

Special Education Ad Hoc Subcommittee Meeting

Monday, April 6, 2026 6:00 PM

New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT. In the event of inclement weather, this meeting will change to remote, and a virtual link will be provided on our website and distributed. , 3 Brush Hill Road, New Fairfield, CT 06812

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

II.A. February 5, 2026

III. INFORMATION ITEMS

III.A. BRIDGE Program Update

III.B. STRIDES Program Update

IV. ACTION ITEMS

V. OTHER

VI. ADJOURNMENT

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: 2/5/26 Minutes submitted by: Samantha Mannion
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 6:00 p.m.

II. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Samantha nominated Kim. Sue seconded – Unanimous

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. December 4, 2025

Motion: To approve the minutes of December 4, 2025, as presented

Made by: Kim LaTourette

Seconded by: Ed Sbordone

Recording of vote: All in favor

IV. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Bridge Program: Overview and Next Steps - Monica talked about the intensity of mental health needs in the district. Avoidance, anxiety and stress have not had structured support to meet these needs. The Bridge Program is for students that would previously be considered for outplacement. The Bridge Program would provide small, structured education with a therapeutic component and a flexible curriculum for high school students. Three area needs: transition from Middle School to HS, parent communication and involvement, and integration between special ed and regular ed. This program would also have school avoidance services provided on-site. This is less expensive than what we were previously doing (using outside services). We are hoping some outplaced students might be able to use this program to return to the district. It is currently a pilot program, but we are already seeing notable successes with some students.

Ken stated that we have money in the budget for school avoidance (contracted services), but these services have not always been successful in getting children into the district. Having a workable, in-house program would reduce district costs and ensure a better educational outcome for avoidant children.

Ed asked how many children are currently participating in the program. Michelle stated that including the therapeutic services component, it is currently five or six, but the program is uniquely tailored to each individual child.

Monica pointed out the program numbers in ALC and the Bridge Program are constantly changing. Some students in these programs will be able to transition into general education, and new students will enter behind them.

If the Bridge Program is successful next year, the investment delta by the BOE would be approximately 35K to fund the remainder of the salary of the requested Social Worker position. Having a full-time social worker would enable us to eliminate an ancillary support position that is currently funded (paraprofessional), and there will be more savings from not having to use contracted services for school avoidance.

More Data on the success of this pilot program will be forthcoming at the next meeting.

B. In-District Transitions: Benefits and Practices - Michelle gave an overview of our current transitions process. When transitions are planned well, there is continuity of services and families feel better and we have better outcomes. Usually, transitions start in March. We try to respect each building's calendar, and we also try and combine transitions with PPTs and annual meetings, whenever possible.

Transitions are coordinated by individuals with expertise in all buildings.

Alex: Kindergarten teachers are observing kids in Pre-K, and meetings happen with parents so they know what to expect in kindergarten. Alex has also created a data sheet that helps to provide more information about each child entering from Pre-K, with more of a focus on social/emotional readiness.

Theresa: 5th - 6th grade: Communication between elementary and MS teachers is critical, especially because the pull-out model goes away in MS.

Michelle: 8th - 9th grade overview: Math placement is primary focus for initial class placement in 9th grade.

12th grade to STRIDES - Angie Mahoney attends all PPTs for this group. Students attend ESY at STRIDES for last two years in HS, and attend some STRIDES activities during the year.

Proper transition planning helps us with staffing, since we can anticipate in advance what we are going to need, and reduces anxiety for families.

V. ACTION ITEMS – none

VI. OTHER

Motion to adjourn: Made by: Ed Sbordone

Recording of vote: All in favor

Seconded by: Kim LaTourette

Meeting adjourned at: 6:53 p.m.