



File photo

Coventry High School students in need of some programs must be sent out of district, at a cost to the school department.

Coventry CAREs for students

Alternative Learning Program provides services to students, saves district money

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COVENTRY— The school administration is taking the final steps in developing a program that will not only provide better services to at-risk students, but will save the district money as well.

Currently, if a Coventry High School student is in need of alternate programs because of an educational or social disadvantage, they are sent to out-of-district institutions to receive extra care.

Superintendent Michael Almeida explained that the school district has to pay for these students to be sent elsewhere — an amount that costs between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per student.

“We have an administrative team that looked at the programs we send the students to and the needs of the students and we have identified that we can provide the same services and develop them within the district,” he added.

Director of Special Services Susan Lyons said the district administration has been discussing the creation of the Coventry Alternative Resource for Education (CARE) program for several years.

Although the high school provides programs such as the Coventry Learning Academy (CLA) for students facing behavioral and emotional challenges, CARE will target students who have not been able to succeed in these other programs.

Under the CARE program, she said, two admission requirements would be applied. First, students who typically do not find themselves in disciplinary trouble, but suffer from emotional challenges will be referred to the CARE program by Individualized Education Program (IEP) placement teams.

“I think it’ll give kids a great opportunity to be helped,” she added. “We’ll ensure our

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Coventry program would save

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students are prepared for the world after high school; a large part of their education needs to be integrated into concepts such as self determination, self advocacy and citizenship.”

The second process would focus on students who have been suspended multiple times, who are involved with drug abuse, weapons and aggression.

She said these students would be referred to the program by administration, rather than being sent to the Alternative Learning Center (ALC), for a minimum of 45 days.

During this time, she explained, these students will also be placed on social suspension, meaning they cannot partake in any extra curricular activities.

“We’ll try and address the underlying is-

ues that would cause these kids to act out,” she added. “The program will be based on social and emotional learning; our core will be based around utilizing well known procedures in therapeutic environments and combine that with academics.”

Lyons explained that creating CARE will provide services to students who need them, without having to send them to other cities and towns at a large cost to the district.

“We made the decision that it has to be off campus because it will provide the kids with a more secure place, something that wouldn’t be as distracting,” she said.

Almeida said the administration is considering renting a building at 1193 Tiogue Ave., to house the CARE program.

He explained that leasing the building would cost approximately \$40,000 per

year—the equivalent of sending one student to an out-of-district institution.

He said if they are able to secure the lease, the district is estimating \$200,000 in savings for the following fiscal year.

The program would not require additional staffing either, he said, only the reorganizing of existing staff members—two teachers and a part-time nurse.

Administration is working alongside the Department of Human Services to provide counseling and Kent County Mental Health to provide psychologists.

The superintendent will present information on the lease to the school committee during their next meeting and if approved, work will begin over the summer to design the space, develop the curriculum and work with families of the students.