

Coventry Public Schools

Goals: 2022 -2023 School Year

By: Beth Giller, Director of Pupil and Staff Support Services

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.

- Collaborate with Coventry's Educational Technology Team on the migration of the district's current platform that maintains students' Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and 504 Accommodation Plans to the Connecticut Special Education Data System (CT-SEDS), most specifically for historical data and parent contact uploads, identifying outlier processes, and training on the technical side of the transition.

Using the CSDE's timeline for CT-SEDS implementation as a guide, to effectively prepare for the large-scale transition from Frontline to CT-SEDS, collaborative planning meetings with the Educational Technology Team began in the fall of 2021. Initially, these meetings were brainstorming sessions to identify the project needs, tasks, and predictable problems (i.e. historical data download configuration, Frontline and PowerSchool feeds to CT-SEDS). By spring of 2022, an outline and timeline of identified tasks and decisions were developed and used as a guide during our meetings. Collaborative meetings were more frequent through the spring, summer and fall of 2022. For example, decisions included whether to continue to keep Frontline for 2022-2023 and in what capacity, when to migrate data to CT-SEDS, what to do with historical data beyond the three years that migrated to CT-SEDS, Parent Portal access, and the process for migrating student contact information from PowerSchool to CT-SEDS, download errors review and user roles. The attention to detail and problem solving mindsets of Coventry's technology team members were an asset during the entire transition.

CSDE distributed a list of CT-SEDS User Roles noting the capabilities of each role. Initially there were 21 User roles identified in CT-SEDS (in Frontline there were 12). Case managers were identified as Student Team Leader, although there was also a User Role as Special Education Teacher. Teachers were assigned to the school level or as an aggregate user. The differences in roles were subtly described, but there was a significant difference in practice. To make a change for some user roles required submitting a request to Public Consulting Group (PCG), the system developer; those changes took weeks.

CT-SEDS went live July 1, 2022. The decision was made to delay the historical data upload process until the team was confident that it would be migrated to CT-SEDS successfully. In addition, it was necessary to wait for the PowerSchool rollover prior

to migrating student information. Upon migrating student information (all CPS students), each student needed to be assigned to a school and then those students with an IEP or 504 needed to be assigned a Student Team Leader. Thereafter, the Team Leader assigns all team members. In CT-SEDS service providers can only access those students with whom they work.

The technology department was instrumental throughout the process of migrating from students' Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and 504 Accommodation Plans to the Connecticut Special Education Data System (CT-SEDS). The Director of Educational Technology and the Director of PSSS meet weekly; CT-SEDS remains on the agenda to discuss system updates and support continued staff implementation.

- Provide resources and supports for PSSS staff to effectively implement the Connecticut Special Education Data System (CT-SEDS) for students' Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and 504 Accommodation Plans that went into effect July 1, 2022.

To prepare for the transition to CT-SEDS July 1, 2022, PSSS staff were provided release time to participate in 8 sessions of IEP Quality Training which was highly recommended by the Bureau of Special Education (BSE). Last spring the BSE presented CT-SEDS IEP Overview series, focusing on one tile of the CT-SEDS platform in each video. This provided a glimpse into what the new IEP would look like and served as a step-by-step guide for completion. Given the value of this series, staff was provided the opportunity to view these trainings as part of summer work.

Ten CT-SEDS Expert Trainers across the district attended summer training. In turn, they trained PSSS certified staff in the system navigation. The intent was for the Expert Trainers to be the go-to people for any issues encountered. Unfortunately, there were too many 'glitches' that could not be remedied in a timely manner. Given this, and feeling the need to track all known 'glitches' in the district, this process was temporarily centralized to the PSSS office. As more 'glitches' were identified and became more complex, the state sorted inquiries to the RESC Help Desk, BSE data managers, PCG Help Desk, and/or the Director of BSE.

With regards to 504 Accommodation Plans, four Coventry case managers participated in the 2022 spring pilot of CT-SEDS to learn the system and provide feedback to the state. The Expert Trainers were designated to support both IEP and 504 case managers, however the 504 platform was not user friendly, nor intuitive. Fortunately, case managers held anticipated September/October annual meetings in May/June of the year prior avoiding the most challenging CT-SEDS time frame. In addition, while it has been practice to adhere to deadlines similar to those of special education, it is not legally mandated, so meeting time frames were adjusted as needed.

