# Transforming Early Education

## Oswego City School District's Shift to a District-Operated Full-Day UPK Model

# Overview of Oswego's hybrid UPK model

Prior to the project, the Oswego City School District operated **a hybrid Universal Pre-K (UPK) model**, combining both district-run and community-based programming.

The district provided half-day programs at four elementary sites, while one full-day program was contracted out to a community-based organization.

**This structure led to:**

- Underutilization of half-day afternoon seats (only 49% enrollment)

- A waiting list for the full-day program due to high demand

- Inconsistent instructional quality and oversight, particularly as the community provider allowed its license to lapse, requiring temporary district intervention.

# Introduction 01

**Enhancing early education to better serve our community's families and children.**

## Purpose of the Leadership Project:

The leadership initiative sought to explore the feasibility and potential impact of shifting to a fully district-operated, full-day UPK model.

**Key questions included:**

Could the district better meet family demand and equity goals with a full-day model?

Would a centralized, district-run approach improve instructional consistency and accountability?

Could the shift support the district's long-term strategic vision, including earlier intervention and reducing remediation in later grades?

- The project aimed to align early education programming with state funding initiatives and Oswego's broader K-12 mission of educational excellence and inclusion

# Introduction 02

**Enhancing early education to better serve our community's families and children.**

# Why the Shift Was Needed

**Underutilization:** Afternoon half-day programs had low enrollment, indicating mismatch with family needs.

**Over-demand:** Full-day site was at capacity with a waitlist, showing a preference for extended programming.

**Licensing Issues:** The community provider let their license lapse, forcing the district to intervene.

**Quality & Consistency:** Lack of alignment with district's K–12 vision; curriculum quality varied.

**Research-Driven:** National studies support full-day Pre-K as more beneficial for early childhood development.

| CER AM | CER PM | FPS AM | FPS PM | KPS AM | KPS PM | MIN AM | MIN PM | FLS FD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | 5 | 13 | 6 | 15 | 15 | 13 | 3 | 18 |
| 7 | 13 | 5 | 12 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 15 | 0 |

# Project Vision

- Align Pre-K with district's strategic vision for education and equity.
- Improve inclusive access, especially for low-income families and those with transportation barriers.
- Ensure curricular alignment between Pre-K and elementary instruction.
- Build a sustainable model that supports long-term intervention goals and reduces later remediation.
- Reflect student-centered innovation through consistent, high-quality instruction.

# SMART Goals

### Cost Analysis:

Compare operational expenses between contracted and district-run programs.

### Facilities Evaluation:

Assess readiness of all elementary buildings to host full-day UPK programs.

### Regulatory Planning:

Compile NYSED requirements for credentials, classroom ratios, and compliance.

### Cost Analysis:

By June 2025, evaluate and provide specific recommendations for physical plant modifications required to accommodate full-day Universal Pre-K programs in each elementary school, including detailed plans for infrastructure changes. The assessment will be submitted to district leadership for review and future planning.

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### Regulatory Planning:

By June 2025, compile and present an outline of all relevant New York State Education Department (NYSED) regulations, permits, and staffing supervision requirements for operating district-run Universal Pre-K programs. The final report will include actionable recommendations for ensuring compliance and proper staffing by the stated deadline.

| Month | Key Actions |
|-------|-------------|
| October | Readiness meeting with Assistant Superintendent; set milestones. |
| November | Began cost analysis; worked with Business Office to gather financial projections. |
| December | Reviewed classroom space and capacity at each building. |
| January | Outlined NYSED regulations; consulted Curriculum Team on alignment. |
| February | Designed and refined parent survey to assess interest and transportation needs. |
| March | Distributed survey; analyzed and disaggregated results with district leadership. |
| April–May | Summarized project outcomes; presented findings to Superintendent; began transition planning. |

# Project Timeline

# Stakeholder Engagement

**Parents:** Surveyed current UPK families to assess:

- Interest in full-day programming

- Transportation barriers and preferences

**District Leaders:** Collaborative meetings to align goals and data interpretations.

**Curriculum & Business Teams:** Helped ensure planning addressed instructional and financial considerations.

**Result:** Strong stakeholder support created a shared vision for transformation.

# SURVEY FINDINGS

- Survey showed strong family preference for full-day options.
- Identified key transportation challenges— many families unable to access half-day sites due to logistics.



