

Reflection on Preventative and Responsive Services

I have had the opportunity to observe the challenges of implementing a more preventative system at my practicum site in Newton. With the recent events of suicides within the Newton District, preventative and responsive services was a “hot topic” throughout the school year as well as how the schools can do more. I have observed the Assistant Principal of Student Services’ struggles with the implementation and change within the school system to be more preventative. I believe up until now the system has been more reactive than proactive, and this change was much needed.

The first step was to put in more Tier 1 supports in the school. The Assistant Principal implemented a pilot executive functioning program in the 6th grade. The process in the beginning of the year was challenging and brought up many questions about the logistics surrounding the program and implementation. The program consisted of a six-week intervention utilizing the HOPS curriculum. Different cycles of students were in the program throughout the course of the school year. Since it was successful, it is going to be carried into next year and run in the seventh and eighth grades as well.

Due to the suicides that occurred at the two high schools as well as the increase in student need within the other schools in the district, there was a district wide decision to have staff begin training utilizing the Signs of Suicide (SOS) program as a preventative measure.

There have been many difficulties trying to implement preventative and responsive services. Much of the struggle has been from moving from a reactive to proactive response within the schools. Due to the high numbers of students in crisis, this change has been a challenging one because they need to respond to these students first. Everyone in the student services sector of the district has felt the stress of these increased numbers of students in crisis.

Once more preventative measures are put in place to become more proactive the stress may decrease in the upcoming years.