

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN

Here for you 860-335-2455



UPDATE FOR 1/9/2017

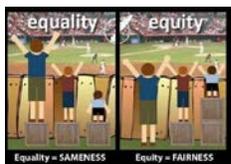
JUMP TO SCHOOL UPDATES:

Please **CLICK BELOW** to get the **DIGITAL BACKPACK** information for the listed school:

- [BG](#)
- [TIS](#)
- [TMS](#)
- [THS](#)

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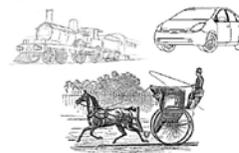
Mastery Based Learning – An introduction



Equity
over
Equality



Stimulate and Support
over
Rank and Sort



Transformative Practice
over
Tradition

What *is* Mastery Based Learning? To me, MBL represents HOPE and the future of education. Some have said education is necessary for true *equality* in our country and that it should be a *right*. I believe this is true but I also think a focus on *equality* falls short. Mastery Based Learning represents a natural evolution of *thinking* about equality and education; it is a recognition that we are *not* actually all the same. The term “equal” is insufficient to address the needs of the human condition given the history of people in our republic. Different people will *always* need different things. Giving every learner the exact *same* things will not maximize opportunity for them, and may not provide the greatest opportunities for success.

Over the years of American history and education, people have argued the education system exists in this country for a variety of reasons: to sustain the democracy, to indoctrinate, to prepare a suitable workforce, and so on. It seems to me it has typically lived up to these functions. It has never, however, truly been the *creation* of those that served in its ranks. Instead, educators have tended to function within the box we have inherited. We sow the seeds the best we can in the soil we were given. For a long time the conformity demanded by the system served the needs of the society. The system lived up to some of the ideals of Dewey, preparing citizens to participate in a democracy – but it also existed to rank and sort, and because of that an institutional paradox existed – one in which the institution purported to tout the ideals of democracy while being institutionally complicit in the depravation of some of those it educated, failing to truly help them attain “the American dream.”

Trouble is, when people do not come in *equal* then the ranking and the sorting tends to favor those that have the greatest advantages, or privileges, when they enter the system. This is true for both individuals and groups. The soil we are trying to sow the seeds in has some poison in it. The poison has been there so long, perhaps as long as 400 years, I am not sure we can even fully see what it would be like without it. The only way to clear the soil, or address the institutional challenges education faces, is to focus on the daily and weekly outcomes of those we serve. More than ranking them and sorting them into groups – we have to look at how we can maximize the outcomes of all involved, and overcome the poison that is present. The poison is poverty, classism, institutional racism, politics, and rigid tradition over transformative change.

There is a moral obligation to increase practices that generate *equity* in our schools. Our schools cannot create opportunity in the new economy as they are currently structured. The book *Postcapitalism – A Guide to Our Future* by Paul Mason speaks to the changes, and the needs of the new economy. The rank and sort system is an antiquated 19th century and 20th century relic designed to prepare a small number of

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students for creative thought and participation in the intelligentsia, and ranking and sorting the remaining greater numbers, many of them underprivileged, for human driven automation in factories or in agriculture. A caste system emerged, with the poor, women, and black and brown bodies occupying the lower rungs.

Educators and the citizenry have been left with the burden, and the opportunity, to clean the soil, to move the nation forward. This work is absolutely critical to the welfare of our democracy, and our society. We need *more* critical thinkers, and to get that, we need to practice more *equity*. We need to stimulate and support, over ranking and sorting. We need excellent progress monitoring methods, and fewer standardized tests.

The poisoned soil makes this task hard. Our traditions in education regarding how we deal with divergent behaviors, and attendance, and culture – are not maximizing opportunities for success. Tying assessment to compliance is a problem for those that find it hard to conform to a rigid and sometimes unfriendly and unforgiving system. A system that is more retribution focused, than restorative. We have a significant school to prison pipeline; a good book documenting this dynamic is *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander. At a time when our country is filling and funding its prisons, over-testing and increasingly privatizing its schools and diverting dollars from public schools, *community* public schools need to prepare *more* of these learners for the intelligentsia. As Yong Zhao points out in his books, *Catching Up or Leading the Way* and *World Class Learners - Educating Entrepreneurial Students*, machines will do any job that can be automated. Products are becoming *virtual*, created by groups of people working cooperatively and collaboratively together, sharing ideas, and most importantly, thinking creatively. Machines will do the rote and repetitive tasks – humans will do the *creative thinking*. The only process that will prepare them for this is a process that seeks to maximize students' *mastery* of the content and skills necessary. Toll taking jobs on the Mass Pike disappear, and jobs as App Programmers are borne.

