

Mental Health Subcommittee Meeting Minutes January 15, 2014

The following were in attendance: Brad Wilson, Carolyn Mark, Bob Houghtaling, Lindsay Daskaloupus, Sharon Foley (Social Worker), Nora Santamour (School Psychologist), Peggy Bonk (School Nurse)

I. Debrief with District Staff Regarding Mental Health Challenges in the District

II. Determine Next Steps

EG School Committee member Carolyn Mark provided an overview of EGSD's recently revised Mental Health Policy and the role of the Mental Health Subcommittee. She expressed the desire to have the participation of all of the mental health professionals in the district in the Mental Health Subcommittee since they are the ones closest to the ground who truly know what the challenges and opportunities are regarding the mental health of our students and staff.

Some of the challenges identified include:

- An increase in anxiety disorders requiring an increase in services. Caseloads may or may not be increasing necessarily, but the nature of them has shifted and the level of difficulty in addressing them has increased. Changes in educational expectations definitely impacting the mental health of students.
- Seeing mood disorders, substance abuse. Also, pockets of poverty in EG - affected students need a different model of care. Lack of family support a major issue. Need to improve access and make it easier for families.
- Data collection regarding case loads and the nature of individual cases is not consistent throughout the district, but some staff have data systems that could be replicated by others
- If schools play a bigger role in screening, what are the legal implications of a) not having the resources to support, or b) over diagnosing?
- Mental health staff conduct peer supervision, but lack supervisory support.
- EG is holding onto more and more students that used to be referred out of district, creating both challenges and opportunities.
- So focused on academic performance (that's where funding is focused) that we don't/can't always focus on the whole child. But you can't compartmentalize like that because it's all connected.

What's working:

- Peer supervision
- At risk meetings every Monday morning, which include Guidance, social work, Bob H., Shanna (school psychologist). Doing this for 7-8 years.
- Community/school link has been great.
- Mentoring programs with community involvement.

- At elementary level, weekly team organizational on Mondays and Fridays.
- Staff works in a cohesive, coordinated way.

Some of the opportunities identified include:

- Better understand and be able to paint a picture as to how we as a district address mental health at all levels. For example, at the primary school level, it starts with positive behavioral supports; secondary would be referrals from nurses office and teachers; and tertiary would be RTI (response to intervention) and special ed.
- Improve data collection systems at the school level and across the district so that any trends can be assessed and evaluated
- Better education of staff regarding what role they can play in assessing and addressing the needs of students. Definitely some cases where there are legal implications for schools and staff stepping in. Trainers such as David Kane from the Sargent Center (special ed law) is happening and needed.
- Benchmark against best practice in other districts. For example, Chariho has a drop in center for students to support them when they get stressed out. North Kingstown has the Edgenuity program which is an alternative to the mainstream classroom. Warwick has an outside supervisor come in once a week to meet with mental health support staff. Some districts offer satellite offices to mental health professionals for easier referral and access.
- Clinical supervision (even every other work) would support the support staff in providing exemplary service to students
- Classroom teachers need more training and support in identifying and dealing with issues in the classroom. Increasingly responsible for RTI (response to intervention)
- Overall, need to assess quality, quantity and adequacy of training provided to all staff

Next Steps:

- 1) Staff to begin to look at data collection opportunities. Goal is to be able to fully assess the challenges and opportunities in the district before the end of the school year, and to present our findings to the full school committee.
- 2) Include all mental health support staff in invitation to next meeting
- 3) Schedule next meeting