

## **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

The social and emotional subcommittee began their process by assessing the supports currently in place for the students in our district. We recognize that schools are educational institutions in which students develop and refine their cognitive and academic skills; however learning can not take place unless the students' social and emotional needs are met. Towards that end, we have constructed a wide array of student support services designed to understand students better, help teachers address student needs, and work with families to maximize the success of their children regardless of the challenges they may face.

The Enfield and Erdenheim elementary campuses have comparable support personnel. There is a principal, guidance counselor, and nurse onsite each day. They share a full time emotional support teacher and a Response to Intervention (RTI) support teacher. A school psychologist, social worker, and the director of pupil services are also available. Each school is staffed with a full time reading specialist. At the middle school, the in-house team consists of a principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor, nurse, emotional support teacher, reading specialist, Response to Intervention support teacher and on-going service is provided by a school psychologist, the social worker, and the director of pupil services. Staffing at the high school is provided by a principal, two assistant principals, 3 guidance counselors, a nurse, an emotional support teacher, academic support teacher and access to two school psychologists, the social worker, and the director of pupil services.

Child study meetings are held at each of the four schools on a regular basis. The elementary meetings are scheduled on alternating weeks and the middle and high school meet weekly. These meetings are attended by the building administrators, guidance counselors, school psychologists, social worker, and specialty staff such as the academic support teacher and reading specialist. The director of pupil services attends the elementary and high school meetings. Additionally, at the high school the nurse and county representative is present.

These meetings have only one focus – to identify students who are not functioning well in their school environment with a goal of developing proactive strategies. Students are identified by reviewing attendance, lateness, discipline records, trips to the nurse, grades, and anecdotal referrals made by concerned faculty, staff, and students. Once a student is referred – information is collected from all his/her teachers and reported back to the team to see if patterns can be identified.

Different problems require different responses. Generally a plan to help the student is developed. Such a plan may include additional academic support, mentors, or collaboration with a parent to make referrals to outside professionals. Teachers and guidance counselors are the first line of support for all students. Additionally, as part of our process we look to our clinical staff, particularly our clinical psychologists, to help us look at student behavior through the lens of mental health and in some cases mental illness.

The team meets with the parents and discusses concerns openly. Parents are strongly encouraged to engage in the process with the school since they hold the legal authority to access medical and therapeutic services to address their child's distress. As families face the reality and degree of their child's inability to function adequately, ongoing meetings are held to support and assist them.

When this process works well, the school and parents join together with outside mental health professionals to surround the student with well coordinated support. The school's role is to make appropriate accommodations, while it is the responsibility of parents to secure intensive professional treatment and to serve as role models for seeking and accepting help.

Approximately 20% of the student body receive special education and related support services. We are required to include parents as active participants on these IEP teams.

In accordance with our responsibility to safeguard our community's children, the district has in place a well developed crisis response team. It includes all the staff mentioned above with the exception of the reading teachers, RTI teachers and nurses. The response is customized to respond to the situation but the following protocols are well established:

## 1. OFFSITE CRISIS

If there is an offsite crisis, the Superintendent, Principal, and Director of Pupil Services contact each other and determine the impact on students and staff.

Typically, the in-district response team (counselors, emotional support teachers, psychologists, social worker, administrators) report to the respective school at 7:00 a.m. to meet with the Principal and Director of Pupil Services to be updated on expectations for their interaction with students as they arrive to school.

Usually, the Principal will make a public statement to the student body and then allow the relevant classrooms to be visited by therapeutic staff to assist the students and teachers.

The guidance area is manned with staff collecting and directing students in need of help or to make arrangements for the students to be discharged to their parent.

Lists are maintained of students who sought help so a determination can be made about the student's distress level and how, when, and by whom the parent should be contacted.

At the close of the day the team usually meets with the Principal, the faculty, and staff to debrief and to seek suggestions for the next day's level of support.

The response team will then meet with the Principal to plan next steps for the individuals in crisis and continued support.

## 2. ONSITE CRISIS

In the event of an unexpected onsite crisis, lockdown procedures are in place in all buildings. Nextel phones are used to communicate and typically the superintendent rallies administrators to areas of need. When additional supports are necessary that exceed the district's resources, other districts and local mental health providers are included in the response planning.

While the Principal and Superintendent manage the scene of the crisis, the other principals initiate lockdown or evacuation procedures. The Director of Pupil Services manages the coordination of the response team that now consists of employees and volunteers from surrounding districts. The in-house response team meets after dismissal and develops the response plan. This plan is then communicated to the team leaders of the volunteering districts by the Director of Pupil Services. All logistical details are conveyed and the district is ready for the next day.

After the schools are dismissed and the immediate planning is coordinated, the Superintendent meets with the District Leadership Team to ensure collaboration and communication.