

## Coventry Public Schools

Beth Giller, Director of Pupil and Staff Support Services  
2020-2021

### **1. Identify, define, and measure the critical skills and attributes that are required for success and align systems to continuously improve student performance and achievement.**

- Develop and implement a hybrid Extended School Year Program for Coventry Public School students for ESY 2020.

After reflecting on teaching and learning in a remote setting as a result of school closures in March 2020, the Coventry team explored potential options for Extended School Year (ESY) for the 2020-2021 school year. The options included remote instruction, hybrid model, or in-person learning. Surveys were sent to families of students who meet the criteria for ESY inquiring about their instructional preference for summer instruction. After review of Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 7PP signed May 18, 2020, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Considerations for Youth and Summer Camps* updated May 19, 2020, and the results of parent surveys, the ESY Planning Team forged ahead with a Hybrid Instructional Model for ESY.

Planning for a Hybrid ESY Instructional Model was a major undertaking as there was little guidance to follow. Coventry relied on our internal expertise for planning purposes as very few districts in Connecticut planned and implemented in person ESY instruction. All COVID-19 safety protocols in effect in July 2020 were fully implemented thanks to our facilities, nursing, and ESY staff.

A Coventry Public Schools ESY Procedural Plan was developed and shared with staff and families to assure all that social distancing, cleaning protocols, and hygiene procedures were in place. All employees and students were screened for COVID-19 symptoms upon arrival at the school and temperatures were taken. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was supplied for staff and required of students entering the facility. ESY ran four consecutive weeks in July, three hours per day, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Wednesday was designated as Wellness Wednesday for cleaning, planning, and delivery to remote learners.

In 2019, 61 students participated in ESY Pre-K - 21. In 2020, 28 students participated Pre-K -21 in-person and 22 participated remotely. Transportation was not provided due to the initial DPH and CDC guidance for safe van/bus transportation.

In compliance with recommendations, ESY groupings were reduced and cohorted for a 7:1 student/teacher ratio. All learning was based on the student's IEP goals and implemented to the greatest extent possible. In addition, one of our goals for ESY was to

provide the opportunities for students to reacclimate to the structure and expectations of school and for students to have the ability to engage in social interactions.

Coventry Public Schools provided a variety of remote platforms for students learning online based on the student's needs and the family's accessibility to technology. Platforms include Google Classroom and SeeSaw. In addition, educational packets of materials were delivered to students' homes. Related services included teletherapy and/or teleconferencing.

Finally, we developed a Partnership Pledge as the success of ESY last summer required a community commitment - a true partnership with our CPS families.

Preparation and planning for ESY informed our planning for re-entry to school in August. It was evident that students enjoyed a return to school, students could build their mask wearing stamina, students and staff felt safe and understood the need to adhere to safety protocols. Parents were grateful for an opportunity for their child(ren) to socialize with other children and to regain structure in their lives. While the planning for Hybrid ESY was extraordinarily challenging, it was a success and instilled the, "We CAN do this" attitude.

## Our Partnership Pledge

Coventry Public Schools takes a Team Approach to Safety

<p><b>We pledge to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Provide safety for all</li><li>● Stay at home if sick</li><li>● Allow temperature to be taken daily</li><li>● Use proper personal protective equipment</li><li>● Be transparent about potential COVID-19 exposures</li><li>● Limit the number of people in the school and classrooms</li><li>● Set up environments to allow for distancing 6 feet apart</li><li>● Provide small staff-to-student ratios</li><li>● Maintain a clean environment/ disinfect regularly</li><li>● Eliminate use of materials that cannot be disinfected regularly</li><li>● Wash hands often</li><li>● Listen to and answer your questions and concerns</li></ul>	<p><b>Parents, we ask you to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Keep your child home if he/she is sick and notify nurse: (860) 742-4529</li><li>● Have your child wear a face covering</li><li>● Disclose potential COVID-19 exposure to student and/or family members</li><li>● Allow child's temperature to be taken upon arrival daily</li><li>● Wear a mask when dropping off/picking up child</li><li>● Review ESY expectations with your child each morning:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Keep your mask on</li><li>○ Keep hands away from your face</li><li>○ Do not share materials</li><li>○ Wash hands often</li><li>○ No snacks</li><li>○ Ask questions if you don't understand something</li></ul></li></ul>
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- Develop a Coventry Public Schools PSSS Reopening Plan which addresses special education processes and practices in multiple instructional models, including development of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) services, Learning Model IEP Implementation Plans, Planning and Placement Team meetings, and evaluations.

Coventry Public Schools developed plans for three models of reopening schools: K-12 Full Return Instructional Model, K-12 Hybrid Instructional Model and K-12 Distance Learning Instructional Model. Each plan delineated schedules, safety protocols, and expectations for students which, for the most part, apply to those students and staff under Pupil and Staff Support Services.

The PSSS plan covered special education practices and procedures to follow upon reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 school year. During the initial school closure in March 2020, guidance from federal and state special education departments supported the implementation of special education services *to the greatest extent possible*. The same departments later acknowledged that special education services may look different depending on each of the educational models. Special education services will continue in alignment with Individualized Education Program (IEP) with a full return to school; adjustments may be needed when in the hybrid or distance learning instructional models.

