



APSSP Submission to WCDSB

Re: Needs Assessment Regarding Staffing Enhancement for Professional/Para-Professional Staffing

Submitted at the Joint Consultation Committee May 26, 2009:

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In an effort to support the Board with the implementation of the staffing enhancement funding for September 1, 2009, the APPSP membership welcomes the opportunity to assist in furthering the Board and Ministry's educational goals for students by providing information for the current "Needs Assessment".

APSSP staff currently provide a broad range of specialized assessment and intervention services to support students, and school communities in meeting the goals set forth by the Ministry of Education and the WCDSB aimed at improving student learning and achievement, boosting graduation rates, and facilitating positive life outcomes for all students. Professionals in the fields of social work, psychology, speech-language pathology and attendance counselling act as consultants and resources to school based teams to assist in identifying, understanding, and effectively intervening with vulnerable students whose school progress is threatened by unique learning needs, mental health concerns, and stressful life circumstances. The WCDSBs most recent Board Improvement Plan (2008-2009) notes that regional data indicated that when reviewing incoming student profiles "*the area of concern for all schools is in the domains of aggressive behaviour and overall social competence*" and that "*students who enter our schools in Senior Kindergarten demonstrate an increase in the multiple challenge index which will result in the need for the Board to address more complex student needs in the upcoming school years.*"

The collaborative expertise and efforts of APSSP professionals are specifically targeted to assist schools in improving the outcomes of students with complex learning and social needs.

In an effort to provide relevant input into the current needs assessment, we have solicited input from each professional group. The discipline groups were each asked to identify highest priority needs that if fulfilled would enhance student outcomes but which current resource allocation prevents us from providing. We hope that the information provided below is of assistance to WCDSB decision makers faced with the challenging task of maximizing the positive impact of allocating limited funds.

Discipline Specific Enhancement Ideas

Attendance Counselors:

- Expansion of Attendance Counselor Services to include working with students and families in Grades 1 – 6 and those of 16 and 17 years of age would support schools struggling to monitor and support non- attending students with the goal of increased retention and improved graduation rates.
- SALEP numbers are exploding with the Learning to 18 Initiative. Additional funding could provide needed support to the SALEP process by tracking and supporting students who have been excused but remain on register through SALEP.
- Attendance support could be made available for students in the Alternative Education Program(s) and the teams working with these high risk students.

Speech-Language Pathologists:

- Services for students grade 7, 8 and 9 to work collaboratively to transition students with ASD, LLD and other co-morbid difficulties
- Direct service for students in Junior division
- Currently limited direct intervention , JK to Grade 3 due to limited SLA availability

Psychology:

- The need for psychological assessment and consultation services as expressed by school teams far exceeds our personnel resources.
- Limited staffing prohibits us from monitoring progress and refining programming for the students we have assessed.
- Secondment to system driven initiatives stresses school teams by further limiting the availability of scarce but highly valued direct psychological service to schools.

Social Workers:

- Threat and Risk Assessment as it relates to violence in schools (i.e.: Kevin Cameron model). Direct services to students in alternative, suspension and expulsion programs.
- Escalating demand from schools for intervention related to suicide, depression, self harm, anxiety for students JK-Gr. 12.
 - Intermediate and secondary students account for over 75% of social worker crisis response referrals
 - Significant number of kids presenting with mental health issues in early years affecting attendance, behavior and learning.
- Substance use and mental health and the impact on schools, learning, suspension and expulsion rates
 - education, assessment and direct service to students regarding substance use

More intensive case management and direct service to students by social workers is required as well as increased Social Work support for a specific family of schools.