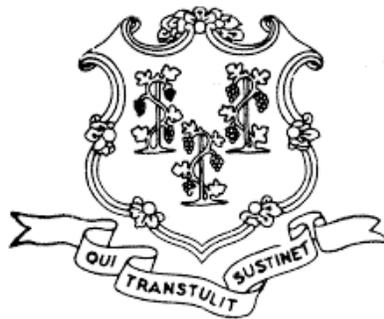




**MORE Commission  
Special Education Select Working Group**



**Recommendations for Legislative Action  
February 18, 2015**

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February 18, 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

We invite you to examine the MORE Commission Special Education Select Working Group 2015 Recommendations for Legislative Action.

The Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission was created by House Speaker J. Brendan Sharkey in 2010 to work on finding solutions to issues that face Connecticut's municipalities. The Special Education Select Working Group was formed as a sub-committee of the MORE Commission in December, 2013 with the mission of determining how to provide special education in a more effective manner. Our group works in a bi-partisan and collaborative manner, and brings together legislators, town and school officials, advocates and citizens to address critical issues in special education.

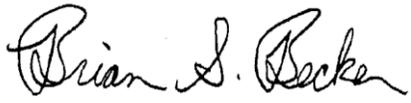
Over the past year, the working group held information gathering meetings to try to ascertain how the existing special education system works, what programs are available, and how those programs are funded. Some additional specific meeting topics have included the role of private special education providers, the role of the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) in special education, the effectiveness of existing transition services (from the K-12 system to post-graduation opportunities), and how special education services are delivered in other states. We also held a series of public hearings in different locations around the state to gain a better perspective on the special education system at a local level. During each hearing we asked parents, teachers, advocates, administrators, and other interested parties to offer testimony in response to the broad question: ***What are the systematic challenges to special education and what are some possible solutions?*** The responses and suggestions we received and the information we learned during those hearings was invaluable and informed our recommendations for legislative action.

This document represents the culmination of our year-long efforts to provide the Connecticut General Assembly with a set of working recommendations for legislative action. In recognition of the diversity of opinion on many of the topics our group addressed, this report is divided, within each subject, between those action items to which a consensus of our members agreed, and those action items that had significant support but did not ultimately garner the endorsement of each member of the working group present.

Our group will continue to meet throughout the coming year to begin work on our next set of recommendations for legislative action and we welcome and encourage your participation in this process. If you have additional questions about the work of the MORE Commission and the

Special Education Select Working Group, please visit us online at <http://www.housedems.ct.gov/MORE/SPED/meetings.asp>.

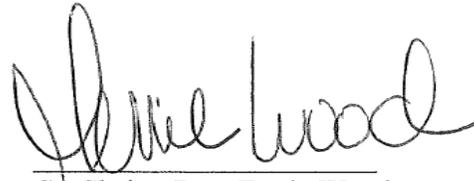
Sincerely,



Co-Chair - Rep. Brian Becker



Co-Chair - Rep. Michelle Cook



Co-Chair - Rep. Terrie Wood

## **Recommendations for Legislative Action**

### **I. Special Education Funding and Related Proposals**

- Remove or raise the cap on the excess cost grant to school districts and reduce the threshold required to trigger the excess cost grant from the state (currently, the state pays for special education costs once a student in a given district requires services exceeding 4.5 times the average per pupil expenditure in that district, up to the point when the cap on this excess cost grant is reached).
- Track federal IDEA funds that flow through the State Department of Education (SDE) to local districts and Medicaid funds that flow through the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and other relevant state agencies to local districts.

### **II. The IEP**

- Make the current IEP form more user-friendly for administrators, teachers, and parents.
- Implement a statewide system to digitally complete and store IEP forms that allows parents, local district staff, and state officials to access them at will. This system may be based on the Illinois Statewide Online IEP Database System (I-Star) and the web-based IEP tutorial developed by University of Illinois Professor James Shriner or other similar programs. Teacher, administrator, and parent input should be considered when adopting or creating a new IEP system.
- Increase the font size and enhance the visibility and content of the description of the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) and the CPAC contact information contained in all IEP form packets used across the state. A note that SDE's Bureau of Special Education is the lead state agency for all special education inquiries, as well as the contact information for the agency, should also be included conspicuously in all IEP form packets.
- Ensure that the recommendations of the 2011 IEP Task Force, as passed into law in Public Act 12-173, are properly implemented (please see Appendix C).

### **III. Improve Services for Students with Language Related Learning Disabilities**

- K-3 students must receive explicit and systematic instruction in foundational language and literacy skills including phonemic awareness, phonics (decoding and encoding), reading fluency, sentence and text comprehension, and written expression. This instruction must be delivered using an evidence-based reading program for all students taught by highly-skilled and well-trained professional teachers of reading, experienced in delivering reading and language instruction to diverse student populations.

- The General Assembly's Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) should study the effectiveness of new and existing reading and writing instructional programs designed to accomplish these goals for both disabled and nondisabled students in all Connecticut public schools. The Committee may consider, among other programs, the Windward School (NY) intensive writing program and the Amistad Academy language literacy program as possible models.

#### **IV. Teacher and Staff Training**

- Modify teacher certification requirements to include additional special education courses and special education classroom techniques in areas such as reading, differentiated instruction, social-emotional learning, cultural competencies and assistive technology. Incentivize double certification in special education and provide regional training opportunities for current teachers (coordinated with current in-service days) to bring current general education teachers up to speed on special education classroom techniques. Also include a training on the basic rights and obligations of teachers under IDEA.
- Create a paraprofessional training program on special education classroom techniques and other relevant job skills. Offer training (possibly at the state or regional level) at no cost to the paraprofessional and consider offering training before school, after school, or during work days using a rotation system to ensure adequate paraprofessional coverage at all times.
- Provide additional low cost or free teacher, paraprofessional, and administrator training opportunities at the regional or state level. Encourage districts or state or regional entities, when appropriate, to set up online training programs.
- Provide regular teacher, paraprofessional, and administrator training on how to properly implement the scientific research based intervention (SRBI) tiered system that was passed into law in 2010 to improve student outcomes and identify candidates for special education services.
- Review and consider the recommendations of the December 17, 2014 Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee report on School Paraprofessionals Staffing (please see Appendix D).

#### **V. Speech, Physical, and Occupational Therapy**

- Improve speech, physical, and occupational therapy offerings for special education students with an emphasis on developing life skills. This may be done regionally through RESC or district staff using a model similar to the one employed in the Meriden Public School System.

- Given the shortage of qualified speech, physical, and occupational therapists in Connecticut's schools, the state should explore possible incentives for qualified candidates to enter these critical fields.

## **VI. Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) and Registered Behavior Technicians**

- Study the possible advantages of including BCBAs and registered behavior technicians as part of the special education team in schools across the state. This study should include an evaluation of standards for BCBA licensure at the state level and the feasibility and utility of implementing applied behavioral analysis (ABA) services in all Connecticut public schools. The study should also include possible incentives for qualified candidates to enter this critical field and incentives for Connecticut institutions of higher education to offer BCBA training courses.

