

# Futures Education

*Authentic Work : Sensible Costs : Building Better Lives*

***Clinical and Educational Services Analysis Summary  
Stonington Public Schools  
August 26, 2010***



# A Brief History of the Clinical and Educational Services Analysis (CESA)

- The rationale: As Futures' personnel began providing services within school districts, it became evident as contractors that we were not necessarily contributing to improvements at a more global level in the effective and efficient delivery of services to students. Both we, and the districts that we served, began asking the fundamental question Can we provide services better?
- Where we've been: 150 schools districts across Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Virginia, North Carolina, Illinois, Georgia, Michigan, New York, Arizona, and Idaho.

# Current Challenges in Special Education

- The “culture” of student ownership (“not my kid/problem”)
- Fiscal Realities/District Resource Capacity
- Systematic:
  1. Pre-referral Process
  2. Entrance Criteria
  3. Exit Criteria
- Parental Expectations

# Executive Summary

- The leadership of the Stonington Public Schools commissioned this comprehensive review of five primary areas:
  1. The allocation of supports and associated documentation;
  2. Financial parameters associated with the delivery of special education;
  3. The efficacy and efficiency of related service providers; and
  4. The organizational structure of the special education program
- For ease of presentation, we will consider the results with respect to: Program Review, Organizational Structure, Support, and Procedures, and Financial Considerations

# Methodology

## *Interviews*

- All interviews were confidential, allowing for candid responses
- Interview questions were catered according to the interviewees' particular areas of expertise and relevance to the area (s) under review
- A representative number of clinicians, educators, administrators, and paraprofessionals involved in the area (s) under review were interviewed in order to attain valuable and contributory qualitative information

## *IEP Reviews*

## *Financial Analyses*



# Preliminary Themes and Findings

## Organizational Structure, Support, and Procedures Findings

- Strong culture of ownership of all students that is more fully embraced by the Pawcatuck schools
- Variable understandings of the ultimate goals of special services
- Historical lack of definitive responses from central office, has led to building based decision-making in address special education issues
- Emerging and improving academic and behavioral interventions for all students

# Preliminary Themes and Findings (cont).

## Organizational Structure, Support, and Procedures

### Recommendations

- Institute District-wide protocols and procedures (e.g. PPTs, Rtl practices)
- Maximize opportunities for staff to attend District-wide meetings in order to further promote uniformity, collegiality, and commonalities of best teaching practices.



# Implications for Our Work

- Continue partnership with SERC and fully implement “Step-by-Step” district-wide
- Foster “inclusive schools” and continue the shift in mental models
- Provide ongoing professional development in Step-by-Step and inclusive schools
- Continue to explore and create effective academic and behavior supports in district
- Conduct regularly scheduled team meetings for special education and related services personal by the Director of Special Services
- Develop consistent practices, protocols, and procedures with building administrators to address current inconsistencies in special education, Rtl, and the SAT process



# Preliminary Themes and Findings (cont).

## Program Review

### Findings

- A stated understanding of an educational service delivery model by the related service providers
- Variability with respect to the quality of the IEPs
- A stated and practical clinical philosophy of “front loading” among the majority of the staff where younger students are provided with more intense therapy.
- Variability with respect to the practices and procedures of Student Assistance Team and co-teaching
- Over-reliance on paraprofessional supports

# Preliminary Themes and Findings (cont).

## Program Review

### Recommendations

- Leadership is strongly encouraged to institute district-wide entry and exit criteria for speech-language, PT, OT, and paraprofessionals that supports best practice in terms of federal, state, and district guidelines and initiatives
  - Least Restrictive Environment
  - Free Appropriate Public Education
- -Use of push-in, consultative, and integrated models
- Continue to improve the SAT-Rtl processes to increase consistent practice across all schools and to increase the effectiveness in monitoring student progress
- Increase personnel, programmatic, and administrative capacities surrounding the co-teaching model and the related practice of an integrated IEP, where related services and instructional staff work together to optimize educational outcomes



# Implications for Our Work

- Develop with building administrators, Special Education team, and related service personnel clear, explicit exit and entry criteria in conjunction with the use of the Rtl model
- Director of Special Services and Assistant Superintendent will reconvene and create a PK-12 district-wide Rtl committee to establish district-wide consistent practice and understandings
- Design and develop with SERC continued and ongoing professional development to increase understanding and practice of co-teaching models and Step-by-Step processes
- Use in-house models of co-teaching and inclusive school practices to ensure district-wide movement toward full implementation of Step-by-Step, co-teaching, push-in models, and consultative supports

# Preliminary Themes and Findings (cont).

## Financial Considerations

### Findings

- In comparison to DRG and benchmarking conventions, Stonington is notably over-staffed with paraprofessionals; in contrast, the number of behavioral health and OT staff is not as highly staffed as may be expected.
- The fees for the pre-school program are considered to be relatively low in comparison with other programs in the area
- The employment of a full-time autism consultant may represent an over-extension of District resources
- The District's reliance on out of District Placements is neither excessive from the number of students (29) nor an expenditure perspective

# Preliminary Themes and Findings (cont).

## Financial Considerations

### Recommendations

- Leadership may consider re-allocating resources currently designated for paraprofessional supports and re-deploy them for special education teachers.
- Investigate the use of some proportion of therapy assistants
- Transitioning the autism specialist to a consultative “train the trainer” role
- Consider increasing the fee for the pre-school program
- Continue to expand programmatic, personnel, physical plant, and fiscal capacities to create in district supports as alternatives to out-of-district placements



# Implications for Our Work

- Increase understanding of the purpose of paraprofessional support as well as the role of paraprofessionals in Stonington to reduce need
- Develop and monitor criteria for the use of paraprofessional supports
- Continue the use of therapy assistants to support OT and PT work
- Explore options for preschool programming and fee structure for typical peers
- Continue to explore ways Stonington can better support our students in district by creating supports and by building our staff's capacity to service students' various needs
- Further use in-house "experts" to build staff capacity and provide on-going support in a variety of areas and create professional learning community among the special education and related services teams

# *Discussion*

