

Andover School Committee
Thursday, April 28, 2022
School Committee Room

WORKSHOP

Participants from the School Committee: Chair Susan McCready, Vice Chair Lauren, Tracey Spruce, Emily DiCesaro, and Sandis Wright.

Others participating: Superintendent Dr. Magda Parvey, Asst. Superintendent Dr. Julie Riley, Dr. Ryan Fielding, APS Clinical Director, Joe Yarid, Director of Social Workers, and Jennifer Murray and Mike Roseman of Effective School Solutions (ESS)

I. Call to Order

Chair Susan McCready called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Susan reported that they will be two presentations around Social and Emotional Learning and Mental Health, current and future programming. Dr. Parvey is excited to have Andover's Clinical Director Dr. Ryan Fielding and Joseph Yarid, the Director of Social Workers presenting at today's workshop, and on a partnership with Effective School Solutions (ESS) to help enhance some of our practices and also to build our MTSS playbook which will address our Mental Health Tiered System in the District.

A. New Business

1. Mental Health Discussion Dr. Ryan and Joseph Yarid

Dr. Ryan spoke about the factors that affect the disposition of students that includes mental health support and Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

A review of the current APS Mental & Behavioral Health Team at APS and the current mental and behavior health MTSS Structure was provided by Dr. Ryan. The team consists of Licensed Clinical Social Workers, School Psychologists, Board Certified Behavior Analysts and Registered Behavior Technicians.

The Tier Support Level I is universal for all students at all times, Tier 2 is targeted intervention and Tier 3 is intensive intervention. Andover has done many things that target certain cohorts of kids in different school houses including mental and behavioral health screenings, as well as targeted trainings for Tier 1.

Current Tier 2 Level Structure includes in-school therapeutic support with individual counseling; therapeutic support includes group counseling, group skills-building, as well as family support with research connections and collateral communication.

Annually, there are approximately 1,000 kids in the Andover Public Schools that need some degree of Tier 2 support. Of that number, a little less than half are students who have special education needs. Approximately 54% are General Education Students and students who are on 504 plans. Middle school grades have the highest density of students needing Tier 2 support.

The Andover Public Schools Behavioral Support Consultation Team includes behavioral analysis, working with Massachusetts General Hospital, Brigham's, and Tact, as well as staff who are board certified in Behavioral Analysis.

Dr. Fielding explained the Tier 2 into Tier 3 Level structures which serve students with behavioral health crises and psychiatric crises. When students present with crises due to unsafe externalized behavior (behavioral health crises), school staff utilize Safety-Care protocol which is an applied behavioral analysis-based method prioritizing de-escalation and the physical safety of students.

Psychiatric crises happens when students have crises due to internalizing symptoms of unsafe behavior. Mental Health Staff provide a safety assessment, parent support and referral to crisis resources. Procedures are outlined in the "APS Student Self-Injury and Suicidal Ideation Protocols".

General Education School Re-Entry Planning and Support is for students who need support for returning to school; using the School Team and Hub support for students in K-5 and the School Team & BRYT (The Brookline Center for Community Mental Health) Framework. For students in high school, they use the School Team plus TLC Program.

Future directions for Social Emotional Learning for Tier 1 includes using RULER through the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. Professional Development for APS Staff includes the Fundamental Principles of Trauma Sensitive Schools.

Addressing the Effects of Covid:

They have noticed that students are presenting with delayed development in social maturity, and that the disposition of students in the school house show areas of concern that includes student perception of themselves. At AHS, half of our students reported a little bit of anxiety and depression with 15% reporting an increased level of anxiety related to Covid.

Augmenting Services:

Increase targeted Tier 2 Supports include offering more types of therapeutic groups such as 6-8 week interventions for targeted needs, as well as additional push-in, in-class support for high needs students, and targeted school entry/re-entry support for school avoidance and truancy challenges.

Reflective Assessment: Identify new opportunities for student and behavioral health interventions, streamlining current practices, and assembling a singular repository for APS protocols related to mental and behavioral health.