In practical terms, what does this mean for us here in Tolland? It means putting state and commercial standardized testing into perspective. Proponents of limiting it argue that if you can tell how well students are going to do on these assessments by looking at their poverty levels and zip codes, then what is the point of the tests - how many times do we need to see those results? Skeptics of testing suggest getting tests like the PSAT and SAT out of our classrooms and class time, and back to the weekends. Regardless of the point of view, in Tolland developing awesome Progress Monitoring and Formative Assessment practices, evaluating them, is critical for true Mastery Based Learning to be successful. It means giving behavioral ramifications (not academic ones) for behavioral transgressions, and creating opportunities for students to attain mastery of content to the greatest extent of their natural abilities, to the farthest point of their “Zone of Proximal Development” as Vygotsky might say. It means accurate reporting of assessment and progress. It means educators as agents of change, with more time teaching and progress monitoring, and less time preparing students for a commercial test.

Henry Ford once said, “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses”. Education cannot merely become a faster horse, it needs to *transform*. We can do this together – and I believe a focus on Mastery Based Learning is the way.

I look forward to continuing this discussion with you over the next few months, and years. The work is perhaps some of the most important work ever done in education in our nation’s history.

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Equality = SAMENESS

Equality is about SAMENESS, it promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing.

BUT it can **only work IF everyone starts from the SAME place**, in this example equality only works if everyone is the same height.

Equity = FAIRNESS

EQUITY is about FAIRNESS, it's about making sure people get access to the same opportunities.

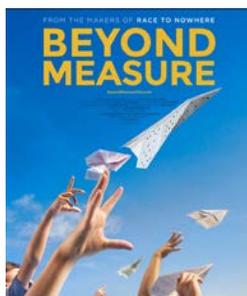
Sometimes our differences and/or history, can create barriers to participation, so we must **FIRST ensure EQUITY** before we can enjoy equality.

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Ten Principles of Mastery Based Learning

1. All learning expectations are clearly and consistently communicated to students and families, including long-term expectations (such as graduation requirements and graduation standards), short-term expectations (such as the specific learning objectives for a course or other learning experience), and general expectations (such as the performance levels used in the school's grading and reporting system).
2. Student achievement is evaluated against common learning standards and performance expectations that are consistently applied to all students regardless of whether they are enrolled in traditional courses or pursuing alternative learning pathways.
3. All forms of assessment are standards-based and criterion-referenced, and success is defined by the achievement of expected standards, not relative measures of performance or student-to-student comparisons.
4. Formative assessments measure learning progress during the instructional process, and formative-assessment results are used to inform instructional adjustments, teaching practices, and academic support.
5. Summative assessments evaluate learning achievement, and summative assessments results record a student's level of mastery at a specific point in time.
6. Academic progress and achievement are monitored and reported separately from work habits, character traits, and behaviors such as attendance and class participation, which are also monitored and reported.
7. Academic grades communicate learning progress and achievement to students and families, and grades are used to facilitate and improve the learning process.
8. Students are given multiple opportunities to improve their work when they fail to meet expected standards.
9. Students can demonstrate learning progress and achievement in multiple ways through differentiated assessments, personalized-learning options, or alternative learning pathways.
10. Students are given opportunities to make important decisions about their learning, which includes contributing to the design of learning experiences and learning pathways.

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**Come for our February 1st, 2017 showing of
BEYOND MEASURE
7:00 PM in the Tolland High School Auditorium.**

See this educational review in [Edutopia](#) as well as from [The New York Times review](#).

The movie will be followed by a short discussion about the topic of testing, innovation, magnets/charters, and public school practices. Food and beverages will be provided.

