



From the Bureau of Special Education

Brief from the Chief

The current economic situation in Connecticut is bound to be heightening concerns, questions, emotions, and anxiety levels across districts and programs. With one of the largest fiscal budget gaps in state history, Connecticut is in the middle of an extraordinarily tough legislative session to identify solutions which will support its citizens. Schools and organizations are being challenged to think creatively as to how they will maintain a high quality education for all students amid rising costs and anticipated cuts to state aid. The Bureau of Special Education (BSE) staff strives to keep the perspectives of those whom we serve in the forefront as we move into a new budget calendar and are faced with tough decisions. Like many other state agencies, the BSE is cognizant of tensions likely present across local education agencies and encourages readers to stay informed on the issues through our *Bureau Bulletin*.



Anne Louise Thompson, Chief of the Bureau of Special Education speaks to the Back to School audience this past fall. Photo: SERC

The BSE recognizes that there are and will continue to be activities and tasks required by districts for the purposes of meeting federal and state requirements that may be perceived as inconvenient or unnecessarily onerous. While much of what the BSE does concerns compliance with these mandates, the BSE staff constantly reminds itself about the current economic climate and how it affects schools, families, and students. For the remainder of this fiscal year, the BSE will focus on how to serve our districts and programs with increased efficiency. We will report the latest information regarding funding, grant opportunities, and resources available across Connecticut through our monthly Bureau Bulletin. Additionally, we are inviting readers to submit creative ideas around any low cost or no cost efforts underway that are helping to ensure compliance with IDEA 2004 (please refer to Bureau Happenings in this issue). This is an opportunity to strengthen partnerships and share resources. Despite challenging times, there remains a great deal of enthusiasm pertaining to how the BSE and districts will partner in support of children and youth with disabilities. We look forward to tailoring our service and support.



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Mark Your Calendars...

- SEDAC-G March final certification statutory due date March 1st

We appreciate the district-level energy it takes to educate over half a million kids in Connecticut!

Featured Story:

CSPD: Developing Professionals

Connecticut's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) serves to improve the quality of educational and early intervention services and programs for infants, toddlers, children, and young adults with special needs through the effective preparation and ongoing professional development of educators, service providers, and families. It is through the development and implementation of the CSPD that the goal of an adequate supply of highly qualified personnel can be realized.

CSPD was mandated for both Part B (ages 3 through 21) and Part C (ages birth to 3) by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) until the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004. Though no longer mandated for Part B, leaders in the state of Connecticut choose to continue this work to ensure that the free and appropriate public education (FAPE) of students with disabilities includes preparation of highly qualified staff. In order to ensure broad-based participation in the development, review, and periodic update of Connecticut's CSPD, the Department, through SERC, has established the Connecticut Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Council. The CT CSPD Council seeks to enhance and sustain one seamless system, Birth – 21, and includes representatives from a variety of constituencies and interests (e.g., general and special education, early intervention, institutions of higher education, families, state agencies, professional organizations, related services).



Membership on the Council requires participation at quarterly Council meetings and priority workgroup sessions dedicated to examining issues of current interest and need. In addition, members are expected to share pertinent Council information with their constituencies. Members take leadership for some of the ongoing work of the CT CSPD Council which includes:

- Data Analysis: Review of Existing Data and Identification of Additional Data Needs;
- Needs Assessment: Monitor Needs and How They Are Met;
- Identification of Personnel Needs (Retention and Recruitment);
- Identification of Professional Development Needs (In-Service and Pre-Service);
- Networking and Establishment/Development of Collaborative Partnerships;
- Information Exchange; and
- Monitoring of Research and Trends on "Best Practices," Legislation, and "Cutting Edge" Issues

The Council provides a forum for ongoing communication among multiple stakeholder groups and policymakers concerning current personnel development needs, practices, and policies. Follow this link to the CT CSPD website where you will find information about current membership, meeting schedules, meeting agendas, and [more](#).

The 2007-2008 Connecticut Special Education Parent Survey Summary Report is posted on the SDE [website](#). Click here for the complete [article](#) on the survey purpose and steps for 2008-09 by education consultant, Colleen Hayles.

State of the State

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Commissioner: Title I & Title III Regulation Changes



Commissioner McQuillan disseminated a [letter](#) in January 2009 summarizing changes in regulations released in October by the U.S. Department of Education which will directly impact districts and programs [Title I and Title III](#). The final regulations require districts to provide timely and clear notice to parents regarding public school choice and related costs, data requirements, and concerns around supplanting with federal dollars. The regulations and anticipated changes specifically address all students under Title I and Title III. A complete copy of the final Title I, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/finrule/2008-4/102908a.html>. Please contact Michelle Rosado, Education Consultant, at michelle.rosado@ct.gov if you have any questions regarding the regulations for NCLB Public School Choice.

