The PPS Department has begun the 2014-15 school year on a positive note. After an extremely busy summer interviewing for many openings throughout the department new staff members are acclimating well to their new positions within the Wallingford Public Schools, and bring a new excitement and energy to the department.

Several department initiatives are set for implementation in the coming weeks. The school district has chosen the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) as our universal screening measure of children’s social, emotional, and behavioral skills. All grades one through five students will be rated by teachers in order to identify at-risk students in these areas. Results of the DESSA will assist school based intervention teams in placing students in tier two and tier three interventions. The DESSA also comes with a progress monitoring procedure, which will allow intervention teams to track students’ progress to interventions provided. School psychologists and school social workers will oversee the implementation process as well as progress monitoring procedures. Additionally, an action committee of the Special Services Management Team will begin to investigate a social, emotional and behavioral universal screening measurement for students in grades six through eight during the next several months.

The PPS Department has also formed its own autism evaluation team consisting of three school psychologists and two speech pathologists. All members of this team completed a rigorous five day training requirement facilitated by staff at Cooperative Educational Services (CES) in Trumbull. Members of this evaluation team will complete comprehensive and specialized evaluations to assist planning and placement teams in determining special education eligibility for students under the autism exceptionality. Planning and placement teams will now be capable of making eligibility determinations based on Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) eligibility criteria and less reliant on the need to refer for independent evaluations in order to make these determinations. The evaluation team members are currently developing a referral process for these evaluations, which will be shared with administrators and staff in the coming weeks.

PPS continues to have strong representation on district management teams as well. The District Climate Management Team, which oversees the completion of districtwide surveys, will be convening soon to review revised school climate plans. Each school and district program based climate team has recently revised their climate plans utilizing results of parent engagement surveys completed during the 2013-14 school year to assist with their revisions. During the 2014-15 school year surveys will be administered to parents, staff and students. More information regarding the administration timeline of these surveys will be forthcoming. The District Climate Strategic Plan was also recently revised during this past summer’s Strategic
Planning meetings, and currently is in the review stage by various community stakeholder groups.

The PPS Department has recently facilitated training to school counseling and administrative staff on Section 504 procedures and requirements. Training for school psychologists and school social workers is scheduled for an upcoming professional development day. District 504 paperwork has recently been updated and revised implementation protocols for Section 504 implementation are near completion.

Lyman Hall and Sheehan High Schools are entering year two of implementation of PBIS through SERC while middle school implementation of year one is scheduled to begin during the 2015-16 school year.

Finally, the PPS Department and PPS PTAC has been working collaboratively this fall planning it first Special Education Fair scheduled to be held October 28, 2014 from 6:00 – 9:00 pm at the Toyota Presents Oakdale Theater in Wallingford. Currently nearly thirty vendors have committed to participate in this fair to share information with parents regarding the various services each vendor provides to children with disabilities. Vendors include financial planners, an attorney to share expertise on estate planning, medical health providers, recreation and entertainment providers, disability resource center staff from Gateway Community College and Southern Connecticut State University, as well as representatives from the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services (BRS) and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Several in-district staff will also be present to share information regarding the wide range of services offered to students within the Wallingford Public Schools. Additional vendors continue to be recruited at this time and more information will be provided throughout the next few weeks regarding this fair. We hope for a great turnout.