



Yvette Goorevitch
Chief, Specialized Learning
and Student Services
Goorevitchy@norwalkps.org
P: 203-854-4128
125 East Avenue, PO BOX 6001
Norwalk, CT 06852-6001

Updated Status Report to the AD Hoc Committee on Special Education

September 15, 2017

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 120 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 will participate in small learning groups throughout 2017-18 to continue the clinical support and collaborative training while they pursue classroom Level 1 Orton-Gillingham certification.

Cohort 2 - Cohort two will begin in October 2017 and include a maximum of 25 teachers, speech pathologist or teachers with reading certification. They will receive intensive in-service training in under the supervision of LiteracyHow Inc. The Orton-Gillingham Fellow also associated with Fairfield University will provide clinical supervision and coaching for Cohort 2.

It is anticipated that 6-12 students may be served at the Dyslexia Clinic before or after school for two day per week beginning in November 2017 with full implementation available for service delivery for 20-25 students in summer 2018.

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 January 2018,

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.

Norwalk High School High Roads program for students with significant behavior

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.

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.

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.

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 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 BCBA's. 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 Middle 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.

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.

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.

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.

Respectfully Submitted,

Yvette Goorevitch
Chief, Specialized Learning and Student Services
9/15/17