At this time further guidance regarding special education procedures and practices is expected from the CSDE Special Education Division mid-August. This plan has been developed based on information received to date and knowing the needs of our Coventry students, families, and staff. Given this, revisions to align with recommendations from the CSDE will be made as needed.

### **Instructional Models**

**Full Return Instructional Model 2020-2021** - In school instruction will occur for all students when the district is assured all safety protocols can be followed. All students' schedules may be adjusted to provide appropriate support to ensure social, emotional and physical wellbeing. Given this, the way and time in which specialized instruction is delivered may also need adjustments. This will be a transparent process requiring flexibility and open communication between all members of students' IEP teams.

**K-12 Hybrid Instruction Model 2020-2021** - Placement decisions for students who qualify for special education services will be made on an individualized basis. In collaboration with parents and members of the student's school team, individual schedules will be developed. Students will receive services pursuant to their IEPs through in-person or remote instruction, with an emphasis on providing in-person instruction whenever possible, therefore every student who has an IEP regardless of academic performance will be invited to attend school for services.

**Distance Learning Instructional Model:** The goal of the Distance Learning Instructional Model is to provide continuity of learning during a short term (2-5 days, 2 weeks, etc.) or long term closure. Students engage in learning with materials and support

from the school. Remote learning provides an opportunity for students and teachers to remain connected and engaged with the curriculum while working from alternate locations. It includes a blend of synchronous (real time) and asynchronous learning. Instruction at all grade levels will feature synchronous (real-time) teaching in addition to asynchronous lessons and resources, office hours, individual and small group conferencing, with integrated supports based on individual student needs. Group sizes and screen time duration will vary based on developmentally appropriate guidelines.

As we learned from school closures in the spring of 2020, services look different when provided in a virtual setting. Teams of educators work closely to schedule and integrate services when possible to maximize student engagement. Teachers will apply what they learned from the successes and challenges during last spring to support students' goals in this change in environment. Schedules of services will be established at the onset of school to be well prepared for any potential closure. Mode of home school communication will also be determined when school opens.

Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) will be available for consultation with parents to prompt school appropriate behaviors while in distance learning.

**Parent Choice/Temporarily Opting Into Remote Learning** - This references those parents who choose to keep their children home from school upon the reopening of school. CSDE's Addendum 6 Reopening Guidance for Educating students with Disabilities addresses this. In order to provide Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the district is prepared to provide programming for in-person access. *In-person access affords the students with the most equitable educational experience (CSDE)*. If parents choose to opt out of in-person instruction, the district will continue to implement the student's IEP remotely to the greatest extent *feasible*. This will include access to synchronous instruction.

**Cohorts:** Under IDEA, Coventry Public Schools is required to provide all students with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Student cohorts have been recommended during a return to brick and mortar schools for the school year 2020-2021. Given this, students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be part of a general education cohort and a smaller cohort with students in need of similar intervention services. Parents will be apprised of the cohorting practices.

**Learning Model IEP Implementation Plan (LMIP):** To coincide with current IEPs - Special education services for all three models of reopening should be documented in the Learning Model IEP Implementation Plan. Learning Model IEP Implementation Plans will be added to PPT Agendas to review at a PPT. If a PPT is not due for an extended period of time, the Learning Model IEP Implementation Plan should be completed and reviewed and agreed upon by all of the Team members, including parents. Case managers will be in contact with parents prior to the beginning of the school year to review aspects of the LMIP. Due to time constraints as the LMIP was disseminated by the CSDE mid-August, case managers will prioritize completion for the Hybrid Instructional Model.

**Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** IEPs will be written as if all students were in school full time. As stated above, schedule adjustments are in place for all students, and as such may affect the scheduling of IEP services. It is acknowledged that services look different in remote learning, and as such the CSDE has issued guidance regarding service documentation during distance learning, hybrid model, and in-person instruction.

Accommodations: Accommodations may shift from one instructional model to the next. The Team members need to be aware of how to shift accommodations to support student's individual needs. This will require open communication with all team members.

IEP Service Documentation: Service log documentation is required. This documentation serves as evidence for the Learning Model IEP Implementation Plan and IEP implementation.

Specialized instruction - Service Location: Students with an individualized education plan require specialized instruction as outlined in his or her IEP. It is expected that all specialized instruction occurs in any model, however the location of services may need to be revised. Flexible setting while in school is appropriate; guidance regarding service location is expected from the state.

**Related Services:** Related Services staff includes Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapist, Social Workers, School Psychologists and Board Certified Behavior Analysts.

All related services staff will be provided with appropriate **PPE**: face masks, face shields, gowns if needed, and plexiglass barriers in order to provide services in offices. Virtual sessions in school will be an option if deemed appropriate for the student. Due to the adjustments in schedules for all students, priority scheduling for related services is required.

Materials used should be student specific and or rotated with ample time for disinfection or quarantine of materials as needed. Additional space will be available to service small groups of students.

Staff members who provide services in more than one building should arrange schedules to be in one school for the day.

**Progress Monitoring:** Progress monitoring of IEP goals currently being addressed should be completed weekly. This can be in the form of brief check-ins on progress towards specific goals and objectives.

<https://intensiveintervention.org/intensive-intervention/progress-monitor>

**Technology:** Staff and students will have access to devices and specialized apps as required for IEP services or specific programs.

**Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Meetings:** Coventry will continue to hold PPTs virtually using Google Meets. The protocols established in the spring of 2020 remain in effect with an emphasis on all PPT members having ready access to the PPT invitation and individualized PPT Agenda to ensure efficiency during the meeting. IEP Summaries continue to be required to document virtual settings as outlined in the protocols. In addition, all evaluations must be sent home to parents/guardians three to five days in advance of the PPT and evaluators should review reports with parents prior to the PPT.

**Prioritizing PPTS - any model**

FAPE by Age Three - Birth to Three referrals should be held asap - reference the July 9, 2020 guidance document regarding FAPE at Age 3

Updated Guidance for Children Turning Three During COVID-19

**Developmental Delay and Secondary Transition:** PPTs for students who were age 5 and developmentally delayed and students who are turning transition age (13 or 15 last year) These meetings should be held asap. If meetings are held and SEDAC noncompliance is corrected prior to October 1, a citation will not be issued.

**Initial referrals or triennials** due between March 16 and June 12 -

Evaluations: Initial and triennial evaluations are prioritized for the fall. It is recommended that rating scales recommended by the PPT are not completed until the student's teacher knows the student well enough to complete. Scales completed right before or during school closure may not be reflective of the student's current state. Evaluations other than scales may be completed, provided the student appears receptive to testing.

**Current PPTs due in the 2020-2021 school year:** All PPTS will be held in a timely manner, adhering to annual end dates. The possibility may exist that additional data or transitional time to school is needed to assess and develop appropriate goals and objectives. If this is the case, parents will be apprised in advance that we may have to hold a subsequent PPT at a later date.

**Annuals due between March 16 and June 12, 2020 :** Will be completed as soon as possible, but no later than October 1, 2020.

**NEW Referrals early in 2020-2021 school year** - Parent initiated referrals to special education are anticipated and require response with sensitivity and validation of parent concerns. The possibility exists that there will not be sufficient information to determine the need for evaluation. The Team will need to work through this process as additional time may be needed to collect data to determine if evaluations are necessary.

**Collaboration Portal** - the Collaboration Portal - Frontline, our IEP / 504 vendor, made their Collaboration Portal available as of April 2020. It is designed to be a secure and easy way to sign and share documents with parents/guardians electronically. When a

document is shared with the parent/guardian, case managers will send an email prompting parents to open the document using a unique access code. Case managers provide the access code to parents.

All certified staff members are required to use the Collaboration Portal this year.

**504 Accommodation Meetings:** While 504 Plans do not require strict adherence to plan deadlines, our practice has been to follow the guidelines established under IDEA for IEPs. Any delayed 504 meetings from spring 2020 require direct parent contact to discuss scheduling. Providing time for students to transition to the new school year may be appropriate so that current information (attendance, engagement, skill levels, emotional wellbeing) is available. In addition, staff should be prepared to promote varied accommodations for each instructional model.

**Plans:** 504 Accommodation Plans should include summaries as specified in the protocols used during school closure spring 2020. At this time, it is unclear the extent to which varied accommodations should be documented. Learning Model IEP Implementation Plans may be restructured to document accommodations in each model and attached to the 504 Accommodation Plan.

**Restraint and Seclusion Practices** - Physical restraint should only be used when it is required to protect the safety of the student or any other person. Given this, the possibility exists that students may require restraint and/or seclusion. If a child's behavior escalates to this level, staff should be prepared to don full PPE to proceed safely.

Trauma informed practices and resilience training is scheduled prior to the school year, so that all staff will be apprised of effective response and de-escalation strategies to minimize the need for student restraints and/or seclusion.

Virtual PMT Training will be provided to those staff members in need.

**Para-professionals** - Roles and responsibilities of all staff will require increased flexibility upon reopening. Creative scheduling to maximize the support for our students while maintaining safety is imperative. Duties will not be the traditional duties from the past.

**Special Education Transportation:** At this point in time, transit vans can be fully operational with no limitations as long as all are wearing face coverings and community transmission is low. When boarding the van, students will be encouraged to sit in the back row first, loading toward the front. Unloading the van will be from front to back. If there is a spike in Covid cases in our area, restrictions will be enforced.

- Continue a three year School Improvement Plan for Coventry Academy that aligns with National Alternative Educational Association (NAEA) Fifteen Research-Based Practices for Effective Alternative Education Programs to ensure appropriate social, emotional, academic, and vocational programming,

This school year is the second of a three year school improvement plan for Coventry Academy, Coventry's alternative high school. Last year we evaluated the program based on the practices, or standards, and identified priority areas to be addressed over the three year period. School closure March 2020 resulted in a roadblock to continuous improvement until students returned to the school building in August. Transitioning back into a structured schedule was less challenging in the hybrid schedule than the full inperson schedule, and as such priority areas were revisited in October.

