

February 15, 2018

Windham Southeast Supervisory Union

Lyle Holiday, Superintendent

Marisa Duncan-Holley, Director of Special Education

Shelley Wilson, Coordinator Elementary Special Education

WSESU overview / Impact of proposed law to reform education and special education funding

WSESU has made strides toward implementation of MTSS. The supervisory union has participated as SWIFT schools, Numbers That Count (UVM), SPDG and SSIP to expand knowledge of equitable education for all students including additional instruction of Tier I and Tier II instruction and interventions. Through these systems Vermont Agency of Education provided there was broad and deep analysis of how instruction and intervention were provided and where the areas we needed to improve. The outcome led to monthly benchmarks, data meetings to review the success of academic progress and adjustments to instruction, more time for students to master skills. The outcomes have been outstanding for our students, who have had great gains in reading and math as well as decreases in behaviors and reduction of out of school placements.

Though we have made great gains with academics and behavior success, WSESU has a high percentage of students living in poverty, experiencing trauma, unstable housing, lack of food, the effects of opioids and children being removed from their families by the Department of Children and Families have a great impact on the school community.

Schools are responsible for the wellness of children. We provide a safe environment, clothes, breakfast, lunch, snacks and weekend food. School professionals require training and expertise on the impact of poverty and trauma and time and an intervention system for social development as well as literacy and math.

Special education has been the support to struggling students as children have been exposed to more adverse childhood experiences. This has caused an increase of students not gaining academic skills due to the psychological impact of their lives. Special education has adapted to include struggling students. Decreasing funding as presented in the 7 models will have a significant impact on student success and supporting students to graduate. This transition will take time and effort and does require funding that aligns with the student that require special education supports and services.

As a system, we are concerned that services and supports we have in place will be reduced by a significant reduction of special education funding. The needs of children and adolescents are on the rise each year. Changing a funding mechanism does not change the need for children in crisis.

Transition to Census Based Special Education Funding Supports

- AOE provide a road map for schools / supervisory unions to achieve equitable education MTSS.
- AOE coaching system that aligns with SWIFT coaching. Provide a model guiding assessment of the system, development of transition plan and ongoing assessment of achieving goals set through the assessment process implementing research based instruction and intervention equitable for all students.
- Review of the Special Education Rules for the eligibility categories of Emotional Disturbance and functional behavior as an adverse effect.
- AOE guidance and funding sources for behavior specialists, registered behavior technicians or other sources for highly qualified paraprofessionals, academic and behavior coaches
- Funding that supports structures within schools to provide social service needs to struggling students and students experiencing trauma that includes personnel experts in social work, poverty, trauma and behavior.
- Funding for general education to take responsibility for student evaluation, behavior experts, trauma experts and social workers/ psychologist for the many students not eligible for special education but in need of instruction and interventions that support their social and emotional needs.
- Timing of budget decisions that align with budget development process that begins in September