



Torrington Public Schools Department of Student Services Winter Newsletter 2020



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2019-2020 Department of Student Services, Certified Special Education Staff

All certified special education members of the Department of Student Services worked together on Feb. 19th to further enhance our collaborative knowledge. The morning was spent as a whole group focusing on legal updates and procedural consistency of practices. In the afternoon, specialty areas were able to work together on a variety of topics including: Effective Use of Para-Educators, Development of Transition Assessments, Psychological Assessments, Advanced Training in the 504 Process, Compilation of Community Resources for Parents, and Needs Assessments for both Speech Pathologists and School Nurses. It was a very informative day filled with new learning!

What's Been Happening in Our Schools?

Torrington: Inclusion Benefits All Children

Children with Special Needs, like all children, benefit immensely from sharing experiences with their peers. The Voices Program at Torrington School, works jointly with the entire school community, to ensure that all students have the opportunity to experience meaningful relationships with their peers and shared academic and social involvements.



Torrington Middle School

What a wonderful community we have around us! Dora Carr, a special education teacher at TMS reached out to the Torrington Community to have stability chairs donated for students in her program. These specially designed chairs help students sit up straight and focus better by engaging their muscles and brain. To date she has received 11 chairs due to the kindness of:

George's Restaurant
Doyle's Medical Supply
Ida's Bridal
Alfredo's Deli
Tedeschi Tile
Torrington Soup Kitchen
(Lisa Hagman)
Sharon Arsego



Thank you so much for your support of the TPS!

Torrington Middle School **ATP Program**

Over the past few months in the Academic Transition Program, students have been hard at work helping out the community. As part of the program's outreach, the students participate in community building activities with the goal of supporting the needs of others. Students have written cards, sorted mailings, fundraised, and even worked on props for the latest drama production, *The Sound of Music*. The students have grown tremendously in their ability to support each other and the entire school community.

One of the latest student run activities was the special education February department staff meeting. Students prepared individual invitations to the meeting, and hand-delivered them along with a smile and chocolate-dipped pretzels to teachers. Meanwhile, several other students prepared red and pink cookies and cupcakes in a Valentine's theme. Preparations for the event ended with the room being decorated for the holiday. The students were elated when they took a step back and saw their final work!

The ATP program has made great strides over the past 6 months, and we look forward to a tremendous second half of the year!



Torrington High School

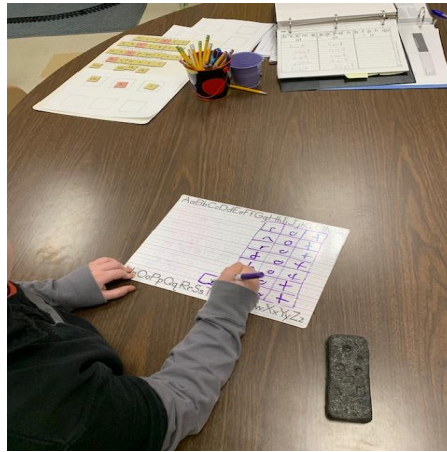
The Unified Basketball team is in the midst of a successful season. The team consists of special education student athletes, supported by their general education peers. They meet weekly and alternate between practices and games. So far, the team has competed against Lewis Mills High School, Wamogo High School, and Canton High School. The team will host Oxford High School on March 4 at 2:30 in the Torrington High School Gymnasium. The season will be capped off with the NVL Tournament on March 12. Please stop by to support the kids!

Torrington Middle School **Life Skills Program**



In January, students learned how to make different soups to sell to staff as part of Cafe 133. They also learned how to make and sell pulled pork and macaroni salad. Students are becoming more collaborative, helping each other problem solve, increasing their independence and socialization skills. They are volunteering to read and teach classes, having fun while achieving their goals!

Vogel-Wetmore Resource



Students in the Resource Room for reading and spelling have been using Elkonin Boxes to segment words into distinct phonemes. The process is fun and engaging for the students.

