



**Student Services Report
to School Committee
June 6, 2022**

Martha Bakken, Director of Student Services
Emily Tucker, Assistant Director of Student Services

Office of Student Services

The Office of Student Services for the Weston Public Schools hosts a broad range of services, programs and supports including:

- Special Education and Related Services for students ages 3-22
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- English Language Education
- Guidance / Counseling
- Health Services
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- Home/Hospital Services

Many of these supports are in place as a result of federal and state laws and regulations. Other services are provided to all students in the Weston Public Schools to support them throughout their classrooms, schools and community.

Update on 2021-2022 Areas of Focus

The previous Director and Assistant Director of the Office of Student Services identified several areas of focus for the 2021-22 School Year.

The areas identified by the previous director include:

- **Transition to New Director and Assistant Director:** Martha Bakken, the Student Services Director, started in July 2021 and Emily Tucker, the Assistant Director of Student Services began in August 2021. They met formally and informally with students, principals, staff, parents and community members to develop an understanding of the needs of students, caregivers, staff, and the community as a whole. Martha and Emily also met with SEPAC leadership regularly to understand the needs of the community and had a Meet and Greet with SEPAC parents early in the year. Martha also began the tradition of “Martha Meetings” for caregivers, community members and staff to meet with her to discuss ideas or concerns.
- **Focus on Mental Health:** Weston Public School mental health providers are reporting significant increases in both the number of students presenting with mental health challenges and the severity of need. This combined with local and national shortages in outside services, including therapists, psychiatrists, hospital beds, and therapeutic program placements has created a serious challenge in meeting the needs of all students. The Weston Public Schools has responded to the mental health crisis in a variety of ways. Examples of changes the district has implemented this year include using federal and state grant funds to increase the number of school adjustment counselors and psychologists by three for this school year. Clinical staff have also received training in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), an evidence-based approach for individuals with a wide range of mental health challenges. One staff member also completed training as a school-based trainer in Youth Mental Health First Aid, an

evidence-based training program administered by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing that teaches staff how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges. We are also currently reviewing new evidence based Mental Health curriculum at the primary and secondary level to address the increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression.

- **Guidance External Review:** Weston Public School's Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program Review initially began in 2019 with a Self-Study in preparation for an external review in the spring of 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the move to remote and then hybrid schooling, the external review was postponed. Because of the delay we completed an updated internal self study that involved goal setting, activity analysis and extensive surveys. The K-12 Guidance/Counseling Self Study Report was presented to the School Committee on April 11, 2022. The School Committee provided guiding questions for the external review committee who completed their review on April 25 and 26, 2022. Results from the external review are expected by the end of the beginning of the next school year.

As a new director and assistant director, we continued on with these focus areas while also identifying additional priorities for the department:

- Understanding current support and service structures for students, families and staff across the district
- Ensuring that there are institutionalized mechanisms for ongoing communication with staff, parents, and community members to understand their needs and concerns
- Analyzing the Student Services budget including grant funding sources and all expenditure categories
- Monitoring compliance with state and federal mandates
- Developing a culture of joyous learning with an emphasis on transparency, communication, and willingness to take risks

Special Education Program Updates

Integrated Preschool Program

Weston Windows, our integrated preschool program, is a fully inclusive program that provides a comprehensive range of services within a supportive environment. Through play and planned activities, our preschoolers develop their skills, creativity and curiosity. Teachers support social skill development through an engaging social skills curriculum, modeling language, guiding interactions and establishing clearly defined expectations. Within a caring and respectful classroom community, teachers adapt and modify activities based on the needs of each child and to ensure all students' full participation. Related service providers (Occupational Therapists (OT), Physical Therapists (PT), Speech Language Pathologists(SLP)) provide support to students within and outside of their classrooms. Through ongoing collaboration with colleagues, families and outside providers, our preschool teachers support and address each child's individual needs and their transitions into preschool and from preschool to kindergarten.