If a full-day UPK program had been available this year, would your family have taken advantage of it?
27 responses
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

74.1%
18.5%
7.4%
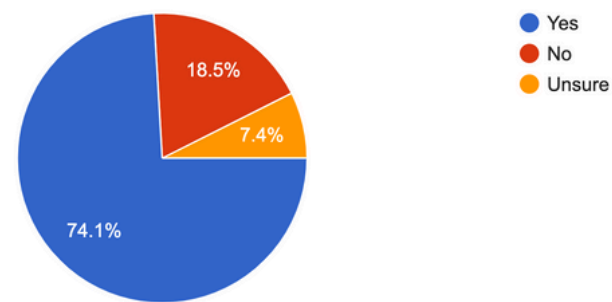


Does one-way only transportation create a hardship for your family?
27 responses
- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

51.9%
7.4%
40.7%
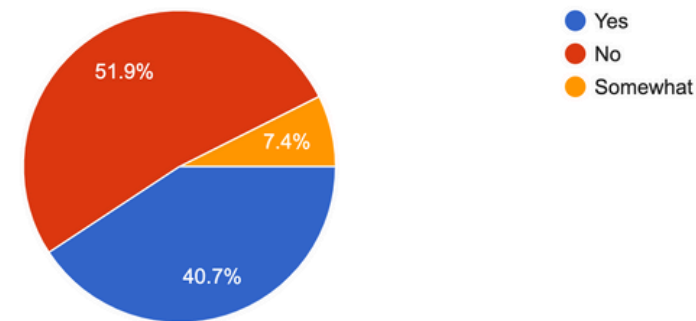


Do you use the District-provided one-way transportation to get your child either to or home from UPK?
27 responses
- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

70.4%
25.9%
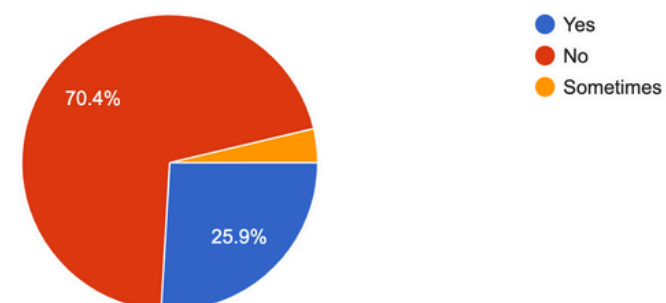
# Survey Insights:



Universal Pre-kindergarten Program Needs

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The purpose of this survey is to better understand the needs and preferences of our UPK families to help us determine if, in the future, a full-day pre-K option in each elementary school would better support our community. Your participation is critical in helping us identify potential barriers, especially related to transportation and scheduling, and to determine whether or not the current half-day options meet your family's needs. The survey should take fewer than 5 minutes to complete.
Thank you in advance for your feedback.

# Financial Analysis

- Conducted cost comparison between community-based and district-run models.

- A full-day, district-operated model showed:

- Slight increase in cost (teacher salaries, facilities)

- But greater capacity (91.6% of current demand met)