## **VII. Transition Services**

- Require one state agency (such as SDE's Bureau of Special Education) to understand and coordinate all transition services programs provided within the state, including those administered by other state agencies (DDS, BRS, etc.). This lead agency will not assume the responsibilities of other state entities currently involved in transition services, but will become the one-stop resource for all parents, administrators, teachers, and other interested parties that have questions or need advice about transition services.
- Require all agencies involved in transition services (SDE, DDS, and BRS or a new Department of Special Education) to make available to special education students, parents, and other family members a simple fact sheet listing the agencies involved in transition services, the basic services they provide, and the continuum of the least restrictive environment options in transition services. The lead state agency for transition services will be responsible for ensuring the creation of fact sheets and for making them available to special education students, parents and other family members.
- Require SDE's Bureau of Special Education to ensure that local districts, starting in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade year and going forward, notify and educate special education students and parents about transition services, including what general services, programs, and options may be available upon aging out of the K-12 education system.
- Require all agencies involved in transition services to regularly collect, assimilate, and report on longitudinal data concerning special education student outcomes (employment, DDS and BRS program participation, etc.) to better inform future special education and transition services policy decisions.
- Properly fund transition programs to reduce funding uncertainty and avoid coverage gaps between exiting the special education system and adult programs.

- Task one or more staff persons at the school, district, or regional level with ensuring that transition planning takes place for all special education students and with assisting in job placement or establishing and attaining other post-graduate plans.
- Review and consider the recommendations of the December 17, 2014 Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee report on Transitional Services for Youth and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (please see Appendix E).

#### **VIII. Transportation**

- Utilize regional transportation models, such as a model administered by the RESCs, public transit districts, or some other regional entity, to transport students with disabilities.

#### **IX. Summer Programming**

- Establish or increase capacity for students in need in summer programs to prevent them from backsliding, educationally and socially, over the long break. Regional approaches to providing these services, possibly at the RESC level, should be encouraged.

#### **X. Equipment Sharing**

- Study the implementation of an assistive technology equipment sharing program similar to that administered by Nebraska's Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP), under the umbrella of SDE, the RESCs, or some other state or regional entity.

#### **XI. Parent Training and Advocacy**

- Clarify the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center's (CPAC's) role as an information clearing house for parents, advocates, and school personnel who have questions about the special education system as a whole and the services that are available to students. SDE should provide full, complete, and accurate information on these topics to CPAC so they may pass it on to special education parents, advocates, and school personnel.
- Create or enhance and publicize a basic, in-person training (possibly run by CPAC) on the agencies, staff and services available and involved in the special education system for parents.
- Task one staff person at the school, district, or regional level with providing parents with additional training opportunities.

## **XII. Private Special Education Providers**

- Regularly audit all private special education school facilities that accept state or municipal funds to educate children in order to ensure that such funds are spent appropriately and effectively. This provision is not meant to require audits of private special education providers who are independent contractors, such as occupational and physical therapists, but is rather intended to apply to private school facilities that educate special education students using public special education funds. Audits should include a thorough financial review as well as an examination of the private special education school facility's programming, possibly incorporating surprise site visits.
- Study the certifications of teachers and staff and tuition rates at private special education school facilities accepting public school students.
- Require some type of monitoring (between SDE, the sending district, and the private facility) to ensure that student education plans are modified effectively within the bounds of the common core standards.
- Require private special education providers to provide their audited financial statements (or equivalent documentation) to any requesting school district that uses the provider's services.

## **XIII. Reciprocity of Licensure for Education Professionals**

- SDE should be directed to establish standards for reciprocity of school professional credentialing with surrounding states that hold their educators to similarly high standards. SDE should also pursue reciprocity agreements with the credentialing entities of those states.

## **XIV. Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) Special Education Regionalization Proposal**

- **Overview:**
  - Look at turning the RESCs into regional special education districts for the purposes of providing direct student services where economies of scale may be realized and for providing support services such as teacher, administrator, and paraprofessional training. The RESCs may also continue current non-special education regional programs.
- **Provision of Services:**
  - The RESCs will expand regional direct service programs for students in areas of special education where economies of scale would lead to a better student experience and cost savings for local districts. Such areas may include autism services, occupational therapy services, physical therapy services, speech therapy services,

- services for students with Down syndrome, literacy services, etc. Many of these services will be based at regional special education centers administered by the RESCs. The current IEP/PPT process will continue to be used to identify when it is appropriate for students to be placed in regional or local special education programs.
- To the extent possible, in order to facilitate federally required mainstreaming and to reduce infrastructure costs, the RESCs should look to locate regional special education centers within existing general education schools. Given declining student enrollments, this will be an effective use of public resources.
  - The RESCs should look to create enough regional special education centers to ensure that students do not generally have to travel more than a certain number of minutes from their homes to receive services without the consent of the student's parents. One hour is the current maximum allowable time without parental permission according to Connecticut Education and Culture Regulation Sec. 10-76d-19(a) (please see Appendix B).
  - The RESCs should look to develop, in partnership with local districts, a regional transportation plan for students participating in regional special education center programs. The RESCs will be responsible for funding this regional transportation system.
  - The RESCs may explore providing additional services to assist special education students, such as establishing summer and after-school programs.
  - The RESCs should look to expand their current professional development offerings by offering high quality, low or no cost programs at the regional level for teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals. These training programs should include regular offerings in effective scientific research based intervention (SRBI) implementation, classroom techniques for working with special needs students, and other behavior and special education topics that will keep staff current with the most up-to-date classroom and administrative practices.
  - The RESCs may employ expert staff to work in the regional special education centers and to travel to or be based from other schools where specialist services are needed throughout their area of operation. RESC staff levels at regional special education centers and other area schools will be based on the need for specialists to work with students who have a particular disability within a particular geographic area. For example, if there is only one student in a geographic area who has a particular need, the local RESC may choose not to create a regional program at the regional special education center, but rather may decide to dispatch a RESC specialist to that student's home school instead.
  - SDE's Bureau of Special Education will periodically audit the RESCs to ensure that they provide excellent services, properly implement IEPs, and spend state and municipal special education funds effectively.

**XV. Reorganize Special Education Administration at the State Level**

- Require all state entities (agencies, bureaus, etc.) directly involved in providing educational, healthcare, and transition services to special education students to create and implement detailed and enforceable interagency agreements to ensure the proper provision of services without gaps or duplication.