We currently serve seven students with special education needs within our preschool program in classrooms at the Country and Woodland Schools. Each classroom is led by a preschool teacher and supported by classroom aides and learning assistants. This year, the preschool teams at both schools include support from a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) in addition to related service personnel (OT, PT and SLP). The teams meet weekly with the Team Chair and Principal, to review and plan for upcoming evaluations and cases. The preschool team also meets monthly with the Student Services Director and Assistant Director to share information, discuss curriculum, develop protocols, and ensure consistency across schools.

Language-Based Programs

Our Language-Based Classrooms (LBC) at the Woodland, Field, Weston Middle School and Weston High School are classrooms designed to provide explicit, multisensory instruction in reading and written expression and specialized support for content subject areas to students with language-based learning disabilities. In addition to daily classroom instruction, students receive specialized, small group intervention based on individual needs. Providing students with opportunities for success academically, socially, and emotionally within a fully inclusive classroom is an essential goal of this program. Developing a positive attitude, self-confidence and self-advocacy is also emphasized.

This school year, elementary LBC teachers met monthly with the Assistant Director and Director of Student Services. This work focused on sharing and extending knowledge of best practices particularly in the area of written language instruction. The group will be working with our literacy coaches during a summer workshop to develop and share written language instructional materials to meet the needs of all learners in the language based classrooms.

Students in Language Based Classrooms by Grade

Grade	Number of Students May 2021	Number of Students May 2022
2	2	2
3	4	4
4	7	4
5	8	7
6	7	13
7	5	8
8	11	5
9	7	9
10	9	8
11	8	9
12	4	8
TOTAL	72	77

Evidence in the effectiveness of this program has been reflected in an increase in the number of students with language-based learning disabilities who we serve in-district, within a co-taught classroom. We also continue to receive inquiries from personnel in neighboring districts about potentially placing students in our language-based classrooms.

ACCESS

The ACCESS program is a highly individualized program that serves students with complex academic, social and behavioral needs at Country, Field, Weston Middle School and Weston High School. While this program was initially designed to serve students with autism, it has evolved to meet the needs of students with a broader range of developmental profiles. Most students are included in general education classes for a large part of their day and may receive small group instruction with a special educator outside of the classroom. The common goal for students in the ACCESS program is for them to participate fully in the school community. Staff provide a range of academic and behavioral supports to help students make effective progress and participate in their classroom and school community.

Students in ACCESS Program by Level

Level	Number of Students May 2021	Number of Students May 2022
Elementary	5	5
Middle School	9	8
High School	8	7
TOTAL	22	20

In addition, our ACCESS teachers at Country, Field and the Middle School continue to provide behavioral consultation to their schools.

Middle School Compass Program

Compass is a general education program for students returning after an extended period out of school due to medical hospitalization or social/emotional needs. Compass also supports students who require a place to check in with a Counselor or Learning Assistant during their day to support their emotional needs. The District Psychologist serves as a resource for clinical decision-making.

Students Served in the Compass Program at the Middle School

Grades	School Year 20/21	School Year 21/22
6-8	7	12

High School Compass Program

At the High School level, Compass is also a general education program for students returning from extended time out of school as a result of medical hospitalizations or who require significant short term support due to social/emotional needs. As at the Middle School, the District Psychologist serves as a resource for clinical decision-making.

Both the Middle School and High School programs also work closely with the BRYT Network that provides consulting, resources and professional development.

This year mirroring the increase in the mental health needs across the nation, state and our own district we have seen a significant increase in the number of students requiring the social/emotional and mental health supports that Compass provides.

Students Served in the Compass Program at the High School

Grades	School Year 20/21	School Year 21/22
Freshman/Sophomores	7	13
Juniors/Seniors	7	12
TOTAL	14	25

High School Bridge Program

The Bridge Program is a therapeutic special education program that supports high school students with significant social and emotional needs. A common goal of the Bridge program is to provide students with support to establish positive relationships so that they can develop the confidence and skills necessary to take academic and social risks, and to increase their independence. Students in Bridge require small group academic and therapeutic support, access to clinical support services, as well as organizational and study skills instruction.

