Updated Status Report to the AD Hoc Committee on Special Education

December 21, 2017

Updated 6/28/18

Start of Norwalk Center of Specialized Learning in literacy

Cohort 1 - The Norwalk Center of Specialized Learning and Literacy also known as the Norwalk Dyslexia Center will be located at 350 E. Main St. During the Summer of 2017, six special education teachers were trained by LiteracyHow Inc. in Orton-Gillingham methodology using a clinical practicum approach. Eleven students received 2 hours daily of Orton-Gillingham intervention from the teachers under the clinical supervision of an Orton-Gillingham fellow from LiteracyHow Inc. The training was affiliated with Fairfield University. Trained teachers will follow up in the schools in Fall 2017 with students identified in the Summer 2017 program. Cohort 1 staff participated in small learning groups throughout 2017-18 to continue the clinical support and collaborative training.

Cohort 2 - Cohort two began in October 2017 and included 11 special and general education teachers. They received a 5 day intensive in-service training in Structured Literacy under the supervision of LiteracyHow Inc.

Cohort 3 - A group of 10 specialists, including psychologists, speech pathologists and special education teachers will be trained in effective evaluation practices for the clinical diagnosis of Dyslexia. The training will be provided by Fairfield University and is expected to begin by Fall 2018.

Update December 2017

13 teachers in Cohort 2 started their intensive in-service training in November 2017. They have four remaining days of preparation before completing their training; Monday January 29th, Thursday February 15th, Saturday, March 3rd, and Wednesday March 14th. There is currently 1 student receiving after school services from a Cohort 1 instructor. It is anticipated that an additional 5-10 students will begin when Cohort 2 has completed their training.

Updated June 2018

As on June 2018, two educators form Cohort 1 have applied for their classroom Level 1 Orton Gillingham certification. It is anticipated that the remaining 6 cohort 1 teacher will apply for the classroom certification in fall 2018. 8, Cohort 2 teachers are working in the clinic for summer 2018 to provide intensive reading instruction to students identified by special education, general education teachers and school administrators. All students recommended for the summer clinic were offered the opportunity for participation. Interviews are in process to hire a reading specialist teacher/ coordinator for the clinic.

Implementation of contract system (all invoices current and correct amount encumbered)

The revised organization provides for a Special Education Supervisor to work as a team with the Out of District Placement Coordinator. This team of professionals will work together to review all students who may require increased in-district services (such as 1:1 paraprofessionals), contract services or placement in an out of district special education program. The Centralized PPT will ensure that all resources of the district are considered prior to making recommendations for additional services that do not currently exist in the district. This will assist the department to identify appropriate program development needs and ensure equitable use of existing resources across the public school buildings.
In January 2017, a Special Education Supervisor was assigned to develop procedures to ensure that contracts are in place for any outside services, evaluations, or out of district placements; and to ensure that the budget for these services have been identified and encumbered. As of June 2017, this resulted in a highly effective encumbering procedure to monitor all expenditures in the special education department with regard to contracted services and placements in out of district private or residential schools. Currently, for 2017-18, as of September 2017, costs for all students placed by the district in private or residential schools who have signed contracts are encumbered. As new contracts are developed, additional resources required are immediately encumbered. Weekly meetings with the finance department and the department of specialized services monitor all anticipated costs. As students move or return to district programs, funds previously encumbered are unencumbered as needed. The Centralized PPT will monitor students assigned 1:1 support in out of district placements on a quarterly basis to determine to assist in the implementation of independence plans.

Revamped Extended School Year (ESY) program

The Interim Assistant Director and the Superintendent of Schools met with parent groups for input during the Spring 2017 to revise the extended school year (ESY) program. More than 275 students participated in the ESY program in 12 sites. Students received their IEP services and most of the students voluntarily participated in integrated social activities via Summer Enrichment Programs that were available in the schools.

Update December 2017

Preliminary discussions for ESY 2018 have already begun. The first planning meeting will be in January 2018.

Updated June 2018

Monthly ESY meeting were held with parents and district staff. There are 261 students attending ESY 2018 in grades k-12. ESY staff includes 17 teachers, 4 Speech and Language Pathologists, 2 Speech assistants, 3 social workers, 5 BCBA's, 55 paras, and OT/PT staff from Constellations. Locations include; Norwalk High School, Nathan Hale Middle School, Roton Middle school, Marvin elementary, Rowayton Elementary, Wolfpit elementary, Fox Run elementary, and Tracey elementary.

NECC has 64 students, some of who are 2 days a week. Staff includes 5 teachers and 15 para’s including 1:1’s, a 20 hour BCBA, 1 SLP and 2 SLP student teachers, and OT/PT staff from Constellations.

Norwalk High School High Roads program for students with significant behavior and Development of Therapeutic Programs in Roton (Success) and BMHS

The Norwalk High School High Road Program opened during the 2016-17 school year and served 10 students with emotional disabilities or mental illness. For the 2017-18 school year, one FTE special education teacher has been identified to work with the clinical staff from High Roads. Currently six students are in program. Plans to develop full clinical capacity for the 2018-19 school are in progress.

Updated June 2018

Developed Middle School (Roton) and HS Program (BMHS) Therapeutic Programs in addition to the High Roads Program at NHS. Two teams consisting of a Special Education Teacher, Two Paraprofessionals and a dedicated school psychologist (one per school) will serve 10 to 12 students per school. The goal is full integration into competitive general education courses but students may have all classes in the program depending upon IEP needs. The counseling modality is DBT and the entire team will be trained in the DBT methodology beginning in Summer 2018 focusing on student skill development of mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness and emotional regulation. Weekly embedded coaching by DBT/CBT Associates for the team to review data and discuss student needs and provision of consultation for interventions. Close collaboration with community based agencies. Monthly parent counseling and training in DBT methodology is provided. Regular psychiatric consultation from Child Guidance will be provided. Team has weekly dedicated team time with DBT coach and twice monthly consultation from psychiatrist.
Learners excelling and Progressing (LEAP) program at Wolfpit for students with Autism and significant behavior (for students who require an ABA program)

During the 2016-17 school year the district worked contracted with CREC to establish the LEAP program at Wolfpit School. CREC provided the BCBA, the ABA and seven paraprofessionals. Seven students participated in the program who would have otherwise been placed and out of district schools.

During the 2017-18 school year, a special education teacher has been appointed. Nine students are currently attending the program. The LEAP program has been identified as priority for paraprofessional training to assist the staff members to complete training as Registered Behavior Technicians (RBT). Once completed District staff will replace the CREC paraprofessionals. The CREC BCBA duties will shortly be re-assigned to a district employee. The BCBA position is currently posted and we will be interviewing appropriate candidates. Steps have been taken to purchase age-appropriate furniture, materials and equipment including a computer station for the classroom.

Update December 2017

There are currently 7 students in the LEAP program. Constellation is currently providing the BCBA and RBT support. Interviews are in progress to shift from CREC ABA’s to district ABA’s. These ABA’s will all participate and complete the RBT training.

Para-educators have been identified to participate in a 40 hour on line course leading to RBT (Registered Behavior Technician) certification. The first 2 para-educators have completed the course and passed the certification examination while 10 additional staff members are in process of completion of the required hours.

Updated June 2018

4 Paras have completed the 40 hour RBT course and have passed the examination. Two additional staff members are in process of completion of the RCT exam. Transition from CREC staffing has been completed.

In-house Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist

AT Specialist was hired January 3, 2017, to conducting Assistive Tech Evaluations, provides consultations and providing resources on an on-going basis. The Assistive Technology Specialist also conducts training and coaching following the evaluations. There are currently 71 students being serviced for Assistive Technology with 8 new AT evaluations in progress. The Assistive Technology Specialist also conducts parent /staff training and professional development for the district. The AT Specialist purchases AT equipment for students as well as subscription software and technology programs and AAC Devices/Apps.

Updated June 2018

One additional AT Specialist Position has been advertised funded by the IDEA Federal Grant. 15 smart tables, 150 chromebooks and 100 IPADs have been ordered for student use. 75 handheld smart instruments have been ordered for staff to use to input data collection in real time. 2 Schools will pilot site licenses for Fast ForWord (Kendell and Columbus). Language Live! Will be piloted in all special education classes at the middle school to support Core ELA instruction.

Audiological Booth has been ordered and interview for audiologist is schedule. Funding provided via Special Education Development Fund.
Out-of-District Coordinator position

The Out of District Coordinator was identified and hired in late March 2017. She is currently the case manager for approximately 93 students placed in 41 private or residential schools.

As of September 2017, plans to revise the PPT process for students being considered for an out of district placement as well as to develop plans to support the transition and return of students from out of district are being reviewed. Currently the out of district coordinator is working with a special education supervisor who will form the centralized PPT team who will consider any student who may require supports not available in the current public school, or charter school. This will ensure that all resources of the district are considered prior to recommendations are made for out of district or contract services.