**XVI. Due Process and the Burden of Proof**

- The working group has heard testimony from parents, student advocates, school districts, and hearing officers concerning this issue. Meritorious points were made on all sides. The working group recommends that the Education Committee continue the conversation as to whether a proper balance has been struck and in placing the burden of proof on school districts in special education due process hearings.
- Limit the time for each party to present its case in a special education due process hearing to three days, so that each hearing will last no longer than six days in total. Grant the hearing officer the authority to authorize additional days for case presentation if he or she deems it is necessary for a full and fair disclosure of the facts required to arrive at a decision.
- Institute a required step, prior to a special education due process hearing, that helps the parties realistically assess the options available to better meet the educational needs of the child in question without the expense and controversy of a full hearing. A state employed and trained “adjudicator” or “conciliator” could administer this process. Retired advocates, administrators, or former members of the judiciary could be considered as possible candidates for the adjudicator or conciliator role. Adjudicators or conciliators would have the discretion to recommend educational services or a cost sharing for services, in addition to the settlement proposals made by each party (the district and the student’s parents or guardian). Either party would still preserve the right to proceed to a due process hearing following this new process, but the decision of the adjudicator or conciliator would be admissible in that hearing.
- Explore the possibility of expanding the federally funded PPT facilitator project to additional school districts. This project currently places professional facilitators in some PPT meetings to resolve issues between parties before they escalate to the level of due process proceedings. Federal grant money may be available to expand this program.

## Important Topics for Further Study

### 1. Special Education Funding and Related Proposals

- The RESCs will require significant funding to create and administer regional special education services (please see Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) Special Education Regionalization Proposal on p. 10 of this document for additional detail). Conversely, local school districts will likely require fewer special education funds to provide direct services to the special education students for whom the regional programs are not appropriate. Therefore, there are two major options to fund the new regional system:
  - **Option 1-** Allocate a portion of current state special education funding (part of the ECS grant to local districts) to the RESCs for the implementation of cost-effective regional programs.
  - **Option 2-** Continue to provide the current level of special education funding to local school districts, but allow the RESCs to charge annual dues to all local school districts within their geographic area. Dues would be calculated by some equitable measure, such as total population within a school district or total student population within a school district. School districts would be allowed to pay these dues with state allocated special education funds. By moving to a regular dues system, rather than a fee for service system, the budgets for local school districts and municipalities will become much more stable. Annual dues rates will be approved by a public commission whose members will be appointed by the Governor and the presiding officers of the General Assembly and whose membership will include representatives of local school districts and RESC representatives.
  - Other methods for supporting a regional special education system include:
    - **State Education Resource Center (SERC) -** Many of the special education services that SERC provides duplicate those that are or could be provided by the RESCs. SERC receives a significant amount of federal special education funds that could be redirected to the RESCs, allowing them to expand their staffing and program offerings. Unique SERC functions, such as the maintenance of a statewide teaching resources library, should be transferred to the RESCs or SDE's Bureau of Special Education.
    - **Risk Pool (rearrange current federal funding so more can be allocated to regionalization efforts without increasing the overall amount of federal funds CT receives)-** Currently, the State Department of Education (SDE) is allowed to keep a certain percentage of federal special education funds received by the state for SDE administrative functions (the rest is disbursed to school districts). In 2004, congress allowed each state to set aside 10% of the federal special education funds that it receives and

reserves for state-level activities “to support innovative and effective ways of cost sharing by the State, by a local educational agency, or among a consortium of local educational entities...” This type of cost sharing is often referred to as a risk pool. It is currently unclear how SDE spends all of the federal special education funds that it withholds for administrative purposes, although some of it may be funding programs such as Child Find (identifying children with disabilities) and SERC.

- The General Assembly’s Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) should investigate the use of federal special education dollars retained by SDE, as allowed under federal law, for administrative purposes (how much is withheld and where this money is spent), SDE’s financial support of SERC, and the rationale for maintaining SERC as a stand-alone entity within the larger environment of Connecticut’s education support agencies and entities.
- Establish a state grant program (via bonding) to make funds available to districts that are willing to establish and administer “mini-regional” special education centers in their districts. Such funds would be used to renovate or expand space that would be dedicated to the delivery of special education services in the district with space made available for students from an established minimum number of neighboring towns. Also authorize such cooperating districts to share staff and transportation, as needed.
- Separate the “special education” amount from the total ECS allotment of education funding to districts, making it easier to track special education dollars provided by the state and spent by local districts.

## **2. The IEP**

- 1) Create an option to allow parents or the person running the PPT to request or 2) require that a student’s paraprofessional, if he or she is assigned one, participate in the PPT.

## **3. Teacher and Staff Training**

- Update superintendent and administrator training and certification requirements to require courses on special education classroom techniques. Also require additional training in administering special education programs and overseeing special and general education staff with regard to special education students at the school and district level. Additionally, include a training on the basic rights and obligations of administrators under IDEA.

#### **4. Reorganize Special Education Administration at the State Level**

- Short Term: Merge all state level special education responsibilities, reporting, and support into SDE's Bureau of Special Education to improve efficiency and accountability and to close loopholes in the state level special education system.
- Long Term: Create a new Department of Special Education to assume the responsibilities of all state agencies currently tasked with administering state special education programs (including transition services) and funding.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Working Group Members**

#### **Co-Chairs**

- Rep. Brian Becker, 19<sup>th</sup> District
- Rep. Michelle Cook, 65<sup>th</sup> District
- Rep. Terrie Wood, 141<sup>st</sup> District

#### **Legislative Members**

- Rep. Catherine Abercrombie, 83<sup>rd</sup> District
- Rep. Jay Case, 63<sup>rd</sup> District
- Rep. Michael D'Agostino, 91<sup>st</sup> District
- Rep. Mary Fritz, 90<sup>th</sup> District
- Rep. Jonathan Steinberg, 136<sup>th</sup> District

#### **Members**

- Timothy Connellan, Superintendent, Southington Public Schools
- Shelley Davis, Paraprofessional, Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals/American Federation of Teachers
- John Filchak, Executive Director, Northeastern CT Council of Governments
- Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns
- Jody Harkins, Special Education Teacher, Fairfield Public Schools
- Howard Klebanoff, Special Education Attorney
- Patrice McCarthy, Deputy Director and General Counsel, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
- Robert Namnoum, UniServ Representative, Connecticut Education Association
- Kimberly Planas, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Hamden Public Schools
- George Rafael, Government Relations Manager, Connecticut Council of Municipalities
- Mike Regan, President, Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education
- Deborah Richards, Director of Student Services, Capitol Region Education Council
- Julie Swanson, Professional Special Education Advocate

Atty. David Desjardins, Working Group Administrator

**Appendix B:**

**Connecticut Education and Culture Regulation Sec. 10-76d-19(a)**

(a) **Travel time.** Total travel time shall not exceed one hour each way to and from a special education facility. All decisions relating to travel time shall take into account the nature and severity of the child's exceptionality and the child's age. If an appropriate placement cannot be made without exceeding the one-hour travel time limit, written parental consent to longer travel time shall be obtained prior to implementing the transportation service. Transportation services exceeding the one hour travel time limit shall be subject to the approval of the state board of education.