The most valuable resource relative to CT-SEDS this year has been time. Time needed to develop an IEP has, at the very least, tripled. Given this, professional

development days for special education staff was devoted to collaboration and work on CT-SEDS. Discussions focused on navigating the system, processes, goal development the CT-SEDS way, finding documents and problem solving as staff developed IEPs during these sessions. Building level teams drafted their own goal banks aligned with Connecticut Core Standards and the way in which CT-SEDS requires. Teams also developed their own banks for common accommodations as CT-SEDS does not have any dropdown options like Frontline did.

Throughout this transition process from Frontline to CT-SEDS, emails, updates, and newsletters have been shared with PSSS staff. Communication overload was challenging to balance. Many practices, recommendations, and protocols had been distributed throughout the summer, yet questions answered in those documents continued. In the past, the majority of updates were documented in a weekly or bi-weekly newsletter, yet there were too many important updates to wait that long. Due to the number and types of calls coming in to PSSS, additional protocols were established, requesting that inquiries filter to the Expert Trainers prior to PSSS.

PSSS receives CSDE BSE updates weekly, reviews carefully and disseminates if those updates will be helpful to staff. As the year carried on, BSE updates noted more 'remedies' than new 'glitches', although new 'glitches' continue to be identified.

- Develop a plan to manage and monitor a Special Education Stipend awarded to Coventry by the CSDE Bureau of Special Education to support staff implementation of CT-SEDS and for targeted professional development for para-educators.

Coventry was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) to support staff implementation of CT-SEDS. As recommended by the BSE, ten expert trainers were identified in-district to serve as Coventry's CT-SEDS expert trainers, implementing a Train the Trainer Model. Expert Trainers participated in a four hour training session presented by BSE representatives during the summer.

After much consideration and collaboration, the Expert Trainers developed training sessions for their PSSS certified colleagues. Using the BSE presentations as a guide, the trainings were tailored specifically to Coventry's special educators. In order to be prepared for the school year, expert trainers facilitated trainings prior to the opening of the school year. Training before the August professional development days worked well, as K-5 and 6-12 educators had collaboration time to discuss questions and concerns regarding the new platform for IEPs.

Coventry was also awarded a \$5,000 grant from the BSE for professional development for para-educators. Beginning July 1, 2023, districts are required to provide 18 hours of professional development for para-educators. Para-educators were provided with the opportunity to engage in training to become a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT). Four para-professionals took advantage of this opportunity. Additionally, the district's subscription to VectorSolutions, K-12 edition was expanded to include a full library of topics relevant to special education, and

more specifically designed for para-educators. Topics included: Child Abuse & Neglect, Opioid Awareness, Self Injury & Cutting, Disruptive Student Behavior. Trainings offered during professional development days were individualized to groups of para-educators. Topics included: CPR/First Aid, ABA & DTI, Differentiation, Differentiated Technology, Diversity, Para-educator Roles and Responsibilities.

As this is a three year subscription, VectorSolutions will continue to be used to supplement in-person training. It will also be used in the future for onboarding new para-educators to the district.

- Develop 100% of students' IEPs and 504 Accommodation Plans in CT-SEDS by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

Coventry maintained access to Frontline IEP throughout the 2022-2023 school year for multiple reasons: access to the full repository of Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting documents, skepticism about the transition to CT-SEDS, and to have the ability to review/revise IEPs as a result of a program review PPT. Access to Frontline for IEPs and 504s saved special educators and related services staff many hours as there are often more than one PPT and/or 504 meeting scheduled for a student over the course of the year. 496 PPTs meetings were held by May 22, 2023.

Only annual and three year evaluation IEPs were required to be developed in CT-SEDS. As of May 22nd, there have been 252 IEPs and 203 504 Accommodation Plans developed in CT-SEDS. **100% of Coventry students' IEPs and/or 504 Accommodation Plans will be in CT-SEDS by the end of the school year.**

- In collaboration with the Director of Educational Technology, explore marketing techniques to attract out-of-district students to Coventry's specialized programs.

