

**Implementation of Expanded Continuum of Mental Health Supports: Examination of Initial Year Demographics, Outcomes and Sustainability**  
Minnesota Principals Academy~ Action Research Project 2015 ~ Ellen Voigt

**ABSTRACT**

This action learning project utilized descriptive data to examine outcomes of expanding the continuum of mental health services available in a suburban school district in Minnesota. The expansion of services included increasing co-located mental health services available in schools, restructuring special education social work to expand related services in federal setting 1 and 2 resource programs, and providing educational services in new local external partial hospitalization and day treatment programs given formal collaborative partnerships. The project examined to what degree students would access services in the four areas, fiscal sustainability of collaborative partnerships, and staff perceptions and progress of students receiving social work as an Individual Education Plan (IEP) related service. The data indicated that co-located therapist caseloads were full by the end of the year with a wait list, the partial hospitalization and day treatment programs reached capacity during their first year with local district students attending more frequently than other non-resident students. In examining social work as a related service it was determined over 80% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that students benefitted from this service on their IEP and the service provided specialty service beyond what a special education teacher can provide. Of students with social work for mental health on their IEP 71.2% were making progress on IEP goals during the school year, by the end of the school year reporting period 86.4% of students receiving this service were making progress on IEP goals.

**Project Vision & Context:**

- Provide a continuum of mental health services to students through a combination of school provided and locally available parent choice services connected to the school district, to ultimately support student achievement and positive outcomes .

\*Outer suburb district, >9300 students, 81.5% white, 11.9% special education, 19.8% free/reduced

**What?:** Implemented changes are outlined on page 2

**Questions:**

- 1) To what degree are students accessing newly expanded locally available mental health services?
- 2) Are collaborative partnerships with day treatment and partial hospitalization program fiscally sustainable?
- 3) What are outcomes of restructuring special education social workers compared to previous year?

**Outcomes:** Outlined on page 2

**Implications for practice:**

- Students/ families access services available & can be fiscally sustainable, collaborative partnerships of this nature can be successful
- Impact of mental health services on achievement difficult to quantify and measure, initial feedback indicates potential positive impact
- Significant number of students with mental health needs are not identified as receiving special education services
- Shifting some special education social work supports to a more proactive model did not negatively impact students with highest needs (warrants more investigation)

**Next steps:**

- Reintegration– alignment and transition of students between settings
- Instruction & academic progress focus

	Special Education Social Workers- District Employees & Contracted with County (Skills Training)	Co-Located Mental Health Therapy Provided (School Linked Therapists)	County Day Treatment Program	Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP)
Change 2014-15	Restructured to proactive, setting 1 and 2	Expanded by 1.0 (3 total avg)	First year of program collaboration	First full year of program collaboration
Students Served	Direct service to special education students	All students, general / special education K-12 (excludes 5 elementary schools)	Students enrolled per parent choice, general and special education (6-12)	Students admitted per parent choice, general and special education (K-12)
District Staff Assigned	4 special education itinerant social workers & 3 contracted social workers	None	2 dual licensed teachers, related service/itinerant support, admin support	2 dual licensed teachers, related service/itinerant support, admin support
Role & Responsibilities	*Provide mental health and ancillary and supportive services to students on IEPs *Liaison to community and county resources	*Co-located providers act like outside providers and service students per parent choice, providers work directly with parents, we simply allow them to use space for convenience of service	Outside Agency Provider Staff: *Determine intake/discharge, provide therapeutic services School Staff: *Provide gened/sped services- 3 hours of education per day (cores)	Outside Agency Provider Staff: *Determine intake/discharge, provide therapeutic services School Staff: *Provide gened/sped services - 2 hours of education per day (ELA)
Funding/ Billing	*District: general education funded, special education reimbursement *Contracted: paid by county and reported for sped reimbursement, CTSS third party billing	*No district funding *Funded by insurance/ third party billing and mental health grants held by the county	*Program/ County staff third party bills and parent private pay *Educational services are district funded and/or tuition billed to resident district for open enrolled students	*Outside agency staff third party bills and parent private pay * Educational services are district funded and/or tuition billed to resident district for open enrolled students
Facts	* District special education social workers provide service similar to contracted social workers, contracted can bill for CTSS- third party billing	*Make parents aware of community resources including co-located therapists per parent choice of service providers *Co-located therapists records are outside records/ not ed records	*Out of district students can attend, students open enroll in district *Capacity is 16-20 secondary school students, length of stay varies from a few weeks to full year	*Out of district students can attend, students open enroll in district *Capacity of approximately 35 students K-12, average length of stay about 3 weeks
OUTCOMES	*69 received service 13-14, 111 received service 14-15 (62% more) *71.1% progress on all IEP goal progress reports during the year *86.4% students making progress on end of year progress reports *95% staff agreed/strongly agreed students benefitted from service, 88% agreed/strongly agreed service provides specialty service beyond what sped teacher provides	*54 students on caseload *32 high, 13 middle, 9 elementary *wait lists	*16 nonresident students (2490 hours of education) *20 district students (3477 hours) *55.6% from resident district *50% nonresident students sped *50% district students spe  Expense: High Estimate \$383,400 Revenue: Estimate \$382,026.91	*197 nonresident students (4930 hours of education, 46 districts) *51 district students (1228 hours) *20.6% from resident district *34.5% nonresident students sped *29.4% district students sped