First, the students use letter tiles and special boxed paper. The teacher says the word, students repeat it, then segment the word into phonemes while moving the letter tiles. Alternatively, students write the letters in a box for each phoneme. The lessons focus on words from the same word families (at, ot words etc.) containing digraphs or blends. The process can easily be differentiated to meet student individual needs.

Do what you can, with what
you have, where you are.
Theodore Roosevelt

Torrington **Building A "Fact Forest"**



Ms. Tedesco's resource room practiced addition facts by representing equations on parts of trees, to build a "fact forest". Students then discussed how each part of an addition equation "builds" a larger number, just as adding trees builds a larger forest. Students also learned about the importance of trees for nature and our environment. As a surprise culminating activity, each student will receive a sapling to plant in the spring, as we continue to explore how each one of us can effect positive environmental change in our world.

Forbes Resource

TFD → **Forbes** → **TMS**

Lots of exciting things are happening at Forbes! Transition meetings are beginning to be scheduled to help children move successfully from Torrington to grade 4 and from Forbes to TMS. Students are working hard in the resource room....Grade 4 is working on reports and posters on the Northeast region of the United States. 5th graders are completing opinion essays on controversial topics.

District-Wide Assistive Technology Specialty Team

TPS has had the great opportunity to work with the State Education Resource Center to develop a district Assistive Technology (AT) Specialty Team. The team, consisting of ten staff members, is receiving 6 full days of assistive technology training. Assistive technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product that is used to increase, maintain, or improve, the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities. This team will be a great internal resource for all students moving forward!

Southwest DLC & Voices



Ms. Warchol and Mr. Mann's classes have been working hard and enjoying our whole group activities. We recently celebrated the 100th day of school! Our classes worked together in groups to count and sort 100 M&M's. After counting and sorting, we graphed our results using a bar graph. Our bar graphs are displayed on a beautiful bulletin board! For Valentine's Day we took on a huge task of making Valentines for all of the students at Southwest School. We hung the valentines on each of the student's lockers. All of the students and teachers were so excited to see them!



Ever wonder what all those letters mean in the world of special education? Here is a quick tutorial.

FAPE: Educational services including, among other elements, special education and related services, provided at no cost to parents, in conformity with an individualized education program (IEP)

BCBA: Board Certified Behavior Analysts obtained graduate degrees and are certification with the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. They analyze and help to understand the causes of, and ways to treat, behavioral difficulties

We're Moving Up!

At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, the Torrington Public Schools Department of Student Services assessed the need to focus on four key areas this year.

- Special Education Referral & Identification Process
- LRE – Continuum of Services / Outplacements
- Procedurally Compliant PPTs & Timely and Accurate Submission of IEPs
- Maximizing Para-educator Training and Usage

Through the hard work of the department, we are making strides in all goal areas. Regarding data of progress, I am excited to share the following information:

Special Education Referral & Identification Process

The district has placed emphasis on providing a multi-tiered system of support for all students before the identification of the need for special education. This focus, as well as adherence to state and federal compliance with evaluations, identification, and least restrictive environment, have resulted in a reduction in our special education identification rate from 22 to 19.8%

LRE – Continuum of Services / Outplacements

Least restrictive environment (LRE) means educating children with disabilities, to the maximum extent possible with their non-disabled peers, in the school they would attend if they did not have a disability. We have been striving to make sure that every child is being instructed in their LRE. This has led to some great results:

- Our district percentage of children being outplaced in alternative programs has dropped by 5.7%. Ten children have returned to the TPS!
- Twelve students in district have moved from a self-contained special education program to the general classroom setting with supports.
- And most exciting of all.....

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Students have exited from special education services, returning to general education!

IEE: An evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the public agency responsible for the education of the child

IDEA: American legislation that ensures students with disabilities are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education that is tailored to their individual needs

SLD: A Specific Learning Disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or perform mathematical calculations

SLI: Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language or voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance