

BEVERLY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Back on Track and Launch Programs

THE MISSION

The alternative programs that we will develop beginning in 2008 will provide a safe and supportive academic environment to engage “at-risk” and transitional students and challenge them to reach their full potential in an alternative secondary environment. Students will be served through two programs entitled “Back on Track” and “Launch”. The curriculum will reflect the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and well-researched best practices.

The Back on Track Program is designed to provide services for the disenfranchised secondary student who has been unable to access the public school environment. These students are often chronically truant and unable to participate in our public schools due to overwhelming emotional and behavioral concerns. They require out-reach and individualized attention in small, structured environments where the academics and emotional supports are tailored to address their specific needs. We will provide a safe learning environment where students can study in a non-traditional setting to achieve the same outcomes as their peers. There will be a maximum of 12 full-time students in year one (2008-09) at the Back on Track Program with the ability to increase our capacity as the program grows in subsequent years.

Given the ideal location of the McKeown School, we will utilize the resources that can be provided by the Northshore Education Consortium, Beverly High School, and the Cummings Center. While the specific goals and objectives will need to be defined, the overarching goal will be to develop a small structured community where students can build on their strengths, feel safe and secure in a small setting and be provided access to counseling, academic tutoring, and vocational opportunities, so they can be successful learners.

The Launch program will provide transition services for older students into adulthood. In the Launch Program, each child will be individually planned for and supported by a Life Coach. Vocation, recreation, and academics will provide the student with a well rounded experience. Travel training and independence will be a major focus for each student. There will be a maximum of three students and students and staff will work out of the Memorial Building.

CORE BELIEFS

We believe:

- There needs to be equity in learning for all learners.
- Teachers are facilitators of learning.
- The learner is the authentic learner.
- Education is achieved when learners demonstrate the understanding of the process of learning.
- Critical thinking is a skill that must be taught and practiced daily.
- Students need to master basic academic and literacy skills.
- Discipline and behavior need to be systematically taught.
- Educators have the responsibility to develop learners into active and responsible members of their community.
- Every student has something special to bring to the community.

BACK ON TRACK - THE NEED

At-Risk Secondary Students

Beverly Public Schools currently has 97 students placed out of the district due to a variety of issues. The majority are placed out due to emotional and mental health disabilities. The overwhelming challenge that our schools face today is to educate this fragile, at-risk population in our large, traditional settings. Hence, students are on home school instruction or placed in out-of-district programs due to their inability to enter our schools because of school phobia, post traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Many adolescents from DSS and DMH are also coming to Beverly through the community based initiatives. There are more group homes in Beverly and we are programmatically responsible for these children. These students are often disenfranchised and lack a sense of belonging to the large school community. The average cost of educating these students in programs is anywhere from \$28,000 to \$64,500 per student per year.

Some students are bussed daily to places such as Lowell, Chelmsford, and Sudbury. We currently have transportation costs over one million dollars. We need to build capacity to educate more of these students in their own community.

Returning from Hospitalizations

In the past three years, the number of students requiring hospitalization has increased. In addition, we have little capacity to bring students back directly from hospitalization or to provide a safe alternative while they are going through a crisis. The result is often that students are not able to be educated in their home community. This year alone we have had 37 students who require hospital stays and 8 of those students have had more than one hospital stay. We have had 20 students being tutored at Memorial or the Public Library while they await the ability to return to our programs or be placed in out-of-district programs. The cost for these tutoring services this year is estimated to surpass the original request for \$36,000 and will cost approximately \$43,000.

45-Day Placements

Our school system has placed 10 students to date in an IAES (Interim Alternative Education Settings) setting, commonly referred to as a "45-day placement". The cost of these placements is \$200 per day. These students are often placed in these settings for significant discipline concerns. The IDEA 2004 regulates that students with disabilities or students awaiting an evaluation, who have been removed from school due to a felony, possession of weapons or drugs, or exceeding 10 suspension days must be provided a temporary short term setting that enables them to continue their education and address their specific IEP services and goals. The regulation also requires that a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) be completed and a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) be implemented. Often Functional Behavior Assessments are effective in reducing problem behaviors because they are aligned with the IEP process in monitoring the accomplishment of student goals. Promising interventions such as parent management training, family therapy, and home-school collaboration can be a positive result of these placements.