While the Coventry Academy Team continued to use the School Improvement Plan as a guide for ongoing improvement, the primary focus area this year was providing the appropriate support, not only necessary for successful re-entry to school, but also beneficial as we continued to navigate the pandemic. The following best practices/standards were areas of focus and notable improvement:

Standard 3.0 Climate and Culture - *A safe, caring and orderly climate and culture that promotes collegial relationships among students, parents/guardians, and staff is maintained at Coventry Academy. The culture and climate are characterized by a positive rather than a punitive atmosphere for behavioral management and student discipline.*

The Coventry Academy staff demonstrates an understanding of and sensitivity to academic, behavioral, cultural, developmental, gender, and societal needs of students. Home situations and student dynamics are contributing factors to students' success. To effectively support students, an alternative schedule design has been adopted and adapted to meet individuals' needs. Each Coventry Academy student has a mentor; the pair meet weekly (in-person or virtually) to establish weekly goals to afford students with opportunities to have a role in shaping their learning and future. The goals can be a combination of social, emotional, behavioral and academically based. The Team have established Coventry Academy Behavior Protocols to establish clear behavior expectations with embedded action plans.

Standard 11.0 School Counseling -*School counselors will target academic performance, will be grounded in research based practices, and address the current and future needs of students. School counselors will collaborate with school stakeholders to support best practices, articulate instruction and create effective citizens.*

Students most often transition to Coventry Academy in their sophomore or junior year. While there are many factors that result in students transitioning to Coventry Academy, one of the most common reasons is credit deficiency. There are times when a student is challenged to succeed in the traditional high school setting and as such, does not earn sufficient credits freshman and/or sophomore year to keep him or her on track to graduate



with their class. School counselors monitor student progress and in collaboration with students, parents, and administrators, may recommend a shift to Coventry Academy.

The Coventry Academy team collaborates with our Coventry High School counselors to provide the core and elective classes that will satisfy graduation requirements of the Coventry Academy students. GradPoint is also an option for students depending on the extent of the credit deficiency. Oftentimes, students have an interest in transitioning back to Coventry High School, and it is for this reason that juniors and seniors are encouraged to take one or two classes at the high school. Counselors facilitate an understanding of consequences of decision and choices. In addition, the counselors connect students with post-secondary options including trade/technical schools, armed services, work opportunities, and college.

Standard 12.0 School Social Work - *The school Social Work program should be proactive, promote educational equity, and remove barriers to learning. The program prompts the academic mission of the alternative school by fostering policies that are responsive, rigorous, and emphasize intervention and prevention services.*

Currently, our district wide and Coventry High School social worker collaborate to provide joint services to Coventry Academy students. Social workers meet with all students twice a week to provide an outlet and guidance for students working through various issues and/or challenges. These meetings vary in structure and content based on the climate of the moment. For example, while content may be planned for Monday morning meetings, reflection on weekend events often derail those plans. These sessions truly are tailored to the students' needs at the moment with guidance of how to apply learning, reflection, and strategies to future experiences. In addition, all students have access to individualized counseling services.

The Coventry Academy Improvement Plan is a fluid document. Student dynamics can have a significant impact on the daily environment. The team continuously strategizes to support students through days of difficulty.

- Identify effective assessment strategies to progress monitor students' IEP goals and objectives to ensure accurate evaluation for quarterly/trimester progress reports.

Special education teachers have always had practices in place to monitor students' progress on IEP goals and objectives. This year it became even more important as a result of school closure last spring. In any typical school year, IEP goals and objectives are marked with M (Mastered), S (Satisfactory progress), N (No Progress), NI (Not introduced), U (Unsatisfactory), L (Limited Progress), and O (Other) with the most frequently used marks being M, S or NI. Due to school closure and the implementation of distance learning, educators were challenged to assess IEP goals and objectives. Given that the IEP is a legal document and that distance teaching and learning was new for all involved, how to assess IEP goals and objectives became a frequent topic of

conversations with CONNCASE (Directors' Group) and the CSDE Director of Special Education. The CSDE noted the challenge and provided guidance to assess those goals and objectives where valid data was available, but that using O (Other - as a result of school closure) was appropriate given the overall impact of the pandemic.

As a result of using Os to assess students' progress on IEP goals and objectives last June, it became imperative to identify means to assess students' progress more frequently. Not only is it important for educators to be well apprised of students' learning, but understandably parents were concerned about the outcomes of distance learning and were looking for frequent progress updates when school re-opened.

In lieu of lengthy summative assessments used previously, there was the need to establish creative approaches to progress monitoring of IEP goals to be well prepared to address inquiries about student progress. A focus area for professional development early in the school year was *IEP Progress Monitoring*. Past practices were reviewed and staff was challenged to think and plan creatively for frequent progress monitoring in the form of brief formative assessments, 2-3 question prods, dipsticks to gauge understanding, and students' reflection on learning. Increased formative assessments were developed to specifically align with individual student's goals and objectives. This data is reviewed bi-weekly (at a minimum) and in conjunction with district assessments and more formal assessments used during interventions to formulate an accurate profile of students' learning.

*“Our thinking about what it means to teach must be framed as a response to learning, with assessment as the method through which the learner understands how to improve.”*

- Continue the work of establishing learning targets aligned with IEP goals and objectives, engaging students in goal setting and self reflection on their progress.

Students' self report of grades and engaging in reflection of their own learning is a high yield instructional strategy. Prior to COVID, educators established learning targets in general education classrooms and resource rooms. Professional development has been provided to special educators to develop goals aligned with the Connecticut Core Standards, and more specifically grade level standards. The practice to be refined was the extent to which learning targets were aligned with individual student's IEP goals and objectives. The ultimate outcome of this goal would result in embedded strategies to provide students with opportunities to reflect on their learning.