A district goal over the past several years has been to network with Local Education Agencies (LEA) with the intention of attracting out-of-district students to Coventry's specialized programs.

As a member of the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education (ConnCASE), a regional group of Directors of Special Education, I have regular opportunities to network with LEAs. Requests for programming are often disseminated in our group directors' email. Coventry responded to several to discuss programming, but transportation has continued to be a barrier this year. Transportation companies have been understaffed throughout this past year, resulting in a challenging barrier for welcoming tuition students from out of district. Coventry currently has three tuition students for whom we provide programming.

To follow up with districts' inquiries, brochures were developed to highlight

Coventry's programs and address potential questions. This year, program staff collaborated on the development of websites to highlight the strengths of Coventry programs to attract out-of-district students.

The Director of Educational Technology, along with tech team members, were instrumental in assisting Coventry's RISE Program lead teacher and the Coventry Academy team in the development of websites to showcase their programs. Review of information, page formatting, along with determining accordion topics, required collaboration, time and planning. Now that the initial development has been accomplished, teams will continue to update as appropriate.

The RISE website has been published and currently exists under Coventry High School. The Coventry Academy website will be published in the near future as documents undergo final review and formatting. On the current Coventry Public Schools webpage a new subpage title, Programs, will be added between Schools and District on the main navigation bar. Both sites will then be directly linked to the front page of the CPS website under Programs. Both programs will promote that tuition students are accepted. There are currently two tuition students at Coventry Academy.

- Continue to explore opportunities for students in our 18-22 year old program to attend college courses.

The special education teacher of the RISE Program continues to explore supplemental programming for students, including college courses. This year, a registered student did begin the year in RISE while simultaneously taking a college course at Manchester Community College. First semester, with the support of the RISE staff was so successful, the student withdrew from RISE to take more classes at MCC.

It is noted that college is not in everyone's future, but providing the opportunity to explore career and life learning opportunities is imperative for our RISE students. This year our Transition Coordinator held a very successful Transition Night.

Programs in attendance included: Department of Developmental Services (DDS), The Department of Rehabilitative Services (DOR/BRS), Job Corps, Lincoln Technical Institute, the State Education Resource Center (SERC) and the Next Adventures of Axel and Andrew, Eastern Connecticut State University and Mitchell College.

- Prioritize and address the action steps in the Special Education Plan developed in response to the areas of opportunity identified in the District Management Group (DMG) study with a focus on programming in grades 6-12, development of action steps and identification of a metric to measure success.

Several years ago Coventry partnered with District Management Group (DMG) to conduct a review of programming resources and efficiencies relative to special education and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) implementation. This year, the focus was placed on programming in grades 6-12.

To inform programming for the 2022-2023 school year, the Director of PSSS and Director of Teaching and Learning met with CNH and CHS interventionists and special education teachers to identify assessments that could be used as data points for IEP progress monitoring in CT-SEDS. Classroom learning tasks and assessments, as well as special education evaluations and intervention assessments were compiled this year for effective progress monitoring on students' IEP goals.

As learning tasks and assessments were identified, the need for time to consider modifications or alternative assessments was noted. Given this, special education teachers at CNH were involved in coaching days with general education teachers to develop modifications to the curriculum as needed to support students. In addition, to support teachers in the delivery of strong Tier I instruction including the ability to differentiate for all the students in their classroom, training on differentiated instruction was provided to content teachers grades 6-12 in October and November 2022.

At CNH, grades 6-8, team taught classes for English Language Arts and Mathematics continued. Special education teachers are diligent about scheduling planning time with their team teachers. The team taught model provides opportunities to divide the class into smaller sections, which can minimize distractions and increase engagement.

CHS transitioned away from team taught special education delivery model this year to a Skill Center based approach. Depending on students' specific Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals, they were assigned Math, Literacy, and Executive Functioning Skill Center courses with a Special Education teacher. This year, students are either scheduled four times a week in one Skill Center or two times a week in two separate Skill Centers based on their individual needs. This programmatic change provided increased opportunities for explicit specialized instruction in English Language Arts, Writing, and Executive Functioning as written in IEPs. In review of students' IEPs, goals have been mastered within the year-long IEP or are making satisfactory progress noting a shift in strategies to master. In addition, teachers' contact time on specific skill development with students has increased with more individualized attention.