LAUNCH PROGRAM – THE NEED

Guiding Students into Adulthood – Life Transitions

A student who does not receive a diploma and/or has not met his/her transitional goals continues to be eligible for special education is entitled to services from age 19 through their 22nd birthday. This may include preparing the student to live on his/her own, develop adaptive skills, and be exposed to a variety of job-related experiences, taking into account the student's interests and/or higher education.

The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that the child should be prepared "for further education, employment and independence". The purpose of transition services is to prepare a student for their adult life. The regulations state that "the school district shall ensure that options are available for older students, particularly those eligible students of ages 18 through 21 years. Such options shall include continuing education; developing skills to access community services; developing independent living skills; developing skills for self-management of medical needs; and developing skills necessary for seeking, obtaining, and maintaining jobs. Such programs may have an educational and/or

vocational focus and shall be considered in-district programs if the program is operated by the public school and offers the student ongoing opportunities to interact with students or young adults without disabilities. Participation in such options for students younger than age 18 shall not relieve the school district of its obligation to ensure that students have access to instruction in the general curriculum.”

We have a wealth of community resources that these students should be able to take advantage of. The Cumming Center and other Beverly businesses provide learning opportunities for our students through supervised internships. Currently the students who are receiving these services attend out-of-district programs at the approximate cost of \$28,000 - \$45,000 per year. We predict that we will have three new students who will require such placements in September.

PARTNERSHIP

Northshore Education Consortium

Given the four different priorities that we wish to address, it is in the best interest of the Beverly Public Schools to partner with other programs that can assist us in developing the capacity to plan successfully for some of our most challenged students. We have a unique opportunity in Beverly to partner with the Northshore Education Consortium (NEC). Beverly is one of seventeen schools systems on the North Shore that belong to this collaborative, whose purpose is to pool resources to meet the needs of special populations in our schools. With its main facility located on Sohier Road, NEC currently rents school space from us at Memorial, and we have successfully entered into other initiatives with them in the past.

Through this partnership with NEC, the McKeown School will house our Back on Track Program and provide rental space to NEC's North Shore Academy. The Academy serves a student population similar to those served in our Back on Track Program. Currently located in NEC's Sohier Road facility, the Academy was due to rent space at Memorial in 2008-09 for its middle school component, replacing an elementary program currently located there. Moving instead to McKeown would allow the entire Academy program to be located in one building, sharing space with our Back on Track Program.

In this arrangement, our staff will be trained and work under the guidance of the Academy staff members. North Shore Academy already has four master level Mental Health professionals on staff plus a partnership with Children's Friend and Family and North Shore Medical Center. The Academy is led by a full time administrator and supported by a full time nurse. The Back on Track Program would be incorporated into the Academy utilizing Beverly Public School academic resources and the mental health expertise of the Academy. This clearly is a win-win for both programs and a chance for us to thoughtfully develop our capacity while training our staff and providing excellent supports to our students at a reasonable cost in their own community. The Academy will benefit from the academic enrichment opportunities that we will provide to the entire McKeown community.

Originally, it was our concept to include the Launch Program at the McKeown School. With the North Shore Academy located at McKeown, this will allow us to separate the populations so that the students in our Launch Program will report to Memorial and spend the majority of their time out in the community. We plan on continuing our partnership with Patrice Grande, NEC Vocational Specialist, to create business and community partnerships in the city.

It is our long range goal to provide our own programming to Beverly students and in the future have the capacity to tuition other students in. To be successful with this population, we need to sharpen our skills and create an environment that addresses the complex social-emotional, academic and vocational needs of students in an alternative program. We need to manage the learning environment to build on our students strengths and create resiliency. Change can only come for many of these students with skillful teaching that is diverse and provides access through many different modalities. The Consortium brings to us a long history of working successfully with these at-risk youth. We think a partnership can be crafted in which NEC would welcome the opportunity to work with us to develop our potential to work with this population.

