

# **Cabinet Report to Boards**

## **April 2020**

I will introduce this Cabinet Report by expressing how incredibly proud I am to work in the Windham Central Supervisory Union.

The process of working together (boards, teachers, principals, central office, support staff, and families) for these last few years through some challenging times (ACT 46, budget development, declining enrollment, increased trauma, and rising standards) really set the stage for all of us to navigate this extraordinary time we are living in.

Everyone is stepping up, helping out, and taking on additional responsibilities. You will read below the specifics of all the actions that are happening. I would like to point out that all the regular functions of the SU continue to operate while we design and deliver remote learning on-the-fly. This is an extensive report with a lot of valuable information.

We will continue to move forward, working together, in partnership with our communities.

### **Academic Proficiency**

#### *Director of Special Education*

- The Special Education Department has worked very hard these past 2 weeks to design specialized instruction that aims for student academic proficiency. They have coordinated their services to ensure students' needs are met in this remote learning environment. Instruction is meaningful and designed to promote long-term learning.
- Several explicit skills are being taught to students; however, executive functioning skills are requiring an adjustment to our usual in-school instruction now that students are learning remotely. Executive functioning skills include impulse control, controlling one's emotions, being flexible in thinking, working memory, self-monitorization, planning (and prioritizing tasks), starting tasks, and being organized. As you can imagine, what used to be a binder in a backpack in a locker is now an electronic task in a Google Classroom, in an email or Drive. While students were practicing technological skills prior to COVID-19, remote learning has caused a significant shift in approach and need for further instruction. Students and staff are doing an astounding job with these skills, but it certainly has been a shift! The positive is that these are fantastic skills that students will need for post-secondary skills.
- Developed a Continuity of Learning Plan for WCSU's Special Education Department which included guidance on how special education will ensure new learning occurs after 4/6/20 in the areas of Annual and Initial IEP Meetings, Special Education referrals, re-evaluations, parental rights, support services, distance learning plans, IEP amendments, data collection, and record keeping. Our Director of Curriculum & Instruction is orchestrating this to ensure our entire Supervisory Union submits a plan collaboratively.

### *Director of Curriculum and Instruction*

- Prior to the Dismissal, the Academic Support Team (AST) had been working diligently on preparing the two full days of PD for our Grade Level Meetings, which were scheduled for the last week in March. The AST have been working with a Math Specialist to prepare a workshop for elementary teachers (K-6) to take a deep dive into the math progressions (K-2, 3-5) and to create a Math Menu for their classrooms, which includes creating window panes, number talks, journals and games/ activities for students. The PD will be postponed to a later date.
- In anticipation of and since the Dismissal, the AST has been preparing interventions lessons for students and families and providing those lessons via distance learning (hands-on materials, virtual classrooms, YouTube videos, etc). In anticipation of the long term Dismissal of students, the AST has begun to shift more into their roles as academic coaches. The team and I have been organizing and preparing materials and activities for students that are hands-on (games and activities) and can be used independently by families outside of the curriculum and lessons provided by classroom teachers. Families will receive a packet of materials (dice, games, cards, etc) that can be used for different activities, which are focused on math and literacy. These materials will be supported by online tutorials. The Project is starting with Pre-Kindergarten and will work its way up to the middle school grades. (Thank you to Special Education who has provided paraeducator support and materials to help with this project.) The AST is also collecting and sharing lessons as a team and getting those lessons distributed to the schools they serve. These include a bank of YouTube videos (i.e. Read Alouds, Mystery Bag, Keys to Literacy Activities, Math Intervention Activities, etc.) We intend to find a platform to share these across the SU. The team is also preparing and sharing lessons for the curricula being used in our schools, including Eureka Math, Bridges Math Intervention, and Foundations. The team is also preparing Keys to Literacy and Florida Center for Research activities that can be used across the SU. Lastly, all of the AST teachers are continuing to serve their small groups of students to whom they provide academic intervention.
- With the help of our administrative assistant, Elizabeth Francese, we have also created a website to share the latest information about COVID 19 with our communities, provide teacher resources, and resources to parents. The site is linked to the WCSU homepage. I am working to make certain that the information and resources provided have been vetted and are in alignment with the work of our SU. There is a lot of information and resources being shared right now; it can be overwhelming for parents and teachers.

