



# Canterbury Public Schools Pupil Services Office

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Dear Families,

Canterbury Pupil Services would like to warmly welcome you to the 2021-2022 school year! I know it may seem early, and I am sure there is much more summer fun to be had, but I couldn't wait to share our department news that has been in development since the end of last year. We continue to grow and evolve in this department, and here are a few highlights I thought you would like to know before heading into the new school year:

### **Pupil Services Staffing**

None of our work would be possible without the dedication and talent of our Pupil Services staff. They work so hard and care very much about the children of Canterbury. I am very pleased to introduce you to/remind you of the dynamic people who are supporting your children on a daily basis:

CES		BMS		District-Wide	
Pre K	Courtney Langlois	5th/6th Grades	Sanderson Tattersall	Administrative Assistant/Social Work Intern	Theresa Lambert
Pre K	Amy Vallandingham	7th/8th Grades	Bridget Griffin	OT	Julie Levasseur Bryon Verdone
Lower Grades	Jen DeFrancesco	School Counselor	Diana Zuckerman	PT	Ashley Dickinson
Upper Grades	Dan Burke			School Psychologist	Mariah Rae
School Social Worker	Selena Musumeci			Speech Pathologist	Kim Williamson

Please help me wish Kelly Bahre (former 2nd grade and special education teacher) great success in her new position as Canterbury's district-wide instructional coach. We have enjoyed Mrs. Bahre's tenure in the Pupil Services Department and feel even happier that her skills and talents will continue to impact the children of Canterbury.

Please help me welcome Jen DeFrancesco as CES's new special education teacher! Ms. DeFrancesco joins us from New London's Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School where she was a special education teacher for many years. She also has experience as a private Kindergarten teacher, a Behavior Technician, and a high school Social Studies teacher. We are very lucky that she has chosen to join us in Canterbury!

I would also like to welcome Nancy Ladzinski back to our district after working as a paraeducator with Canterbury students at Griswold High School. She will join our middle school team, and we are very excited to have her skills and talents return to our buildings!

### **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**

MTSS is an acronym that stands for Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. This term is an evolution of SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Instruction), which was originally coined RTI (Response to Instruction). To put it concisely, MTSS is a philosophy and procedure to analyze a student's learning by setting a specific and measurable goal, collecting data on the student's performance toward that goal, and then targeting instruction precisely where the child needs it. This process takes place for approximately 6 weeks, and depending on the student's progress, may take place for a few more 6-week cycles. You may hear us refer to this as "progress monitoring" in a Student Assistance Meeting. Student's do not need to have an IEP or receive special education for this type of targeted, tiered intervention. Educational research shows that this is the best way to increase student achievement. In my experience, I have noticed that parents sometimes feel short-changed when schools suggest MTSS, or tiered intervention because they do not immediately qualify for special education. Often we find that students respond to targeted intervention, and never actually need special education, which is a more restrictive program (which leads me to our next bullet point).

### **Integrated and Inclusive Practices in the Classroom and at Planning Meetings**

This school year, you will also find that our district is shifting toward more inclusive practices with intervention and special education service delivery. This means that special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers will "push in" to classrooms rather than "pull students out," of the general education setting into a separate location. The students' needs will determine whether services are delivered in the classroom or a related services room. Although "pull out" services will not disappear completely, we will make a concerted effort to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of pulling out versus pushing in. The goal of this philosophy is multi-layered. It promotes an inclusive culture for all students, which is of high importance, while allowing general education and special education teachers to work together to group students flexibly based on the targeted instruction they need on a daily basis. For example, in a class of 15 students, five students may need extra practice on sounding out the vowel blend /ea/. With a special education teacher in their class, all five of those students can receive instruction on that blend using a specialized reading method from the special education teacher regardless of the student's identification as special education. This model allows for a more efficient use of our resources. This philosophy also allows students to remain in their classroom to experience the rich conversation and grade level content they miss when they are pulled out. Missing the exposure to grade level material and academic conversation makes it difficult to close the achievement gap. We also have a legal obligation to ensure that students with disabilities spend an adequate amount of time with their non-disabled peers.

Our inclusive mindset to instruction will carry over into our educational planning for Canterbury students. You will notice that students will be invited to participate in, and eventually lead their PPTs. Students always have the option, but may be ready to contribute to their meetings around 4th or 5th grade. This is a decision the student, case manager, and parents will have ahead of the meeting so students can feel prepared. By 8th grade (again depending on the student), case managers will have worked with their students on the self-advocacy skills needed to lead their own meeting, and we will build in the opportunity for this to happen with as much or as little support as necessary. The goal is to prepare our students to have the voice and strength to ask for what they need, and to help create a program they wholeheartedly buy into. The case managers of our older students (approximately 7th grade and above) will train and begin to utilize the LifeCourse Planning Tool, which is the state-adopted system to build a meaningful path into young adulthood. This will develop as the school year progresses.

### **The New IEP**

The State of Connecticut has adopted a new IEP which will be in use for the 22-23 school year. The formatting is different, and it is designed to help school personnel prevent errors while writing these comprehensive documents. It will also shift us toward writing “standards-based goals” which will help us better determine what children need to be working toward to get them as close to grade level as possible. Canterbury has identified a team of staff members from the Pupil Service Department to lead the learning, support, and implementation of this new (and very big) undertaking. We will spend this school year training on the program, and we will begin to use the program July 1, 2022. The state has spent a great deal of time developing and trouble-shooting use of the new program. I’m sure there will be hiccups along the way, but together, we will make the adjustment. I think parents will find it easier to read, and a bit clearer to understand. I will provide updates throughout the year.

### **Electronic Resources**

At the beginning of every school year, we offer you links to the required paperwork that supports the PPT process. These include the Procedural Safeguards, Laws Regarding Restraint and Seclusion, Building a Bridge (for students in grades 6-12), Parent’s Guide to Special Education, the Transition Bill of Rights (for students in grades 6-12), and the IEP Manual. The Procedural Safeguards manual has been revised, so you may wish to review it for changes. If you wish to have any of these documents printed for you or translated into another language, please let me or Theresa Lambert ([tlambert@canterburypublicschools.org](mailto:tlambert@canterburypublicschools.org)) know. Theresa is our Pupil Service administrative assistant, and can help you solve any concerns or problems you may encounter. If she doesn’t know the answer, she will be happy to find it!

I think that is enough for now. You will be contacted by your child’s case manager once teachers return from summer break and have a chance to settle in (approximately August 24). If this information leaves you with any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to reach me by phone at 860.912.0315 or email [cbeckwith@canterburypublicschools.org](mailto:cbeckwith@canterburypublicschools.org). We are looking forward to a phenomenal year with your children, and thank you in advance for all of the collaboration and teamwork we will have.

Sincerely,

*Cori Beckwith*

Cori Beckwith

Pupil Service Director