As of 9/2017, eight (8) students previously placed by the district in out of district programs were returned to in district programs. In addition, three students who had been recommended to explore out of district programs were recently placed in in-district programs with individualized support. Additional students moved or graduated. The Centralized PPT is monitoring 17 students for possible changes from their current Out of District Programs.

Assessment Coordinator Position

The Assessment Coordinator was identified during the 2016-17 school year. In November 2016, approximately 70 special education teachers were trained in the use of new assessment materials including the Test of Reading Comprehension – Fourth Edition (TORC-4), Gray Oral Reading Test – Fifth Edition (GORT-5), and the Test of Written Language – Fourth Edition (TOWL-4).

The Assessment Coordinator will identify 10 staff members who will receive intensive training in the diagnosis and assessment of Dyslexia in collaboration with Fairfield University. This training is scheduled to begin by January 2018 with a subsequent cohort of 10 occurring successively thereafter.

Training in appropriate procedures for bilingual assessment of second-language learners who may be suspected of a having a disability will be set as a priority for the 2000 1718 school year.

Intensive training has begun in data based assessments for the development of Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) and written Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) using Re-Think as an online database to collect baseline data, monitor behavioral trends and document phase changes in interventional planning. An overview of the electronic data collection platform was provided on August 28, 2017. Cohort 1 training will begin in October 2017 to include special education supervisors, school psychologists and District BCBAs. Cohort 2 will include School Compliance Monitors and Special Education Teachers working with students receiving District Trial Training (DTT) or who have Intensive (Tier 3) Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs).

Examination of appropriate progress monitoring protocols will be explored in the Fall 2017 for professional development in 2017-18 with full implementation in the 2018/19 school year to monitor progress of IEP goals in reading, writing and math. Consistent progress monitoring will also be included in the SRBI protocol currently under development.

In September 2017, NECC staff were supported via training from CES in the implementation of a new assessment model centered on young children utilizing a cross-disciplinary assessment approach. Currently the assessment coordinator is the interim director at the Norwalk Early Childhood Center

Elementary school compliance monitor positions

In February 2017, nine elementary compliance monitors were selected to meet monthly and to review the IEP documents for quality control and compliance at their schools. For the 2017-18 school year, in addition to 10 elementary compliance monitors, there are 4 Middles school compliance monitors and 2 High School
Department Chairs who will continue this work. They will meet monthly for support and training with the Assistant Director of Special Education.

Update December 2017

The IEP compliance monitors participated in a compliance training on December 8th lead by IEP direct. They were able to ask procedural questions as it relates to the data collection and monitoring.

Policy and Procedures Manual

The Special Education Standard Operating Policy and Procedures manual was completed and posted on the district website during the 2016-17 school year. Revisions to the manual will be made on an ongoing basis as changes to the Connecticut Stated Department of Education Regulations are promulgated.

Section 504 Manual

The Section 504 Manual was completed and posted during the Spring of 2017.

Creation of the parent advisory group

A Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) was established in November 2016 and met several times during the school year.

The new Chief of Specialized Learning and Student Services has established an expanded Parent Advisory Committee (PAC-e) consisting of the previously identified PAC members, SPED Partner leaders, NECC parents and other interested parents or guardians. The first meeting of the PAC-e was held on August 24, 2017 with more than 20 parents and guardians in attendance. A schedule of monthly meetings of the PAC-e has been established.

In addition, monthly general meetings with topical workshop for parents with children with special needs is also scheduled. The schedule will appear on the District’s link to the Department of Specialized Learning and Student Services website. Norwalk Public School staff members will lead the workshops providing hands on training and information for parents on topics including assistive technology, techniques for helping with homework, how to help read with your child with dyslexia and adult transition planning supports. Mrs. Goorevitch will provide an overview of the department’s priority outcomes and implementation steps at the first general meeting scheduled for September 25, 2017.

Updated December 2017

The expanded Parent Advisory Committee (PAC-e) has met monthly thus far. Monthly meetings are scheduled. Typically 15 members attend the PAC-e meeting.

In addition, two district-wide Parent workshops have been held. Mrs. Goorevitch presented District-wide goals to more than 75 parents on September 25, 2017. A second District-wide parent workshop focusing on assistive technology was conducted on November 29, 2017. More than 50 parents participated in hands on workshops focusing on applications for writing, reading, language and fine motor skills. The workshop was planned and led by Angela Rinaldi, District Assistive Technology Coordinator. Sessions leaders included Special Education Teachers, Speech Pathologists and a Student. Additional workshops are planned focusing on topics identified by the PAC-e including:

Social Skills, Clubs and Best Buddies
Executive Order Functioning and Homework Help Systems
Strategies for Reading for Children with Dyslexia
Language Development
Sensory Development and Sensory Integration
Understanding Your Child’s IEP
Creation of Norwalk Early Childhood Center (NECC)

The NECC center was established in 2016-17 and is currently providing am classes for 3 year olds (Mon-Thursday) and pm classes for four-year-olds (Monday through Friday).