**Appendix C:**

**Public Act 12-173 (Recommendations of the 2011 IEP Task Force)**



***Substitute House Bill No. 5353***

***Public Act No. 12-173***

***AN ACT CONCERNING INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND OTHER ISSUES RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATION.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Subdivision (8) of subsection (a) of section 10-76d of the 2012 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2012*):

(8) (A) Each local and regional board of education [responsible for providing special education and related services to a child or pupil](#) shall notify the parent or guardian of a child who requires or who may require special education, a pupil if such pupil is an emancipated minor or eighteen years of age or older who requires or who may require special education or a surrogate parent appointed pursuant to section 10-94g, in writing, at least five school days before such board proposes to, or refuses to, initiate or change the child's or pupil's identification, evaluation or educational placement or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child or pupil.

[\(B\) Upon request by a parent, guardian, pupil or surrogate parent, the responsible local or regional board of education shall provide such parent, guardian, pupil or surrogate parent an opportunity to meet with a member of the planning and placement team designated by such board prior to the referral planning and placement team meeting at which the assessments and evaluations of the child or pupil who requires or may require special education is presented to such parent, guardian, pupil or surrogate parent for the first time. Such meeting shall be for the sole purpose of discussing the planning and placement team process and any concerns such parent, guardian, pupil or surrogate parent has regarding the child or pupil who requires or may require special education.](#)

(C) Such parent, guardian, pupil or surrogate parent shall be given at least five school days' prior notice of any planning and placement team meeting conducted for such child or pupil and shall have the right to be present at and participate in and to have advisors of such person's own choosing and at such person's own expense to be present at and to participate in all portions of such meeting at which an educational program for such child or pupil is developed, reviewed or revised.

(D) Immediately upon the formal identification of any child as a child requiring special education and at each planning and placement team meeting for such child, the responsible local or regional board of education shall inform the parent or guardian of such child or surrogate parent or, in the case of a pupil who is an emancipated minor or eighteen years of age or older, the pupil of (i) the laws relating to special education, [and] (ii) the rights of such parent, guardian, surrogate parent or pupil under such laws and the regulations adopted by the State Board of Education relating to special education, and (iii) any relevant information and resources relating to individualized education programs created by the Department of Education. If such parent, guardian, surrogate parent or pupil does not attend a planning and placement team meeting, the responsible local or regional board of education shall mail such information to such person.

(E) Each local and regional board of education shall have in effect at the beginning of each school year an educational program for each child or pupil who has been identified as eligible for special education.

[(B)] (F) At each initial planning and placement team meeting for a child or pupil, the responsible local or regional board of education shall inform the parent, guardian, surrogate parent or pupil of the laws relating to physical restraint and seclusion pursuant to chapter 814e and the rights of such parent, guardian, surrogate parent or pupil under such laws and the regulations adopted by the State Board of Education relating to physical restraint and seclusion.

(G) Upon request by a parent, guardian, pupil or surrogate parent, the responsible local or regional board of education shall provide the results of the assessments and evaluations used in the determination of eligibility for special education for a child or pupil to such parent, guardian, surrogate parent or pupil at least three school days before the referral planning and placement team meeting at which such results of the assessments and evaluations will be discussed for the first time.

Sec. 2. Section 10-145a of the 2012 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2012*):

(a) The State Board of Education may, in accordance with section 10-19 and such regulations and qualifications as it prescribes, issue certificates of qualification to teach, to administer, to supervise or to serve in other positions requiring certification pursuant to regulations adopted by the State Board of Education in any public school in the state

and may revoke the same. Any such regulations shall provide that the qualifications to maintain any administrator, supervisor or special service certificate shall incorporate the continuing education provisions of subsection (i) of section 10-145b, [as amended by this act](#). The certificates of qualification issued under this section shall be accepted by boards of education in lieu of any other certificate, provided additional qualifications may be required by a board of education, in which case the state certificate shall be accepted for such subjects as it includes.

(b) Any candidate in a program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification shall be encouraged to successfully complete an intergroup relations component of such a program which shall be developed with the participation of both sexes, and persons of various ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds. Such intergroup relations program shall have the following objectives: (1) The imparting of an appreciation of the contributions to American civilization of the various ethnic, cultural and economic groups composing American society and an understanding of the life styles of such groups; (2) the counteracting of biases, discrimination and prejudices; and (3) the assurance of respect for human diversity and personal rights. The State Board of Education, the Board of Regents for Higher Education, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women shall establish a joint committee composed of members of the four agencies, which shall develop and implement such programs in intergroup relations.

(c) Any candidate in a program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification shall be encouraged to complete a (1) health component of such a program, which includes, but need not be limited to, human growth and development, nutrition, first aid, disease prevention and community and consumer health, and (2) mental health component of such a program, which includes, but need not be limited to, youth suicide, child abuse and alcohol and drug abuse.

(d) Any candidate in a program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification shall complete a school violence, bullying, as defined in section 10-222d, and suicide prevention and conflict resolution component of such a program.

(e) On and after July 1, 1998, any candidate in a program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification shall complete a computer and other information technology skills component of such program, as applied to student learning and classroom instruction, communications and data management.

(f) On and after July 1, 2006, any program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification shall include, as part of the curriculum, instruction in literacy skills and processes that reflects current research and best practices in the field of literacy training. Such instruction shall be incorporated into requirements of student major and concentration.

(g) On and after July 1, 2006, any program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification shall include, as part of the curriculum, instruction in the concepts of second language learning and second language acquisition and processes that reflects current research and best practices in the field of second language learning and second language acquisition. Such instruction shall be incorporated into requirements of student major and concentration.

(h) On and after July 1, 2011, any program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification may permit teaching experience in a nonpublic school, approved by the State Board of Education, and offered through a public or private institution of higher education to count towards the preparation and eligibility requirements for an initial educator certificate, provided such teaching experience is completed as part of a cooperating teacher program, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (d) of section 10-220a.

(i) On and after July 1, 2012, any candidate entering a program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification shall be required to complete training in competency areas contained in the professional teaching standards established by the State Board of Education, including, but not limited to, development and characteristics of learners, evidence-based and standards-based instruction, evidence-based classroom and behavior management, and assessment and professional behaviors and responsibilities.

(j) On and after July 1, 2012, any program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification shall include, as part of the curriculum, instruction in the implementation of student individualized education programs as it relates to the provision of special education and related services.