District and building administrators have evaluated progress by way of regular walkthroughs throughout the school year.

2. Maintain and promote a positive and respectful learning community.

- In collaboration with building administrators, provide structures for K-8 related

services staff to review and disaggregate the data from the results of the Aperture Education CASEL-aligned social and emotional learning system to inform Coventry's tiered interventions for social and emotional learning.

Mental health has risen to the forefront of contemporary issues, not only in Connecticut, but globally. For children/students, research has attributed this to increased screen time, social media, a general decrease in physical activity, and with the pandemic, increased isolation and lack of social connections. Social, emotional, and/or behavioral concerns are easily identified in students who externalize their emotions or behavior. Of noteworthy concern is those students who internalize their social and or emotional stressors. This is the second year of using the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) universal screener. The results of administering the DESSA provides a brief summary of children's current overall social-emotional competence to determine if additional skill development is needed. The benefit of an asset based approach (rather than deficit based approach), is to identify students strengths, capitalize on those in order to further develop the skills needed.

The DESSA provides a common lens and language for crafting an SEL program that involves educators, parents, and students. The DESSA is commonly used to inform the delivery of SEL at Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3. The DESSA is entirely strength-based; meaning that the items query positive behaviors (e.g., get along with others) rather than maladaptive ones (e.g., annoy others). For each behavior, the rater (a teacher or parent) is asked to indicate on a five-point scale how often the student engaged in that behavior over the past four weeks."

Related services staff (social workers, school psychologists and school counselors) K-8 are integral members of the building DESSA leadership teams that review and disaggregate the data, and develop Action Plans to implement at their level. Professional development days, faculty meetings and additional collaboration meetings were structures most often utilized by the related services team to complete this work. Time was carefully planned as a competing demand for their time this year was CT-SEDS training.

At each building K-8, data collected was used to inform SEL instruction at each level: Tier I, 2, and 3. Building level leadership teams identified CASEL competencies on which to focus Tier I, and used data to inform goals and programming at Tiers 2 and 3. Lessons were provided for classrooms' morning meetings at the elementary level and for Development Guidance, Advisory and Enrichment at the middle level. The assessment is given twice per year.

At the district level, new reports were demonstrated and reviewed. This included the Impact Report which compares students' scores from one rating period to the next. Also reviewed was the Competency Report which allows us to compare students' progress from one rating period to another. Supporting students' social and emotional needs will continue to be an area of focus moving forward.

Coventry's DESSA window is currently open for post screening K-8.

- Allocate resources from the ESSER II Special Education Recovery Activities and ARP IDEA grants to expand Coventry Academy to develop three distinct learning environments to increase students' focus on teaching and learning, and thereby increasing student achievement and success as measured by students' attendance and quarterly grades.

The ARP IDEA grant money is designated to support students with IEPs and for special populations that are identified as being significantly impacted by COVID -19. After exploring several viable options worthy of this grant funding, it was determined that our district goal for this grant would be to, *Expand the instructional space of Coventry Academy to support all students in need of secondary alternative education.* Due to the structures in place and the individualized programming including hybrid programming with Coventry High School classes, students experience success, have improved their attendance and are more engaged in school. Limited space was the barrier to providing opportunities for more students. This grant funding provided the funds to build an addition of 700 square feet of instructional space. The Coventry Academy staff then established three distinct instructional spaces providing increased opportunities for students' access to programming that support individual needs.

Coventry Academy, Coventry's alternative high school, offers students an individualized program that aligns with district and state guidelines. Programming addresses the personal, social, emotional, intellectual, work skills, safety, and security needs of all students in addition to academic achievement. Coventry Academy is promoted as an opportunity for students to achieve personal and academic growth and success. This is accomplished by having high quality staff who are invested in the students, small class sizes to minimize distractions and disruptions, and a safe calming learning environment. Monthly walkthrough data collected by building and district leaders affirm that there is a strong level of student engagement, quality instruction, rigorous curriculum and a positive learning environment.

