

Special Education News & Discussion

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**May
2009**

Happy Spring!! Three marking periods have officially come to a close and the weather is beginning to change! This edition of the SEND newsletter will focus on the PPT process and will highlight our new Superintendent of Schools, Scott Schoonmaker.

Introducing: Mr. Schoonmaker, Superintendent of Schools of North Branford

We are pleased to introduce Mr. Scott Schoonmaker to our parents. Mr. Schoonmaker assumed the position of Superintendent of Schools on January 1, 2009. Mr. Schoonmaker comes to North Branford after a 17 year tenure in Old Saybrook. Mr. Schoonmaker taught for 5 years before becoming principal of Old Saybrook High School, a position he held for the past 12 years.

Mr. Schoonmaker's first full time position after his undergraduate studies at Assumption College was at an all boys residential treatment facility in Connecticut. Due to his inspirational experience at the facility, Mr. Schoonmaker decided to do graduate work with the Guiding Eyes for the Blind Foundation. Mr. Schoonmaker began training a seeing-eye dog, which he integrated into a reward system for 5 students with special needs. Everyone benefited from Mr. Schoonmaker's graduate project. While principal, Mr. Schoonmaker and his staff expanded Old Saybrook High School's life-skills program for students with significant disabilities.



While only being Superintendent for 5 short weeks, when asked about where he envisions North Branford, Mr. Schoonmaker said with a big smile: "I see North Branford taking part in a global awareness that focuses on equity – educating each other about difference so everyone feels valued." He stated that he is excited about what's to come... "sit with the administrators and you can sense their passion to see where North Branford is going."

Integrated Preschool Special Education Program Set to Begin in September

Project PRIDE is a special education preschool program serving students with disabilities aged 3-5. The program is currently located at Stanley T. Williams School. The class is co-taught by Patricia Cardoza (special education teacher) and Paula Huebner (speech-language pathologist). A storybook curriculum is used and instruction is aligned with the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework to implement students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Themes from the storybooks are incorporated throughout classroom "centers" to facilitate the generalization of skills and concepts within a naturalistic, play environment.

A continuum of services is offered to students with disabilities based upon individual student's needs outlined in the IEP. Service delivery models include outpatient speech-language therapy, half day, extended day and full day sessions and extended school year services for eligible students.

Occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech-language therapy services are provided as described in each student's IEP. A school social worker supports the program by facilitating play on a weekly basis. In addition, she serves as the Intake Coordinator for new referrals, participates with the team in conducting preschool screenings, interviewing parents, and facilitating parent observations of enrolled students. Consultative services are provided on a weekly basis by ACES Behavioral Services. Additional consultation is available through the Board of Education Services for the Blind and the American School for the Deaf. The program is supported by two full-time paraprofessionals.

Typical peers have participated in the preschool program as role models for students with disabilities. These children provide models of age-appropriate language, behavior, play and social skills for children with disabilities. These opportunities help students with disabilities develop skills in these areas and generalize them to other environments. Beginning

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PRIDE continued. . .

in September 2009, the program will include 50% typical peers, creating an integrated preschool setting. This is consistent with the goals in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that requires school districts to provide educational services to students in the Least Restrictive Environment. Peers have been selected through a screening process conducted this winter. Typical peers will attend all sessions and participate in all preschool activities. There are no fees for participation, though parents are responsible for providing transportation.

We are looking forward to this exciting opportunity and the increased benefits it will provide for preschool children in North Branford!

Planning and Placement Team – What is it?

Although parents have sat through many Planning Placement Team meetings, they may wonder about the nuts and bolts of this “team.” The Planning Placement Team is often called the PPT. It is the decision-making body that assures that a student meets the eligibility. It is through the PPT process that North Branford Public Schools ensures that students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate education.



SEND Newsletter Topics of Interest

Name: _____

Topics of Interest _____

Please detach and return to:

Special Services Office
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North Branford, CT 06471

Or email your ideas to: swright@northbranfordschools.org or glittle@northbranfordschools.org
Put “send” in the subject line!



PPT – What’s the Purpose?

PPTs are conducted to determine eligibility, developing, reviewing and revising the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and reviewing evaluations and reevaluations. Other reasons include: developing and reviewing Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), conducting manifestation determinations, making alternative educational placements, and developing transition/post-secondary goals.

PPT – Who Attends?

Parents are a large component of the PPT team. Parents have the right to bring outside providers to the PPT if they choose. The PPT is chaired by a person who is qualified to supervise “specially designed instruction.” Both a classroom and special education teacher is present, a related service provider if appropriate and a representative of the pupil personnel staff such as a guidance counselor will attend. As students get older it is important for them to attend and contribute to their PPTs, especially at the high school level.

Parents are encouraged to contact the Director or Coordinator of Special Education with any ideas of topics for our next SEND newsletter.

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