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Come meet the new Principal of Tolland Middle School

JANUARY 24, 2017

6:30 PM

IN THE STAFF LOUNGE AT TOLLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

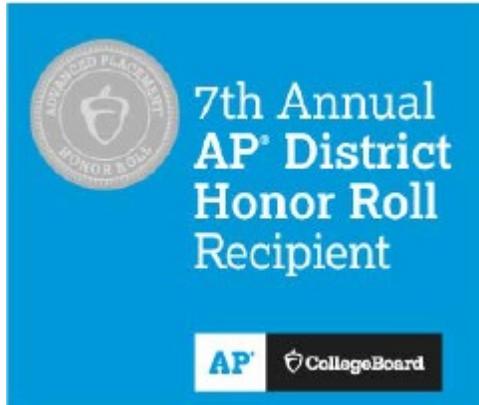
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED



Announcing the new Principal of Tolland Middle School, **Mary Grande!** Mary comes to us by way of Bolton, where she has been an Assistant Principal, and Principal for almost 10 years. Before that Mary served as a Teacher, Administrator, and Athletic Director for the Manchester Public Schools. Mary has a lineage in education with father who served in the field of education, and two grown children - both educators. As you might imagine, in her decades of educational experience she has done it all: teaching, scheduling, curriculum implementation, discipline, parent and community involvement, teacher evaluation, safe school climate work, assessment work, Scientifically Research Based Interventions, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Beyond all of this, she is a gregarious, personable, kind, intelligent, and dynamic leader. She is student centered and focused on the love and humanity required to help children and an organization be successful!

Please welcome her to our Tolland Public School community. She will be making her first visit to Tolland Middle School on December 14th to meet the staff, and hopes to join us early in the New Year. A meet and greet with parents will be scheduled soon after she starts.

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Tolland has made the AP Honor Roll:

Districts on the AP Honor Roll have simultaneously increased access to Advanced Placement® coursework while maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP Exams.



Mark them in your calendar!

Breakfast with the Superintendent 2016-2017:

February 6, March 6, April 3, May 1, and June 5. Breakfast is at 9:00 am at the Board of Education Office.

I hope to see you there!

NOTICE:

Joint Meeting with Town Council, Planning & Zoning Commission and Board of Education

Event Date:

Tuesday, January 31, 2017 - 7:00pm

The public is welcome to join these three entities for a presentation of demographic and housing trends affecting Tolland on Tuesday, January 31, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. at the Fire Training Center, 191 Merrow Road. The second half of the meeting will focus on the role that the Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development plays in setting the path for our community’s future. The Plan, which is a long-range land

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use plan, is due for an update. The discussion will bring key entities and the public up to speed on what the plan is, how it can be used, and seek initial ideas on techniques for engaging the public on the Plan.



CHECK OUT THIS AWESOME COMMUNITY EVENT!
TOWN OF TOLLAND EAGLE FREEZE

[Click here](#)

Athletic Openings



We are seeking a High School level Head Girls Cross Country Coach for the Tolland Public Schools Athletic Program

**The position requires Connecticut State Coaching Certification
Current CPR and First Aid Courses**

For more information and to apply visit our website at

www.tolland.k12.ct.us

District Offices/Human Resources/Employment Opportunities

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2017- 2018 KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Birch Grove Primary School will be hosting a Kindergarten Parent Meeting on March 9, 2017 from 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the gym at Birch Grove Primary School. This meeting is for parents/guardians to hear about an overview of Kindergarten. No children please.

Registration packets will be available at this meeting.

Kindergarten Registration of 2017-2018 kindergartners will take place on March 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, 2017 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., when packets can be dropped off at the Birch Grove Primary School office. There will be one late night on March 16th from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. No appointments are necessary.

Preschool Learning Center
Birch Grove Primary School
Application Process Timeline

Please adhere to the following:

1. Pick up an application and sign up for a screening date between January 10, 2017 and March 10, 2017 in the Birch Grove Primary School office.
2. Complete the application.
3. Return completed application to the Birch Grove Primary School office. The application must be returned to us by March 10, 2017. Forms received after March 10, 2017 will not be accepted.
4. Attend the screening session you signed up for. Screening dates are: March 17 and March 24, 2017.
5. You will be notified by mail regarding the screening results.

**Parents are strongly encouraged to attend the
Parent Information Night
Thursday, February 23, 2017
5:00-6:00 p.m.
Parents only
Preschool Classroom A5
Birch Grove Primary School
Please come in through the front entrance of the building**

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Tolland Family Resource Center

Preschool Childcare Activity Fair January 10, 2017

6:00-7:30 PM. in the Birch Grove Primary Cafeteria.

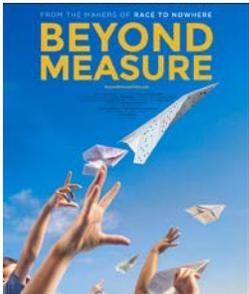
Home Daycare providers, Childcare Centers, Preschools and Programs that offer activities for preschoolers and school aged children in town are invited to "advertise" their program. Programs will send a representative to speak with the adults about their programs and someone to entertain the children with an organized activity. Registration information will be available. This program is FREE and children are welcome.

