

West Milford Township Public Schools
Special Services Restructuring Committee

Meeting #1 June 15, 2022

Meeting Minutes (6/15/22)

Attendees: Elizabeth McQuaid, Bill Kane, Caitlyn Babcock, Luraika Carrubba, Erin West, Laura Davis, Mary Duffy, Maria Haggerty, Alison Scully, Lauren Rembrandt, Whitney Lawrence, and Stephanie Marquard.

District restructuring committees have been formed to review and discuss the district's declining enrollment and loss of state funding. The special services committee was formed to review and consider all matters related to this department and the needs of students with disabilities.

The subcommittee discussed the following at their first meeting:

- Committee members discussed the impact of declining enrollment within the schools and the need to form restructuring committees at this time.
- Special services committee members shared thoughts on keeping all of the buildings open and looking for other uses.
- Questions were raised about the cost of the Highlander Academy lease and if it was possible to move this program into one of the vacant buildings through this process. Multiple committee members felt the district has a need for the Highlander Academy (Emotional Regulation Impairment Program) and asked Dr. McQuaid to explore expanding this program to grades 6-8. Dr. McQuaid shared that this has been reviewed several times but there is not enough space at its current location. She also feels it will benefit students.
- Questions came up about ensuring inclusion opportunities for students with special needs if class sizes needed to increase as a result of restructuring.
- For CLIMB Autism programs, parents want to still emphasize the importance of inclusion opportunities and ensure this can continue.
- Committee members would like to continue with a plan to keep the preschool classes together, if possible. They would like to see consideration given to programs staying together for consistency, if possible.
- Have we considered using a building or space for professional development?
- Can the district consider moving the Transition 18-21 program in a school building that may be closed due to restructuring and looking for adult services at this location?
- Committee members understand the importance of having financial discussions in order to still keep programs and services for students.
- Questions about services came up in discussion.
 - Will all school buildings still have a school nurse? The parents and staff feel this is important.
 - Will the mental health needs of students still be addressed with cuts in staffing (i.e. social workers, school psychologists, etc.)?
 - Will the consolidation of a school offer more in class resource to elementary students?