

**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: 12/5/24 Minutes submitted by: Samantha Mannion  
Members present: Sue Huwer, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone  
Members absent:  
Other attendees: Ken Craw, Monika Krepsztul, Alex Lambert  
Place of meeting: New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. October 1, 2024**

**Motion:** To approve the minutes of October 1, 2024, as presented

Made by: Ed Sbordone

Seconded by: Samantha Mannion

**Recording of vote:** All in favor

**III. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**A. PPS Leadership Transition Updates**

Monika Krepsztul introduced herself as the Interim PPS Director, and gave an overview of the department in this transition period. She stated that in addition to Alex Lambert and two department chairs, the PPS department will also have support from Andrea Einhorn, who will be working 3 days a week, and Jim Martinez, who will be working 2 days a week.

**B. Transition Co-Op Updates**

**1. STRIDES/NCP Academy Developments** - Monika discussed the merger between Strides and the Newtown CP Academy, and provided a slideshow to demonstrate the new space. She stated that our district currently has eight students enrolled, with the expectation that will increase to twelve students, and Newtown currently has about twenty enrolled students. Currently, there are eight job coaches working to support both districts, with the goal of combining all work sites. There were open houses on 11/5 and 11/21 for parents, students and stakeholders that were well attended. Monika gave an overview of specific designated spaces in the new Transitions location, and highlighted that there are now private meeting spaces and that a school store will be opening soon. A question was asked about the lease terms for the space, and Ken responded that due to the structure of our town's budget negotiation process, we can only have a yearly lease, but he is anticipating having a longstanding positive working relationship with the property's owner/operator.

**2. Progress on Ongoing Merger Initiatives** - Monika stated that the goals are to continue to collaborate on work site-sharing and transportation (Ken highlighted the cost-savings that we have benefited from by combining transportation with Newtown). The program is also looking at moving to a co-teaching model. One job coach on staff will ultimately be designated as the Community college liaison for the Naugatuck Valley campus in Danbury, to assist our students that will be taking college classes there. Teachers are also attending Communities of Practice (COP) meetings on a monthly basis. Amy Tozzo, a parent, asked if there was the possibility of adding worksites at a parent's request. Monika stated that requests by parents can be made, and that once those sites are properly vetted, Transitions staff will be able to coordinate to make that happen.

**C. ELC Information Night** - Alex Lambert discussed the ELC Information Night that was held on 11/19. The evening was hosted by PPS, ELC teachers and service providers. There

was very good turnout at this event, and as a result, we have an increased number of families wanting to attend the Family Resource Center which meets every Wednesday, from 9:30am-10:30am. The information night covered topics such as placement, morning and afternoon designations, and the lottery system at ELC. Ed Sbordone asked about the current student in the lottery/waitlist and Alex stated that she didn't know the exact numbers, but that the current list is long. Ken pointed out that there was 160k in tuition put forward in this year's budget to offset staffing costs, but explained that the ELC program is not self-sustaining.

**D. SPED Presentations at Faculty Meetings**

1. *1/16/25 at the High School:* Focus on IEP Accommodations and Modifications - The Special Education Department will begin presenting at school faculty meetings. Their first presentation will be to high school faculty, where they will be presenting on accommodations and modifications.

**E. Nursing Program Update** - Ken provided a detailed update on the situation with the nursing program. He explained that the program is being restructured to replace the float nurse position with a lead nurse, and that we will be using an agency to ensure that we have adequate nursing coverage in all buildings during this transition period. Substitute nurses will overlap with outgoing employees to ensure continuity of care for children. Each school will be communicating these changes to their communities. He stressed that while nursing falls under PPS, the Lead Nurse is the key point of contact. He also mentioned that a request has been made at the elementary school to have the two nurses share a common office, and that the plan is to have the facilities start the structural work to make this happen over the summer. He wanted parents to know that we have always been covered from a staffing perspective, and that there has never been a situation where there was not a nurse available in a school building. We are also increasing the nurse substitute pool per diem rate to \$250, to make us more competitive. Rebecca LLOYD gave a recruitment overview, and stated that we are currently recruiting nurses through Applitrack, nursing schools and various social media sites, and reiterated that our pay rates are now competitive compared to other districts in our area.

Several concerned parents and caretakers conveyed their concerns during this portion of the meeting. They wanted a specific transition process in place to reduce parent and child anxiety, and had questions regarding the vetting process for incoming nurse staff (Ken stated this would be the Lead Nurse's responsibility). They also wanted to know where medical supplies for children would now be housed, and asked that the district be forthcoming in communicating all of this information to families. Kim reiterated that parents/caretakers should contact PPS with specific concerns, and Monika agreed.

Susan Huwer asked if we are conducting exit interview for outgoing nursing staff, and Rebecca stated that we had conducted some interviews.

**F. Unified Sports** - We have great enrollment in Unified Sports for volleyball this year. There are 30 partner students and 15 students participating. Monika gave a "shout out" to coaches Elisa Bodar, Greg Schwartz and Jude Reiger to thank them for their efforts and dedication. She also thanked all the other staff members that work to support the program. The students have also participated in the first ever volleyball invitational with Bethel, and attended the homecoming dance on 11/22 at Joel Barlow HS. Basketball will start in January, and our Unified Sports Program wants to work toward becoming a Special Olympics champion school in the future. Susan Huwer asked if that is a state or national accreditation, and Monika stated that she believes it is done at the state level.

**IV. ACTION ITEMS** - none

**V. OTHER** - none

**Motion to adjourn:** Made by: Kim LaTourette  
**Recording of vote:** All in favor

**Seconded by:** Samantha Mannion  
**Meeting adjourned at:** 6:55 p.m.