- More sustainable oversight, avoiding licensing lapses

- Investment justified by long-term academic return and operational control.
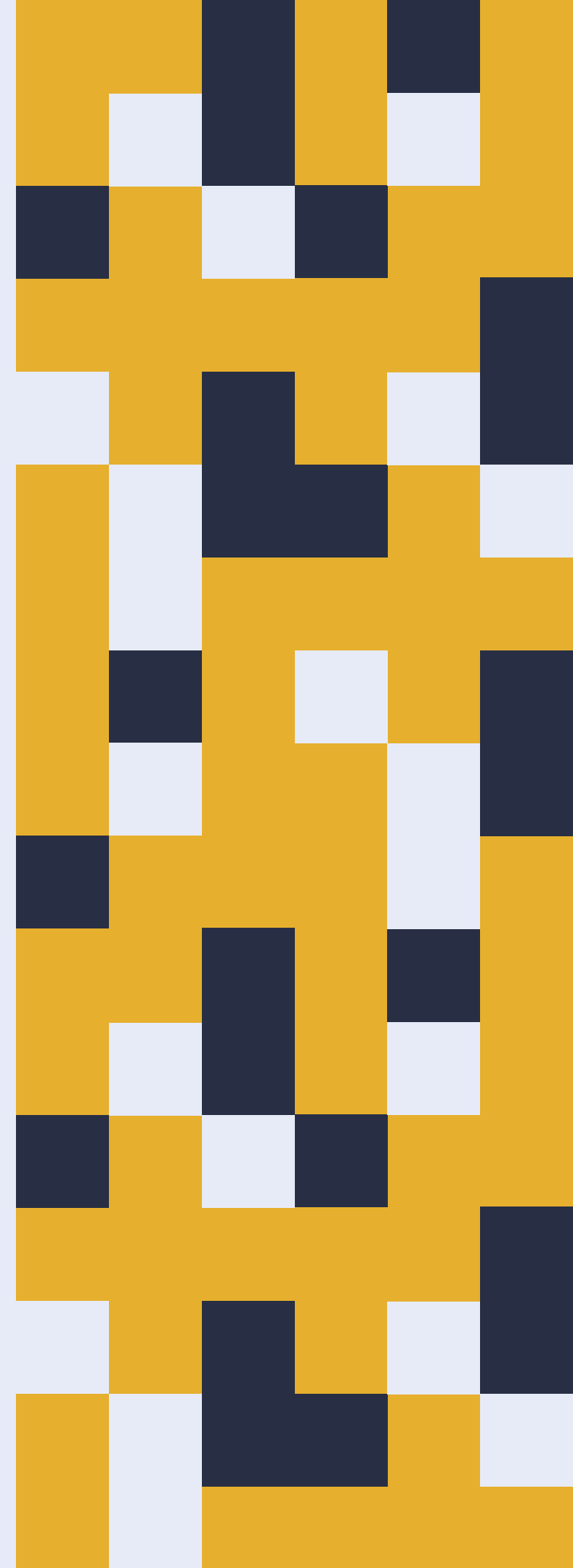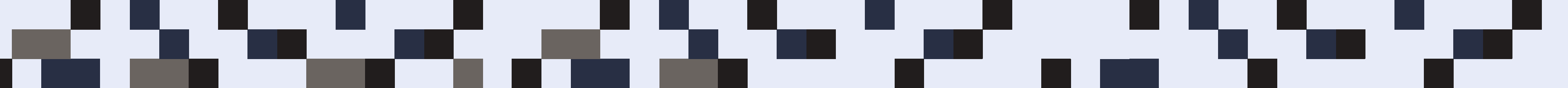
# Facilities, Staff,& Regulatory Readiness

- Reviewed **physical space** across all elementary schools to host Pre-K classrooms.

    - Assessed:

        - Number of classrooms needed

        - Modifications to meet early childhood safety and learning standards

- Created an actionable staffing and compliance plan based on findings:

    - Queried district records to get an idea of in-district teachers possessing licenses to teach Pre-K.

- Outlined NYSED requirements:

    - Staff-to-child ratios

    - Credential requirements

    - Clarified curriculum alignment needs with Director of Literacy

**Based on project findings, other district considerations, and new state funding to district:**

- Oswego committed to fully district-run, full-day UPK programs at all sites.

**Project outcomes helped inform this decision by:**

- Providing clear, compelling data

- Highlighting parent demand and regulatory readiness

The district was positioned to act **strategically and confidently**.
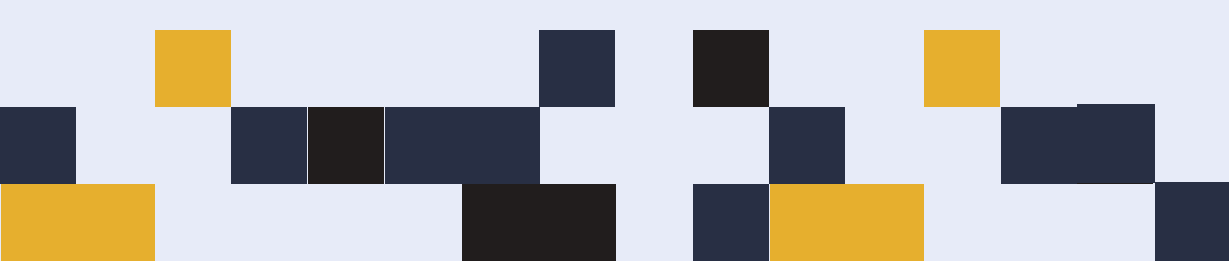
# Final Outcome
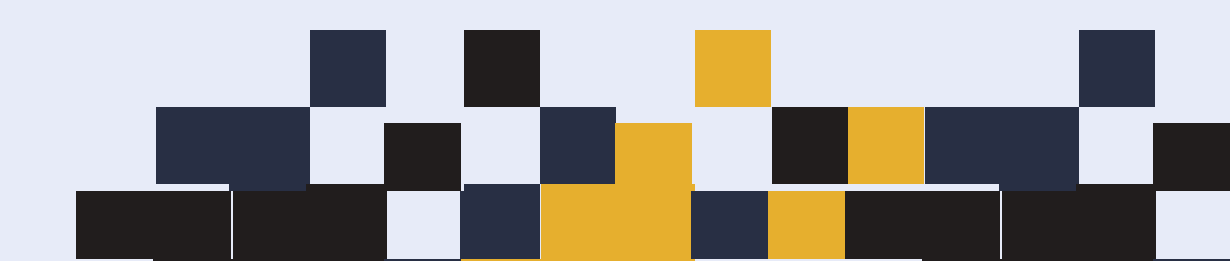
- **The project delivered:**
  - A data-informed roadmap for UPK expansion
  - Financial modeling for future investments
  - Stakeholder trust and alignment
- **Created a framework for equity and early access to education.**
- **Built capacity within the district to sustain change and improve instruction quality.**

