



*"Our Neighborhood. Our Choice."*  
**BMHA Perry Choice Neighborhood**

Working Paper # 2:

In-school Supportive Services Analysis

BMHA Perry Choice Neighborhood Planning Initiative

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Mini-Education Pipeline Planning Team

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## Introduction

The basis for this analysis is an inventory of the existing in-school supportive services in the four MEP schools: **Futures Academy, MLK Multicultural Institute, East H.S. and South Park H.S.** This breadth of support services available in the schools provides direct, on-site access for the students of the Perry Choice Neighborhood. An initial assessment of the current supportive services shows that the Mini-Education Pipeline (MEP) has a ratio of professionals<sup>1</sup> to students of 1 to every 26 students signifying a need to increase the number and presence of professionals within the Mini-Education Pipeline Schools. This analysis allows us to understand what the current supportive service infrastructure looks like across the pipeline schools. Overall, the schools have substantial support services in place which ensure access to an infrastructure that helps address barriers and challenges students and families face while going through school of students. This analysis focuses primarily on supportive services offered through Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) at the MEP schools. These services can be categorized into four separate clusters: *special education services, physical health, mental health and social supports.*

During conversations with school principals, discussions about supportive services revealed that the ***Student Support Team (SST)*** was the primary infrastructure within the school to oversee supportive service delivery. Principals viewed supportive services through the scope of the SST, which operates as an encompassing building-level network of individuals. The SST Chairperson is responsible for setting meetings with the Committee on Special Education regarding special needs students. The SST Clerk tracks attendance and behavioral needs for special needs students.

When examining the SST's work structure, it is clear that this team focuses on ***Committee on Special Education (CSE)*** compliance. The ***Committee on Special Education (CSE)***

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<sup>1</sup> The number of professionals is inclusive of full-time, part-time and occasional staff. It does not include the Check-in/Check-out Program or Closing the Gap staff for which figures are unavailable.

is defined by New York State law and regulation as a multidisciplinary team established in accordance with the provisions of section 4402 of the Education Law. This team of professionals follows special needs students from the referral to reevaluation process. The CSE Chair, whose duties are assumed at the building level by the SST Chair, as defined by NYS Law is the person responsible for ensuring compliance with *Individualized Education Programs (IEP)* that meets state requirements and will result in educational benefit to the student. The CSE Clerk, whose duties are assumed at the building level by the SST clerk, is responsible for the administrative functions of the committee. The appendix provides more definitions related to supportive services.

The ***special education services cluster*** are those services aimed at the specialized instruction of students with special needs and/or disabilities. The special education cluster is comprised of a network of professionals (SST and CSE) which work together to evaluate, identify, and formulate individualized instruction for these students. These services address the large student population within the MEP schools identified as having special needs (between 25 – 35 percent of the school population). The MEP schools have a strong focus on self-contained teaching environments, with a majority of the special education teachers being self-contained. The schools also promote a co-teaching environment which provides additional classroom support for CSE students who are included in traditional classroom environments. The special education cluster represents the most well-staffed cluster of supportive services at the building level.

### **1. *Special Education Services Cluster***

- Committees on Special Education (CSE)
  - a. CSE Clerk (1)
- Self-Contained Teachers (29)
- Consultant Teachers (Co-teachers) (15)
- Special Education Aides (2)
- Speech Therapists (2.5)

The ***physical health cluster*** is a group of support services geared toward the intervention and prevention of physical ailments which may hinder a student's academic

performance. Health services, such as physicals, STD screening and reproductive health care, provide students with convenient access for a healthier lifestyle. There is opportunity to strengthen the physical health support services in the MEP schools, particularly to ensure that an array of medical/health services is readily available on-site at each school.

## **2. Physical Health Cluster**

- Nurses (3)
- Health Clinic (Kaleida)
  - a. Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) (1)
  - b. Registered Nurse (RN) (1)
  - c. Medical Assistant (1)
  - d. Doctor (1) – provides consultation on-site on occasional basis
  - e. Nutritionist (1) – on occasional basis
- Physician Assistants (2) – each Friday.
- Erie County STD Screening Program (1)

The **mental health cluster** is the third cluster, which seeks to address the psychological issues which affect students and prevents best possible academic and life outcomes. Supportive services for mental health and social and emotional development are a central focus of the MEP schools. The mental health support services provide professional guidance and clinical mental support, in addition to case management, to ensure that students receive immediate attention for mental health concerns.

## **3. Mental Health Cluster**

- Guidance Counselors (8 Full-time)
  - a. Guidance Interns (2)
- School Psychologists (4)
- Case Manager (1)
- Mental Health Worker (1)

The fourth and final category is the **social supports cluster**, combines a comprehensive network of support services and individuals to address the social and emotional development of students within the Mini-Education Pipeline. These services address issues such as frequent

absenteeism, suspension, and behavioral concerns. The Student Support Team (SST) infrastructure is comprised of a chairperson, clerk and other supports, which ensure that all of these supportive services interface. The SST exchanges information about individual students who need additional supports, and refers students for services to the appropriate providers.

