

**BOARD OF EDUCATION, NEW FAIRFIELD, CT**  
**Special Education Ad Hoc Subcommittee Meeting**

Name of Subcommittee: Special Education Ad Hoc Meeting type: Regular  
Date of Meeting: 4/6/26 Minutes submitted by: Sue Huwer  
Members present: Sue Huwer, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion & Ed Sbordone  
Members absent:  
Other attendees: Ken Craw Monika Krepsztul, Michelle Demeyer, Theresa Fox, Alex Lambert  
Place of meeting: New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. February 5, 2026**

**Motion:** To approve the minutes of February 5, 2026, as presented

Made by: Samantha Mannion

Seconded by: Kim LaTourette

**Recording of vote:** All in favor

**III. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**A. Bridge Program Update** - Monika Krepsztul reported that two months into it, the new Bridge Program is succeeding. The program adds a new therapeutic component for those high school students dealing with school avoidance issues and at risk of needing placement outside the district or dropping out altogether. It uses a skills-based approach and group meetings in the school environment to help these students with social/emotional issues, coping skills and behavioral problems that hinder their attending high school regularly. The objective is to improve their attendance so that they can complete their education in the district, without the need for outplacement. (The Bridge Program augments other existing efforts: Students with school avoidance issues often require home visits by consultants and social workers and private transportation to and from school for them to be able to attend class.)

There are presently 18 students in the program. The program offers group meetings: one for girls regarding social and emotional relationships, one that is co-ed dealing with communication and coping skills, and a third group for boys focusing on behavior and making good choices. The program has recently added a middle school component: It has begun meeting with the 8th grade, via a weekly program, to help these students socially and emotionally be able to acclimate to high school as smoothly as possible. The Bridge Program has already prevented two outplacements. Staff is hopeful that a current student in outside placement will return to the district in September. Samantha Mannion encouraged staff to seek a grant from the Worth Foundation, which supports efforts like this in the Bridgeport area.

**B. Strides Program Update** – Monika and staff reported that the STRIDES program is now fully staffed with our own employees and not agency's staffing. There are five job sites within walking distance of the STRIDES location in downtown Danbury (Food Bank, hockey rink, Library, City Center, and Naugatuck Community College) and there is an effort to build more on local connections to the downtown location. Also, in April, STRIDES students will have the opportunity to go to Green Chimneys farms for work there.

The partnership with Newtown is going well but we are nearing the end of our three-year working arrangement as well as our shared office lease. Communication is strong and, going forward, there will be areas to address including: a lease renewal with new terms vs our seeking alternate space in the building with our own lease. We expect our number of students to increase significantly within two years, which the current space may not be large enough to accommodate. Also, the current lease is shared 50-50. Newtown has more students in the program, but it was to offset this by providing all students with free job transportation via its vans. However, it was reported that this transportation has been limited as our students go to local job sites within walking distance of STRIDES and the number of shared job opportunities in Newtown which require van transport has been reduced. Also, STRIDES students are now receiving transportation training. Some are working towards a driver's license.

**IV. ACTION ITEMS** – none

**V. OTHER** - none

**Motion to adjourn:** Made by: Kim LaTourette

**Recording of vote:** All in favor

**Seconded by:** Ed Sbordone

**Meeting adjourned at:** 6:44 p.m.