These results are, in part, due to the physical expansion of the building. The Academy is now approximately 2500 square feet: original building space 1200 square feet, 2018 addition 600 square feet, and the 2022 addition 700 square feet. This includes a kitchen area, two bathrooms and now three distinct instructional spaces, so teachers may teach simultaneously. There is adequate space to bring the entire group together for PSAs (Public Service Announcements - teachable moments), or maneuver spaces so a teacher may join a PPT or 504 meeting virtually.

The additional space has provided increased options of admitting students into the program throughout the year, if deemed appropriate and/or necessary. The entrance criteria and process is well documented and reviewed with the parents and

student in a formal meeting. Program expectations are explicitly reviewed and agreed upon in writing by both student and parent/guardian. The Coventry Academy Team works collaboratively with high school staff and administration to identify potential students and maneuver through all issues to be considered prior to recommending a student for placement in this alternative setting.

Coventry Academy, building, staff, and most importantly students, have flourished in this positive inviting learning environment. The addition has made a difference in these students' (and teachers') lives.

- Support the schools in adhering to the District Attendance Protocols to monitoring chronic attendance and truancy.

To address and intervene on chronic absenteeism and truancy, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) encourages participation in the national Attendance Awareness Campaign by Attendance Works (<https://www.attendanceworks.org/>). Attendance Works provides resources as well as research based practices that may effectively combat chronic absenteeism. Members of Coventry's District Wide Attendance Committee participate in the CSDE/Attendance Works partnership's Community of Practice. Coventry's District Attendance Protocols are based on the best practices recommended in this Community of Practice.

Chronic attendance and truancy continues to be of concern, not only at the district level, but at the state and federal level. There are many factors that may contribute to a student's attendance: mental and or physical health, poverty level, abilities, and family engagement to identify a few. The key to addressing the challenges of chronic absenteeism and truancy is by using past chronic absence/truancy data as a diagnostic tool to identify where prevention and early intervention are needed. Unfortunately, research indicates that if a student is chronically absent or truant one school year, the probability is that this will become a trend. Given this, attendance codes are reflected in PowerSchool so student's teachers are aware of this concern.

Coventry's Chronic Absenteeism protocols include a trajectory of strategies and follow-up documentation demonstrating the schools' efforts in addressing this concern. The protocols include phone calls, emails, letters, parent meetings, home visits, special education referrals, and Department of Children and Family referrals. While attendance concerns are reviewed by teams at the building level, the primary responsibility for documentation of the protocols falls to the social workers. Post pandemic the chronic absenteeism rate has increased resulting in a significant increase in documentation required. This, coupled with the increase in students' social, emotional, and behavioral challenges that often usurp the time of our social workers, alternative methods for documentation have been explored.

Adherence to the protocols is important, but more importantly is the recommended shift in the approach with students and families regarding attendance concerns.

Attendance letters have been revised to reflect concern, support, with hopes of fostering a strong home-school partnership. Student Attendance Success Plans have been used to engage students in school. A Staff Attendance Presentation was shared at the beginning of the school year inviting all CPS staff in practicing simple strategies proven to increase student's sense of belonging in their school community: greeting students at the classroom door, using students' names, making eye contact, and practicing empathy.

In collaboration with the technology department, a new system tool that will substantially reduce the time spent in protocol documentation has been piloted this year. The Attendance Team looks forward to full implementation in district next year.

- Provide opportunities for parents of students with IEPs or 504 Accommodation Plans training in the CT-SEDS Parent Portal to have access to their students confidential information.

Quick and easy access to documents shared at Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings and developed as a result of PPTs are important to all team members. Staff were accustomed to the Collaboration Portal in Frontline (our former system) through which all documents (PPT agendas, evaluation documents, IEPs, etc.) could be securely shared with the parents.

The promotion of the CT-SEDS Parent Portal appeared similar to that of Frontline, with the added benefit of parents providing electronic signatures for consent on documents as needed. While this benefit exists, a drawback of the Parent Portal is that only documents generated in CT-SEDS can be accessed via the Portal. Documents generated in CT-SEDS include, but are not limited to IEPs, Prior Written Notice, Record of Meeting, Consent for Evaluation, and Consent for Special Education services. Staff are unable to send uploaded documents through the Portal to parents, like they did in Frontline.