Connecticut Coalition For the Education of Children: Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Coalition is developing a set of recommendations and tools related to the education of students who are deaf and hard of hearing in Connecticut including a tool to assist Planning and Placement Teams (PPTs) in the identification of appropriate communication supports and services as required in the individualized education program (IEP). For more details about the Coalition, developing tools and 2008-09 activities, click [here](#) or e-mail Colleen Hayles at colleen.hayles@ct.gov.

Developmental Delay Definition

A reminder to school districts that each should be aligning policies and practices to accommodate the disability category and definition for "developmental delay" along with the recommended criterion contained in Connecticut statutes. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) offers [policy guidance](#) to determine a "significant developmental delay"; questions about the criteria regarding this category, eligibility determinations, or inclusive practices concerning preschool special education may be directed to Maria Synodi at 860-713-6941.

CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist: Research Initiated



Joe Amenta and Janet Stuck from the Bureau of Student Assessment Fall 2008. Photo by SERC.

Connecticut has joined a consortium of five state/jurisdictions, funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, to develop research evidence in support of alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards. The CSDE will conduct three research studies on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) [Skills Checklist](#) over the next three years in partnership with The University of Connecticut. The Skills Checklist Validation Study explores how teachers use the Skills Checklist in their classrooms. The second study examines how the scoring rubric is used to rate students' skills. The third study is designed to investigate the intended and unintended consequences of the Skills Checklist. Click [here](#) for more information or contact Janet Stuck in the Bureau

of Student Assessment at 860-713-6837. Please visit the SDE [link](#) for CMT/CAPT Modified Assessment System (MAS) information.

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Bureau Happenings

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Register [now](#) for the
2009 Race and Education
Symposium!

Indicator 11: Evaluation Timelines – Noncompliance Notice

The CSDE requires electronic data submission of district evaluation activities leading to an eligibility determination conducted by each local education agency (LEA) for children ages 3 to 21 years. Data are collected annually on all children for whom parental consent to conduct an initial evaluation was received as part of indicator #11, a required measure in the Connecticut State Performance Plan (SPP) used to monitor compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004 regarding initial evaluations (34 CFR 300.301): The “percent of children with parental consent to evaluate, were evaluated and eligibility determined within 60 days (or state established timelines).” Based on 2007-08 data, 44 school districts demonstrated noncompliance with this target as < 95% of the students’ evaluations and IEP implementation were completed within Connecticut’s 45 school day timeline. These 44 districts will receive notification in February indicating their level of compliance with this indicator. Districts below 95 percent are required to complete the following:

- submit evaluation timelines data on initial referrals completed to date during the 2008-09 school year for Department’s review using the CSDE online web system; and
- provide a signed statement of assurance that the district’s 2008-2009 year-end data for evaluation timelines will demonstrate substantial compliance with the indicator and have it signed by the employee and/or supervisor responsible for submitting timely, accurate data to the Department for this indicator.

Districts identified with noncompliance given Indicator 11 data will receive instructions on data submission using the CSDE website so they are timely and accurate for the March 20, 2009 deadline. The signed statement of assurance is due to the BSE on or before **March 20, 2009** via fax, e-mail, or regular mail. Dr. Jacqueline Kelleher is the education consultant assigned to this indicator for 2008-09. She can be reached by e-mail at jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov.

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BSE Submits the Annual SPP and APR!

The Connecticut Part B State Performance Plan (Part B – SPP) updates and Annual Performance Report (Part B – APR) were successfully submitted to OSEP on February 2, 2009. The SDE is required to report annually to the public on the performance of each local educational agency located in the State on the targets in the State’s performance plan. Please refer to the BSE [website](#) for the latest information from OSEP and the SDE regarding APR determinations.

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Bureau Happenings continued

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Updated Directory of Approved Private Special Education Programs

The Directory of Approved Private Special Education Programs was revised on January 16, 2009. It is available on the Bureau of Special Education's website. Additionally, the Wawa Education and Retreat Center, an approved private special education program that provides only extended school year services, is not seeking re-approval this year. They remain in the directory as their approval is effective until June 30, 2009. Please direct any questions to Donna Cambria at 860-713-6925 or donna.cambria@ct.gov.

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Meet the Bureau of Special Education

The Bureau of Special Education (BSE) is pleased to share an update regarding our recent expansion thanks to new staff and consultants joining the BSE in January 2009. The BSE extends a sincere welcome to three new education consultants and two support staff. Our new education consultants include Rhonda Kempton, Michael Tavernier, and Sarah Harvey; new support staff include Carol Leddy and Marvyann Montague. For a description of their staffing assignments in addition to a comprehensive overview of BSE Staff biographies for all professionals comprising the BSE, [click here](#) for the full article. We enjoy serving you and look forward to increasing our ability to support efforts with our increased staffing and expertise.



Perri Murdica, education consultant with the BSE, speaks with paraprofessionals November 2008.