CURRICULUM

Back on Track Program

Students in the Back on Track program at McKeown will follow the Mass Curriculum Frameworks' standards. They will have individualized lesson plans that are tailored to their specific needs. Specialized instruction will be determined by the IEP and remediation for basic skills will be a focal point. Students will be allowed to progress at their own individual rates and progress monitoring will be on going. Instruction will be either in a small group, peer buddies, or one to one. There needs to be an emphasis on specialized interventions such as Lexia, Read 180, or Fast Forward Literacy.

Secondary general education teachers will modify their curriculum to address the needs of the specific group that they are instructing and provide the students access to the rich subject matter and high standards. Decisions regarding specific interventions will be done in conjunction with the middle school and high school initiatives.

Launch Program

Curriculum addresses competencies in living skills and social skills, occupation, guidance and preparation for adult life. Students will explore career opportunities through case management, natural supports, life skills counseling, and mentored employment. Our goal will be to empower students to reach their full potential as they transition from school to work. Leisure and Social pragmatics will also be addressed to provide a well-rounded opportunity for the students to be full members of the community.

We will partner with families to provide comprehensive efforts to build independence and mobility skills. Families will be provided on-going consultation and communication. A Vocational Specialist will assist the team in assessment, evaluations, and job placement trials (paid and/or volunteer). Life coaches will provide academic and vocational coaching as well as travel training. Opportunities to pursue special interests and careers will be made available through partnerships with local colleges and community groups.

Service Learning Opportunities will provide the students with a real life academic link and a chance to have active participation in a thoughtfully organized service that meet the needs of the community. This will foster civic responsibility and will be integrated with the curriculum providing a connection for the students. There will be on-site projects that help build a sense of community and promote a positive self worth. Research suggests that these types of programs increase personal and social responsibility. Students develop a sense of competency and a better ability to bond with adults.

ASSESSMENT

Back on Track Program

Entrance into the Back on Track Program will begin through family and school history, identifying the point at which the student failure began. If testing is not current, it will be updated as necessary to give the team data required to develop the most appropriate educational and transition plan. This program will use both standard and non-standard measure to assess progress. In addition, the students will actively participate in the decisions regarding their educational plans and set their own goals and benchmarks. This will be done through the use of personal contracts and rubrics.

Launch Program

Entrance into the Launch Program will begin through vocational assessment and interest inventories. The vocational Specialist will meet with the student, Life Coach, and family to develop appropriate transition plans and their goals.

SOCIAL WORK/CASE MANAGER

The social worker will be responsible for in-take assessment, outreach, and oversight of the team for clinical needs, treatment planning, and case management. It will be essential to work collaboratively with existing outside providers or assist the family in establishing a new team of treatment providers.

Group work will be an integral part of the program and will include:

- Building a sense of community
- Daily check-in and check-out programs
- Topic focused groups as appropriate

GENERAL INFORMATION

The surgeon general's report in 2001 states, "Of great concern is the increase in the number of students who display severe problem behavior in schools today." Consequently, the culture must have a significant commitment to the prevention of problem behaviors. The adoption of a program such as PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports) will help students define behavioral expectations, learn strategies to achieve appropriate behavior, regulate their emotions, and learn to deal with conflict, and learn how to access a support system in an effective manner. Through this culture, at-risk students will benefit from the frequent feedback and the development of effective student-adult relationships.

School Calendar: Follow the Beverly Public School calendar.

School Hours: 8:45 AM - 2:45 PM

Attendance: Attendance will be monitored closely in partnership with the Coordinator of Child Welfare & Attendance, Emily Rockwell.

Breakfast/Lunch Program: Students will be allowed to buy school lunches. Scholarships for free and reduced lunch and breakfast will follow the Beverly Public School guidelines.

Graduation Requirements: Students and staff will work with Beverly High School Guidance counselors to ensure that they meet the credit requirement necessary.

Exit Criteria: Students and parents will work with the staff to progress monitor progress toward the goals that the team developed with the student. Once the goals and objectives have been reached, students will have the opportunity to re-enter their schools with close monitoring and planning from the School Adjustment Counselor and the program social worker.