The Parent Portal was not activated by the CSDE right away. Given that special education staff experienced a steep learning curve when maneuvering CT-SEDS, it was not considered a high priority. In fact, all finalized documents in CT-SEDS automatically filter to the Parent Portal for parent access. CSDE recommendations directed users to always develop DRAFT documents prior to finalizing, as only directors and data managers can delete documents. Part of the steep learning curve included locating finalized documents in CT-SEDS; when unable to locate a finalized document, staff would often continue to finalize, resulting in many documents being sent to the Portal. Staff can turn off the Parent Portal when working to prevent numerous notifications being sent to parents.

The CSDE published a CT-SEDS PARENT PORTAL QUICK START GUIDE in the fall for distribution to parents of students with IEPs or 504 accommodation plans. Case managers distributed the Quick Start Guides at PPTs and 504 meetings for parents'

reference. Some parents acted on email notifications received and easily accessed the Portal. Other parents prefer email or paper copies. To ensure that parents were able to access the Portal, a Parent Night was held Monday, November 7th, to explain and demonstrate the CT-SEDS Parent Portal. Attendance was very low.

There have been very few parent inquiries outside of PPTs about the Portal. Similar to case managers, parents were disappointed that evaluations cannot be accessed via the Portal. The Parent Portal will be added to all PSSS PPT and 504 Meeting Agendas to ensure that case managers continue to distribute the Quick Guides as needed and explain the Parent Portal to parents and students.

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

- Develop structures for PSSS staff to engage in collaborative coaching sessions to deepen their understanding of the CT-SEDS platform in order to develop and finalize Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

A quick Google search for “benefits of coaching” resulted in the following:

- *Establish and take action towards achieving goals.*
- *Become more self-reliant.*
- *Gain more job and life satisfaction.*
- *Contribute more effectively to the team and the organization.*
- *Take greater responsibility and accountability for actions and commitments.*

The priority goal for PSSS this year was to implement CT-SEDS. The structures in place this year contributed to achieving this goal. Differing from English Language Arts, Math, or Science coaching, CT-SEDS was not facilitated by an expert, as there were not any experts. This time was used to collaborate, problem solve, contribute to the team, build capacity, etc. No one was an expert, but every one was a contributor. Groupings for coaching varied throughout the year, starting with the full PSSS team, then breaking into building level teams, and then specialized teams (speech language pathologists, related services). Teams took action towards achieving this goal, individuals have become more self-reliant, they have contributed effectively to their team and Coventry Public Schools, and they accept responsibility and accountability for their actions. I do believe there is greater job satisfaction in May than perhaps there was in October as SEDS was most challenging for staff in the fall months.

Eight months ago IEPs could not be finalized in CT-SEDS due to system ‘glitches’. Now, after collaboration with a colleague, or review by the director, case managers finalize their own IEPs. Time allotted for Team Coaching throughout the year on Professional Development days was key to this success. The Team appreciates the support of the Superintendent, Director of Teaching and Learning and building administrators to support this as a district priority.

- Allocate the time necessary for the PSSS Office Team to participate in CSDE/Regional Education Service Center (RESC) CT-SEDS Office Hours, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), 504 meetings and OSEP IEP meetings to continuously enhance our assistance to the PSSS staff with the implementation of CT-SEDS.

Given the large-scale changes not only the IEP formatting and error identification, but the transition from one digital platform to another, it was understood that time would need to be allocated for the PSSS office team to deepen their understanding of the CT-SEDS platform. The CSDE scheduled several trainings for directors and data managers beginning in August to learn the system from the administrative side. In addition, weekly Office of Special Education Programming (OSEP) meetings were scheduled. Due to the significant number of challenges with the CT-SEDS platform, meetings were increased to three times a week to provide updates and workarounds. The purpose and focus of the OSEP Office Hours have changed throughout the year as districts' needs continued to shift. Targeted trainings and additional webinar series were developed to assist users with maneuvering the system as directions changed with remedies and updates. The PSSS office continues to monitor all CSDE training offerings, participating as needed and sharing with case managers who may benefit.

