Newark Central School District has won a $3.75 million five-year School Climate and Transformation Grant it will share with the Williamson and Red Creek CSDs to develop, enhance or expand support services with the aim of improving behavioral outcomes and learning conditions for all students.

The lead local educational agency (LEA), the NCSD applied for the federal grant on behalf of the three-district consortium of high needs rural school districts that serve nearly 4,000 students in 12 school buildings.

Jay Roscup, Director of Community Schools in Wayne County wrote the grant with Mark Miller, Director of Grants and Special Projects for the NCSD. Lyons won a similar 5-year grant for Lyons, Sodus, North Rose-Wolcott and the Clyde-Savannah CSDs that expired in September.

Since those districts were not allowed to re-apply for the grant having previously been its recipients, Roscup and Miller wrote the successful grant application for Newark, Williamson and Red Creek.

Roscup said it is imperative that in financially-strapped, high needs Wayne County schools, especially those in eastern Wayne County, where there is such a high level of transiency, that there be consistency among support services provided to students to insure their successful behavioral and academic outcomes.

"Your highest needs students are rotating from district to district" Roscup noted, stressing uniformity of services for them is essential.

Miller said that in Newark, for example, nearly 1 in 5 students will move three or more times during their educational career. Sixty one percent of NCSD students are classified as economically disadvantaged by the New York State Education Department.

"These factors and others have a negative impact on academic success," he said.

Other issues related to poverty, homelessness, various types of abuse, trauma and or neglect; food insecurity, emotional stability, alcohol and other kinds of substance abuse, dysfunctional home environments and mental illness all adversely affect student outcomes and grant monies will be used to set up effective, multi-tiered support systems (MTSS) to more effectively address them.

Simply, the goal of the grant is to:

- Have participating districts use proven consultants and trainers to enable the three districts to implement the best MTSS practices for students
- Using best restorative practices and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) systems to improve behavior and relationships with the goal of improving the social and emotional learning climate in the schools.
- Working with local agencies and service providers to enhance prevention efforts to deter alcohol and other drug abuse that will also result in a decrease in suspensions, expulsions and absenteeism.
- Development of a higher level of community partnerships that will assist these school districts in helping to meet these goals.

"This is important work and we are thrilled that we were able to win this national grant for our region. Building systems that support the academic and behavioral work is foundational to our success as a district," NCSD Superintendent Matt Cook said.

Laurie Palmisano, who was recently appointed by the Newark Board of Education to be the granted-funded Director of NCSD’s Community Schools program will oversee distribution of grant monies to the Red Creek and Williamson CSDs according to School Climate and Transformation Grant specifications and guidelines.

"We know that the school climate plays a critical role in the potential success and school experiences of a student," said Palmisano. "Students who learn in a positive learning environment are more likely to develop skills that will help them be successful in school and in life. I am thrilled to have a role in this important work."