

**New Milford Board of Education
Board Workshop Minutes
April 23, 2019
Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

Present:	Mr. David A. Lawson, Chairman Mr. Bill Dahl Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mrs. Eileen P. Monaghan (6:37 p.m.) Mr. J.T. Schemm
Absent:	Mrs. Angela C. Chastain Mr. Joseph Failla Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Brian McCauley

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Also Present:	Dr. Stephen Tracy, Interim Superintendent of Schools Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services Ms. Alisha DiCorpo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Ms. Ellamae Baldelli, Director of Human Resources Mr. Greg Shugrue, Principal of New Milford High School
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1.	Call to Order	Call to Order
A.	Pledge of Allegiance The Board Workshop of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mr. Lawson. The Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence immediately followed the call to order.	A. Pledge of Allegiance
2.	Presentation	Presentation
A.	Special Education Update Mrs. Olson presented an update on Special Education as of April 2019. She said there will be a presentation by members of ESS about their program and she will end the meeting with an update on the IDEA Grant on why we use it, how we apply for it and how to maintain it. She then introduced the Guest Speakers: Gerard (Jerry) Barone, Chief Clinical Officer; Cheryl Planten, Regional Director; Sarah Moodie, Coordinator at NES; and Debbie Leone, Coordinator at NMHS.	A. Special Education Update

- Mr. Barone began the presentation about ESS with quotes and comments from parents whose student use the program, on the effectiveness of ESS and the progress their children have made using it. He continued with the ESS mission statement, which embodied cost-effective clinical programs that were embedded into the school districts for use by students with emotional and behavioral challenges. He then added in history about the development and growth of the program.
- Mr. Barone went over the impact of the program on the district that included improvement of school related performance, education in the least restrictive environment, and reduction in out of district placement for students.
- There are three levels of care offered through ESS including intensive support, on demand support, and preventative support to provide teacher training on crisis intervention and prevention.
- Mr. Barone stated that the students enrolled with ESS are generally the students who have previously exhausted district resources and end up in out of district placement or require in home treatment. Enrollment with ESS eliminates these needs and helps student stay in schools and stay a part of their community while also allowing for cost savings to the district.
- Mr. Barone described the other programs that ESS offers as well as a newsletter called INSIGHTS sent monthly to staff and another newsletter is sent to parents monthly called SOLUTIONS for help with different topics.
- The presentation began focusing on the impact ESS has had on New Milford specifically. Mr. Barone stated the programs have assisted in a cost surplus for district finances at approx. \$350,000 with anticipation of an increase for 2020. They have brought 6 out of district placement students and 2 home instruction

	students back to New Milford, and have prevented 20 students from being out of district placement. • Mr. Barone provided a cost comparison for the district for the difference between implementing ESS and avoiding out of district placement for students with these needs. He then compared year to year student absence reports showing that ESS can decrease number of days students are absent. The program also allows for less urgent non-scheduled sessions that staff hours are used for allowing an increase in overall staff time. • Mr. Barone presented a slide showing the overall reduction in the need for restraints on students in crisis when program is in place. From September 2018 through April 2019, the number went from 25 to 0. • The end of the PowerPoint indicated again the 100% satisfaction survey results from parents whose students participate in this program. • Dr. Tracy asked about how many families this survey was representative of and Ms. Leone responded about 17 families and the survey is offered twice per year. • Ms. Leone presented on her experience at the High School as the program coordinator. She said that attendance rates have improved and students who have anxiety or a lack of social skills have somewhere to go when they need to express something. She stated students can use the program as needed but they generally have group sessions and a one on one session once weekly, they may stop by daily or as needed to say hello or talk. The program generally lasts about 2 years but there is no end date. ESS allows students who were not on track to graduate the opportunity to graduate and move forward in life with college or careers. ESS is a better solution to out-patient programs that cannot take place in the moment to help with real time coping and crisis and intervention.	
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- Ms. Moodie shared her experience at NES and was in agreement with Debbie stating the kids feel part of something and always have a group to listen. The students learn coping skills right in the moment and it helps teach the staff what the students need plans are to recognize and suggest coping strategies prior to crisis.
- Mr. Barone points out that restraint numbers being down means staff is recognizing and stepping in quicker due to training and they get students to ESS employees faster.
- Mrs. McInerney states that there are 19 spots available at the High School; 18 are filled, how many are at NES? Ms. Moodie commented that they have 9 spots available and 8 are filled.
- Mrs. McInerney asked if any students from HPS are moved to NES to utilize the program. Ms. Moodie said there is 1 student.
- Mrs. McInerney asked if the program will be implemented at other schools such as SMS or SNIS. Mrs. Olson stated that NES was isolated due to this year's specific need and they will need to reassess as students move to new schools.
- Mrs. McInerney asked how many students will be moving to SNIS next year from NES? Ms. Moodie replied that 5 students will be moving.
- Mr. Schemm commented that he saw a cost for this program at around \$275,000 and recalled the High School program only costing \$200,000. Was the remaining amount for the STAR program at NES? Mrs. Olson replied that yes the cost was combined for the two programs.
- Mr. Schemm asked if the students are selected based on their IEP? Mrs. Olson responded that no, 30-40% are general education students not on IEP who otherwise may not have been classified or diagnosed.
- Mr. Schemm asked is we would be avail to excess cost if we have students who would be an out of district placement per pupil or is it a

modular cost? Mrs. Olson replied that we would still extract per pupil cost using ESS total cost so will be below excess cost threshold per student.

