



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Circular letter: C-2 - Revised

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Directors of Regional Educational Service Centers

FROM: Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner of Education

DATE: September 15, 2010

SUBJECT: Guidance and Update on the Implementation of Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) in Connecticut Public Schools

One year ago, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) adopted a framework for using scientific research-based interventions to improve education for all students. Efforts focused primarily on strengthening core instruction in the general education setting through high-quality differentiated instruction in prekindergarten through Grade 12. It is appropriate after the first year of implementation to reflect on the progress made at the CSDE and in school districts in this important work.

Appropriate implementation of SRBI involves the recursive process of using student data to make deliberate and strategic decisions about the effectiveness of instruction, determine the adjustments in instruction necessary to meet the needs of diverse learners, and to assess the need for supplemental interventions to accelerate student learning. In addition, these data document that appropriate instruction has been provided for all students and that alternative procedures and programs in general education (e.g., early intervening services) have been explored and, where appropriate, implemented for any student being considered for special education. The *Guidelines for Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities (2008, Executive Summary)* highlight substantial changes in the way children are determined to be eligible for special education services due to a specific learning disability. An additional, more comprehensive publication of the guidelines is now available to school districts.

The CSDE is committed to supporting Connecticut schools as they implement SRBI and has created several new guiding documents and professional development sessions to assist districts and schools as they continue to improve teaching and learning by employing the tenets outlined in the CSDE document titled, *Using Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI): Improving Education for All Students, Connecticut's Framework for RTI, August 2008*.

The CSDE recognizes the implementation of SRBI across the state will adhere to the same underlying principles and critical features outlined in the framework. Effective implementation incorporates the best practices detailed in the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) professional development offerings that foster improvement in teaching and learning. In addition, the CSDE acknowledges that implementation of SRBI is highly contextualized and will

look different in each district and school based on student needs and available resources, including fiscal support, certified and noncertified staff, materials, and time allocated for data team meetings and interventions. Creative use of resources is encouraged and guidance documents are available to assist districts and schools in the appropriate reallocation of resources, including certification requirements, identification of an interventionist and the role of the paraprofessional, and are posted online at <http://www.ct.gov/sde/srbi>. Additional resources and support documents will be published at the same URL early this fall. An SRBI newsletter will begin publication on a quarterly basis through a partnership between the CSDE and State Education Resource Center (SERC). This publication is an effort to improve communication between the CSDE and the practitioners in the field, as well as foster a common language and understanding about effective implementation of SRBI in Connecticut. The newsletter will include examples of promising practices in SRBI implementation, and feature articles and updates on professional development, policy changes, and frequently asked questions. Past issues will be archived on the CSDE and SERC Web sites listed under SRBI.

The CSDE is developing *Connecticut's Comprehensive System for Successful Student Learning: Addressing Academics, Social, Emotional, Behavioral, Mental and Physical Health*. This document provides a comprehensive approach for successful student learning that addresses the academic, physical, social, emotional, behavioral and mental health domains. The purpose is to create a common understanding of the "whole student" and demonstrate how these domains align with the three-tiered model described previously in the CSDE's *Using Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI): Improving Education for All Students*. This document will include application examples for these domains and will become a part of the Department's overall training and technical assistance system for use by CSDE staff and future trainers.

The CSDE is working on a three-year plan that will guide the actualization of the Department's work around four strategic goals: establish a shared meaning of the underlying elements and principles outlined in the SRBI Framework, provide differentiated professional development around SRBI implementation, improve intra-agency and interagency communication and consistency of information shared about SRBI, and implement and determine a system for the accountability work of the CSDE. Similar to the long range planning done by the CSDE, many districts have undertaken the development of strategic plans for SRBI implementation at the district level. Samples of district plans are available for review at <http://www.ct.gov/sde/srbi>. These plans are posted in the spirit of collaboration and offered as examples for those districts beginning similar planning endeavors.

Connecticut districts and schools have made enormous strides in the implementation of the SRBI framework over the past year, and many of those practices have been and continue to be highlighted in the new SRBI Implementation Training offered this past spring and again this upcoming fall. Practitioners share their successes and challenges in highlighted areas that include district planning, effective scheduling, improving school climate and monitoring student progress. Future training and registration information is available at <http://sdecali.net/>.

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Family partnerships and communication are key elements in the successful implementation of SRBI at every grade level. The CSDE strongly encourages districts and schools to inform families about the structures, language and practices associated with SRBI and embrace them as partners in the educational process on a continuing basis. Revised editions of the Family Guide will be available in September from the Connecticut Parent and Information Resources Center at <http://ctpirc.org/s/>.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Rosanne Daigneault, Bureau of Accountability and Improvement, at rosanne.daigneault@ct.gov or 860-713-6706.

MKM: mab