### **Personalized Learning**

#### *Director of Special Education*

- Throughout the past 2 weeks, I have guided our Special Education team to develop personalized learning opportunities for every student in special education as a result of significant changes in placement due to COVID-19. Special consideration was made for each student's unique needs within the context of their families (for example, internet accessibility, appropriateness of use of technology (age/developmental level). This has been challenging due to the rapid changes and consideration of instruction remotely in the home setting (whereas we are typically designing instruction so the students can access their educational program in school).
- Management of mandates from the Agency of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Governor, and Secretary of Education as they pertain to Distance Learning Plans or IEP Amendments. At this time, the mandate has been given that Case Managers must create Distance Learning Plans for all students on IEPs (in collaboration with their IEP teams) to ensure clarity of services and supports required to access remote learning and continue with specialized instruction.

- What is a Distance Learning Plan?
  - Document can be found here: [Distance Learning Plan](#)

*Director of Curriculum and Instruction*

- The need to provide Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for students has been compounded by the digital platform. AST teachers have been working with classroom teachers to help provide scaffolded instruction for students through the provision of additional, varied activities and lessons.

## **High Quality Staffing**

*Director of Special Education*

- COVID-19 has brought to light the importance of specialization for staff. It has suddenly become evident the benefit of separating the roles of Case Management (procedural compliance) and specialized instruction (prescriptive intervention designed by diagnostic assessment and performance data). Currently, Special Educators are working diligently to recreate specialized learning for students on IEPs so students will continue to be provided with specialized instruction despite the remote learning environment. Case Managers are coordinating services, ensuring services are provided, ensuring accommodations and modifications are being implemented, and are remaining in compliance with Annual IEP Review dates, Evaluation timelines, and documentation. We still have several Special Educators who are performing both roles, causing significant stress for them. I am problem solving around this and shifting resources to alleviate their challenges. While student instruction should be the priority of all, the reality is that funding, monitoring, and procedural compliance remain realities and requirements of this position.
- All of our Special Education staff have collaborated these past 2 weeks to ensure equitable instruction, sharing of resources, and reduction of duplicative efforts that could overwhelm students. We were able to get specialized instruction in place within days of the announcement of dismissal.
- Special Education staff are sharing resources, cross-training one another with technological needs, and are collaborating to develop ideas for all of our students on IEPs.
- I want to also note that our Paraeducators have been absolutely incredible during this time! They have stepped in to support students with social-emotional, behavioral, and academic skills; have helped find supplemental tasks for students that enhance their learning; have helped with childcare for Essential Persons, have reached out to families to support; have assisted with food distribution; and more! They have gone above and beyond and I just want to thank them for their support of our students! Additionally, our Special Educators, School Psychologist, Behavior Specialist, Related Service Providers, and my Administrative Assistant have beautifully assisted one another to design systems of support and instruction for all students. They have worked with colleagues from other supervisory unions to problem-solve intricate challenges, and more. I am very proud of their work!
- Our Behavior Specialist has worked to support our Special Education staff with the enormous paperwork requirements for students on IEPs. We have been mandated to create a Distance Learning Plan for every student on an IEP. As you can imagine, Special Educators whom are providing direct instruction all day and have this paperwork requirement are overwhelmed. Our Behavior Specialist, Case Managers, and I will work together to ensure instruction is the primary focus while also ensuring we are in compliance procedurally.
- Tasks worked on prior to COVID-19:

- I had begun working with our professional team to begin reviewing necessary documentation for decision-making around eligibility for Extended School Year (ESY) services during the summer. This has had to be put on hold for the time being.
- Time Studies: We completed our 2nd week of time studies (Federal requirement for Medicaid purposes). We are analyzing the information which includes dates, hours of work with students on IEPs, time spent assisting “struggling” learners, % Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) vs. Age 6-21 Special Education, etc. We then work with the Business Department for billing needs, budget allocations, and planning for the following year.
- Regional Collaboration (more information can be found in the Financial Efficiencies section). I continue to participate in meetings but am unclear of next steps due to the impact of COVID-19.
- Special Education Referral processes--we identified the need to change our referral process in light of our strong Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and Local Comprehensive Assessment System (LCAS). Our team had begun analyzing our current processes and were working on brainstorming ways in which it needed to change. This has had to be put on hold for the time being.

