

Program Expansion for Students with Developmental Disabilities Recommendations

The Program Expansion for Students with Developmental Disabilities was charged developing recommendations that would inform expansion of programs at elementary and middle school levels. This focus was to be on the Primary Learner (PL) and Upper Learner (UL) programs, with enhancements to programs/classrooms related to the Academic Life Skills (ALS) model in the recommendations. The workgroup looked at the following items:

- Current research in relation to interventions and programming
- Current programs/practices inside HCPSS at the RECC/elementary level - Early Learner, Primary Learner, Upper Learner
- Current programs outside HCPSS (public and private) at the middle/high school level
- COMAR regulations for elementary and middle school programming
- Current evidence-based interventions in place or possible at elementary and middle schools
- HCPSS Strategic Call to Action: Learning and Leading with Equity
- DSE Strategic Plan

Members of the Workgroup:

Nicole Geiger, DSE Instructional Facilitator, Co-Chair
Elizabeth Augustin, DSE Instructional Facilitator, Co-Chair
Katie Markowitz - Parent, Co-Chair
Linda Boit - Parent
Jenny Pacheco - Parent
Sherri Braxton - Parent
Sara Sommerville -Parent
Shannon Majoros - Director of Programming, RISE for Autism
Annie McLaughlin - Educational and Behavioral Consultant
Megan Mulvenna - Director, Special Travelers
Kristie Kay - MS Special Education Teacher
Courtney Tompakov - Upper Learner Special Education Teacher
Paula Murphy - High School Special Educator
Janice Burns - Primary Learner Special Education Teacher
Amy Rianhard - DSE Board Certified Behavior Analyst
Julia Demino - DSE Board Certified Behavior Analyst
Susan LaCount - DSE Instructional Facilitator for Speech Services
Deb Mathias - DSE Resource Teacher for Speech Services
Yvonne Cox - DSE Instructional Facilitator Elementary
Ali Baker DSE Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Cedar Lane School
Laura Smith-Grose - School Psychologist

The Workgroup Met on the Following Dates:

- July 17 2:00-4:00 Redwood, Old Cedar Lane
 - Discussed history and components of Elementary, Primary and Upper Learner programs
 - Reviewed middle and high school programming

- Discussed resources needed to inform workgroup decision-making
- August 9 3:00-5:00 Redwood, Old Cedar Lane
 - Reviewed research and articles
 - Discussed how research applies to program for middle school
- August 21 2:00-4:00 Redwood, Old Cedar Lane
 - Reviewed non-public schools, other counties programs for Autism
 - Discussed how other schools options could look in Howard County Public School System
- September 6 3:30-5:30 Redwood, Old Cedar Lane
 - Worked on recommendations
- September 13 3:30-5:30, Redwood, Old Cedar Lane
 - Worked on recommendations

A Google folder with background information and supporting documentation was shared with all participants. After each meeting, a summary was provided to all Program Expansion invitees, including an invitation to provide further input online in the working documents.

The workgroup suggests the following recommendations for program expansion:

General Program Components for Middle School Classroom

- Student attended PL or UL HCPSS.
- Data indicates that the student is making progress within instruction using Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) practices throughout the day.
- Student requires direct instruction in using and applying functional communication skills across the day.
- Parent information session prior to transition decision making at IEP team
- Program location
 - Prefer central location
 - Provide professional learning for staff and students around disability awareness
 - Determine location by winter break

Staffing

Elementary

- Proposal that the Upper Learner be renamed to Intermediate Learner (IL) to align with other curriculum-based terminology
- One Special Education teacher continue per classroom of up to six students
- Two paraeducators per classroom, and student assistants assigned to provide one more adult than total student number. This allows for both instructional and close adult support needs to be covered within the program vs. using staff assigned who do not have specialized training in ABA-based strategies.
- All regional positions (ALS/PL/UL) be 11-month to encompass ESY and professional learning (teachers, paraeducators, SAs, related service providers)

Middle - proposal for the program to be called Middle Learner (ML)

- One Dual certified teacher per grade level instructing up to six students.
- One paraeducator, and student assistants assigned to establish a 1:1 staffing ratio.
- All positions be 11-month to encompass ESY and professional learning (teachers, paraeducators, SAs, related service providers)
- Additional supports include a BCBA to supervise ABA
- Speech language services include:
 - Time for consultation
 - Time spent within the self-contained setting to address social and functional communication
 - Time spent within the general education setting to work on generalization of skills
- Additional time allotted in a building for Occupational Therapy, School Psychologist
- Additional DSE supports include:
 - Countywide BCBA to support ABA-based instruction
 - Behaviors Specialist and Resource Teacher
- All regional positions (ALS) be 11-month to encompass ESY and professional learning (teachers, paraeducators, SAs, related service providers)

Professional Learning

- Opportunities for professional learning together - teachers, paras, SAs, related service providers
- For all staff:
 - Intensive training in delivery of methodology
 - Intensive training on the use of ABA during instruction
 - Training in device modeling/implementation
 - Training in the use of instructional technology
- For speech-language pathologist:
 - Prompt training
 - Color My Conversations
 - Knowledge of device programming based on student needs
- Utilize pieces of created professional learning modules - complete in summer - Relias modules (used at Cedar Lane by Cornerstone and SEAL); SCERTS (Social, Communication, Emotional, Regulation and Transactional Support) Educational Model
- Create partnerships
 - Look into a potential partnership with the NY Nest program, at least for professional learning purposes, thinking through structures for planning/instruction, etc.
 - Visit Montgomery County program and Ivy Mount
 - Consult with Dr. Rebecca Landa, Director, Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) at Kennedy Krieger Institute
 - Consider local university resources for professional learning options

Instruction

Middle School Model

- Individualized based on student
- English Language Arts (ELA) 6 and Math 6 could be out of general education setting using Direct Instruction as ABA approach
- Science/social studies (services in the general education setting- 35 minutes and out of the general education setting 15 minutes)
- Number Worlds as an option for the math intervention
- Reading intervention to be identified - further research required
- Social skills intervention offered during an intervention block - could be supported by school psychologist and speech-language pathologist
- Principles of ABA infused throughout core content classes

Continued considerations about schedule:

- How to provide reading intervention to students
- How to provide related arts to students

UL 5th grade

- Use other ABA strategies/ approaches for instruction (Direct Instruction, Precision Teaching)
- Spend entire science and social studies block in general education to prepare for middle school -
 - Consider 15 minutes out for pre/reteaching - 30 minutes of inclusion with exit ticket
- Consider providing two Intensive Structured Teaching sessions vs. three to bridge to middle school
- Consider using Number Worlds as a math intervention
- Assess gains in small group instruction getting ABA-infused vs. IST beginning in January and evaluate if the IST structure is still needed.
- Examine different ABA-based approaches to instructional technology

Other Considerations

ALS/PL/UL

- Designate all specialized program positions as 11-month to encompass ESY and professional learning
- Build a social skills component using the SEL model as the basis
- Look at an evidence-based math and reading intervention

Beyond Middle

- Consider an intervention for social/adaptive/self-advocacy skills for high school students taking alternate assessment

Continued Work

- Determine location for middle school classroom
- Develop program guidelines and expectations
- Determine professional learning
- Determine interventions for reading