**Value Added**

# Leadership Lessons

- **Learned to manage complex, multi-source data and synthesize it into actionable findings.**
- **Gained skills in:**
  - Project pacing
  - Stakeholder mapping
  - Systemic change planning
- **Learned to plan around unpredictable timelines (e.g., construction, funding cycles).**
- **Realized the value of regular feedback loops with families and staff.**

# Creating Positive Impact in Oswego

- Strengthened relationships with families through inclusive planning.
- Promoted a culture of innovation and responsiveness in early education.
- Oswego now has a scalable model for other student-centered transitions.
- Enhanced readiness across Pre-K–12 through unified instructional alignment.

# Broader Impact

# Thank You / Q&A

**Thank you for your time and attention.**

**I welcome any questions, feedback, or discussion.**

**Special thanks to:**
- District leadership and staff
- Families who participated in surveys
- Curriculum and business office teams



*Thank You*

Brian Carroll
Executive Summary of Leadership Project

**Project Overview:**
My leadership project centered around providing students with tier I, II, and III interventions who are struggling academically, behaviorally, social-emotionally, or even with their attendance. The year before I arrived at Somers High School, Whole Child Support Teams (WCST) were developed to replace the previous support system where Assistant Principals oversaw grade levels. The hope in moving to this new (WCST) system was to enhance relationships with students and their families by staying with the same kids throughout their four years of high school. Instead of overseeing grade levels, each Assistant Principal chairs a Whole Child Support Team that includes: 2 School Counselors, 1 Social Worker, and 1 School Psychologist. The Assistant Principal oversees the School Counselor's case load over four years, as opposed to grade levels. This builds continuity as it relates to providing support, and promotes relationship building with students and families. This system also provides the student and family with a team of individuals to provide real-time support if needed. The entire team will be able to respond effectively as they are aware of the unique circumstances of each student supported by the team. The two small WCST teams meet as a whole group twice within a month to discuss cases that are especially challenging and would benefit from further guidance. The larger team includes both small teams, the entire high school administration team, data/mtss coordinator, and student life coordinator.The year before my arrival to the district, the WCST system was piloted with the ninth grade class only. The main purpose of my project was to roll out this team approach school-wide for the first time and monitor its effectiveness. Through the use of the Infinite Campus Early Warning System (EWS) and teacher referrals, my small WCST team would discuss students who were identified as needing support, provide interventions when appropriate, and track/monitor their progress over the course of the quarter or school year. Once the year has concluded, our administration team will discuss what worked well regarding the team approach as well as areas that could be improved to maximize effectiveness. Through this project work, I hope to begin next school year with systems in place to further enhance the WCST approach to student support in order to advocate for all students at Somers High School.

**Project Process:**
I began by establishing three goals that I felt would be strong success criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of the WCST approach to student support.These goals were based around conversations I had over the summer with Pete Rodrogues (Principal and Field Supervisor) and Phil Kavanagh (Director of Pupil Personnel Services) around their experiences with the WCST pilot during the previous year, vision for the team approach, and overall purpose of moving to this type of system. The goals I established are as follows:

**Goal #1:**
By June 2025, the Whole Child Support Teams (sub-committee) at SHS will demonstrate effective data based decisions regarding tier I & tier II interventions by using the Emergency Warning System (EWS) through Infinite Campus at every meeting.

- Along with teacher referrals, the EWS is a resource that allows the WCST to be proactive in providing interventions for students in order to keep them engaged in school. This goal promotes the use of this system during each meeting to make interventions intentional, targeted, and data driven.