#### *Director of Curriculum and Instruction*

- As coaches, the AST is preparing several PD opportunities for classroom teachers that will provide training and resources to classroom teachers as we adapt to the new teaching environment. I will be able to prepare a more detailed list of these opportunities in the next few weeks.
- In addition to the many meetings of the Leadership Team (LT) do discuss our responses and strategies for Dismissal, the LT has continued its work as an instructional team. The LT met virtually to continue its work on our cycle of improvement for each school. The team also worked together to plan for PD for next school year, to reflect on current year PD and to continue moving our work forward as an SU.
- Mentors and Proteges met at the beginning of the month. The meeting this month focused on helping proteges gather tools and learn of resources for behavior management and other scenarios they presented. The Mentors will continue to work with their new teachers this year through means other than face to face meetings.

#### *Director of Operations*

Facilities Teams: I have engaged our facilities staff to focus on identifying projects during the school dismissal. This is an opportunity for the staff to focus on tasks that we would normally not have enough time for during breaks or over summer. Some of these tasks include thorough top/down cleaning, ceiling tile replacement, painting. These are low investment projects that will create a large visual impact on the facilities upon the return of our students.

Continuity of Food Service: To start, Chris Parker, his amazing team, and Phoebe Connolly have proved to be invaluable to the operation! Seed2Tray which feeds students from WRMUED schools, along with Wardsboro and Windham has been working tirelessly to continue food service operations during the school dismissal. They are currently running food sites for pickup meals 5 days a week at Jamaica Village School, Leland & Gray and NewBrook Elementary. In addition to this, they have coordinated home delivery for 17 families that have a hard time accessing the food sites. We are currently working on logistics to add two bus routes to increase the accessibility of the meal program for more students.

Childcare for Essential Workers: Kiley, Jorda, Pam and myself have worked to implement a plan for establishing Jamaica Village School as an option for childcare for essential workers, as mandated by the governor. I have worked with Greg, our custodian at JVS to ensure that we have a plan in place for regular disinfection of the rooms and any associated items. These plans are in place and ready to roll as soon as needed!

## **Safe, Healthy Schools**

### *Director of Special Education*

- In addition to assisting with designing and coordinating assignments for paraeducator staff, assisting with design of instruction, and reaching out to families, our Behavior Specialist has worked to design behavior support plans and systems for students in their remote setting. As we embark on new learning in this setting, this role will continue to be crucial in ensuring success of students.
- The Special Education Department has worked to provide calmness and consistency for students on IEPs. This change is extremely disruptive for students already challenged by their learning difficulties. Remote learning has added another layer of change for students. It was a wonderful highlight throughout the week to hear stories from our Special Education Department of the relief they saw on students' faces when specialized instruction resumed.
- I have worked closely with our Director of Operations and food services to coordinate support from paraeducators staff to assist with meal distribution.
- I have worked closely with the Director of Operations and our After School L'AFTER Coordinator (Kiley Boyd) to create childcare for essential workers as mandated by the Governor. This will be available starting on Thursday this week and the team has worked very efficiently.

### *Director of Curriculum and Instruction*

- Our SU is continuing its commitment to becoming a Trauma Informed School Community. The Catalyst group will continue to meet with Dave Melnick, albeit virtually, to work on our ways to provide support to our students, families, and teachers, all of whom are experiencing new and different types of stress. The Catalyst group will continue to share their knowledge with the LT and provide resources for our staff and families.

### *Director of Operations*

Cleaning Protocols: Early March, when we started seeing a heavy spread of coronavirus in California and Washington, I worked with our custodians to implement a more robust disinfection schedule for our facilities. We increased the frequency of disinfecting our "touchpoints", which included door knobs, lightswitches, desks, handrails, etc. Another focus was ensuring we were all following the recommended dwell times for each chemical to ensure it was effective in killing germs.

