



Torrington Public Schools

Department of Student Services

Newsletter - February, 2021



Laura Klimaszewski – Executive Director

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Hello Everyone!

It is so hard to fathom that we have spent nearly 1 year dealing with the COVID pandemic. The experience has challenged all of us to work collaboratively, every day, to meet the needs of all children. On behalf of the schools, please know that our members of the educational community; teachers, paras, specialists, consultants, supplemental staff, and administrators have embraced new learning opportunities to find better, innovative needs to provide quality instruction. We understand that as parents, you have been a critical component in the growth of our students have made. We appreciate your partnership in this endeavor. Please stay healthy, and I hope that very soon we are mask free and 100% in-person without restriction.

-Laura

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Supervisor THS
Steve Barton
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Tom O'Day

Differentiation vs. 504 vs. IEP: **How Do I Help My Kid?**

As a parent, you may be concerned about your child's success in school; academically, behaviorally, or both. While you may think that requesting a special education evaluation is necessary, there are a variety of ways your child can receive needed supports before looking for special education identification. Education for all students needs to be in the least restrictive environment, with the least amount of support necessary to enable access to their education. There is a continuum of supports which can be put in place, always looking to ensure instruction in the least restrictive environment:

Tier 1 Differentiated Instruction.

Differentiation is determining what resources a child needs to meet the learning target. The target stays the same for all children, but the method of instruction or tools provided to help the child reach that target, may look different for some students.

General Education 504 Plan

If your child has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity, your child may qualify for a 504 plan. The learning target for the child does not change – the child is still held accountable. Due to the impairment, however, the child may need individual accommodations beyond what is available to all students. This video presents clear information on the provisions of a general education 504 plan.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aL8Vpuntm4&feature=emb_logo

Special Education

If despite differentiation and the implementation of individual accommodations the child is unable to achieve the learning target, the expected outcome or learning target may need to be adjusted. To be successful, the child may require specialized instruction. A referral may be made to consider if an evaluation is needed to determine special education eligibility and the need for services on an IEP plan. What is the difference between a 504 plan and an IEP? This video provides a nice comparison.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9TgDgHfdlY&feature=emb_logo

If you have concerns about your child's education, or have further questions about differentiation, 504 plans, or special education eligibility, contact the school psychologist or school social worker.

What's Happening in our Schools?

Torrington High School

Unified Sports are once again beginning at THS. After multiple weather delays, the season will kick off on March 9th. After almost a year long layoff, the student athletes are excited to take the field again. This year will look different than past years, as the athletes will only compete in district and not against other schools. This provides the athletes with unique opportunities to participate in additional sports and games, for example kickball, that they would not normally compete in during a typical year. Despite the delays and the unique schedule, the student athletes are eager and excited to start their season



The Forbes Hi-Lo Library!

Mrs. Kristin Talbot, resource room teacher at Forbes Elementary School, has built a small library of Hi-Lo books. These books match the interest level of our students while providing needed lower readability. It ensures that all students have access to books they want to read at their independent reading levels. Mrs. Talbot has built this small library by combining fundraising through Donor's Choose and \$750 grant awarded by the CT Reading Association (CRA). Since coming up with this idea in the beginning of January, Mrs. Talbot has seen over 100 books borrowed and read by students. Students who had previously avoided reading, are now excited to pick out books that they can read and feel good about reading. It's so exciting to see everyone wanting to read!



Torrington School

All Kindergarten students are working on Social Skills with our School Psychologist, Mrs. DiCostanzo. Each student has a personal binder they work in, which will assist them in developing appropriate social skills throughout the year. Some of the areas of practice include the following:

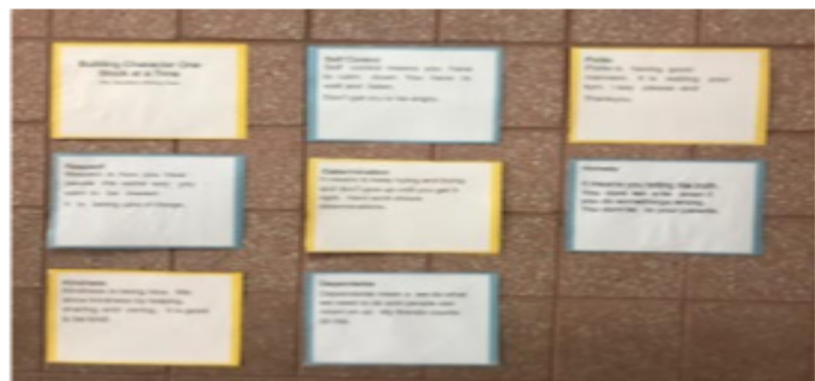
- character traits
- appropriate listening skills
- introducing yourself
- giving and receiving compliments
- maintaining personal space
- using tone of voice, and
- understanding eye contact, facial expressions, and body language.

Once the books are completed, the students will get to take them home and add to them as they wish. Thank you, Mrs. DiCostanzo for supporting all our students with social/emotional learning this year!



Forbes: Mrs. Boulette's Intensive Resource Room

Students in Mrs. Boulette's program have begun a "BUILDING GOOD CHARACTER, ONE BLOCK AT A TIME" wall! The students use the words while writing and also during Social and Emotional Learning activities. It has been a great experience watching these hard-working students use these tools to help them succeed.



What's Happening

Pre-School Lab At THS

In Ms. Nikirk's Preschool Lab, children work in the Preschool Pizza Café! This type of hands-on learning station builds many different types of development- vocabulary, problem solving, cooperative play, math readiness, pre-reading and writing, and imagination. Students "work" taking orders, cooking in the pizza oven, "dining" with friends, and working as a team to make pizzas for customers. Just as importantly, they are having so much fun!



Our Staff Do Great Things!!

Below is an email that an 8th grade student sent to Mr. Lafreniere, reminding us that we all have the power to make a difference in the life of a child!

"Just want to thank you for pushing me to keep my grades up because trimester one they were not the best and I feel like i know i could have done better but you and Ms..Duchene have been pushing me to ask for help and just making sure i have been turning in my work so i just want to say thank you for all you have been doing for me and thanks for all the help you been giving me."



Great Happenings at TMS!

Thrive



Students in Ms. Browning and Mr. Vacarelli's Thrive program utilized their history class to learn about Chinese New Year. One of the activities culminated in students presenting each staff member with a card and fortune cookie for the Year of the Ox!

Life Skills



Students in the Life Skills program celebrated Black History Month by creating this collage, adding people to it as they learned about their significance in history.