A model exists within the MEP schools to create interfaces between in-school and external supportive services. Our intention is to understand how external (community-based organizations, health organizations, etc.) providers can interface most effectively with the in-school supportive service structure. Closing the Gap (CTG) provides a platform for interfacing between key members of the SST and external providers in order to devise strategies designed to meet the needs of the students who are either slipping through the cracks or need additional supports.

#### **4. Social Supports Cluster**

- Student Support Team
  - a. SST Chair (5)
  - b. SST Clerk (2)
- College and Career Readiness/Access Counselor (1)
- Social Workers (4)
  - a. Social Work Interns (2)
- Parent support liaisons/facilitators (1 Full-time and 2 Part-time)
  - a. Volunteers from PTO
- Attendance Teacher (1 Full-time and 3 Part-time)
- PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support)
  - a. Check-in/Check-out Program (in 2 schools)
- Alternative Education/In-school Suspension (2 Full-time and 1 Part-time)
  - a. Teacher (1)
  - b. Administrator (1)

## Analysis

1. The above analysis conveys the collective strength of supportive services currently offered in the four MEP schools. Each school provides services in each of the four key areas (*special education, physical health, mental health and social supports*). The schools offer a wide range of support services ranging from physical and mental health supports to college access and guidance. As the MEP pipeline is developed, an inherent goal might be to strengthen the existing services and perhaps expand the services within specific clusters.
2. Each MEP school has a Student Support Team infrastructure for in-school supports. The SSTs spend most of their time ensuring Committees on Special Education (CSE) compliance and coordination of CSE service delivery. From a support services perspective, some schools place more weight on the CSE planning and compliance, which signals that it may be important for the schools to place the same emphasis on service delivery in other service areas, to ensure that there are no voids.
3. A model exists within the MEP schools *to create interfaces between in-school and external supportive services*. The role and functions of Closing the Gap (CTG) are replicable and should be studied and expanded to the other MEP schools.
4. Within our supportive services framework, there are strategies specifically designed to establish linkages between parents and the schools. This is evident through the parent facilitator roles. The role of parent facilitator and liaison could be expanded to ensure that there is more parental involvement in the service delivery process.

5. There is significant infrastructure dedicated to special education which signals a higher population of CSE students in the MEP schools. The strong presence of self-contained teaching, in conjunction with the co-teaching model fosters inclusion and positive learning outcomes for CSE students.
  
6. A comprehensive health services model exists within the MEP schools to provide physical health support services on-site, which ensures students have convenient access to basic health services. For example, Kaleida Clinic at MLK should be used as a model for health service deliver for the pipeline schools.

The MEP schools have a strong foundation of in-school supportive services, but there may be opportunity to both strengthen the current support services in specific categories and expand offerings at each school. These may be supportive services which require additional resources, both human and monetary, for which additional capital could be secured.

Through our analysis, we've also found that the in-school supportive services system is augmented by external providers. For example, one school provides several external providers to meet additional supportive service needs. There is a pilot of the Erie County Sexual Health and Wellness Program provides STD screening and pregnancy testing on-site. Also, Every Person Influences Children (EPIC) provides in-school lunches and discussions about parenting for young parents. Daemen College provides two additional social work interns and physician assistants which conduct athletic physicals. St. Bonaventure also provides guidance counselor interns. Most notably, Closing the Gap, an external provider of referrals for supportive services, operates on a daily basis within South Park H.S. to ensure interfaces between in-school services and external providers.

## APPENDIX

- A. Alternative Education/ In-school Suspension program** is a school-based program in which students with behavioral problems are assigned to spend time during the school day as opposed to time spent out of school on suspension. This alternative method to traditional suspension aids in countering negative effects of out of school time.
- B. Check-in/Check-Out Program (CICO)** is an intervention program aimed to address students demonstrating problem behavior by increasing positive adult contact, providing feedback and setting of expectations and goals.
- C. Committee on Special Education (CSE)** is a team appointed by the Board of Education responsible for identifying students with disabilities in need of services, determining eligibility, developing individualized plans and placing students in appropriate learning environments.
- D. Co-teaching model** means a staff-member who provides services to a student identified with a disability by assisting in modifying instructional methods and/ or learning environment to promote and enhance learning.
- E. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS)** means a framework for assisting school personnel in organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum enhancing academic and social behavior outcomes.
- F. Self- Contained teacher** is a teacher who facilitates instruction in a smaller setting with a fewer number of students aimed to increase support for students with special needs or disabilities.
- G. Student Support Team** is a school-based committee that utilizes systematic approaches to address learning and/or behavioral problems of students at risk of failure.