Sec. 3. Subsection (a) of section 10-220a of the 2012 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2012*):

(a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide an in-service training program for its teachers, administrators and pupil personnel who hold the initial educator, provisional educator or professional educator certificate. Such program shall provide such teachers, administrators and pupil personnel with information on (1) the nature and the relationship of drugs, as defined in subdivision (17) of section 21a-240, and alcohol to health and personality development, and procedures for discouraging their abuse, (2) health and mental health risk reduction education which includes, but need not be limited to, the prevention of risk-taking behavior by children and the relationship of such behavior to substance abuse, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV-infection and AIDS, as defined in section 19a-581, violence, teen dating violence, domestic violence, child abuse and youth suicide, (3) the growth and development of exceptional children, including handicapped and gifted and talented children and children who may require special education, including, but not limited to, children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or learning disabilities, and

methods for identifying, planning for and working effectively with special needs children in a regular classroom, including, but not limited to, implementation of student individualized education programs, (4) school violence prevention, conflict resolution, the prevention of and response to youth suicide and the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, as defined in subsection (a) of section 10-222d, except that those boards of education that implement any evidence-based model approach that is approved by the Department of Education and is consistent with subsection (d) of section 10-145a, as amended by this act, subsection (a) of section 10-220a, as amended by this act, sections 10-222d, 10-222g and 10-222h, subsection (g) of section 10-233c and sections 1 and 3 of public act 08-160, shall not be required to provide in-service training on the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, (5) cardiopulmonary resuscitation and other emergency life saving procedures, (6) computer and other information technology as applied to student learning and classroom instruction, communications and data management, (7) the teaching of the language arts, reading and reading readiness for teachers in grades kindergarten to three, inclusive, (8) second language acquisition in districts required to provide a program of bilingual education pursuant to section 10-17f, and (9) the requirements and obligations of a mandated reporter. Each local and regional board of education may allow any paraprofessional or noncertified employee to participate, on a voluntary basis, in any in-service training program provided pursuant to this section. The State Board of Education, within available appropriations and utilizing available materials, shall assist and encourage local and regional boards of education to include: (A) Holocaust and genocide education and awareness; (B) the historical events surrounding the Great Famine in Ireland; (C) African-American history; (D) Puerto Rican history; (E) Native American history; (F) personal financial management; (G) domestic violence and teen dating violence; and (H) topics approved by the state board upon the request of local or regional boards of education as part of in-service training programs pursuant to this subsection.

Sec. 4. Subdivision (1) of subsection (i) of section 10-145b of the 2012 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2012*):

(i) (1) For certified employees of local and regional boards of education or nonpublic schools, except as provided in this subdivision, each professional educator certificate shall be valid for five years and continued every five years thereafter upon the successful completion of professional development activities which shall consist of not less than ninety hours of continuing education, as determined by the employing local or regional board of education or the employing supervisory agent of a nonpublic school approved by the State Board of Education in accordance with this section, or documented completion of a national board certification assessment in the appropriate endorsement area, during each successive five-year period. (A) Such continuing education completed by certified employees with an early childhood nursery through grade three or an elementary endorsement who hold a position requiring such an endorsement shall include at least fifteen hours of training in the teaching of reading

and reading readiness and assessment of reading performance, including methods of teaching language skills necessary for reading, reading comprehension skills, phonics and the structure of the English language during each five-year period. (B) Such continuing education requirement completed by certified employees with elementary, middle grades or secondary academic endorsements who hold a position requiring such an endorsement shall include at least fifteen hours of training in the use of computers in the classroom during each five-year period unless such employees are able to demonstrate technology competency, in a manner determined by their local or regional board of education, based on state-wide standards for teacher competency in the use of technology for instructional purposes adopted pursuant to section 4d-85. (C) Such continuing education completed by (i) the superintendent of schools, and (ii) employees employed in positions requiring an intermediate administrator or supervisory certificate, or the equivalent thereof, and whose administrative or supervisory duties equal at least fifty per cent of their assigned time, shall include at least fifteen hours of training in the evaluation of teachers pursuant to section 10-151b during each five-year period. (D) In the case of certified employees with a bilingual education endorsement who hold positions requiring such an endorsement (i) in an elementary school and who do not hold an endorsement in elementary education, such continuing education taken on or after July 1, 1999, shall only count toward the ninety-hour requirement if it is in language arts, reading and mathematics, and (ii) in a middle or secondary school and who do not hold an endorsement in the subject area they teach, such continuing education taken on or after July 1, 1999, shall only count toward the ninety-hour requirement if it is in such subject area or areas. (E) Such professional development for certified employees with an endorsement in special education who hold a position requiring such an endorsement shall include at least ten hours of training in the implementation of student individualized education programs and the communication of individualized education program procedures to parents or guardians of students who require special education and related services. On and after July 1, 2011, such continuing education shall be as determined by the local or regional board of education in full consideration of the provisions of this section and the priorities and needs related to student outcomes as determined by the State Board of Education. During each five-year period in which a professional educator certificate is valid, a holder of such certificate who has not completed the ninety hours of continuing education required pursuant to this subdivision, and who has not been employed while holding such certificate by a local or regional board of education for all or part of the five-year period, shall, upon application, be reissued such certificate for five years minus any period of time such holder was employed while holding such certificate by a local or regional board of education, provided there shall be only one such reissuance during each five-year period in which such certificate is valid. A certified employee of a local or regional board of education who is a member of the General Assembly and who has not completed the ninety hours of continuing education required pursuant to this subdivision for continuation of a certificate, upon application, shall be reissued a professional educator certificate for a period of time equal to six months for each year the employee served in the General Assembly during the previous five years.

Continuing education hours completed during the previous five years shall be applied toward such ninety-hour requirement which shall be completed during the reissuance period in order for such employee to be eligible to have a certificate continued. The cost of the professional development activities required under this subsection for certified employees of local or regional boards of education shall be shared by the state and local or regional boards of education, except for those activities identified by the State Board of Education as the responsibility of the certificate holder. Each local and regional board of education shall make available, annually, at no cost to its certified employees not fewer than eighteen hours of professional development activities for continuing education credit. Such activities may be made available by a board of education directly, through a regional educational service center or cooperative arrangement with another board of education or through arrangements with any continuing education provider approved by the State Board of Education. Local and regional boards of education shall grant continuing education credit for professional development activities which the certified employees of the board of education are required to attend, professional development activities offered in accordance with the plan developed pursuant to subsection (b) of section 10-220a, or professional development activities which the board may approve for any individual certified employee. Each board of education shall determine the specific professional development activities to be made available with the advice and assistance of the teachers employed by such board, including representatives of the exclusive bargaining unit for such teachers pursuant to section 10-153b, and on and after July 1, 2011, in full consideration of priorities and needs related to student outcomes as determined by the State Board of Education. The time and location for the provision of such activities shall be in accordance with either an agreement between the board of education and the exclusive bargaining unit pursuant to said section 10-153b or, in the absence of such agreement or to the extent such agreement does not provide for the time and location of all such activities, in accordance with a determination by the board of education.

Sec. 5. Section 10-184a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) The provisions of sections 10-76a to 10-76h, inclusive, [as amended by this act](#), shall not be construed to require any local, regional or state board of education to provide special education programs or services for any child whose parent or guardian has chosen to educate such child in a home or private school in accordance with the provisions of section 10-184 and who refuses to consent to such programs or services.