As of September 15, 2017, there are 139 children enrolled in 5 classes. There are 61 students with IEP’s and all are enrolled with their typically developing peers for developmentally appropriate activities. All related services are provided on site including speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and the services of a BCBA.

A full-time school psychologist leads the PPT at NECC for all Norwalk residents, ages 3 to children turning 5, who are referred for a suspected disability. The evaluation team consisting of the psychologist, speech pathologist, nurse, OT and special education teacher. All members of the evaluation team have been trained by CES in a new protocol for multidisciplinary evaluations. Students who require additional specialized assessments may be evaluated using protocols such as the VB Map, ADOS, physical therapy assessments or occupational therapy assessments as required. Assessments are conducted at NECC on Friday mornings.

There are currently 20 seats for typically developing peers in the current five classes. The sixth class is anticipated to open in November-December 2017, following the identification of additional students who may register.

December 2017

The position for the addition 6th classroom has been posted and interviews are scheduled for 1/2/18. A half day small special class and a half day integrated class is planned based upon the needs of the students. Additional students have been enrolled on a rolling admissions basis.

The parent leadership group meetings monthly with Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Goorevitch. The NECC parent group has submitted and received approval in December to form the newest PTO organization in Norwalk Public Schools. With parent and staff input plans have been submitted to the City for a new early childhood fully accessible playground.

Updated June 2018

Directed has been hired for NECC start date July 1, 2018. Two classes (4 half day sessions) have been redesigned into two full day co-teaching School Readiness classes. Co-teachers have been identified and hired. New early childhood accessible playground installation and parking lot renovations scheduled for Summer 2018. Completion of window replacement project anticipated July 6, 2018.

18 to 21 Year Old Program expansion of transition planning

Program expansion of work experiences and independent living skills for students 18 to 21 is planned for Norwalk High School and Brien McMahon High School. Currently, there are 18 students participating in the transition program at both high schools supported by the transition coordinator. (Jessica Ireland) and two job coach paraprofessionals. A pre-vocational program is also currently available at both Brien McMahon High School and Norwalk High School for 23 students citywide. Students are placed in a variety of community-based sites including Walgreens, ShopRite, Marshall’s, T.J. Maxx, Homegoods, City Hall, Marvin, and Toys R Us.
Plans to expand the 18 to 21-year-old program to include in Think College and Project Search, both national replication models, are being developed with the first consultation for the programs scheduled for September 26, 2017.

Update December 2017

Further consultation was held on December 7th on the development of Think College and Project Search have occurred. Mrs. Goorevitch attended a regional discussion group with College Steps on 12/4/17. In addition to district administrators and support providers, community members and parents have been invited to participate in the development of the programs. The next meeting of the Transition Design Team is scheduled for 1/11/18. A visitation to the Montifiore Hospital Project SEARCH program is planned for January. The District has submitted and received approval in October to continue to offer the current 18-21 year old Transition Program from the CT. Department of Education.

Updated June 2018

Budget for staffing for Project SEARCH approved via Special Education Development Fund. Meeting with NCC to confirm space and access to internships for Project SEARCH conducted in June 2018. Identified staff will attend the Project SEARCH convention in July 2018. RFP for contract with adult agency for job development and on-site support submitted June 2018.

ASD NEST in Norwalk

Updated June 2018

A team of 18 consisting of Principals, supervisors, general education teacher, special education teachers, speech pathologists and parents attended the NESTCON conference at NYU Steinhardt Center in January 2018. Two additional consultation days from NYU were provided in Norwalk for planning. Program implementation will begin in September 2018 with one 5th grade class in Fox Run and one 8th grade class in Nathan Hale. Staffing will consist of a co-teaching team (fulltime general education and full time special education) and dedicated speech pathologists to provide a fully inclusive program for students with ASD. Staff will participate in training with the ASD NEST Support program from NYU. Regular twice monthly embedded on-site coaching for the team has been scheduled via a contract directly with NYU. Direct support in facilitation strategies, accommodations, and direct explicit implementation of the Social Development Intervention (SDI) curriculum (“hidden curriculum”) focusing on pragmatic language and social cognitive skills will be provided.

Respectfully Submitted,

Yvette Goorevitch
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6/28/18