Students in High School Bridge Program by Grade

Grades	School Year 20/21	School Year 21/22
Freshman	0	3
Sophomores	6	2
Juniors	6	7
Seniors	4	5
TOTAL	16	17

Our Compass and Bridge programs continued to see an increase in the number of students hospitalized this year. It is notable that many of these students did not have the opportunity to access the support outside of school that they might have had in previous years due the current difficulty with finding mental health placements and services. Some students recommended for partial day programs or full hospitalization before returning to school did not attend these programs due to lack of openings.

Special Education Enrollment

Students qualify for special education services after a comprehensive evaluation. Specific assessments are chosen based on the student's suspected area of disability. Students are deemed eligible by the special education team if they are identified as having a disability, are not making effective progress because of the identified disability, and require specially designed

instruction in order to make effective progress in the general education curriculum. As of March 1, 2022 the total number of students eligible for special education services in the Weston Public Schools was 370. Of those, 33 students are placed out of district;

In-district Students Eligible for Special Education Services

Grade	Number of Students May 2021	Number of Students May 2022
PreK	14	14
Kindergarten	9	14
Grade One	11	13
Grade Two	16	12
Grade Three	21	17
TOTAL LOWER ELEMENTARY	71	70
Grade Four	18	17
Grade Five	20	25
TOTAL UPPER ELEMENTARY	38	42
Grade Six	22	26
Grade Seven	22	28
Grade Eight	35	26
TOTAL MIDDLE SCHOOL	79	80
Grade Nine	37	39
Grade Ten	38	39
Grade Eleven	28	39
Grade Twelve	29	28
TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL	132	145
Post Graduate	0	0
TOTAL	320	337

Special Education Students by Disability

Primary Disability	Number of Students March 1, 2021	Number of Students October 1, 2021	Number of Students March 1, 2022
Autism	32	31	32
Communication	35	29	33
Developmental Delay*	33	29	23
Emotional	31	26	30
Health	84	87	95
Intellectual	7	7	5
Multiple Disabilities	0	0	1
Neurological	28	28	30
Physical	0	0	0
Sensory/Deaf Blind	0	0	0
Sensory/Hearing	5	1	3
Sensory/Vision	0	2	2
Specific Learning	87	89	100
TOTAL	342	329	354

*The diagnosis of Developmental Delay is only applicable to students under age 9. Students are often re-evaluated and their disability identification changed as a result.

These numbers do not include students who are not included in our district profile at DESE for a variety of reasons including those students who are enrolled in other school districts.

Out of District Placements

When a student's needs cannot be met within Weston Public Schools, an appropriate out of district school is identified by the Team, including the family (and student if appropriate). The Team identifies a placement that is in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) where the student can receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Students may attend another public school program, a collaborative, or a DESE approved private day or residential school. Currently 33 students attend out of district placements: 4 in public schools, 4 in collaboratives, 23 in private day schools, 2 in other settings.

Students in Out of District Placements by Disability

Primary Disability	Number of Students March 1, 2022
Autism	12
Communication	1
Developmental Delay	1
Emotional	8
Health	1
Intellectual	5
Multiple Disabilities	1
Neurological	2
Physical	0
Sensory/Deaf Blind	0
Sensory/Hearing	2
Sensory/Vision	1
Specific Learning	0
TOTAL	33

Extended School Year (ESY) 2021

Weston's Extended School Year (ESY) program was primarily offered in person last summer. 101 students participated in the ESY program. Some students participated in a full day program as recommended in their IEPs, while others came in during the day for recommended services including speech, occupational therapy, reading, academic support and counseling.

