Ruby S. Thomas ES

Request for Information Response

Nevada Department of Education as Provided by

SB 515, Section 23

Social worker or other licensed mental health professional

December 14, 2015

To:

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SECTION II
NARRATIVE

Ruby S. Thomas Elementary School

Ruby S. Thomas Elementary School is a large elementary school facing numerous academic challenges typically associated with high enrollment and a transient population that is predominately of low socioeconomic status. The school's current enrollment is 796 students, an increase of 82 students over the count day enrollment for 2015-2016. The demographic breakdown of the student population is 8% Asian, 60% Hispanic, 18% Black/African American, 10% Caucasian, 1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 4% Multi-Racial. Additionally, approximately 90% of these students qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL), 55% have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) excluding pre-kindergarten, and 15% have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Thomas Elementary School's population is highly mobile, exhibiting a transiency rate of 42.2% in 2014-15. Most notable is our homeless student population. The school currently has 116 homeless students enrolled at Thomas.

The social worker/mental health professional will work closely with the school's counselor, nurse, and school psychologist to provide support to students, staff, parents, and community members at Ruby Thomas Elementary School. As noted by the data above, our school has a fairly large homeless population and is also highly transient. The social worker/mental health professional will assist in obtaining additional resources to support our homeless students, as well as students and families from low socioeconomic backgrounds. These resources will include organizing and maintaining a pantry of clothing and food items to support our families who may be in crisis or need; working with community organizations and partners to obtain services for families; and aligning and supplementing family services with Family and Community Engagement Services (FACES) unit which is currently housed on our campus.

Many of our students experience difficulty in their social and academic interactions. The social worker/mental health professional will work to provide specific services to students, which include, but are not limited to, assisting students in understanding and accepting self and others; helping students develop appropriate social interaction skills; providing crisis intervention; educating students on recognizing, preventing, and dealing with bullying; teaching conflict resolution and anger management; and developing programs for identified children with behavioral, social, and/or emotional needs. Students who are at risk or are possible victims of abuse or neglect will also be identified and monitored. In addition, Ruby Thomas Elementary

School is working to implement The Leader in Me philosophy to promote leadership skills in students through the use of Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. The social worker/mental health professional will be instrumental in teaching the habits to both students and families in order to encourage the development of leadership skills within our students. Furthermore, this person will be a key member of the leadership team, helping to obtain community and financial resources to support implementation of The Leader in Me. As leadership qualities are taught and promoted with students and families, it is expected that achievement levels will increase; however, the social worker/health professional will develop additional, aligned intervention strategies to further enhance students' abilities to improve academic success.

Specific services for families include educating parents and guardians in how to access and utilize school and community resources; assisting families with information and support regarding attendance and truancy; providing parents with access to programs available to children with special needs; working with parents to facilitate their child's adjustment to school; and generally, alleviating family stress to enable their child to function more effectively in the school and community.

The assigned social worker/mental health professional will also provide support to school personnel by assisting them with managing the behavior of students in the classroom; providing feedback and support with implementation of behavioral interventions; creating professional development which provides staff members with information to help them understand factors that might affect a specific student's performance and behavior; assisting teachers in supporting special education students who have behavioral concerns in a cooperative consultative model; and assessing students with mental health concerns.

As a way of building sustainability within the school, the social worker/mental health professional will help develop a system for responding effectively to each student's needs, tracking the services provided to them. He/she will advocate for improved community/school services to better meet the needs of students and their families; ensure that students are receiving adequate support from social and mental health agencies; and coordinate services to students and families. Consultation regarding related Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS), mental health standards, and district/school policies and procedures will be provided by the social worker/mental health worker.

The assigned social worker/mental health professional at Ruby Thomas Elementary School will assist with the previously mentioned initiatives, as well

as work closely with the school counselor, the school's health professionals, the school psychologist, and the FACES coordinator to align services to students and families. He/she will be an integral member of the staff, attending and participating in staff meetings, relevant professional development, and school activities and events. The person selected for the position will service all students and their families, pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, sharing knowledge, skills, and strategies in the areas of mental health and human behaviors with both staff and families. He/she will identify students with similar social and/or academic needs and facilitate regular support groups to provide students with strategies for overcoming difficulties related to behavioral and academic success. The social worker/mental health professional will identify, mobilize, and coordinate school and community resources to enable students to learn as effectively as possible in the educational setting. Furthermore, support will be provided to parents through the planning, scheduling, and conducting of activities, meetings, or educational workshops to assist parents with strategies to help their child(ren) become more successful in the school and community setting. This coordinated support will supplement what is currently taking place in the FACES program, and in the school overall. He/she will identify challenges in a child's living situation (home, school, and community) that may affect the child's adjustment, performance, and attendance in the educational setting. Finally, this position will provide assistance to school administration with ensuring compliance with Senate Bill 504 by counseling students involved in bullying allegations, both the targets as well as the bullies, as well as providing guidance and training on positive school climate strategies.