

# Special Education News & Discussion

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## October 2010

The Special Services Office is pleased to provide the 2010-2011 annual newsletter, Special Education News and Discussion (SEND). This newsletter was created to inform parents and students about special education programs, practices and policies within the North Branford School District in an effort to enhance home-school communication. The newsletter, along with other special education resources, can be accessed at the district website: [www.northbranfordschools.org](http://www.northbranfordschools.org)

### Introducing....

The Special Services Office is very pleased to welcome three new staff members to North Branford Public Schools for the 2010-11 school year.

# Welcome!

#### **Jillian Colonese – School Psychologist – TVES**

Ms. Colonese comes to North Branford from Southington Public Schools. Ms. Colonese earned a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from Saint Anselm College as well as a Master's Degree in School Psychology from Southern New Hampshire University.

#### **Katie Capiello– Special Education Teacher – NBIS**

Ms. Capiello holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History with a concentration in Secondary Education from Assumption College. Ms. Capiello is certified in Special Education and is anticipating earning a Master's Degree in Special Education during January 2011.

#### **Amy Maynard-Special Education Teacher-NBHS**

Ms. Maynard comes to North Branford from Old Saybrook Public Schools. Ms. Maynard earned a Bachelor Degree in Psychology from Sacred Heart University as well as a Master's Degree in Special Education from Southern Connecticut State University.

The district is delighted to add the expertise of Jillian, Katie and Amy to our district!

### Program Expansion

With the closing of the ACES - Collaborative Alternative Magnet School (CAMS), North Branford High School was able to expand the Bridges Program to accommodate more students. The program recognizes that some students demonstrate the need for more individualized education services to address academic, emotional or behavioral concerns. These students often experience success when instruction is provided in a smaller group setting with additional supports. Students receive services in the least restrictive environment based on their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or specific needs. Students have the option to receive instruction in all of their core classes within the Bridges Program or to attend some classes in general education, including electives. The Bridges Program also offers online classes through the Virtual Learning Academy when appropriate.

The expansion has allowed NBHS to include a fulltime Transition Coordinator who assists students in the Bridges and Life Skills Programs with paid and unpaid work experiences.

Students are involved in a community partnership with TJ Launderette and assisting students in the Life Skills program with recycling throughout the district. Students are in the process of developing a business plan for the operation of the T-Bird Coffee Coop scheduled to open on October 4, 2010. Students will be baking treats to sell to staff along with teas and coffees while managing the shop. Students hope to cater small department meetings. Next time you are at NBHS, stop by for a scrumptious treat and beverage!

### First Annual Transition Night

Mrs. Pendziwater, Transition Coordinator and Mrs. Artaiz Special Education teacher, hosted the District's First Annual Transition Night. Parents of high school students with disabilities and participants in the district's 18-21 year old program were invited to a Transition Trade Show before the traditional Curriculum Night on September 23, 2010. Representatives from the Connecticut Department of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Children and Family Voluntary Services, Department of Developmental Services, Southeastern Employment Services, Harbor Health Services and Probate Judge Frank Forgione were all in attendance to assist families with post secondary planning. These representatives provided brochures and other information about services available to students with disabilities when they leave high school. They were available to answer

questions from students and parents. Attendees received important information that will assist in planning for our students' futures after graduation.



Judge Frank Forgione provides information to a parent at the recent NBHS Transition Night.

## More Exciting Additions

A committee is in the development phase of designing an accessible courtyard at NBHS. High school students will assist with designing the space, landscaping the courtyard and building planters. The Art Department is exploring adding a Sculpture Garden in one section of the courtyard. A beautiful memorial bench for Nicole DeFilippo, a former NBHS student, was built by John DeNunzio, Technology teacher at NBHS. The bench was dedicated in June and will be placed in the courtyard.

On October 4, 2010 the NBHS Coffee Coop opened. The business plan for the student run coffee shop was developed by students in Mrs. Pendziwater's Careers Class. The students researched competitive pricing, menus and do all the baking and selling of the pastries. Coffee and teas are offered for staff members. Stop by Room 14A to see what it is all about!

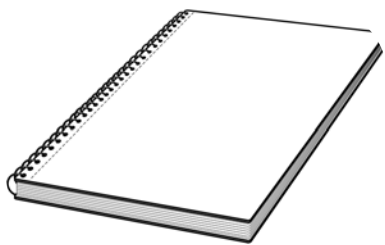
A Greenhouse has been built for the use of students and faculty. Students will be planting, caring for and harvesting plants to donate, sell and feature at community events!



## Policy and Procedure

The District uses procedures to ensure that proper identification of students with disabilities occurs through the implementation of sound evaluative practices. A comprehensive evaluation, including data detailing a student's progress in general education is conducted to determine if the student meets the eligibility criteria to receive special education services.

Before school personnel refer a student to an initial Planning and Placement Team meeting, alternative strategies and programs in general education are implemented and student progress is carefully monitored through the Scientific, Research-Based Intervention (SRBI) process, often referred to as Response to Intervention (RTI).



RTI is a multi-step process of providing educational support and instruction to children who are struggling learners. Student progress is monitored and results are used to make decisions about adjusting interventions. North Branford Schools currently uses the Response to Intervention

process in addressing problems with reading, math and behavior. The RTI process is flexible and designed by school districts to meet the needs of their students.

Once a referral to special education is made, the PPT must ensure that an evaluation is comprehensive. The PPT must further gather

input from multiple sources (families, general education classroom, curriculum-based measures, standardized assessments, student records, observation)

For a student to be considered eligible for services as a student with a Learning Disability team members must determine that the student is not achieving adequately for the student's age and grade level standards in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, math calculations or math reasoning.

The PPT must determine that the lack of adequate progress is not due to a visual, hearing, or motor disability, an intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, limited English proficiency, environmental/cultural differences, or economic disadvantage.

A reevaluation is conducted once every three years unless the parent and district agree that adequate information already exists to determine whether the student continues to be eligible for special education services. As part of the reevaluation, the PPT reviews existing data including: information and evaluations conducted by the district and/or provided by the parent, curriculum-based and standardized assessments, as well as observations by teachers and related service professionals. The team may identify the need for additional evaluations to determine continued eligibility.