Collaboration with the Special Education Parent Advisory Council

The Office of Student Services continues to collaborate with Weston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). The Director of Student Services, the Assistant Director of Student Services and the SEPAC Board members met monthly to share information and ideas and discuss programming for families. At the end of last school year, SEPAC collaborated with the Student Services office to conduct a survey of all caregivers in the Weston community. Results of the survey were presented to the Weston School Committee on October 25, 2021.

Information from this survey provided insight on Student Services Department priorities and next steps.

This year Weston SEPAC partnered with other SEPACs in the area and advertised online seminars on a variety of topics that were helpful or informative to our families. Weston sponsored two of those online presentations. The first was a Basic Rights IEP presentation and the second was on Special Needs Planning (Trusts, Power of Attorney, Medical Power of Attorney). In addition, the SEPAC hosted a much appreciated Staff Appreciation day at each school this spring. The SEPAC has also been able to restart their in person monthly coffees that are held on the first Friday of every month.

Students with 504 Accommodation Plans

Guidance/Counseling staff in all five schools are responsible for facilitating the 504 process including eligibility determination and implementation of 504 plans. At the elementary level, many students are on 504 plans for specific learning and health disabilities such as allergies, diabetes or ADHD. At the secondary level, students tend to be on 504 plans for specific learning, health disabilities, or social/emotional disabilities.

Students with 504 Plans by Grade

Grade	Number of Students May, 2021	Number of Students May, 2022
PK-3	15	14
4-5	20	18
6-8	20	23
9	3	8
10	13	6
11	19	20
12	22	21
TOTAL	112	110

English Language Education (ELE)

Every year the English Language Education (ELE) teachers meet with and evaluate all new students that indicate on their Home Language Survey that a second language is spoken in the home. ELE teachers provide Sheltered English Immersion services (unless parents request a waiver) to all students determined to be eligible for ELE services. The ELE teachers also support new EL parents by reaching out to provide school and program information, access to the EL Parent Handbook, and interpreters for families that require translation services. In addition, ELE teachers schedule and administer the required ACCESS testing to EL students across the district. Progress reports are also provided to parents by ELE teachers twice a year.

This school year we were also excited to add three Family Outreach Liaisons to the Weston Public Schools who worked with families from our three largest language groups (Mandarin, Spanish and Korean) to support communication and engagement with families and provide increased access to information and resources.

Elementary Update

This spring elementary ELE students in grades K-5 have been involved in a new culture and identity project. Elementary ELE teachers used the book *This is How We Do It: One Day in the Lives of Seven Kids From Around the World* by Matt Lamothe as a mentor text to introduce topics including what children eat for breakfast, how they help at home, what they do with their free time, and what they like to wear. Students created their own journals, documenting their daily lives through their own illustrations and writing, to share with peers and families.

The elementary ELE program has been providing after-school tutoring to students since February 2022. Tutoring has been provided to support students with language skills necessary for classroom work. There has been a focus on vocabulary, grammar, speaking and writing skills.

In the summer of 2021, eight EL students in grades K-2 participated in our Summer English Academy (SEA), a thematically based two-week program that focused on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Nine EL students in grades 3-4 participated in one-on-one and/or small group tutoring to work on specific English skills. Three EL students in grade 5 participated in a weekly literacy group, focused on preparing students for Middle School reading and writing expectations. In preparation for this summer, we recently surveyed parents and are working on developing a schedule for services for EL students for the summer of 2022.

Secondary Update

At the secondary level students' work is closely connected to key curriculum elements. For example, recently students read a number of sample texts and examined the structure of informational essays, including sample MCAS models. The unit culminated with a study of the

Harlem Renaissance for which each student chose a Harlem Renaissance poet and used information learned in class from articles, documentaries, poetry, and various educational sites to write an informational essay about the Harlem Renaissance and their selected artist.

In the summer of 2021, two EL students in grades 6-8 and three students in grades 9 through 12 participated in our summer ELE tutoring. The work for middle and high school students focused primarily on writing, vocabulary, comprehension, and analysis. As noted above, we recently surveyed parents and are working on developing a schedule for services for EL students for the summer of 2022.

The secondary ELE program has also been providing after-school tutoring to students since February 2022. All tutoring has been to support students with language skills necessary for classroom work, homework and projects.

Students in English Language Education by Grade

Grade	Number of Students May, 2020	Number of Students May, 2021	Number of Students May, 2022
K	4	11	10
1	3	5	13
2	10	5	7
3	12	10	5
4	5	6	10
5	8	4	2
6	5	4	3
7	3	6	1
8	2	3	6
9	3	1	3
10	1	3	1
11	0	1	4
12	0	0	1
Total	56	59	67

The number of students in ELE programs have increased since last year including a number of students arriving with a WIDA score of 1, 2 or 3 and requiring the most support.

Primary Language of Students in our ELE Programs

Arabic	Cantonese	German	Japanese	Marathi	Slovak
Bengali	Dutch	Gujarati	Korean	Portuguese	Spanish
Bulgarian	Farsi French	Hindi	Mandarin	Russian	Turkish

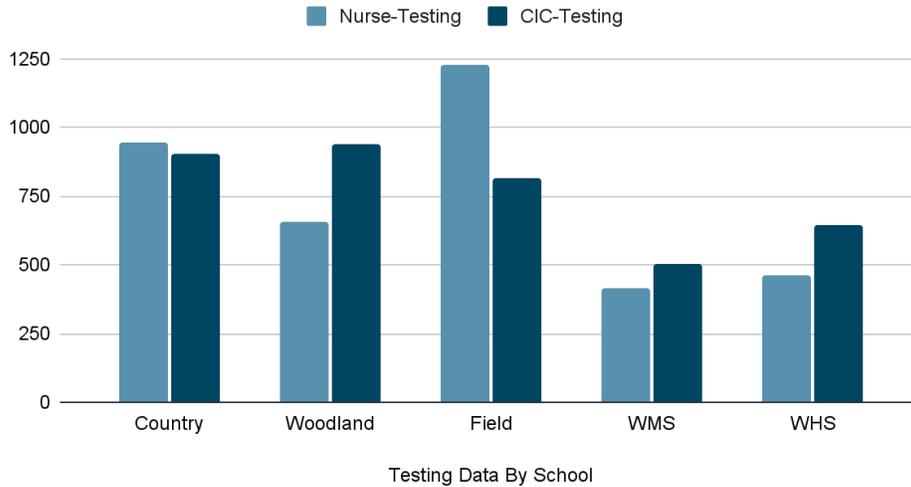
Health Services

The health services department supported the district through this second year of the pandemic, expanding upon knowledge gained from the previous year, and pushing forward toward a holistic model of supporting the school-aged child. Districtwide mitigation of COVID-19 remained front and center with many measures in place; including continued expansion of testing programs to include free rapid tests to take home, as well as in-school PCR testing, pooled testing, and symptomatic testing options for students and staff.

The nursing team remained a vital source of information and support for both students and staff for all things COVID, including district-wide testing events, case management, vaccination information, contact tracing, and isolation/quarantine guidance. While the state-funded and CIC-run testing program helped support the pool testing efforts, we encountered many programmatic transitions at the state level, resulting in the majority testing being managed by the district’s in-house nursing team.

To date, at least 9,764 in-school COVID-19 tests have been performed, identifying a total of 502 positive individuals. Our team also provided support and case management to the 925 students and staff who tested positive this school year. See Figure 1 for a breakdown of testing numbers and results by school. The Graph depicts the number of PCR tests performed by school nurses versus the total number of pool tests performed by CIC. Pooled grouping ranged from 2-10 individuals per pool tube.