**Goal #2:**
Student recommendations to WCST (by teachers) will increase by 5% from semester one to semester two during the 2024-2025 school year.

- During initial conversations with Mr. Rodrigues and Mr. Kavanagh, they explained that there were minimal teacher referrals during the pilot year of the WCST program. A major goal of the team approach is to open lines of communication between the front office, classrooms, students, and families. Increasing teacher referrals provide critical qualitative and quantitative data to support students.

**Goal #3:**
During the 2024-2025 school year, 60% of the students who receive Tier I and Tier II interventions through WCST will see an increase in academics, attendance, and/or behavior(s) in the quarter they were referred.

- The ultimate objective of the WCST approach is to provide interventions as early as possible to support student success. This goal provides data around the effectiveness of interventions for students and areas of future improvement.

**Action Plan:**
1) Train WCST Members on using Emergency Warning System (EWS).
    - Ensure all WCST team members have access to the Early Warning System
    - Develop meeting structures and plan for large and small team meetings using EWS
2) Develop group norms during the initial WCST meeting.
    - Each member should be present and accountable during each meeting
    - EWS should be used during every meeting
    - Team should consistently review students supported by WCST along with considering interventions for newly referred students
    - Communication with faculty/staff should be consistent and split up among team members
    - Keep it positive
3) Establish a process to record tier I, II, and III interventions and track/monitor student progress.
    - Microsoft Notebook
    - Record interventions and supports in the microsoft notebook
    - Review amd monitor student progress using microsoft notebook at each meeting
4) Establish Microsoft Form as the primary tool for teachers to refer students to WCST
    - Compile teacher referral data at the end of December

- Compile teacher referral data at the end of April

**Project Outcome-"Value Added":**

Overall I feel as though my project has been very successful. In the first year of school-wide implementation, the WCST program had accomplished a lot in supporting the students of Somers High School socially-emotionally, behaviorally, and academically. When having initial conversations with Mr. Kavanagh and Mr. Rodrigues over the summer, they mentioned that the only "referrals" to the WCST came from the counseling staff during the 23-24 school year. There were virtually no teacher referrals informing interventions for students during the pilot year. As of the spring during the 24-25 school year, we have 11 teacher referrals. This is a huge increase from the previous school year. One of my project goals related to teacher referrals was to increase them by 5% from semester one to semester two.This goal was very successful, seeing an increase of 25%. I strongly feel this is due to communication protocols we put in place within our group to ensure swift and consistent outreach to teachers and parents when discussing students within the team. I also recognize that there is more to be done to further increase teacher referrals. One way I plan to further support teacher referrals is by including messaging and form link in the Friday Flyer. This creates more access to the form and reminds our teacher staff that this process is there to support them. Another way I hope to support referrals is by scheduling time to visit departments and remind staff of the form and referral process. My small teach has supported 25 students this school year and I hope to potentially grow that by 10% next year. Currently, 58% of students have seen direct short-term increases in academics, behavior, or social-emotional support due to interventions from the WCST. One of my major project goals was to track short-term increases and enhance student progress by 60%. Although I am not currently at my desired number, I am on track to reach that goal by June which was the timeline of this goal. My team has used many different interventions including: telephone conferences, in-person parent meetings, program review and revision, behavior conferences, wellness checks, support plans, addition of ASC to schedule, and many more. This wide variety of interventions has greatly benefited students in the short term. I will continue to track the data and begin to analyze long term implications of interventions by WCST. Unfortunately, my goal of using the early warning system at each WCST meeting was unsuccessful. One major reason was being inundated with teacher referrals during the month(s) of December and February. My team saw this increase of teacher referrals as an opportunity to really show the benefit to using the system. We worked hard to communicate support, follow up at weekly meetings, and maintain open lines of communication between staff and families. Due to this, we put the EWS on the backburner to really focus on the referrals. I recognize that the EWS was the primary tool in our early meeting (September-November), and this was due to a lack of teacher referrals. For next school year, I will establish a protocol that will ensure the EWS or other progress monitoring tool is used at every meeting. I plan to begin each meeting with a review of the portal, adding students to the list of need be, and then begin reviewing students who have been brought up previously through WCST. Overall, the WCST program has greatly enhanced communication between all stakeholders and provided valuable interventions to students and families in order to support their educational experience. I see great value in this program and will continue to meet with my administrative team and WCST partners to continue growing the program. This has been a great project experience and adds value to all members of the Somers Central School District and our SHS family.