

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

The North Branford School District's Special Services Department offers an array of special education programs and settings to eligible students. These programs are offered on a continuum ranging from least restrictive environment (LRE) to more restrictive environments as required by State and Federal law. The least restrictive setting is the regular education classroom, whereas the most restrictive setting (in district) is a self-contained classroom experience (e.g. a classroom that takes place in a special education or related classroom without typical peers).

Students must have the opportunity to learn and progress in the LRE before moving to a more restrictive environment. Our goal is to provide all students with inclusive experiences to the maximum degree appropriate to meet their unique educational needs.

Special Education Programs offered by the North Branford School District include the following (from least restrictive to most restrictive):

### Inclusion Classes

Inclusion classes refer to regular education classrooms that offer special education support. There is a range of services available within inclusion classes based on the needs of the students participating in them. They may include:

- Consultation provided by a special education instructor or related service provider
- Special education support provided one or more times per week by a special education paraprofessional
- Special education support provided one or more times per week by a special education instructor or related service provider (e.g. Speech/Language Pathologist, etc.)
- Special education support provided on a daily basis by a paraprofessional, special education staff member, or related service provider
- Co-teaching that involves both the regular and special education teacher on a daily basis

### Resource Rooms

Special Education instruction in a Resource Room setting is available at all North Branford schools. This instruction is based on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and may range from organizational assistance to academic support in one or more classes to instruction in an academic area (Reading, Writing, Math, etc.). Academic instruction may take place in addition to or in lieu of regular education instruction based on each student's unique needs.

### Project Pride

Project Pride is a Preschool Program located in Stanley T. Williams Elementary School. It is a reverse mainstream program, which means that both special education and regular education students participate. Students who require special education services are referred to Project Pride by Birth to Three Services or the CIP preschool screening process, and are admitted by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) process. Regular education students are admitted based on passing the CIP preschool screening, parent interest, and random selection.

### The Bridges Program - Elementary

The Bridges Program at Totoket Elementary School is designed for students who require an intensive behavioral program beyond what is typically available in the regular education classroom setting. Special education students are referred to this program by a PPT after less restrictive settings have not been successful over a period of time.

### The Bridges Program – High School

The Bridges Program at North Branford High School is designed for special education and regular education students who are not experiencing academic, social, and/or behavioral success in the regular education setting. Consequently, they require a structured and intensive behavioral program and small group setting for a period of time until they are ready to reintegrate into their regularly scheduled classes. Students are referred to Bridges by a PPT, 504 Team, or the early intervention team, START. Regular education students are admitted by the Bridges Committee, which meets no less than once per marking period to review referrals.

### Life Skills

Life Skills Programs are offered at Jerome Harrison School, Totoket Valley Elementary School, North Branford Intermediate School, and North Branford High School. The Life Skills Program was designed for special education students who have intensive instructional needs. Consequently, the programs focus on basic academic awareness, the development of adaptive skills, leisure activities, and vocational exploration, as well as pragmatic language and trips into community settings. Many Life Skills students receive some instruction in the self-contained Life Skills classroom, as well as some instruction in the regular education setting (using a modified curriculum and with special education support).

### Other Services

In addition to the various programs available within the district, there are supportive services available to eligible students. Some of these services include the following:

- Counseling services are available to identified regular education and special education students. This typically occurs through short-term themed groups (e.g. divorce groups, study skills groups, new students groups, etc.). More intensive services may be provided to special education students in accordance with their IEP. Crisis counseling is also offered to any student in need.
- Speech/Language Therapy is offered to eligible special education students. Therapy services may include articulation therapy, vocabulary development, pragmatic language development, academic support, or consultation.
- Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy is provided to eligible special education students who experience fine and/or gross motor problems that impact academics as outlined in their IEPs. Both direct and indirect (consultation) support is available.

- Assessments can be provided to students who are referred for an initial evaluation or re-evaluation by a PPT. These may include psychological evaluations, functional behavior assessments, academic assessments, speech or language evaluations, psychosocial evaluations, behavior or adaptive rating scales, neuropsychological screens, tests of visual motor integration, record reviews, and/or observations to name a few.
- Consultation is available from special education and support staff on a regular basis as indicated in an IEP, requested by START, or on a one-time basis to address a specific need articulated by a teacher or administrator.

The Special Services Department is constantly examining the programs and services offered in an attempt to ensure that the needs of students are appropriately addressed to help them experience success in school.