

# Special Education News & Discussion

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Dr. Kris Lindsay, *Coordinator*

We are pleased to provide the second issue of our annual parent 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.

## What is "Response to Intervention?"

Response to Intervention (RTI) is the practice of providing high quality, scientifically based instruction to all students so they can experience academic success. Instructional interventions are designed to address each student's unique needs. Progress is frequently monitored to determine whether changes should be made in instruction or goals and to determine whether students are making appropriate progress. Three tiers of intervention are designed to provide students with increasing support in the event that they do not respond to less intensive strategies over a period of time.

The North Branford School District has been exploring the possible use of RTI at the elementary school level over the past school year. The goal is to implement RTI within the 2006-2007 school year. This regular education initiative will be carried out by classroom teachers utilizing differentiation, North Branford Strategies for Success (NBSS) teachers, and Language Arts consultants. Support will also be provided by the early intervention team, START, and the planning and placement team (PPT) process.

The Special Services Department is actively investigating RTI as part of the evaluation process for determining student eligibility for special education services. It is presumed that eligibility would occur if students did not achieve success within the first three tiers of RTI within given timelines. At this time, the Connecticut State Department of Education has not issued guidelines for determining eligibility based on RTI, although this is a work in progress. In the meantime, the Director of Special Services and the Coordinator of Special Education have attended several state sponsored workshops and conferences to learn more about this promising educational practice.

## The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center

The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) is a statewide nonprofit organization that offers information and support to families of children with any disability or chronic illness, age birth through 21. CPAC emphasizes the importance of parents advocating for their children's education needs based on understanding special education laws and procedures.

CPAC staff work directly with parents and provide in-service presentation for schools and service providers. CPAC is also represented on numerous state-wide committees and various organizations in an effort to represent issues that are important to parents and families in Connecticut.

Last year, the Special Services Department asked CPAC to speak to parents about updates in special education law at a SEND sponsored workshop. Parent feedback reflected the success of this presentation. The district looks forward to working with CPAC in the future to provide information and support to families on relevant issues.

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## Connecticut Aptitude and Performance Test

The Connecticut Aptitude and Performance Test is administered to all 10th grade students in the areas of Math, Science, Response to Literature, Reading for Information, Interdisciplinary Writing, and Editing and Revising. Passing all sections of the CAPT is a requirement for high school graduation.

The district has recognized that not all students experience success on every section of the CAPT, even with accommodations. Consequently, both regular education and special education students are offered the opportunity to retake a section(s) of the CAPT, and/or the opportunity to complete an alternative assessment to demonstrate their understanding of the material being assessed.

Each academic department has designed their own version of a CAPT alternative assessment. These include portfolio development, conducting scientific experiments, and completing modified tests. Students are assigned CAPT mentors to help them follow time-lines, complete project steps, and to otherwise prepare for the successful completion of the CAPT requirement.

The North Branford School District believes that all students can graduate with the appropriate instruction and supports. The provision of a CAPT alternative assessment ensures that students can demonstrate their mastery of content through a variety of means and experience success in school.

## Upcoming SEND Workshops

SEND offered three parent workshops during the course of the 2005-2006 school year. Topics included Bureau of Rehabilitative Services, student transitions from elementary school to intermediate school, and updates in special education laws. We received positive feedback from parent and student participants. The district will offer additional workshops during the course of the 2006-2007 school year. Details will be forthcoming.

## Website Development

The Special Services Department is pleased to inform you that a Special Services page is under development for inclusion in the district's website for the 2006-2007 school year. This will provide another opportunity to inform parents about upcoming events, as well as programs, practices and policies pertaining to special education and related services.

## Staff Additions

The Special Services Department is pleased to welcome new staff members to our district. Kelly Davis, Occupational Therapist, and Penny Sawicki, Physical Therapist, are employed part time to provide related services to eligible students and consultation as needed. Parents are encouraged to contact Kelly or Penny by phone at 484-1235 or via email at:

[kelldavis@northbranfordschools.org](mailto:kelldavis@northbranfordschools.org)

or

[psawicki@northbranfordschools.org](mailto:psawicki@northbranfordschools.org)

**On behalf of the Special Services Department we would like to wish you and your child a happy and successful 2006-2007 school year!**

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