[\(b\) If any such board of education provides special education programs or services for any child whose parent or guardian has chosen to educate such child in a private school in accordance with the provisions of section 10-184, such programs or services shall be in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1400 et seq., as amended from time to time.](#)

Sec. 6. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 17a-16a of the 2012 supplement to the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2012*):

(a) For purposes of this section:

(1) "Child" means (A) any school-aged child, (B) any child ages three to five, inclusive, who has been identified as eligible for special education pursuant to sections 10-76a to 10-76d, inclusive, [as amended by this act](#), or under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1400 et seq. , as amended from time to time, or (C) any child twenty-seven months to five years of age, inclusive, who has been referred to a planning and placement team to determine eligibility for special education and related services pursuant to sections 10-76a to 10-76d, inclusive, [as amended by this act](#), or under said Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, who is placed in out-of-home care by the commissioner pursuant to an order of temporary custody or an order of commitment, in accordance with section 46b-129.

(2) "School of origin" means the school that the child is attending at the time the department places the child in out-of-home care or the school the child is attending at the time of any change of out-of-home care, by the commissioner.

(3) "Receiving school" means the school that a child is attending following a school placement decision by the department in cases in which remaining in the school of origin is determined not to be in the child's best interests.

(4) "School placement decision" means a decision made by the department regarding the school in which the child will attend while the child is in out-of-home care and does not refer to the provision of a free, appropriate public education to children eligible for special education.

(5) "Department" means the Department of Children and Families.

(6) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Children and Families.

[\(7\) "Nexus school district" means the school district of a local or regional board of education under whose jurisdiction a child would otherwise be attending school.](#)

(b) (1) Whenever a child is placed in out-of-home care by the department pursuant to an emergency order under subsection (e) of section 17a-101g or an order of temporary custody or an order of commitment under section 46b-129, and at any subsequent change in out-of-home care, any such child may, if it is in the best interests of the child, as determined pursuant to subdivision (3) of this subsection, continue to attend his or her school of origin. Such child shall continue to be a resident of the school district in which such school is located during such attendance for purposes of chapters 168 to 170, inclusive, 172 and 173. The board of education for the school of origin shall

continue to provide free school privileges to the child and any services provided by such board shall be in accordance with the provisions of subdivision (2) of subsection (e) of section 10-76d and section 10-253. If the child continues to attend his or her school of origin following placement in out-of-home care by the department, the local or regional board of education of the school of origin shall not be eligible to receive an excess cost grant pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (e) of section 10-76d for the cost of such education, including, but not limited to, tuition and transportation costs. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and each fiscal year thereafter, an excess cost grant pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (e) of section 10-76d shall be available to the nexus school district when the nexus school district pays the child's tuition to the local or regional board of education of the school of origin. If the nexus school district placed the child in a private school or regional educational service center program prior to the child being removed from the home by the department and the child continues to attend such prior placement, the nexus school district, or, if the nexus school district cannot be identified, the town where the child resides, shall be eligible to receive the excess cost grant pursuant to section 10-76g.

(2) Every decision by the department to place a child into out-of-home care under the provisions of subsection (e) of section 17a-101g and section 46b-129, and any subsequent change in out-of-home care, shall take into account the appropriateness of the school setting and the proximity to the school of origin.

(3) (A) Whenever a child is placed in out-of-home care by the department pursuant to an emergency order under subsection (e) of section 17a-101g or an order of temporary custody or an order of commitment under section 46b-129, and at any subsequent change in out-of-home care, the department shall immediately determine whether it is in the best interests of the child to remain in the school of origin. There shall be a presumption that it is in the child's best interests to remain in the school of origin. The department shall provide written notice of its decision to the parties not later than three business days after the date on which the decision is made. Such notice shall identify the factors that form the basis of the department's decision. Any party may object to the department's decision not later than three business days after receipt of such notice. The child shall remain in the school of origin until the time for objection has passed and until any disagreement is resolved, except as provided in subparagraph (C) of this subdivision. The child shall be transported to the school of origin pursuant to subsection (c) of this section during any such disagreement except as provided in subparagraph (C) of this subdivision. Such disagreements shall be expeditiously resolved. The department shall bear the burden of proof that the school placement decision is in the child's best interests.

(B) The school placement decision may be revisited at any time during the child's out-of-home care, if circumstances change, in order to ensure that the school placement decision remains in the best interests of the child. Notice of any subsequent decision to change the child's school placement decision shall be provided in accordance with subparagraph (A) of this subdivision. Any school placement decision made pursuant to

this section may be challenged through the dispute resolution process for treatment plans. The child shall remain in the school of origin until any such disagreement is resolved, except as provided in subparagraph (C) of this subdivision and shall be provided with transportation in accordance with subsection (c) of this section.

(C) If at any time the department determines that continued placement in the school of origin will jeopardize the child's immediate physical safety, the department may immediately remove the child from the school and shall notify the child's attorney, parents, guardian ad litem and surrogate parent, if any, by phone or by facsimile on the same business day. Any party may object to the decision to change the child's school placement not later than three business days after receipt of such notice. If any party objects to the change in school placement, the department shall hold an administrative hearing not later than three business days after the objection.

Sec. 7. Section 10-76ii of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) On and after July 1, 2012, a local or regional board of education that is responsible for providing special education and related services to a child, pursuant to section 10-76a, shall provide applied behavior analysis services to any such child with autism spectrum disorder if the individualized education [plan] program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires such services. (1) Such services shall be provided by a person who is, subject to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, (A) licensed by the Department of Public Health or certified by the Department of Education and such services are within the scope of practice of such license or certificate, or (B) certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board as a behavior analyst or assistant behavior analyst, provided such assistant behavior analyst is working under the supervision of a certified behavior analyst. (2) A teacher or paraprofessional may implement the individualized education [plan] program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 providing for such applied behavior analysis services, provided such teacher or paraprofessional is under the supervision of a person described in subdivision (1) of this subsection. For purposes of this section, "applied behavior analysis" means the design, implementation and evaluation of environmental modifications, using behavioral stimuli and consequences, including the use of direct observation, measurement and functional analysis of the relationship between the environment and behavior, to produce socially significant improvement in human behavior.

(b) If the Commissioner of Education determines that there are insufficient certified or licensed personnel available to provide applied behavior analysis services in accordance with the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, the commissioner may authorize the provision of such services by persons who: (1) Hold a bachelor's degree in a related field; (2) have completed (A) a minimum of nine credit hours of coursework from a course sequence approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, or (B)

coursework that meets the eligibility requirement to sit for the board certified behavior analyst examination; and (3) are supervised by a board certified behavior analyst.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to require the inclusion of applied behavior analysis services in an individualized education [plan] [program](#) or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Sec. 8. Subsection (d) of section 10-221a of the 2012 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(d) Commencing with classes graduating in 2020, and for each graduating class thereafter, local and regional boards of education shall provide adequate student support and remedial services for students beginning in grade seven. Such student support and remedial services shall provide alternate means for a student to complete any of the high school graduation requirements or end of the school year examinations described in subsection (c) of this section, if such student is unable to satisfactorily complete any of the required courses or exams. Such student support and remedial services shall include, but not be limited to, (1) allowing students to retake courses in summer school or through an on-line course; (2) allowing students to enroll in a class offered at a constituent unit of the state system of higher education, as defined in section 10a-1, pursuant to subdivision (4) of subsection (g) of this section; (3) allowing students who received a failing score, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, on an end of the school year exam to take an alternate form of the exam; and (4) allowing those students whose individualized education [plans] [programs](#) state that such students are eligible for an alternate assessment to demonstrate competency on any of the five core courses through success on such alternate assessment.