The process of engaging students in goal setting and self reflection does require instructional time. In any regular school year, time constraints, whether self-imposed or legally mandated, impact daily special educators' practices. This year, the expectation was for teachers to be prepared to teach in the three models of instruction: in-person, hybrid or remote models. Teachers were introduced to teaching through plexi-glass, teaching students in-person and virtually simultaneously, teaching outside their comfort

zones; teachers were encouraged to take risks and they did. Given the new practices effectively implemented, the increased demand on special educators to fulfill increased required CSDE mandates, and time constraints related to all of the aforementioned, refinement in this goal area was not as expected. Metacognition is a powerful tool to propel students' learning. This goal will be continued into next year with high expectations for student goal setting and reflection, specifically related to their IEP goals and objectives.

- In response to the action steps outlined in District Management Group's (DMG) Special Education Plan, develop guidance for staff in the development of Individual Education Plans.

The action steps outlined in DMG's Special Education Plan were to be phased in gradually. Changes in special education service delivery requires time as students' Individual Education Plans (IEP) are in effect for 365 days, with reviews annually.

Action steps that were carefully reviewed this year were the IEP Writing Terminology Potential Recommendations. A recommendation included the use of consistent defined terminology across the district. For example, in review of all IEPs, when students required additional support, the following terms were documented: Adult Support, Para-professional, Intensive Adult Support, Extra Adult Support, and Additional Adult Support. During a professional development day, special educators Pre-K - 12 shared their rationale for documenting this, and other services, differently. The team realized our end goal was to identify consistent terminology, but in order to accomplish this, team members needed to deepen their understanding of how services are interpreted and defined at each level. Additional terms discussed included, 'small group instruction' and how that is defined (in numbers) at each level. The end result was a rich collegial discussion of what support looks like at each level and why it is named as it is. The very end result - compromise and a deepened understanding of special education practices across the district.

In addition to identifying terminology to be used consistently across the district, the Team also drafted If/Then statements for the **PPT Recommendations & Program Accommodations and Modifications Page 8** and the **Service Delivery Grid Page 11**. For example, IF the accommodation, "As determined by case manager" was written, THEN the case manager would need to outline when that would be appropriate. Similarly, on the service delivery grid, IF we selected *Flexible Scheduling Based on Student Need*, THEN a clear protocol should be developed to outline what that means.

While this may appear to be a simple task, it was quite the undertaking. Consistency in terminology and the way in which services are documented is a work in progress, especially as new scenarios arise. The way in which we document information on IEPs are topics of conversations during building hours, team meetings, leadership meetings and collaboration times. The PSSS staff is cautious as they have realized the way in which IEPs are written is binding as IEPs are a legal document.

- Further refine a plan to promote Coventry's specialized programs to smaller districts as a revenue source.

Coventry's specialized programs, including our ABA Programming, 18-22 Transition Program, and Coventry Academy, continue to provide customized services for students. Not many small districts are able to provide these services within their own district.

Our goal is to promote these programs to smaller districts as a source of revenue. Given COVID-19 safety protocols to cohort students, and not yet having a clear understanding of what next school year will bring, this goal was not fully addressed this year. It will carry over into the 2021-2022 school year.

- Review and update the current 504 Referral/Meeting Process to establish consistent procedures and maximize resources.

*A **504 Plan** is a **plan** developed to ensure that a child who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives **accommodations** that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment.*

In Coventry we are always looking for ways to improve our processes to maximize the use of our time and resources. This year necessitated a review of our 504 meeting processes due to the number of meetings in need of scheduling as a result of the pandemic. Following guidance from the Connecticut State Department of Education and Bureau of Special Education, 504 meetings and Planning and Placement Team meetings were suspended during school closure March - June 2020. In order to meet mandated timelines for IEPs and self-imposed deadlines for 504 meetings, 504 case managers collaborated to identify how to best streamline the number of meetings for an initial referral meeting. Following is the plan developed.

## **Coventry Public Schools 504 Process**

To ensure consistency in the 504 process, and to streamline the number of meetings held, please use the following documents. The hope is to gather all necessary information to determine eligibility prior to going to a 504 meeting. The possibility exists that a second meeting will be necessary; however, the intent is to reduce the number of meetings needed to develop a plan.

<i>Initial Referral w/ Medical Information</i>	<i>Initial Referral without Medical Information</i>
Complete the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Section 504 Worksheet 01 Referral</i> for a <u>parent or school referral</u> (found in 504 Direct 5th from the bottom)</li> </ul>	Complete the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Section 504 Worksheet 01 Referral</i> for a <u>parent or school referral</u> (found in 504 Direct 5th from the bottom)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain medical documentation from parent/guardian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the <i>Section 504 Notice - 01 Referral by Parent with Consent for Eval</i> or <i>Section 504 Notice - 02 Referral by District with Consent for Eval</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule 504 meeting; send <i>Section 504 Meeting Invitation</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct Evaluations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the <i>Eligibility - 504 Determination Checklist (Student Eligibility Determination Worksheet / Meeting Summary)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule 504 meeting; send <i>Section 504 Meeting Invitation</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop 504 Accommodation Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the <i>Eligibility - 504 Determination Checklist (Student Eligibility Determination Worksheet / Meeting Summary)</i></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop 504 Accommodation Plan</li> </ul>

**Annual Meetings** - held every year to review that the accommodations remain appropriate.

**Triennial Meetings** - Students should be reevaluated every 3 years or substantiated medical documentation submitted. If there is a ‘perceived disability’ - you know the student takes medication and/or is regularly seen by a physician, then it is reasonable to continue the plan. If there isn’t any reason to suspect ongoing medical diagnosis, documentation should be obtained.