- Mr. Shugrue made a statement about the program at NMHS and how well it is working. He said it is nice to have good staff on hand that student's feel safe with when they need to use them.
- Mr. Dahl asked how students are selected for the program. Mr. Barone commented that they generally look at students who have been hospitalized, had recent suicide attempts, have a large number of absences, take medications, or suffer with anxiety. They use early identification to use low level techniques prior to admitting to ESS.
- Ms. Leone stated that admittance to the ESS program generally comes from guidance or social workers referral and they then look into student. The student and their family need to be willing to participate in order to be admitted.
- Mr. Lawson stated that the program seems to help students remain in district which can reduce anxiety to students who may have to otherwise manage an out of district placement.
- Dr. Tracy asked Mr. Barone if there was a specific psych. Model or philosophy on who is selected as staff for the ESS program.
- Mr. Barone said the program is based on years of experience in intensive outpatient therapy work. It is a combination of group therapy, individual therapy, education, skills groups, and family groups with strong group supervisory support. The program becomes fully embedded into the schools with strong support from the building leadership.
- Dr. Tracy asked if providing professional development to staff is a prevention method.
- Mr. Barone replied that yes tier 1 intervention for staff is priority because the more students

	can stay in the classroom the more energized and well-regulated the class becomes. • Mrs. McInerney asked what a typical day for students is like and if some students are pulled out and given private instruction or do they stay in classes and are only pulled when necessary. • Ms. Leone replied that they have a small group room and small office where some students do stay most of the day and a teacher will come give them instruction for an assignment. They limit this type of session due to students becoming too comfortable with the one on one treatment. They try to integrate into the classroom as much as they can. • Mrs. McInerney asked what it means when you graduate from the program. Ms. Leone replied that the student is released from ESS and no longer in the program. The student may still stop by to say hello but ESS can no longer offer services. • Mrs. Planten added that ESS will step them down to the guidance counselors or connect them with additional support from the social workers. • Mrs. McInerney asked if the students get set up with a buddy or peer. Mr. Barone said that they do not but throughout group therapy they become friends with other group members and use them for support. He mentioned they are working on a fully teen run program for this type of scenario. • Mrs. Olson began presentation about the IDEA Grant with PowerPoint. The IDEA grant is significant revenue for the district at about \$1,000,000 annually. Mrs. Olson would like to go over what the impact of the grant is and what our responsibility is to maintain the grant. • IDEA is an annual federal grant and allocation is based on number of students in New Milford and incidence of poverty for the students. We receive two parts of the Grant: 611 for ages 5-	
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21 at \$871,018 and 619 for ages 3-5 at \$31,989.

- We are entitled to the grant every year however the amount is to be spent over two years so there is always an overlap in funds.
- Mrs. Olson went over the goals of the grant which included; increasing opportunities for students with disabilities, increase the parent partnership in their students education, increase access to technology in order to promote communication, provide specialized instruction to students with disabilities, increase proficiency and accuracy of IEPs, and to promote best practice for transition planning for 18-21 year olds.
- In order to be compliant for the grant, there are two parts that need to be satisfied: 1. We need to provide a share to non-public schools within New Milford; Canterbury and Faith Academy, where we will identify any students who may need services and provide staff and opportunities at these locations and 2. To budget the same amount or more for special education as the previous year continuously.
- Mrs. McInerney asked that if we spend all of the money available on those schools do any remaining funds needed come from our own budget?
- Mrs. Olson replied that no we can use the grant money as we see fit and she will pro rate the amount for a 9 month period. The teachers in those assignments know what hours they work and for what specific dollar amount per assignment. The services provided are a service plan and it is limited.
- Mrs. Olson provided a break down in how the funds are allocated with the primary bulk of the funds being used for staffing.
- Mrs. Olson pointed out the two goals for the pre-school portion of the grant part 619. These goals are to provide preschool programming within a fully inclusive environment with non-disabled peers and to enhance programming to

	improve accountability for early childhood outcomes. • Mrs. Olson will bring the new application for the grant to the BOE next month for approval.	
3.	Adjourn Mr. Dahl moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 p.m., seconded by Mrs. Monaghan and passed unanimously.	Adjourn Motion made and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Angela C. Chastain
Secretary
New Milford Board of Education