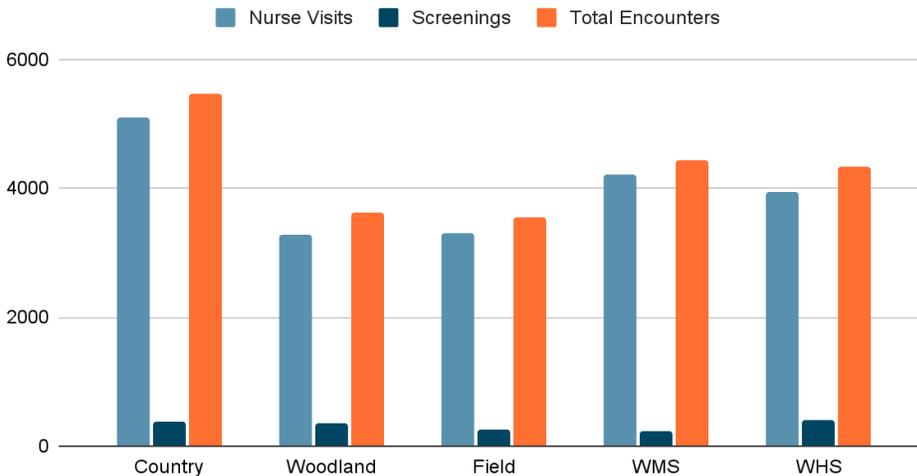
Figure 1



While COVID-19 was a large focus of the health services department, it was not the only focus. The routine duties of school nurses include, but are not limited to, triage and management of injury and illness, medication administration, health care plan development, student and staff education, family team meetings, and mandated health screenings. To date, a total of 19,811 encounters have been logged (excluding COVID-19 testing visits) with an additional 1,632 student screenings completed district wide.

The nursing team also proactively identified social-emotional and mental health needs of the students and staff as a whole and as individuals, and each school nurse rose to the challenge of meeting those needs while simultaneously performing routine nursing duties. See Figure 2 for a breakdown of nursing visits per school. The graph demonstrates the total number of encounters including nurse visits (illness/injury) and screenings (Vision, Hearing, BMI, Postural), excluding encounters involving testing data.

Figure 2



Nursing has partnered with guidance and support services teams to identify and find best practices for students who are struggling with the uncertainty of the past two years. This partnership includes hosting educational programming on mental health and disease management in schools, small group work with students at all levels, and collaboration with district administrators around anti-vaping messaging and safety planning. We have maintained and expanded upon partnerships with Regis College, such as hosting 2-3 nursing students each semester during senior practicums.

The health services department holds two state grants, including the Comprehensive School Health Services Grant and the Regional Nurse Consultant Grant which provide \$225,000 in funding to the district. Through these grants health services has been able to continue to support the BRYT/Compass program at the high school, as well as create a part-time districtwide school nurse floating position.

Working with the School Health Unit at the Department of Public Health, Weston is in the initial phases of building a comprehensive training program for school nurses whereby school nurses throughout the Central Mass Region will be able to use SIM technology to maintain and build their assessment and treatment skills. Nurses within the department continue to present and maintain a presence in local and national organizations.

Guidance / Counseling

Weston Public School's Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program Review initially began in 2019 with a Self-Study in preparation for an external review in the spring of 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the move to remote and then hybrid schooling, the external review was postponed. Given the three-year gap since the initial Self-Study, the decision was made to update the self assessment in the 2021-22 school year.

As the first step in this year's district-wide Program Review of the Guidance and Counseling Program, guidance and adjustment counselors throughout the district worked with the Director and Assistant Director of Student Services, and the 6-12 Head of Guidance to conduct an in-depth self-study. The work began in the fall of 2021 with regular meetings of all guidance and adjustment counselors in the district with a focus on identifying shared goals for three distinct client groups: students, families, and school faculty and staff. Once goals were developed, current key guidance and counseling activities that address goals in each area were identified. Finally, available data sources to measure success toward the goals were defined.