Sec. 9. Subdivision (2) of subsection (c) of section 17a-16a of the 2012 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(2) If it is not in the best interests of the child to attend the school of origin, the department shall work with the board of education for such school of origin and the receiving school to ensure immediate and appropriate enrollment and attendance of the child in the receiving school in accordance with the provisions of subsection (e) of section 10-76d and section 10-253. The educational records of the child shall be provided by the school of origin to the receiving school, in accordance with the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, Public Law 110-351. Upon notification by the department of a decision to change a child's school placement and notwithstanding section 10-220h, the school of origin shall transmit to the receiving school, not later than one business day after receipt of such notification, all essential educational records for the child, including, but not limited to, the child's individualized education [plan] [program](#) and behavioral intervention plan, if any, and all documents necessary for the receiving school to determine appropriate class

placement and to provide educational services. The school of origin shall transfer nonessential records to the receiving school in accordance with section 10-220h.

Sec. 10. Subsection (a) of section 17b-28d of the 2012 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) The Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education, shall submit to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services an amendment to the state Medicaid plan concerning school-based child health services provided to Medicaid enrolled children requiring special education pursuant to an individualized education [plan] [program](#). Such amendment to the Medicaid plan shall maintain and enhance, to the extent permitted, federal financial participation associated with such costs through a service-specific rate method.

Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The individualized education program for any child identified as deaf or hearing impaired shall include a language and communication plan developed by the planning and placement team for such child. Such language and communication plan shall address: (1) The primary language or mode of communication chosen for the child, (2) opportunities for direct communication with peers and professional personnel in the primary language or mode of communication for the child, (3) educational options available to the child, (4) the qualifications of teachers and other professional personnel administering such plan for the child, including such teacher's or personnel's proficiency in the primary language or mode of communication for the child, (5) the accessibility of academic instruction, school services and extracurricular activities to the child, (6) assistive devices and services for the child, and (7) communication and physical environment accommodations for the child.

Approved June 15, 2012

## **Appendix D:**

### **Recommendations of the December 17, 2014 Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Report on School Paraprofessionals Staffing**

*(For the complete PRI Committee Report, please see [http://www.cga.ct.gov/pri/2014\\_PARA.asp](http://www.cga.ct.gov/pri/2014_PARA.asp) )*

- 1.** The Department of Labor (DOL) should make all final decisions and awards of the State Board of Mediation and Arbitration and State Board of Labor Relations available online. Further, because many of matters before both boards are resolved before final decision or award, searchable summary information on all grievances and complaints should also be available on DOL's website.
- 2.** The State Department of Education should collect information about Title I paraprofessionals annually, summarize the information, and post on its website. At a minimum, the posted data should include: the number of paraprofessionals covered by NCLB; the number who have not met the NCLB requirements; the number of districts out of compliance; and the types of actions taken by the districts.
- 3.** The State Department of Education's focused monitoring process should include an inspection of a random sample of Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) to ensure that the language outlining paraprofessional services is written with enough specificity regarding the amount of time a paraprofessional is to provide support to a student and what that support entails. This will inform the consultant team, if that district is selected for phase-three assistance, on whether IEP specificity is an issue, and if so, allow the CSDE to provide technical assistance in writing IEPs. If the IEPs do indicate specifically what and how much paraprofessional assistance is to be provided, then the in-district focused monitoring sessions should examine whether the IEPs are being followed.
- 4.** Regarding the Special Education Administrative Complaint Process, the State Department of Education shall:
  - seek to modify the state regulations pertaining to special education to include the process and procedures for filing an administrative complaint;
  - issue a policy brief about the availability and mechanics of the process and circulate it to organizations and groups interested in special education services, including the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council; and
  - make the Complaint Resolution Process, as well as the complaint form, available on its website in a manner that is easily accessible to the public.
- 5.** The State Department of Education should establish a system or systems whereby one or more of the following takes place:
  - (1)** all final decisions on administrative complaints are written in a way that does not reveal the identity of individual students and made available on its website in the same way as due process final decisions;

(2) a summary table is placed on its website and updated quarterly containing information to include: (a) type of complainant (parent, agency/advocacy organization, LEA, other); (b) district or districts involved; (c) nature of complaint; (d) whether complaint is withdrawn, dismissed or going to final decision; (e) date of final decision; (f) if final decision includes findings of non-compliance the nature of the non-compliance; (g) any corrective action ordered to be taken; (h) the date upon which follow-up monitoring confirms that corrective action has been taken; and/or

(3) interested individuals or organizations can, for a small fee, automatically receive copies of all final decisions on the merits on any administrative complaint, regardless of whether or not that complaint involves a request for due process.

**6.** The State Department of Education should develop and distribute a policy brief stating that IEPs should be drafted in such a way as to clearly identify the type of employee (i.e., certified vs. non-certified) providing services and supports and explaining how to appropriately specify the frequency and duration of such services and supports. The brief should provide examples of both appropriate and inappropriate language and clearly indicate where in the IEP this information should appear.

**7.** The State Department of Education should conduct a random audit of a sample of districts' rosters of substitute teachers and verify that each individual listed has a bachelor's degree, or that the district has a waiver for that individual. Secondly, CSDE should assess whether the number of substitutes on the roster appears adequate to meet the needs of the district, given the size, number of schools, and composition of the student body. If the roster appears inadequate, CSDE should further examine what those districts are doing to ensure adequate classroom coverage by qualified staff when teachers are absent.

**8.** To ensure at least some preparation for the requirements of paraprofessional positions, all school districts shall be required to provide a minimum of three hours of training, with pay, for all instructional paraprofessionals prior to the start of the school year. That time should be spent with the immediate supervisor of the paraprofessional, who will provide such information as necessary to educate the paraprofessional on his or her role and responsibilities and ensure full knowledge of all duties he or she will be expected to perform.

If paraprofessionals are hired after the start of the school year, or, if there are reassignments during the school year, the districts shall provide the same number of hours of training prior to a paraprofessional performing new duties in a classroom and/or with an individual student or students.

**9.** The State Department of Education should redouble its efforts to inform districts about paraprofessionals having access to information contained in student IEPs. This could be done through reissuing the existing brief on this topic and distributing it to: all district Directors of Special Education; the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education; the Connecticut Association of Public School Administrators; the Connecticut Association of Schools; the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education; parent advocacy groups; and other organizations with an interest in special education.

**10.** Regarding the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council:

- The State Department of Education shall be required to provide staff support for the council and its work.

