

Bridge Program

Presentation to the School Committee

October 17, 2017

What is the Bridge Program and Who Does It Serve?

- ▶ The Bridge Program is a safe, therapeutic environment that provides academic, behavioral and social/emotional supports that facilitate improved functioning in all areas. The Bridge Program serves students with average cognitive abilities who have had difficulty making effective progress due to a primary social/emotional disability. Students may also have other learning disabilities, behavioral disabilities or other co-existing disorders or disabilities that require significant therapeutic supports.
- ▶ Bridge services can range from a small, short-term self-contained classroom providing direct instruction in the core curriculum to a supported full-inclusion program. The Bridge Program offers a range of services to support the child in all areas (academically, behaviorally, socially). Teachers are involved with all staff working with the students across settings to monitor progress and current performance. Teaching assistants provide targeted, goal-oriented support to students and assist in the implementation of accommodations and modifications.

What Brings Us Here Today?

- ▶ As part of the Special Education Coordinated Program Review, districts are asked to periodically review special education programs in an effort to improve outcomes for students.
- ▶ Why review the Bridge Program?
 - ▶ The number of students in the Bridge Program at BHS had increased significantly in the recent years.
 - ▶ To determine whether the Lane School have an inclusive SAIL program and a Bridge Program?
 - ▶ In order to better align the program vertically for consistency for our students.

Enrollment in the Bridge Program

School	2016	2017
Davis	0	0
Lane	10	11
JGMS	15	13
BHS	19	21

*3 of the 11 students in the Bridge Program at Lane are diagnosed with Autism

Mission Statement

- ▶ In close collaboration with students, families, school based staff, and other community service providers, the Bridge Program (supports and services) will support students in developing self awareness, self regulation and resiliency to achieve social, emotional and academic independence in order to transition to a less restrictive setting.

Our Values and Assumptions

- ▶ Academic struggles can impact social/emotional functioning
- ▶ Strong relationships with all teachers/staff ensure success
- ▶ Assuming positive intent informs positive interactions
- ▶ Change is possible when high expectations are paired with:
 - ▶ Structured settings
 - ▶ Assessments that identify skill deficits
 - ▶ Effective strategies and interventions targeted towards skill deficits
 - ▶ Strong family partnerships
- ▶ Therapeutic success depends upon understanding that behavior is a form of communication
- ▶ Professional Development for all staff should be ongoing
- ▶ All work should be grounded in empathy and compassion

Referral Process

- ▶ Each building does has their own referral form and ultimately, decisions on placement are made through the IEP process.
- ▶ This year, our teams are working to develop a consistent means of referral across district that includes the following:
 - ▶ Ensuring a pre-referral process in place and consistently processed
 - ▶ Student Intervention team process
 - ▶ Interventions and outcomes
 - ▶ Classroom observations
 - ▶ Additional assessment work
 - ▶ Alternative interventions and what structure can you put in place before you get to the next step.
 - ▶ Student voice should be heard

Entrance Criteria

- ▶ IEP (Social/emotional)
- ▶ Emotional disability
- ▶ Not meeting academic success because of emotional/social challenges
- ▶ Does student need Bridge services to achieve academic progress?
- ▶ Not making progress with less targeted supports and services
- ▶ Data review

Program Components

Educational

- Academic Support
- Reading support
- Consulting with teachers regarding disability related impacts in general education curriculum
- Alternative teaching methods
- Identifying and addressing specific academic skill deficits

Clinical

- Individual and group counseling
- Crisis management (ongoing)
- Collaboration with outside providers
- Proactive relationship building with parents
- Progression of social/emotional skills
- Setting realistic therapeutic goals
- Evidence based practice
- Trauma sensitive approach for individual students
- Building relationships with students
- Sharing information with staff

Program Strengths, Accomplishments and Challenges

► Strengths and Accomplishments

- Inclusive model
- Helps students develop resiliency
- Fosters independence/self awareness
- Supporting students with social/emotional behavioral health needs
- Provides coping strategies
- Guides students through transitions
- Provides opportunities for students to succeed
- Collaboration with families, staff, students, administrators and teachers
- Collaboration with community based services
- Provides opportunities for decreased support when appropriate.

► Challenges

- Vertical alignment of the program across the district
- Professional development for general education personnel
- Lack of a unified method of data collection
- Consistent transition practices between schools
- Finding appropriate clinical supports for program staff.
- Adjustment counselors not being assigned to the program full time.

Plan For Ongoing Improvement

- ▶ **Monthly vertical team meetings have been scheduled. Some of the issues the team will be working on are the following:**
- ▶ Strengthen and ensure consistent practice for referrals/intake process
- ▶ Reviews of our work with families and general education teachers.
- ▶ Further develop consistent practices across programs and consistent practices for transitioning between buildings
- ▶ Provide additional professional development for- TAs, Gen Ed staff, Parents
- ▶ Develop a unified data collection systems for measuring student progress
- ▶ Academic strategies for students with social/emotional disabilities
- ▶ Increase our focus on building student independence

Anticipated Needs

Lane School

- For the next school year, we will be looking to create an Inclusive SAIL Program to be modeled after the JGMS and BHS programs. This will allow for the Bridge Program at Lane to be restructured so that only students with a primary disability of Emotional Disability are assigned to the program.
 - The **Inclusive SAIL Program** is designed to serve Bedford Public School students in grades K-12 with educational needs related to an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other related disabilities. This program utilizes an integrated model to include students for a majority of their day within the general education setting, with supports, providing a safe, nurturing learning environment to facilitate the growth of language, social, behavioral, life and academic skills. Modifications to curriculum content and methodology will be carefully considered by the team and tailored to meet individual student's needs. Instruction will be provided by both general education teacher and special education teachers. Related services including speech/language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, Board Certified Behavioral Analyst consultation, and counseling are provided based on individual need.
- Currently, the school adjustment counselor at Lane is servicing the students in the Bridge Program and the rest of the special education students. She currently has a case load of **21** students, which includes, Bridge students, included students with Autism, and our SAIL students.

JGMS

- Currently, the school adjustment counselor at JGMS is servicing the students in the Bridge Program and SAIL students. She currently has a case load of **27** students, which includes, student the Bridge and SAIL programs.

For Further Review and Consideration

- ▶ A Therapeutic Intervention Specialist at Davis
- ▶ It has been recommended that rather than establishing a Bridge Program at Davis School, we consider adding a Therapeutic Intervention Specialist at Davis.
 - ▶ A TIS is a trained individual who has considerable experience working in a therapeutic milieu. This position would be specifically trained to manage and support the behavioral needs of students identified with social/emotional/behavioral health needs.
 - ▶ The role of the TIS should include the following responsibilities
 - ▶ Implement the student's behavior plan
 - ▶ Monitor student's progress
 - ▶ Work with the school-based team of professionals to oversee the student's plan
 - ▶ Perform initial interventional when a student is in crisis
 - ▶ Assist with student evaluations and revise and update behavior.