership together along the continuum of student need; and the systemic availability of evidence backed programming across all schools.
2. Review of IMSE Training (Institute for Multi-Sensory Education)The district has provided 30 hours of training for all Curriculum Support teachers-this training provides a complete understanding of IMSE's enhanced Orton Gillingham method and the tools necessary to apply it in the classroom. This is a significant step in building capacity to service all our childrens' needs. The program is also being offered to all special ed teachers in self contained classrooms/resource rooms. The training will be on a voluntary basis after school, the district will pay the tuition fee.

3. OG Training: The district presently has 1 cohort of teachers who have graduated from the 2 year OG program at FDU, a second cohort is in year 2 of training, and a third cohort started their training this Fall. This training is paid for through an ongoing IDEA grant. Again, this is about building the district's capacity, next steps will include looking at scheduling practices to best utilize this wonderful resource of OG trained teachers. Additionally, the district has hired Judy Shapiro, an industry expert, to provide professional development to all teachers in the FDU program (past and present) to support teachers in utilizing OG as a small group interventions.
4. Implementation of the Paraprofessional Checklist-This is an information gathering tool being used by Child Study Teams to provide rationale to support the request for a paraprofessional. Data will also be collected over time to examine trends across schools and Child Study Teams. An audit item from both 2009 and 2020 special education audit was the overuse of 1:1 paraprofessionals, potentially inadvertently resulting in students not advancing, or falling further behind, or becoming socially isolated(when there is not a thoughtful pulling back of support over time) rather than fostering increased independence and skill development.
5. Montclair Public Schools' commitment to collaborate with Family Connections. Family Connections is applying to the NJ Department of Children and Families for \$6.9 million in annual funding to bring significant new preventative and mental health services to Essex County public school students, their parents, and educators. Examples of services include: mental health first aid, trauma focused therapy, suicide prevention and aggressive behavior replacement. Collaboration is contingent on Family Connections' receipt of funding.