Given that data for guidance and counseling is often difficult to collect and measure due to the inherent confidentiality and varied nature of the work, there were limited data sources for measuring progress toward goals, especially the goals related to families and staff. Therefore, new sophisticated and robust guidance/counseling surveys targeted at all three primary client groups (students, families, and staff) were developed and used as the primary source of data to determine how well counselors are currently meeting target goals for each constituent group. After the completion of the internal Guidance and Counseling Program review, the external

review committee completed their onsite review on April 25th and 26th 2022. A report with the results of their review should be available by the beginning of the next school year. After the external review committee submits its report, the guidance and adjustment counselors will develop an implementation plan to address the recommendations in both the self study and external review report.

Professional Development

Students services staff have participated in a wide variety of professional development targeted both toward district goals and toward the specific needs of the students with whom they work. Some examples include:

- In September 2022, a total of seven staff including Team Chairs participated in a three day training to become Safety Care Trainers for the district. Each school now has at least one (and often 2) trainers on staff that can provide both initial training to school staff and ongoing support in de-escalation and the use of restraint only as a last resort for the safety of students or staff.
- Secondary counselors participated in training in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and our District Psychologist is now trained as a trainer for Youth Mental Health First Aid and will be training a group of 25 staff members this summer.
- The ACCESS program teachers and BCBA's at the elementary level have met regularly with a consultant from the New England Center for Children (NECC) to discuss programs and student needs as well as develop trainings for staff.
- We continued to provide training to evaluators on Q Interactive, a digital platform for conducting special education and cognitive evaluations via the iPad. We now have at least 3 pairs of iPads at each school for use in these evaluations.
- ELE Teachers continue to participate in FEDCO (Former EDCO) ELE Committee meetings that include EL directors and teachers from surrounding towns to discuss current issues in the field, as well as state requirements for ELE programs.
- One of our ELE teachers was invited to participate in the WIDA ACCESS Speaking Study this spring the purpose of which was to help WIDA better understand how students perform on the Online ACCESS Speaking test and whether students can show what they can do on the test. Another ELE teacher is presenting at the Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Other Languages MATSOL conference via video a lesson she developed.

Significant Disproportionality

In July 2020, the Weston Public Schools was first cited for significant disproportionality related to overidentification of African American students with a communication disability. As a result, the district was required to form an interdisciplinary team to examine data, determine the root cause or causes and then develop action steps to address and, ideally, rectify the disproportionality. This work continued this year as Weston continued to be identified as disproportionate in the same area.

This initiative began at the federal level, related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In 2016, the United States Department of Education revised its regulations to standardize the way states and districts must identify and respond to significant disproportionality in special education. Regulations also expanded ways that districts must dedicate funds to provide early intervening services to students to address disproportionality and mitigate the barriers to students' access to curriculum and support. This work was delayed in 2016, but then in spring of 2018, the U.S. Department of Education ordered immediate implementation resulting from a court case. The identification process began in the 2018-2019 school year.

Historically, in Massachusetts, data has shown that African American and Hispanic students are more likely than other racial or ethnic groups to be identified as having a disability. In addition, students with disabilities are more likely to be placed in substantially separate settings, suspended and expelled. Weston was not identified as having disproportionality in the areas of placement or discipline.

Based on state data (through a quantitative methodology and process) identified districts must examine their policies, practices and procedures towards mitigating the disproportionality while remaining in compliance with IDEA. In addition, a portion of our federal IDEA funds must be allocated to address the specific area of disproportionality. Weston's area of disproportionality is very narrow: African American students are 3 times more likely to be found to have a communication disability than other students in the district.

Weston used this finding of disproportionality as an opportunity to bring together a team of administrators, instructional coaches, curriculum specialists, special education teachers and speech pathologists to examine our Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions, our Instructional Support Teams (IST) in the district as well as our process for identification of communication disabilities. This team initially worked from January to May, 2021 to develop an action plan that was submitted in May, 2021. Using information gleaned from the implementation of that plan during this school and ongoing analysis of our policies, practice, and procedures we submitted a new plan for next school year in May, 2022. Once approved, this plan will be shared and implemented during the 2022-2023 school year.