- Establish an adhoc committee to develop a comprehensive local professional development plan for paraeducators not fewer than eighteen hours in length in preparation for legislation effective July 1, 2023.

The role of the para-educator continues to evolve and varies depending on individual assignments. As students' needs have become increasingly complex, training has been imperative to support both para-educators and certified staff in de-escalation strategies, varied instructional practices, trauma-informed practices, and crisis intervention, to name a few. Connecticut Legislation enacted July 1, 2022, requires school districts to provide 18 hours of professional development for para-educators beginning July 1, 2023.

As a result of the survey feedback and ad-hoc committee meetings, the professional learning schedule was established to include two full days and 2 half-days as designated on the district's school calendar: August, October, December and February. In addition, under the House Bill 5321, paraeducators should be trained in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) procedures and participation. During the 2022-2023 school year, Coventry Public Schools implemented new legislation which requires districts to offer 18 hours of professional development for paraeducators. This mandate trumps paraeducators' contractual obligation of participating in two professional development days annually. Given this shift and perspective that flexibility was needed this first year of implementation, PSSS selected to expand the district's subscription to Vector Solutions Educator Training K-12 Edition to include access to the library specifically designed for paraeducator

professional learning. A three year subscription was purchased with grant money awarded by the Connecticut State Department of Education Bureau of Special Education.

Coventry paraeducators' roles vary greatly. The majority of paraeducators support students in a one-to-one or one-to-two capacity in the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Program K-12. There are also paraeducators whose primary responsibility is to provide classroom support to teachers in order to support students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). In addition, there are several paraeducators whose role is to provide reading intervention instruction to students under the supervision of building reading consultants. While there are training topics that are appropriate for all paraeducators, the learning needs of these three groups of paraeducators vary greatly.

This school year, para-educators were provided with the opportunity to collaborate with their supervising teacher, participated in training for their specialties (reading) and CPR/First Aid Training. Feedback received on the Vector training courses was that the material was informative and appropriate to their jobs. The ABA Team provided a comprehensive training for all paraeducators in February that included Universal Protocols, Program Books, Prompting, and Data Collection. Paraeducators also joined their building level professional development on a variety of topics: Virtual Guest Speaker Monica Genta, 'The Rooted Classroom'; Diversity Training with Linda Darcy; Epilepsy; and Orthographic Mapping and the Role of Practicing Phonics through Decodable Texts.

Para-educators had the opportunity to complete a survey to provide input regarding professional development topics and scheduling for 2023-2024 and beyond. The survey return was 56 %. Two ad-hoc committees were developed: K-5 and 6-12. Survey results were reviewed and discussed in depth with each committee. Para-educators shared they would most benefit from trainings to better support our students:

- Strategies to Support Students Socially & Emotionally
- De-escalation Strategies
- Implementing Aspects of a Student's IEP
- Collaboration with case managers, BCBAs, school psychologists, social workers

Additional Input:

- View and discuss Vector trainings in small groups
- Assistive technology that students use
- Training on how to support student with varied exceptionalities: attention deficit disorder, anxiety, autism, emotional disability, mood disorders
- Technology: Google Suite, portfolio preparation,
- CPR/First Aid Training - in paraeducators' contract

As a result a comprehensive plan for para-educator professional development has been developed for the 2023-2024 school year.

- In collaboration with members of the leadership team, engage in professional development on academic return on investment with the District Management Group and develop an approach for application to programs and practices within the PSSS department.

The leadership team was offered the opportunity to engage in professional development on academic return on investment with the District Management Group. The intent of the academy was to develop the team's understanding of how to evaluate a program by applying the DMGroup's Change Management Framework.

After guided brainstorming and team collaboration, our focus as a group was to determine the effectiveness of the reading investigation programs used at Coventry Grammar School. To maximize the benefits of this professional learning, the reading program was used to provide the information needed to submit the reading waiver to the State Department of Education.

Programmatic review and evaluation is a continuous process in PSSS. This DMGroup Framework will be used as applicable in the future.