Revised IEP Forms Available

Districts were alerted to several proposed changes to the individualized education program (IEP) form concerning transition planning when BSE consultant, Gail Mangs, presented IEP [amendments](#) at the Fifth Annual Back-to-School meeting. The revised IEP forms effective for all IEPs released on or after October 1, 2009 are now [complete](#). Gail is available to clarify reasons behind the changes or to answer specific questions about using the forms. Please contact Gail at gail.mangs@ct.gov or 860-713-6938. Additionally, Dr. Patricia Anderson is available regarding transition services and the use of the revised IEP forms. She can be reached at patricia.anderson@ct.gov or 860-713-6923.

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Federal Focus

On February 17, 2009, the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) was signed into law by President Obama. Over \$12 billion is being directed toward IDEA Part B & C grant programs made to state and local education agencies. Connecticut families and schools personnel are eager to learn how this passage will directly impact districts and programs. There are still several action steps necessary at both the federal and state levels before having accurate, complete information to share regarding the amount and availability of funding and any requirements. We encourage districts and programs to consider the *Bureau Bulletin* as a resource and watch for updates. Preliminary information is available through [U.S. Department of Education](#).

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Federal Focus

Functional Behavioral Assessment Guidance

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has provided informal guidance to State Education Agencies regarding Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) (as outlined in attached [Letter to Christensen](#)) with respect to when conducting this assessment is appropriate as well as when parental consent should be obtained by district and program staff. For example, parent consent is not required if the FBA is used in the context of a school wide effort to improve overall student behavior in the school, unless consent is required from the parents of all children in the school prior to conducting such an evaluation 34 CFR § 300.300(d)(1)(ii). Please watch the *Bulletin* for further BSE guidance regarding these assessments.

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U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor

All Americans have the right to a good education, whether they have disabilities or not. The [U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor](#) is working to ensure that students and individuals with disabilities have access to a quality education and employment, and are given the opportunity to succeed. The current Committee on Education and Labor was established on January 4, 2007. Representative Joe Courtney of CT serves on this committee. The Education and Labor Committee's purpose is to ensure that Americans' needs are addressed so that students and workers may move forward in a changing school system and a competitive global economy. The committee and its five subcommittees oversee education and workforce programs that affect all Americans, from early learning through secondary education, from job training through retirement. The Committee on Education and Labor oversees federal programs and initiatives dealing with education at all levels -- from preschool through high school to higher education and continuing education. These include:

- elementary and secondary education initiatives, including the No Child Left Behind Act, school choice for low-income families, special education (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), teacher quality & teacher training, scientifically-based reading instruction, and vocational and technical education;
- higher education programs (the Higher Education Act), to support college access for low and middle-income students and help families pay for college;
- early childhood & preschool education programs including Head Start;
- school lunch and child nutrition programs;
- financial oversight of the U.S. Department of Education;
- programs and services for the care and treatment of at-risk youth, child abuse prevention, and child adoption;
- educational research and improvement;
- adult education; and
- anti-poverty programs, including the Community Services Block Grant Act and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Readers are encouraged to monitor the latest education news and events regarding federal policies, budgets, and action plans through the U.S. House Committee [website](#). The latest policies and initiatives concerning disability issues are frequently posted to this location.



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Resources & Opportunities

Center for Children's Advocacy

The Center for Children's Advocacy, Inc. is a non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Connecticut School of Law in Hartford, CT. This organization hosts a [web-site](#) which includes information regarding advocacy, the law, and protections with respect to children's issues that readers may find helpful. There are links dedicated to federal and state laws and regulations as well as links to presentations and papers made by national agencies committed to promoting awareness of legal issues currently relevant in special and general education.

Autism Reading

Several readers have contacted the BSE looking for some recommended reading concerning characteristics of autism and building instructional interventions that will address the needs of the student. One important document to review is *Educating Children with Autism*. Published by the National Research Council. 2001, it is available through the [National Academies Press](#). With respect to readings on developing effective programming, The National Early Childhood [TA Center](#) provides a wealth of information at no charge. Readers are encouraged to contact the [SERC library](#) for a comprehensive listing of materials and resources available online and/or in the physical stacks. The SERC consultant assigned to autism is Kate Weingartner who can be reached by e-mail: weingartner@ctserc.org. Other materials and helpful links are located on Connecticut's Department of Developmental Services [web link](#).

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Call for Compliance Creativity

Does your district have a great resource sharing idea? Are you using a cost-effective educational or administrative practice that saves time and energy? Have you found an innovative way to streamline and monitor school processes? The BSE is seeking to share and exchange information regarding cost-effective practices occurring in Connecticut districts and programs. We'd like to learn more concerning efforts that have been enhancing cost-effectiveness while sustaining or improving results for students with disabilities. Please consider sharing your stories and experiences for a late Spring publication. We're particularly interested in creative ideas around staff development, use of technology, and regional sharing of resources that build capacity. Please send your information electronically to [Dr. Jacqueline Kelleher](#) by March 31,

Nondiscrimination Statement

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons and does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws. Inquiries regarding the Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to the Affirmative Action Administrator, State of Connecticut Department of Education, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457-1543, 860-807-2071.

Connecticut State Department of Education

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The CSDE [website](#) provides information and resources regarding paraprofessionals through the CALI initiatives!