

# **SPECIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

## **OCTOBER 2011**

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**PERSONNEL UPDATES** This year our primary Child Study Team and related service providers (Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapists, Physical Therapist) remained intact. With the core unit remaining constant, there is a continuity of service to all our special education students as well as a cohesive and philosophically similar approach. The team continues to provide a broad array of services to our students with the goal of maintaining in-district programming for our special needs students wherever appropriate.

There was one new special education certificated staff hire and also several new support staff personnel additions, each of whom brought with them experience and broad skill sets. The appendix highlights all district-wide staff and reflects the few adjustments that occurred this year.

In terms of certificated staff, we were fortunate to have Ms. Kylie Pringle join our elementary self-contained programming at Evergreen Avenue School. Ms. Pringle is not new to the district as she provided some instructional services to Woodbury High School last year. Her reputation preceded her for doing good work with our high school students, and we anticipate that Ms. Pringle will continue this trend with our elementary students this year.

### **INCLUSION UPDATE**

The first highlighted area in this report is the continued effort to provide our special education students with education in an inclusionary setting whenever appropriate. This philosophy is not just shared by the Woodbury Special Services Department; it has also been mandated by Federal and State governments. Systematic and individual conversations regarding this topic are always at the forefront of our dialogue with teachers, parents, case managers and administration. Each year we continue to modify programs to find new and creative ways to increase inclusionary opportunities within the current fiscal and personnel landscape. Last year, we reported a shifting of staff responsibilities at the high school to broaden our inclusion support in the content areas of science and social studies. This year, we are looking at creative ways of increasing inclusion experiences for our elementary students. We are currently taking on this challenge in the Evergreen Elementary School with a team approach to science instruction that will allow Special Education staff to take cadres of their self-contained students into the general education classrooms for a portion of the science lesson on a daily basis. At the Walnut Street and West End Schools resource center teachers are utilizing a push-in model of service delivery as opposed to pull-out at an increased rate in comparison to years past. These small but progressive steps in the area of inclusion continues to demonstrate our dedication to providing appropriate services in the least restrictive setting for ALL of our Woodbury Students.

### **RELATED SERVICES – BEHAVIORAL/READING SPECIALIST UPDATE**

Over the course of the past several years we have continued to build in-district resources for the provision of related services. At this point we are fortunate that the district is currently contracting directly for our Physical Therapy, Speech and Occupational Therapy needs rather than going through a third party provider. We feel this not only makes sense from a fiscal perspective, but also gives us more accountability and quality control over the implementation of services. Furthermore, this year we are actually contracting out Occupational Therapy services to a neighboring district to generate revenue back to our district.

Last year in this report we highlighted the addition of Ms. Trish Walshe, a Behavioral Specialist, who provided the district with consultative behavioral intervention plans across the district's elementary schools. This year we were able to utilize IDEIA grant money to increase her role with the provision of direct reading intervention services as well as professional development for staff. Ms. Walshe is actually a certified reading specialist and is a Level 1 Wilson certified instructor. The Wilson system of reading instruction is a model based on direct phonetic instruction that is designed to help struggling readers primarily at the elementary level. Ms. Walshe will be spending time this year providing professional development workshops and ongoing consultation services to all elementary Special Education teachers using strategies and materials from the Wilson system. It is our belief that this will be an added tool for teachers to utilize with our struggling readers in the self-contained and resource center classrooms.

### **SELF-CONTAINED PROGRAMMING – ADDITION K/1 MD CLASS**

As we continue to enhance in-district programming, we are always looking at segments of our special needs population where we can expand current services. Last year, we developed and implemented a Junior High self-contained Emotional Support program that currently houses six students who otherwise would be placed in out-of-district programs. This year, we expanded our lower elementary programming with the development of a Multiply Disabled K/1 classroom. This classroom currently houses two students that were previously placed out-of-district, one that has an auditory disability and another with a broad range of medical issues including the need for a feeding tube. The two other students in that classroom are Autistic children that recently aged out of our preschool program. Without the implementation of this program, they would have been slated for an out-of-district assignment this year.

We are fortunate that we were able to shift our in-district staffing resources to create this program without the need for additional staff. Ms. Lauren Stankiewicz, who had previously taught a self-contained Learning Disabilities class for the district was able to take over as the lead instructor in this new Multiply Disabled class. She has experience working with this population from a position at a previous district. Ms. Stankiewicz works closely with our district Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist, and Nurse to provide the broad range of medical and related services necessary for these students. Thus far, the program has started out smoothly and we look forward to it continuing to grow and develop as the year progresses.

### **GRANT FUNDING – SCHOLARS, LEADERS, ATHLETES, GENTLEMAN (SLAG) AND GIRLS, ARTISTS, LEADERS, SCHOLARS (GALS)**

As we continue to develop comprehensive programming that meets the academic, social and emotional needs of our students and community, we have broadened our after-school and summer programming through community partners. This past summer, through two separate funding sources, we were able to provide mentoring programs for our third through eighth grade students. These programs utilized formal social skills curriculum including the Girls Circle and Boys Council programs. Furthermore, these programs provided students with exposure to martial arts fitness training and art, music and acting seminars to provide the students with a well balanced approach to overall social development. As a result of these programs, we were able to provide summer mentoring services to approximately forty to fifty students throughout July and August.

As we open this school year, we were fortunate to build on our relationship with the Youth Service Commission to provide the district with ongoing funds to maintain the elementary mentoring programs throughout this school year. As a result, during the week of October 3<sup>rd</sup> we kicked off our SLAG and GALS programs at West End and Evergreen servicing approximately fifty third through fifth grade students across those two buildings. It is our goal that funds will increase in January of 2012 allowing us to expand this program at the Walnut Street School. Currently Walnut is running the SLAG program for boys as one of our afterschool clubs funded through the local budget.