In addition, similar to our Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings, formal agendas were developed to establish expectations and guide team members, parents included, through the process.

An example of an agenda for an Annual Review:

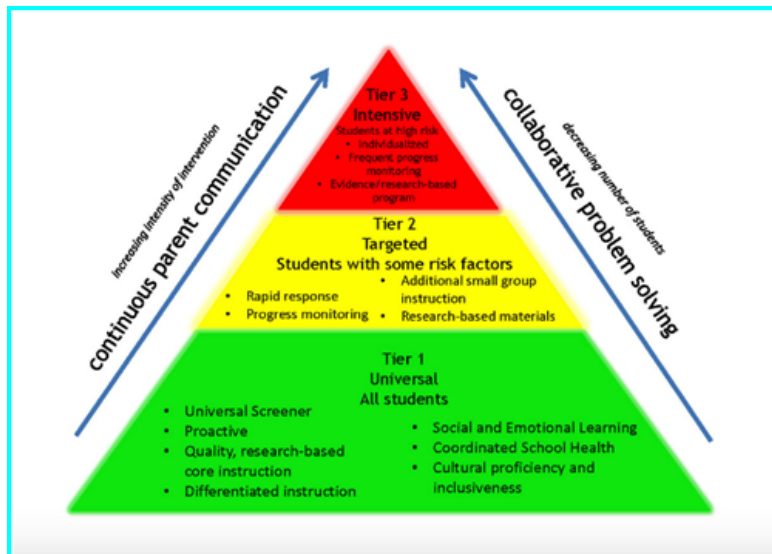
- Introduction of team members

- **Distribute Medicaid Consent (if applicable)**
- Purpose of meeting
- Parents share information/concerns
- Progress updates
  - Classroom teacher (**Share student summary, data, progress**)
  - Related Services; if applicable
- Questions and/or clarifications from parents and team
- Update 504 Accommodations
- Questions and/or clarifications from parents/team
- Meeting summary
  - **Review recommendations**
- Adjourn
  - \*\*\*With your written consent you may receive your child's 504 Accommodation Plan electronically. Speak with your child's case manager.

## 2.0 Maintain and promote a positive and respectful learning community

- In collaboration with building administrators, develop and implement additional tiered interventions to address additional social and emotional learning needs students have experienced as a result of the pandemic.

The diagram below is an example of an Intervention Pyramid, outlining Tiers I, II, and III reflecting evidence based supports. This model is currently followed for academic and behavioral tiered interventions, and this year social and emotional needs have been integrated.



Last June, staff completed a ten question student Social Emotional Learning Assessment on each student. The intent was to gauge students' levels of home support, basic needs,

positive relationships, school engagement, trauma, positive peer relationships, and attitude towards returning to school. Related services including, school counselors, used the survey data in conjunction with anecdotal records to identify students with potential need for support upon return to school. Plans were developed to support students in the social and emotional realm through Tier I (general education classroom), Tier II (short-term interventions) and Tier III (intensive individualized interventions).

Lessons to specifically address social and emotional learning were developed by our related services staff to implement during the first quarter of this school year. These lessons were delivered in the general education classrooms across the district as an effective Tier I strategy for acknowledging the potential for social and emotional issues for students. At the secondary level lessons were taught during English Language Arts (CNH) or English (CHS) classes. At the elementary level, initial lessons were virtual in order to preserve cohorts. Recommendations and/or requests from teachers for follow-up lessons for classes and student referrals for small group lessons followed thereafter.

Increasing staff's awareness of effective use of SEL check-ins and results was key to being able to identify students to monitor. Each school based team worked with students individually or in small groups to address SEL needs. There has been an increase in the number of students accessing counseling services informally. Additionally, there has been an increase in the number of families that related services regularly contact to provide support and guidance in maneuvering through this school year.

- Continue the work of the District Attendance Committee to align with Connecticut's Department of Education guidance to properly monitor students' attendance and engagement in learning.

The District Attendance Committee was assembled last year to ensure the district had appropriate interventions in place to address chronic absenteeism and truancy. Committee members included related services staff, administrators, technology team members and teachers. Many new procedures were established and implemented as a result of the great collaboration among committee members. For example, PowerSchool codes were developed for chronic absenteeism and truancy so teachers could be aware of absenteeism and closely monitor from the onset of a new year. There were many benefits to beginning this work last year; most notably was that the work transferred well to Attendance Tracking during a pandemic.