Equipment Investment: COVID-19 created an opportunity for schools to focus more heavily on regular disinfection. This bears a burden on the custodial staff, who are already limited in time between cleaning, repairs, and emergency items that arise on a daily basis. To make this task less burdensome on the staff, we invested in the purchase of two Clorox Total 360 Systems. These are commercial grade, electrostatic disinfectant sprayers. The goal is to be able to disinfect more areas, more regularly than we currently can. The units will be on schedule to travel between schools. Regularly using these machines will also assist during the cold and flu season, and overall, make our buildings cleaner and safer.

Act 66 Lead Testing Updates: Wardsboro Elementary has completed their permanent remediation action. Townshend Elementary is 90% complete, only waiting for one additional fixture which has been hard to locate a replacement. Jamaica Village School benefited from the installation of 2 centrally located water fountains/bottle fillers. One of the units is operational, the second is waiting on a replacement part that arrived broken.

## **Financial Efficiencies**

### *Director of Special Education*

- This month started out with conversations and meetings regarding regional collaboration for special education programs for financial efficiency, increased continuum of services for students, and improved programming. This involved a Board Meeting for the Learning Collaborative and then a presentation at the regional Directors of Special Education meeting. I will attend another Board Meeting with the Learning Collaborative in the upcoming week and we will determine what our next steps can be in light of COVID-19.
- Amidst COVID-19 changes, staff have worked to keep costs as low as possible. They reached out to Principals and the IT Department to determine whether or not equipment was in-district. They worked creatively to create learning packets, binders of assignments, and more.

### *Director of Operations*

In House Service Work: Due to the extended school dismissal, as I work with the custodians on projects, we are also able to shift focus on additional service work that can be performed in house. With this extra time, we can perform more work ourselves, rather than hiring an outside contractor. I am also challenging our facilities team to think globally on sharing staff and talents of other custodians across the SU, as needed for certain projects.

NewBrook Elementary Roof: We have awarded the bid for the replacement of the leaking roof over the multipurpose room at NewBrook Elementary School to Finnell Roofing. This was the last section that was not replaced when Finnell Roofing replaced the main portion of the roof. This roof was in rough shape and leaks were becoming more prevalent. We are scheduled for this work to be performed the week of April 20th, but plans are subject to change as directives come of the governors orders.

L&G Biomass Boiler Upgrade: Messersmith Manufacturing has been working on getting final details of the boiler buttoned up. We had a test fire on the boiler last week which went smoothly. The onset of COVID-19 has extended the deadline on some parts and labor but we are looking to get the boiler commissioned in the next couple weeks.

### *Director of Finance*

Business Continuity and COVID-19: The business office was able to react quickly to the “stay home” “stay safe” mandate by the Governor. All the vital operations, payroll, HR and Accounts Payable processes have been un-interrupted. These key elements continue to be our top priority during the crisis. We meet as a team most everyday via Zoom to discuss the day and the issues that have been arising. We are carefully tracking expenses specifically for COVID-19 using a project code in our accounting system with the hopes of State reimbursements. The business office has been active in helping each department, particularly in Food service. WCSU’s National School Lunch Coordinator, Donna Albin, was able to file all the necessary applications to ensure that we are receiving as much federal reimbursement as possible with

serving the student's in a non-traditional way. We also have been able to act on more grant opportunities that are starting to flow with the help of Liz Francese.

Budgets: There were two budget votes that were postponed due to COVID-19. WRED and Windham's FY 21 budgets have not been voted on. The potential new date for t WRED -Weds May 6th and Windham has not yet rescheduled.

Audits: Most of the audits are completed and I have hard copies for all the board members once I am able to physically get them to you. The audits will be posted online. You will find them on the WCSU website: <https://www.windhamcentral.org/>

There is also a management letter addressed to the WCSU board. The management letter, which is not a material or significant weakness, is to help our office to improve. We have already addressed the areas that were pointed out to us. I am happy to elaborate on those items at the WCSU board meeting on April 1st.

Implementations and Upgrades: We have completed our first major eFinance Plus upgrade on 3/30. Details for staff members will be going out today as to how the upgrade will effect them. As part of the Agency of Education eFP Governance Group it was a delight to see that the upgrade included some of our suggestions. We have also started the Attendance and Substitute Management system last week with a GO LIVE scheduled for May 15th. This will most likely be pushed back due to COVID-19.