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Elementary Coordinators: Craig Haas & Elizabeth Logue  
Middle School Coordinator: Stephanie Greiner  
High School Coordinator: Lynne Bennett  
Out-of-District Coordinator: Chris Carlson

Good evening Dr. Susse and School Committee members. We'd like to thank you for this opportunity and hope to use this time to briefly highlight our priorities for the upcoming 2017-18 school year and answer any questions you may have about these identified areas of need.

We'd like to begin by thanking you for your support of our requests in the FY17 budget. While we were unable to realize our full request, we understand the challenges faced last year and again this year in meeting the many needs across the District and within our own department. We recognize that out-of-district tuitions have become the main driver for this year's budget proposal and for this reason we have limited our requests to positions we believe will have a direct impact on these costs.

We continue to see the enrollment growth across the District reflected in our special education population (fig. 1).

Fig. 1

October SIMS Reports

October 2016: Total = 862 (age 3-5 = 87 / age 6-21 = 767)

October 2015: Total = 834 (age 3-5 = 83 / age 6-21 = 746)

October 2014: Total = 838 (age 3-5 = 95 / age 6-21 = 743)

October 2013: Total = 812 (age 3-5 = 95 / age 6-21 = 717)

Last year we requested a 4.0 FTE increase to the elementary learning specialist positions to be distributed across four of the seven elementary schools, so that all schools would have three of these specialists. Funding only allowed for 2.0 FTE and so we ask again this year, for the remaining 2.0 FTE.

Our analysis of student placement shows that our in-district programs (Supported Learning Centers or “SLCs”) at the elementary level have grown with referrals increasing steadily for the last three years (fig. 2).

Fig. 2

| <b>New placements</b> | <b>11-12</b> | <b>12-13</b> | <b>13-14</b> | <b>14-15</b> | <b>15-16</b> | <b>16-17</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Brackett SLC          | 7            | 1            | 4            | 1            | 6            | 7            |
| Dallin SLC            | 1            | 6            | 1            | 3            | 4            | 7            |
| Stratton SLC          | 6            | 5            | 3            | 3            | 9            | 8            |

Current enrollment figures (fig. 3) show that we are reaching capacity (class size & physical space) in most of these classrooms.

Fig. 3

| <b>Current enrollment</b>   | <b>K</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>total</b> |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|
| SLC Brackett (2 classrooms) | 3        | 0        | 3        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 17           |
| SLC Dallin (2 classrooms)   | 2        | 2        | 3        | 2        | 6        | 3        | 18           |
| SLC Stratton (3 classrooms) | 3        | 5        | 4        | 5        | 0        | 6        | 23           |

We do not believe the solution lies in expanding our programs as students are entitled to a *Free and Appropriate Education* (FAPE) in the *Least Restrictive Environment* (LRE.) We know from the research that time spent in general education predicts higher MCAS scores, higher on-time graduation rates, fewer days absent per year, lower rates of receiving disciplinary action at school, higher rates of school or community group membership, and closer to grade level performance on both standardized reading and math tests (Hehir, Grindal, & Eidelman, 2012; Hehir, Schifter, Grindal, Ng, & Eidelman, 2014; Schifter, 2015)

When faced with limited resources and the need to make the greatest impact we know we have to address the foundation of our educational supports. Our learning specialists serve general education students through a *Response to Intervention* (RTI) model, as well as provide special education services to eligible students. In order to keep students in less restrictive settings, we have to better meet student needs in their “home” or neighborhood schools.

Two learning specialists serving six grades are simply not able to do this. We are gathering promising results from the schools in which we have been able to increase the learning specialist positions to 3.0 FTE. These schools have been able to create more

opportunities for co-teaching, provide more RTI services. If we are to meet the needs of the entire high needs population and provide the level of service this community has come to expect, we must work as part of a cohesive team that consists of administrators, general educators, learning specialists, coaches, and interventionists. This request was echoed by the Arlington Education Association (AEA.)

Our second request is to create an administrative position to oversee the implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) initiatives, support the development of Safe and Supportive School (SASS) environments, and oversee the supervision and evaluation of guidance counselors and school social workers. Beginning with 2014 data, we have analyzed the placements of students in out-of-district settings. Of the fifty-eight (58) new placements, thirty-one (31) of these placements were to address students' social emotional needs. Twenty-six (26) of these placements were made during the middle and high school years. We have several initiatives happening across the District to support Social Emotional Learning and target at-risk students. Currently we are seeking grant opportunities to coordinate these activities into meaningful and thoughtful interventions that span the entire District from preschool to high school. We have been utilizing consultants to help guide our research and implementation. A full-time Director of SEL & Student Support Services would lead this work across the District, as well as provide much needed leadership and supervision to the roles of guidance counselor and school social worker.

We again thank you for your time and consideration and would like to provide you an opportunity to ask questions.