Noting the severity of student absenteeism and truancy across the state during the pandemic, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) issued the following guidance: *Addendum 14 Supporting Student Attendance and Engagement during Hybrid or Remote Learning* September 21, 2020, *Tracking Daily Attendance on Remote Days in 2020-21* issued October 20, 2020, revision released December 11, 2020.

Instruction during the in-person instructional model was complicated by often having a combination of in-person and remote students. This combination also resulted in difficulty tracking attendance. *A student is considered to be 'in attendance' for at least half of the regular school day*" (State of CT Policy, 2008) This year a remote student could be considered as being 'in attendance' on a particular day if the total time spent on one or more of the following activities equals at least half a school day: synchronous virtual classes, synchronous virtual meetings, time logged in electronic systems, and assignment submission/completion. Attendance codes (Absent Unexcused, Medical Remote Present, Remote Present, Remote Absent Unexcused) were established and our Technology Team trained identified staff members at each building to review daily attendance.

This year the CSDE required districts to report the number of students who opted-in to remote learning programming. This data was originally reported weekly until the request was revised to monthly submissions.

Attendance protocols established in the 2019-2020 school year were revisited districtwide. Reiteration of the definitions of chronically absent and truant students remain in effect and our practices for addressing those were necessary. Parent contacts, attendance letters, meetings, home visits, referrals to Planning and Placement Team meetings, and Department of Children and Families (DCF) referrals are documented methods of engaging families to navigate and address the barriers for school attendance concerns. This year core members of the Team met with Coventry's Youth Services Coordinator to brainstorm additional strategies for engaging families.

It has not always been common practice to request a Planning and Placement Team meeting to address attendance concerns, however the importance of districts' responsibility for Child Find has become more prevalent in recent years. Following protocols and holding PPT meetings demonstrates that the district is doing its due diligence to support the needs of students.

### **3. Recruit, retain, and develop high quality staff at every level.**

- Provide the structures for collaboration and presentation for our Related Services Staff to develop Professional Development opportunities including Self-Care, Resilience, and Trauma Informed Practices.

The importance of self-care has been recognized and well-documented over this past year. It is nothing new, but has become more prevalent in the news as people around the world have been isolated from family, friends, and co-workers. Long-term social isolation can have health consequences. For people who may have had underlying conditions, such



as anxiety or depression, social isolation can exacerbate such conditions. This we knew as we began to prepare for Coventry's re-entry to school in August 2020.

Related Services staff, more specifically, school social workers and school psychologists, support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. They apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior, to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. In collaboration with our district Community Engagement Specialist, related services staff crafted presentations for our staff, including a timeline for delivery to provide support to staff throughout the school year.

Formal presentations this year by our staff included a Staff Self Care presentation and Trauma Informed Practices for Students. In addition, related services staff coordinated presenters for Coventry. Dr. Kate Fields, Teacher Development Specialist, Connecticut Education Association shared two presentations with staff this year, *Self-Care Strategies for Educators: Caring for Yourself So You Can Care for Others* and *Mind the Moment: Practical Mindfulness Activities for Students and Teachers* and Dr. Paula Gill-Lopez, professor of psychology, Fairfield University, *Self-Care to the GHR staff*.

In addition to acting as presenters and coordinating presentations, Coventry's Related Services staff, as members of school climate committees, brainstormed creative ways to lighten teachers' days. For example, educators at the high school enjoyed 'swag bags' in October, Lucky Leprechaun Fridays in March and energizing music during passing time. Educators at Coventry's other schools enjoy competitive Spirit Days and months.

In some respects, one could perceive self-care as a conundrum. Professional learning identifies the importance of self-care and strategies to employ throughout each day, but self-care is a personal responsibility that only individuals control. It is hoped that frequent self-care tips become internalized.

- With support from EASTCONN, continue efforts to refine specialized programs by establishing the structures necessary to provide coaching opportunities to further develop the capacity of our ABA educators at CGS and CNH.

PSSS continues to appreciate the support from EASTCONN to consult with staff to continue building their capacity. Coventry has consulted with EASTCONN to support our staff through the expansion of our ABA program for the past 4/six years. The support and consult model has shifted throughout the year as needs were ever changing and the program expanded. Coventry now has two full time Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA), so this year has led us into preliminary discussions about entering into a gradual release model of support from EASTCONN.

This year consultation support from EASTCONN has crossed over three buildings: Coventry Grammar School (CGS), G.H. Robertson School (GHR), and Capt. Nathan

Hale Middle School (CNH). The focus for consultation at CGS, has been to assist with building our BCBA's skills as a consultant to the ABA program. This includes developing meeting schedules and utilizing an action planning framework during consultation meetings. The BCBA has taken an active role in overseeing the development and implementation of student program books and utilizes the program book audit tool to conduct an assessment of program books. The focus of consultation at GHR has been to review staff fidelity data and coach the ABA teacher in providing consistent feedback to her staff. Our K-5 ABA program is strong in the priority components of an ABA program; refinements can be well managed by Coventry staff with occasional oversight by EASTCONN.

EASTCONN consults more frequently with CNH staff as the ABA program is relatively new at the middle level. Primary focus of consultation has been on building and training staff on the program-wide Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) for the middle school levels as well as the professional development in protocol development and data analysis systems. Hands on training and feedback on Discrete Trial Instruction (DTI) implementation and assessing the fidelity of implementation is another focus for weekly sessions.

