
Special Education Update

Woodbridge School District

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Tonight's Presentation

- Why is our work important?
- Current numbers (students, referrals, staff)
- Staffing Trends
- Staff Evaluation Process
- Special Education vs. 504
- Process for Referral
- Current Programming at BRS
- Building Independence
- Questions

Purpose of Special Education

- To allow students with disabilities to access the general education curriculum similarly to their typical peers
- To provide learning opportunities and strategies for students to play on their strengths
- To support students as they develop independence through both direct instruction and specific accommodations
- To allow students with disabilities to advocate for their specific learning needs as they identify their learning challenges
- To provide access to standards based curriculum and materials at an appropriate instructional level

Who Are We?

- PK-6 Total Population of BRS: **876**
- Pre-School: **18** students (Special Ed/ General Ed)
- Students Receiving Special Education: **113** (12.9% of school)
- Students Receiving 504 Services: **56** (6.4% of school)

(as of 1/2/24)

Who Are We? Disability in Percentage by Category

Disability Category	2022-2023 % by Category	2023-2024 % by Category
Autism	19%	22%
Developmental Delay	6%	2%
Emotional Disability	2%	2%
Hearing Impairment	2%	2%
Intellectual Disability	2%	1%
Multiple Disability	1%	1%
Other Health Impairment	4%	6%
Other Health Impairment- ADD/ADHD	18%	16%
Specific Learning Disability	23%	23%
Specific Learning Disability- Dyslexia	10%	9%
Speech and Language Impairment	11%	14%
Visual Impairment	2%	2%

Who Promotes Our Purpose of Special Education

TEACHERS

Pre-K	1
Resource Room (K-2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)	6
Intensive Resource (4-6)	1
Social Emotional Learning (K-2, 3-6)	2
Life Skills (K-3, 4-6)	2

RELATED SERVICES

Social Work	1.5
Psychologist	2.5
Speech Pathologist	2.5
Occupational Therapist	1
Physical Therapist	6.5 hrs /wk
Paraprofessionals (currently assigned/filled in Special Education)	25

How Do We Support The Whole Learner?

- Constant collaborative effort between General Education and Special Education Teams
 - Teacher and related service providers attend grade level meetings to support current content needs
 - Classroom accommodations and modification needs discussed
 - General Education Teachers differentiate to the vast needs of their learners
- Consultation and collaboration with families
 - Updates, emails and progress monitoring shared with families
 - Sharing of outside of school resources to support specific student needs
- Continuous reflection and professional learning
 - Staff participate in professional development activities related to academics, literacy, and language specific to both special education and current general education practices

What Professional Learning Has Been Provided?

- Science of Reading
- Structured Literacy from CREC
- Epilepsy Training
- Wilson Training
- Unique Learning Systems
- ASHA Conference (Speech Pathologists)
- SONDAY Literacy Training
- Heggerty for PreK Program
- Everyday Speech
- Social Thinking
- Visualizing/Verbalizing
- On Cloud 9 Math Training
- Sensory Room Design
- CT Bureau of Special Education Back to School Meeting
- CT SEDS Database
- Teacher Evaluation Process
- Master Teacher Online Training
- Introduction to Behavior
- Physical Management Training (PMT)
- Dyslexia Identification- PSW
- Dyslexia Eligibility and Cognitive Evaluations
- Functional Behavioral Assessments/ Behavior Intervention Plans

Who Supports Our Special Education Staff?

Administrator	2022-2023 Supervision	2023-2024 Supervision
Analisa Sherman	25 Teachers	22 Teachers 7 Paraprofessionals
Jimmy Sapia	32 Teachers	24 Teachers 3 Paraprofessionals
Cheryl Tafel		23 Teachers 7 Paraprofessionals
Carrie Borcharding	21 Teachers	14 Teachers 22 Paraprofessionals

How Is Our Time Spent Working On This Process

	2022-2023	2023-2024
Total PPTs July- Dec	121 Total (Carrie- 117)	100 Total (Cheryl- 57 Carrie- 43)
Referrals (July- Dec.)	31 Total	21 Total
Types of Referrals	* Parent- 18 (8 to evaluation) * School- 13 (11 to evaluation)	* Parent- 15 (4 to evaluation) * School-6 (5 to evaluation)

Considerations:

- SRBI process
- Consolidation of PPT meetings
- Team planning meetings
- Fewer parent referrals resulting in evaluation
- Building student independence
- Eligibility discussions resulting in 504

Eligibility: Special Education vs. 504

Special Education	504
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have at least one of the documented disabilities under IDEA (13 categories)2. Disability must affect educational performance and/or ability to learn and benefit from general education curriculum.3. Student must require specialized instruction to make progress in school.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have a documented disability2. Disability must interfere with the ability to learn in the general education classroom. <p>* Broader definition than IDEA, however disability must “substantially limit 1 or more basic life functions”</p>