## **ROBINS NEST UPDATE**

This year we were able to maintain year two of our pilot program with the Robin's Nest to provide in-district mental health counseling and psychiatric medication management services for our students. Due to our aggressive approach to developing in-district programming and reduce the number of out of district placements, we were able to modify our IDEA grant to maintain this service for the 2011-2012 school year. Already Robin's Nest counselors have begun working with students throughout our K-12 buildings, and Dr. Yilmaz has met with eight students to review medication needs for the school year. It is our long term goal to work together with the Robin's Nest to secure grant funding to maintain this valuable partnership in years to come.

## **LEGO GROUP**

In addition to traditional counseling services provided by the in-district counselors via the BEST (Behavioral and Emotional School Base Treatment) Program and the Robin's Nest counselors as outlined above, this year we continue to pilot a small Lego therapy group at the Evergreen Avenue School. The utilization of Lego's as a therapeutic tool has been researched internationally by local neuropsychologist, Dr. Daniel Legoff. The use of Lego play in the group setting coupled with guided talk therapy has been found to increase social skills with boys, specifically with children on the Autistic Spectrum. One of our social workers, Gloria Goode, has researched this therapeutic intervention and has grown her own Lego group pilot program to a weekly group that services approximately twenty male students at Evergreen Elementary. She currently meets with third and fourth grade students every Tuesday from 7:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. and fifth grade boys Thursdays during the same time frame. It is amazing to see these students come to school early once a week to be part of this group. Their Lego creations are also displayed throughout the school giving students a sense of pride and accomplishment.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION MEDICAID INITIATIVE (SEMI)**

As the state continues to put forth new initiatives and regulations within the realm of special education programming, the district continues to work hard to maintain and exceed predetermined expectations. One of the newer State programs comes from the ability of districts to bill special education and related services to the federal Medicaid program. The State of New Jersey now requires districts to meet specific budgetary expectations with regard to the billing of these services based on the number of special education students that receive related services and that meet the free and reduced lunch requirement. At this point, the district currently has 134 students eligible to participate in this program with a projected budget for the 2010-2011 school year of generating \$49,709. This means that the state is assuming the Woodbury Public Schools will generate this minimum amount and will hold the district accountable should we not meet that expectation. I am pleased to report that based on the hard work of our related service providers, case managers and the organizational management led by Ms. Witts in the Special Services Office, the district billed \$83,378 for the 2010-2011 school year. We are confident that with the current system and structure we have in place we will continue to exceed State expectations in this area, however, at this point we do not have our projected state goal for the 2011-2012 school year.

## **APPENDIX A: SPECIAL EDUCATION/CASE MANAGERS TEACHING STAFF DISTRICT WIDE**

\* = *New Staff Member*

\*\* = *Staff assignment/responsibilities shifted*

### **Walnut Street School**

- Ms. Caroline Polsenberg: ½ time Pull Out Resource Center and ICS Walnut
- Ms. Kristin Shute – Speech and Language Specialist

### **Evergreen Avenue School**

- \*\*Ms. Lauren Stankiewicz: Self Contained MD K/1
- Ms. Colleen DiRienzo: Self Contained 4
- \*Ms. Kylie Pringle: Self Contained 5
- Mrs. Fran Wiczerzynski: Resource Center 1-5
- Mrs. Susan Kudless: 3 year Old Self Contained Pre-School
- Ms. Andy Morrissey: Instructional Assistant - 4 year Pre-K Old Inclusion
- Mrs. Shelia Lenoff – Speech and Language Specialist

### **West End School**

- Ms. Maria Gassner: Self Contained – K-1
- Ms. Tracy Weist: Self Contained Grades 1-2
- Mrs. Sheri Peteani: Resource Center – Grades 1-3
- Ms. Jen Koengetter: Resource Center & ICS – Grades 4-5
- Mrs. Erin Wang – Case Manager
- Ms. Debbie Sirlin – Speech and Language Specialist

### **Woodbury Jr/Sr High School**

- Mr. Marc Cannuli: High School In Class Support History
- Ms. Betty McKenna: High School In Class Support Science
- Mrs. Sherri Davis: High School Resource Center English
- Mr. Marcus Berg: High School Replacement Math

- Mrs. Eliza Cadorette: 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> grade In-class Support Program
- Mrs. Terri Stebich: 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade Resource Center Math and Literacy
- Mrs. Kristin Corley: 7<sup>th</sup> Resource Center English
- Mrs. Thilana Chandler: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Multiply Disability Self Contained
- Ms. Jackie Rosario – 8<sup>th</sup> grade Self Contained
- Mrs. Georgia Stanfill - 7<sup>th</sup> grade Self Contained
- Mr. Jake Lessman – 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> – Self Contained – Emotional Support
- Mr. Dan O’Leary: 6<sup>th</sup> grade Self Contained
- Mrs. Anne Evans: 6<sup>th</sup> grade In Class Support

### **District Wide Staff**

- Mrs. Sharon Cardwell – Case Manager – 6<sup>th</sup> grade & Out of District Students
- Mrs. Denise Dreger – Case Manager – 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- Mrs. Tanya Ripley – Case Manager – 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade
- Mrs. Stacey Henry Case Manager – Evergreen Avenue & Walnut Street
- Ms. Gloria Goode – Case Manager – Evergreen Avenue & High School
- Ms. Tricia Bevelheimer – Physical Therapist
- Ms. Trisha Walshe – Behavioral Specialist
- Ms. Erin Lauk – Occupational Therapist