The addition of a second BCBA in the district has been invaluable. BCBAs, behavior specialists, help guide staff and administrators through the process of providing the most appropriate support for students with behavioral challenges. While students are individuals, developing the systems to ensure successful transitions for students as they move from one program to the next is important. The collaboration between our BCBAs and the extent to which collaborative structures for our ABA staff have been established this year, is notable. Much of this work has been done under the guidance and supervision of EASTCONN; their support has been successful in building the capacity of our staff. Moving forward, the program will continue to benefit from the support of EASTCONN along with the internal systems we implement to further develop our internal support system.

- Provide professional development in the area of differentiation of curriculum to ensure that students have appropriate learning experiences in all Instructional Models of learning.

Differentiation means tailoring instruction to meet individual needs. Instruction can be differentiated in four ways: content, process, product and the environment. The use of ongoing assessment, flexible grouping, choice and interests can make this a successful approach to instruction.

This year Coventry prepared for three Instructional Models: in-person, hybrid, and remote learning. Providing special education services virtually, especially for students with intensive needs was a challenge. Given this, EASTCONN provided three

professional development sessions for the ABA teachers and elementary speech language pathologists to train them in creating virtual visual supports (i.e., icons, within task schedules, rule cards, etc.). Training in Boom Cards resulted in engaging lessons for use in-person or virtually that aligned directly with student specific IEP objectives.

Coventry's K-12 ELA and Mathematics Specialists met with teams of teachers, including special educators, throughout the year for the purpose of curriculum review, compacting, pacing, and student work protocols. During coaching days, special education teachers engage in differentiation of assessments and pacing guides to address modifications and accommodations of students' IEPs.

Safety protocols, physical distancing and cohorting, resulted in grouping challenges. Flexible grouping is one strategy used to differentiate instruction by student need. Groupings can occur within the classroom or in a separate setting. Due to the spacing requirements of the COVID-19 safety protocols, grouping within the classroom was not permitted and identification of space outside of the classroom was minimal. Creative thinking and working with building administrators resulted in opportunities for pull-out groups to pre-teach, remediate, and differentiate.

Special education service delivery looks different at each building level. No matter what the delivery model, a key component of differentiation is providing time for special and general education teachers to plan and collaborate. This year, collaboration time was significantly impacted by scheduling as a result of the pandemic. Building administrators were creative in finding time for collaboration for educators. How to support student independence in the classroom, Tier 1, instruction was often a topic of conversation at special education department meetings. The goal is to provide modifications and accommodations (i.e. visuals, checklists, etc. ) so students can access the work and be independent.

- Continue to provide comprehensive, targeted, and differentiated training for para-educators.

A priority for the district throughout COVID has been to provide professional learning for staff as education experienced a monumental change in service delivery.

Para-educators have been instrumental throughout COVID in supporting students in-person and virtually as classes often have remote students streaming into class and preparing and delivering materials to students (more so during ESY).

To note, para-educators are the front line service for our students identified in need of special education services. Roles and responsibilities of para-educators varies greatly across the district Pre-K - 21. Given this, professional development needs differ and as such we strive to provide differentiated professional development opportunities that will

support the individual needs of para-educators in order that they may support the individual needs of our students.

To be well prepared for Coventry's re-entry to school after closure, all staff members were provided with five days of professional learning, development, and planning opportunities. Required training for all staff members included Staff Self-Care, Social Emotional Learning/Trauma informed Practices for Students, Racial Equity, Unconscious Bias, COVID Safety Training, Safe Schools, Mandated Reporter training, and Universal Precautions Training. In addition to these required trainings, para-educators were involved in several of the following depending on his or her position: Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) and Protocol Review, Instructional Practices/Technology Training, Integrated Technology Instructional Strategies, Newsela Training, Zearn Training, PBIS Restorative Practices, and Restorative Practices in Distance Learning.

In addition to in district training, para-educators have access to a series of webinars from EASTCONN that are specifically designed for para-educators. Another on-line webinar series is sponsored by PaTTAN (Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network). Paraeducators submit learning reflections after accessing webinars. Note the variety of topics accessed this year:

- Cultivating Equity in the Classroom
- PaPBS Network Overview and Highlights of PBIS
- Alternate Eligible Content for Science: What Paraprofessionals Need to Know
- Math Concentration Series: Counting to Algebra
- Hidden Curriculum: Teaching and Increasing Social Skills for Students with Autism
- Trauma and Its Impact on the Educational Settings
- Trauma Informed Practices
- Progress Monitoring and Data Collection
- Fostering Communication Opportunities for Students with Complex Needs
- Using Mobile Devices as Classroom Tools: Basics and Beyond

Not only do para-educators have access to quality professional development as noted above, they have opportunities to collaborate with the special education colleagues during Professional Development days and also after school when necessary to support student's success. Collaboration time with special education teachers is provided for those para-educators whose position includes reading or math intervention.

Finally, para-educators associated with our intensive instructional programs utilize a weekly extended day to access training and coaching with our Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Teachers. In addition, one of our district BCBA's has provided training focused on Data Collection with learning targets including, the importance of accuracy, how incomplete data can skew results, and what the graphs are used for (in PPTs to inform program changes, medication adjustments, etc).