Service Needs: Special Education vs. 504

	Special Education	504
Direct Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Specific goals and objectives are required for the student to make progress in general education-Provided by Special Education Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Not part of 504- Accommodations to the environment or presentation of materials allows student to access similarly to their peers
Related Service	Speech, OT, PT, Counseling are provided for student to access the General Education Environment	Can be provided but are typically the exception
Documents	Yearly reviews and 3 year evaluations required	Should be reviewed yearly for changes

How Do We Identify Students For Special Education

Referral to Special Education

- Parents can refer based on concerns from home or school
- Teachers can refer based on current performance data or specific concerns
- SRBI team can refer based on completion of SRBI cycles and student response to intervention
- Timeline (45 days) begins with referral

Determining Eligibility

- Planning and Placement Team 1 (PPT1)-
 - Team convenes, data review, consider student needs, determine if evaluation necessary
- Outcomes of PPT1:
 - 1. Student goes to evaluation
 - 2. Student does not move forward in process, and returns to Gen Ed/SRBI monitoring or could be referred to the 504 team

What Happens Once Students Are Identified?

- PPT 2
 - Occurs within 45 school days, to allow evaluations to be completed
 - Evaluations reviewed
 - Eligibility discussed- checklists/requirements for disability categories
 - Goals/Objectives presented
 - Specific, Measurable, Achievable within 1 year
 - LRE (Least Restrictive Environment)
 - Student-Needs Driven
 - Accommodations and Service Delivery with a Special Education Teacher and/or related service provider
- Annual Review
 - Yearly Review of current performance
 - Progress monitoring reported at report card intervals
- Triennial Evaluations
 - Every 3 years (minimum) evaluation and eligibility determination reestablished

How Are Services Delivered?

- Push-in supports: Special education teacher and/or related services staff provide direct instruction in the general education classroom
- Pull-out supports: Students attend individual/small group instruction by a special education teacher in the Resource Room Setting
- Direct Teaching: ABA style approach to instruction, such as discrete trial training
- Co-treatment: Service provided simultaneously by a special education teacher or related service providers
- Self-contained supports: Supports and the majority of the day spent in a location without typical peer models

What Are Our Current Programs?

- Life Skills:
 - Loosely based around a self-contained model to focus on academics and building independence while accessing the alternative assessment and state standards
 - Integrating a tiered curriculum, Unique Learning Systems, based on grade level units
 - Focus on increased student independence and decreasing adult support and prompting
- Social Emotional Learning:
 - Resource Room and alternative location to the general education setting when students require an opportunity to work on self-regulation and coping strategies
 - Students participate in Skill Building and/or counseling strategies to be generalized in the regular education setting (Curriculum: Everyday Speech, Social Thinking)
 - Significant focus on decreasing adult support and building independence
- Academic Support/ Related Services
 - Conducted through the Resource Room instruction or push-in services
 - Utilizes classroom content materials to support skill development and generalization
 - Variety of methods and strategies provided
 - Academic Support: Structured Literacy Programing, Math Support. Reading Comprehension, Executive Functioning, Written Expression and Language Support
 - Related Services: OT, PT, Speech and Language, Social Skills, Counseling

Constant Theme: Independence!

“The goal of paraprofessionals should be to work themselves out of a job.”

Our most important job as educators is preparing students to succeed in life. They must become capable of succeeding without our help. That’s why **the most important role of paraprofessionals in special education is helping students become independent learners.**

- Focus Area 1- Paraprofessionals

- Paraprofessional needs and supports as it relates to independence
- PD for all paraprofessional staff on behavior interventions, student need and supports
- Data collection throughout the school day by supervisors