On a daily basis, Mr. Yarid said the APS Social Workers are constantly accessing the needs of their students. The conditions of the pandemic increased children's anxiety. Having students in the schools 6-7 hours a day provides opportunities for their staff to address the situations to determine what is school-based and how they can provide services.

As increased needs are identified, Dr. Parvey said it would be helpful to share that information with the Committee. Andover has a talented group of social workers who work exceptionally hard with a greater caseload than what they have had before.

School Committee members responded with questions to Dr. Ryan and Mr. Yarid, asking about the benchmark tool, and the TLC Program provided which Andover has used as a model for the past 8-9 years; it is something that is a very important piece to have from the Bright Network at AHS. There was concern about mental health before the pandemic and which has increased since the pandemic. The School District can do school based counseling, but there are many students who need services outside of the School; there is a concern about the lack of providers. Mrs. McCready is pleased with all of the programs APS has and the work our Mental Health Team provides.

Dr. Parvey thanked Dr. Fielding and Mr. Yarid for their presentation.

Dr. Fielding and Joe Yarid have been working with Jennifer Murray and Mike Roseman to establish what they can provide in a data-backed, cost-effective clinical programs embedded in the school day.

B. Expanding the Continuum of Mental Health Care in Andover Public Schools

Jennifer Murray, District Director and Mike Roseman, Assistant Director of Effective School Solutions (ESS).

Information was provided on the three different listening sessions with building leaders and Special Education to identify areas of vulnerability in the existing continuum of student mental health care and to identify if there is a disconnect between programs that do exist in the district and not utilized as readily as people would hope.

Findings: There is a comprehensive plan in place for supporting the social-emotional health of students with numerous stakeholders mentioning the district's strong commitment and ongoing work. There is a need for a comprehensive approach, educator support, and development on mental health topics that is well thought out.

They expressed concern about the sufficient therapeutic capacity of the Tier 2 level to support the increased number of students presenting with mental health challenges. Building leaders shared that students were reluctant to come into the building and needed a lot of family coaching, consuming much of the existing bandwidth that exists in the buildings to support students at the Tier 2 level.

There is a desire to expand the Tier 3 level programming and also to create a path for the highest level of mental health care outside of the special education setting. There is a need for more family and parent engagement. They are also looking at a partnership for the upcoming school year.

Two focuses: Start serving students and getting them the mental health care they need and organize the current resources in the District and how they align to the changing student population.

Organizing Professional Development across the district by establishing MTSS (Multi-tiered System of Support) the same type of structure currently being used in Andover. Look at mental health and develop clear universal interventions at each tier of school, establishing a structure of tiers of support, and developing a playbook which will be used as a training and monitoring tool and to have focused professional development for all staff; particularly on the impact of trauma on student mental health.

Presentation of the Tier 2 Clinical Programming Model would be started with embedded clinicians at WMS, WHMS, and AHS to expand capacity for General Education students and offer flexibility at Tier 2 levels for students who do need the home school connection. Each clinician would have a caseload of 12-15 students providing weekly individual therapy and they do have the availability of offering Group Therapy.

Parent Workshops: The suggestion is to offering virtual workshops on a large range of options, caring for the caregiver, navigating the challenges parents and caregivers face in response to Covid, and using the “nurtured heart” approach.

In addition, ESS would provide a Regional Clinical Director to oversee the partnership coming on site regularly to make sure they are hitting the mark programmatically and to provide additional supervision to the clinicians. They can also provide urgent interventions if clinicians are not available throughout the day. ESS clinicians will be in the schools every day and will try to incorporate family therapy during the day.

It is evident that support is needed at AHS ,Wood Hill, and West Middle Schools due to Tier 3 levels that will provide equitable coverage across the District. They quantify and measure gains with students using a student self-report, and also have clinicians track student progress over time. They also have a parent satisfaction survey rating their experience on they are benefitting overall on the services provided.

They have an entire Professional Development Library that they can work with the District to organize a plan and identify the right kind of sequence and content.

II. Adjournment

At 6:00 PM on a motion by Lauren Conoscenti and seconded by Emily DiCesaro, the School Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn the workshop of April 28, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo

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Recording Secretary