For further information contact Laurel Leibowitz (860) 870-6750 x 30215

Also that we are enrolling new sessions of playgroups, spanish, cooking and art classes for children ages 0-12 beginning in January. Information can be found on our website www.myteacherpages.com/webpages/tollandfrc

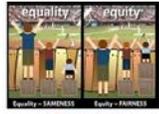
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COMMUNITY AND BUDGET WORKSHOPS

BUDGET WORKSHOPS-THS Library – 7:00 PM	COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS
<p>January 9, 2017 January 18, 2017 February 15, 2017</p> <p>** Please note if it snows on January 9 or January 18, the make-up day will be January 23.</p>	<p><u>BEYOND MEASURE FILM</u></p> <p>February 1, 2017 7:00 pm – Tolland High School</p>  <p>https://youtu.be/m4LTV8jat2o</p> <p>In <i>Race to Nowhere</i>, director Vicki Abeles unveiled the dark side of America’s achievement culture. In her follow up documentary, <i>Beyond Measure</i>, Abeles travels to public schools across the country as they embark on a journey to transcend the limits of our outmoded, test-driven education system and create a more equitable, empowering, student-centered education culture from the ground up. By putting research and innovative models into practice, groundbreaking school communities are transforming how and what they teach. In chorus with experts including Sir Ken Robinson, Linda Darling-Hammond, Yong Zhao, Alison Gopnik, Jo Boaler and Daniel Pink, the change makers in <i>Beyond Measure</i> prove that both a new vision and a higher purpose are within reach for American education.</p>

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Mastery-Based Learning Workshop



*Equity
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DATE CHANGE

MARCH 1st, 2017 7:00 pm-Tolland Middle School

Department of Developmental Services: From age 3 to Adulthood



**Presented by:
Mary Stark, DMR Transition Advisor**

March 16, 2017 –

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM THS

Come learn about:

- Why I should apply for DDS Eligibility at an early age?
- What resources might be available for younger students?
- What needs to happen at age 18? Guardianship, SSI and Medicaid!
- How do families arrange for supports? Medicaid Waiver?

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- How do school systems and DDS work together?
- How to we plan at age 21?
- Who are the adult service agencies in your area?
- How is DMR funding established for your son or daughter?
- How Does DDS and the Department of Rehabilitation Services work together?

PLEASE RSVP to: Patti Hess, Director of Pupil Services
860.870.6818x6

Early Identification and Treatment of Childhood Anxiety Disorders



April 5, 2017 – 7:00 pm- THS Library.

Dr. Elizabeth Davis is a licensed clinical psychologist at the Anxiety Disorders Center at the Institute of Living. Dr. Davis specializes in working with children and adolescents with anxiety disorders. She has particular expertise in incorporating elements of mindfulness and acceptance-based treatments into Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. Dr. Davis has presented at numerous professional conferences, schools, and academic medical settings on the topic of childhood anxiety disorders.

Talk title: “Early Identification and Treatment of Childhood Anxiety Disorders”.

Learning objectives:

- Identifying early warning signs of childhood anxiety disorders
- Understanding evidence-based, gold-standard treatments that are available
- Discussing strategies families can use at home to effectively address anxiety symptoms

Collaborating with school system to address symptoms across environments

Topic to be Announced!

- June 7, 2017 –7:00 pm-

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APRIL 5, 2017-WORKSHOP ON CHILDHOOD ANXIETY DISORDERS

Dr. Elizabeth Davis is a licensed clinical psychologist at the Anxiety Disorders Center at the Institute of Living. Dr. Davis specializes in working with children and adolescents with anxiety disorders. She has particular expertise in incorporating elements of mindfulness and acceptance-based treatments into Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. Dr. Davis has presented at numerous professional conferences, schools, and academic medical settings on the topic of childhood anxiety disorders.

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- Discussing strategies families can use at home to effectively address anxiety symptoms
- Collaborating with school system to address symptoms across environments

TOLLAND HIGH SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Mark your calendar:

February 9, 2017 – 6:30 pm

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www.facebook.com/tollandpublicschools

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Search for:

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Or

[Superint. Willett](#)

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LINKS AND OTHER ARTICLES OF POTENTIAL INTEREST

[School Diversity in Action](#)

[How Non-Minority Students Also Benefit from Racially Diverse Schools](#)

[Teaching Tolerance](#)

[Forgiveness Can Improve Mental and Physical Health](#)