- CSDE support staff should ensure that all School Paraprofessional Advisory Council meetings and agendas be posted at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting on the CSDE website for paraprofessionals.
- The advisory council shall be expanded to include: two paraprofessionals who do not belong to a union; a special education teacher involved in supervising a paraprofessional; a representative of one of the higher education institutions offering teacher preparatory programs; and a parent who has a child who is currently receiving, or in the past has received, instructional paraprofessional support.
- The council shall elect a chairperson from among its members, and the term of the chair should be for two years.
- The CSDE staff support functions should include securing a public meeting place for the council as well as posting the meeting location on the CSDE website for paraprofessionals at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.
- CSDE should establish a list of current contact persons in each district who will be responsible for disseminating information to paraprofessionals in that district. The contact list should be reviewed annually by the Advisory Council and updated by CSDE.

**11.** The State Department of Education should develop individual briefs around topic areas contained in the Guidelines for Training & Support of Paraprofessionals and post them on CSDE's website for paraprofessionals.

## Appendix E:

### **Recommendations of the December 17, 2014 Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Report on Transitional Services for Youth and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

*(For the complete PRI Committee Report, please see [http://www.cga.ct.gov/pri/2014\\_ASD.asp](http://www.cga.ct.gov/pri/2014_ASD.asp) )*

#### **RELATED TO TRANSITIONAL SERVICES DURING HIGH SCHOOL**

- 1.** The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) should promote a best practice of establishing individualized education program (IEP) goals related to transition to adult life sooner, prior to high school.
- 2.** CSDE should provide training to transition coordinators on the development of more realistic and specific IEP post-school goals.
- 3.** CSDE should require school districts to use the Secondary Transition Planning IEP Checklist.
- 4.** CSDE should formally monitor implementation of the Student Success Plan.
- 5.** CSDE shall monitor the requirement for parents of high school students with ASD (and other disabilities) to be provided with a copy/website link to “Building a Bridge” or other transition-related materials by their local school districts, and add this requirement to the Secondary Transition Planning IEP Checklist.
  - CSDE should assess reasons why parents are questioning the usefulness of “Building a Bridge” or other transition-related materials they may have received from their school districts, and revise the materials accordingly.
- 6.** CSDE shall develop and distribute a written Parents Bill of Rights to all parents of students with ASD (and other disabilities). This single-page document shall inform parents of the following:
  - They have the option to request consideration of provision of transitional services-only (18-21 programs) for their son or daughter.
  - They are entitled to receive a copy of “Building a Bridge” or other transition-related materials.
  - Their son or daughter is required to have a Student Success Plan beginning in sixth grade and parents must be given a copy of this plan (which addresses transition to adult life).

- Their son or daughter will benefit from realistic and specific IEP post-school goals.

**7.** The Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council (ASDAC) should identify possible strategies to improve interactions between the DDS Division of Autism Spectrum Services, DMHAS, and DORS/BRS with both transition coordinators and parents.

**8.** CSDE should consider the feasibility of recommending a law similar to the Massachusetts “Turning22Law”, requiring the identification of which state agency is best able to support the student after he or she exits high school.

#### **RELATED TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

**9.** CSDE should offer training to transition coordinators on the development of IEP transition goals related to self-advocacy (including accessing college disabilities office), time management/organization, and study skills for college-bound high school students with ASD.

**10.** For college-bound students with ASD, CSDE should consider incorporating decreasing reliance on supports prior to high school graduation into IEP or Student Success Plan.

**11.** CSDE should publicize the advantages of a college immersion experience.

**12.** The Board of Regents should consider replicating the Step Forward programs at other Connecticut community colleges.

**13.** The Board of Regents should consider replicating the Disability Resource Center model at Southern Connecticut State University to other Connecticut State Universities.

**14.** The University of Connecticut should consider replicating the Beyond Access Program at other University of Connecticut campuses.

#### **RELATED TO POST-HIGH SCHOOL EMPLOYMENT/VOCATIONAL SERVICES**

**15.** The Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council (ASDAC) should explore ways to increase accessibility/availability of vocational programs for individuals with ASD.

**16.** DORS should develop an information campaign clarifying who may be eligible for BRS services.

**17.** Local school districts should provide transitional services for students interested in vocational training and competitive employment.

**18.** DORS should promote the advantages of at least part-time employment.

- 19.** In collaboration with other state agencies, DORS should take the lead on developing an informational campaign regarding the impact of employment on benefits.
- 20.** CSDE should work with transition coordinators on the need to address advantages and logistics of youth employment with parents/caregivers.
- 21.** CSDE and BRS should encourage families and students with ASD to experience summer employment while in high school.
- 22.** DDS should consider establishing a full-time position dedicated to the promotion of employment.
- 23.** DORS should develop a shared definition of “competitive employment” across state agencies.

#### **RELATED TO POST-HIGH SCHOOL INDEPENDENT LIVING**

- 24.** DDS should consider establishing a housing coordinator position for the autism division. Within available resources, the housing coordinator should assist the resource specialists working with wait list families to develop an individual housing plan.
- 25.** The autism division should establish a one-stop housing resource for individuals with ASD.
- 26.** The Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council (ASDAC) should establish a subcommittee on housing to produce a report on the present and future ASD residential needs, best practice guidelines, and plan of action proposals.

#### **RELATED TO SUPPORTS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

- 27.** The Department of Social Services, in coordination with the DDS autism division, should examine the feasibility of providing children served in the HUSKY B program with the same coverage being considered under the Medicaid State Plan amendment.
- 28.** A survey of the individuals and families on the autism waiver wait list should be conducted to compile basic information regarding their immediate and upcoming needs and their levels of existing resources and support.
- 29.** The Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council should consider establishing additional subcommittees on transportation and life skills.
- 30.** DDS should consider creating an interim family grant program for the ‘ASD only’ population similar to the one already established for individuals with intellectual disabilities to help offset disability- related expenses.

**31.** The Connecticut legislature should consider passing its own Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) act modeled after the federal legislation.

**32.** DDS shall, within available appropriations, consider hiring additional ASD resource specialists.

**33.** The DDS autism division should have access to education and transition advisors for the ‘ASD only’ population. Upon request and within availability, these advisors could provide guidance or referral to other state and/or community-based supports to individuals and families on the wait list.

#### **RELATED TO SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE**

**34.** The DDS autism division, as the state’s lead agency for autism, should:

- Establish and maintain an integrated confidential data system that facilitates shared agency information.
- Serve as a one-stop resource regarding statewide resources, assessments, lifespan services, waivers, healthcare, housing, transportation, employment, education, and community supports for individuals with ASD.
- Keep exploring opportunities to further develop and strengthen the system infrastructure through coordination of state-level work on ASD.
- Identify funding sources that are flexible, diversified (public and private, state and federal), and sustainable that can be used in a variety of ways to meet the ASD population’s unique, and evolving needs.
- Promote outreach activities that bring together significant stakeholders and interested parties.
- Continue to develop an ASD training infrastructure.
- Prepare an annual progress report listing accomplishments and activities of the division and council.