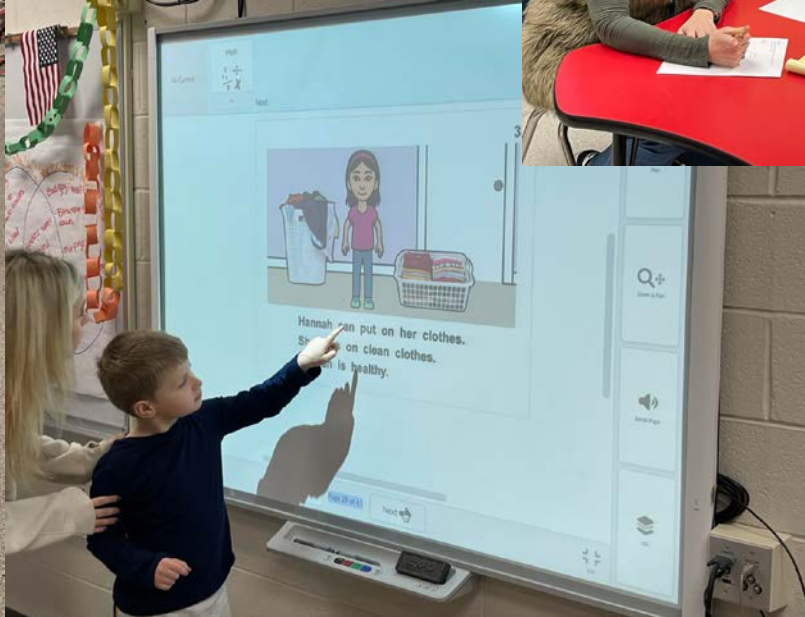
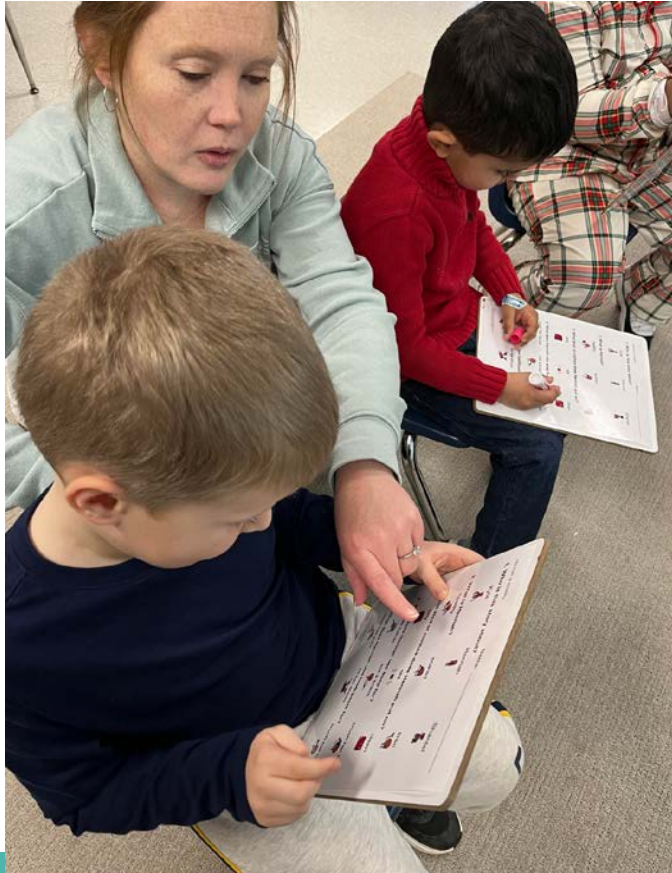
- Focus Area 2- Life Skills Program

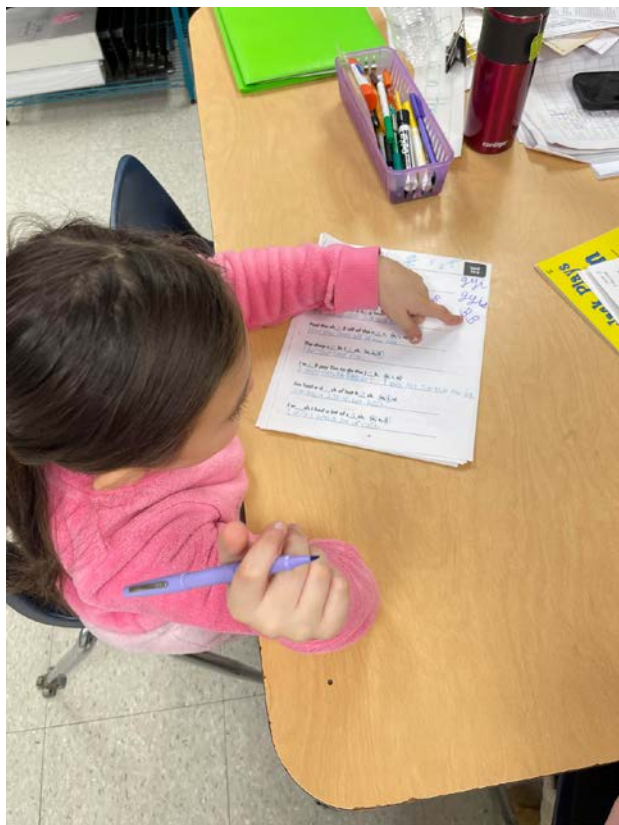
- Building Independence within the school day
- Curriculum to align with alternative standards (Unique Learning Systems)
- Student participation and alignment across related services
- Observations and restructuring of Life Skills Classroom needs

<https://thrivealliancegroup.com/role-of-paraprofessionals-in-special-education/>

<https://inclusiveschools.org/resource/avoiding-over-use-of-paraeducator-support-for-individual-students/>

What Does Programming Look Like In Action?





Additional Materials

- Example parent newsletter (attached PDF)
- Student work sample- writing assignment (attached PDF)
- [Unique Learning Systems Curriculum](#)
- [IEPs vs. 504 Resource](#)
- [Building Independence Overview](#)
- [Inclusive Schools- Paraprofessional article](#)

Questions?