

From the Bureau of Special Education

## Brief from the Chief

Happy New Year, *Bulletin* Readers!

As the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) staff says farewell to a productive 2008, we enthusiastically welcome 2009 and the plethora of exciting initiatives on the horizon! Some highlights of upcoming activities include:

- examining policies and practices using academic achievement as the key performance indicator in our focused monitoring;
- releasing the *LD Guidelines* and providing subsequent training and technical assistance;
- delivering guidance concerning changes to IEP forms;
- collaborating with other bureaus and agencies on accountability and improvement initiatives that address the needs of the special education community, and;
- examining ways to increase training accessibility using technology.

Our bureau understands that it is critical to maintain regular communication on the latest relevant information with those responsible for educating children and youth with disabilities. The BSE will continue to keep readers informed of news, changes to regulations, deadlines, and available resources concerning the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) through its *Bureau Bulletin*. We want the *Bulletin* to be a two-way connection between the BSE and the special education community. Please continue to make your needs known regarding how and what we communicate; the BSE is committed to taking district-level and stakeholder feedback under advisement with respect to communication and the overall provision of programs, services, and supports to Connecticut through the BSE.

As Chief of the BSE, I am very conscious of the constant changes evolving in education and the great demands placed on professionals in our field. Our staff keeps this consideration at the forefront in developing and refining our work to ensure compliance with federal and state requirements. It is an honor and privilege to serve Connecticut. We appreciate the efforts our districts and programs make on behalf of children and families across this State as well as in cooperation with the BSE. Enjoy the second half of the school year! - Anne Louise Thompson



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### Mark Your Calendars...

- **Progress Reports due January 15th for 2007-08 focused monitoring cohort**
- **SEDAC-G March final certification statutory due date March 1<sup>st</sup>** (since March 1<sup>st</sup> is a Sunday, SEDAC-G final certification due date will be March 2<sup>nd</sup>)

## Featured Story:

### Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC)

The CT Parent Advocacy Center, Inc. (CPAC) is a statewide nonprofit organization that offers information and support to families of children with any disability or chronic illness, age birth through 26. CPAC is committed to the idea that parents can be the most effective advocates for their children, given the confidence that knowledge and understanding of special education law and its procedures can bring. Through outreach efforts and referrals from schools, social service agencies and other parents, the number of families that CPAC serves has grown dramatically over the past 25 years. CPAC is staffed by parents of children with disabilities who have training and personal experience with the law and disability issues. CPAC also provides bi-lingual staff who provide training and technical assistance in Spanish. As a Parent Training Institute, under the auspices of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), CPAC's activities are aligned with the State Department of Education's State Performance Plan (SPP). The 20 indicators of this plan are the foundation of the Bureau of Special Education's (BSE) work to ensure an appropriate education for Connecticut's students with disabilities. CPAC accomplishes this through training, intake calls, Child Find activities, committee participation, newsletter, website and various publications that provide information and technical assistance that relates to the range of special education services provided under IDEA. More specifically, CPAC addresses Indicator #8, which involves making improvements toward an increase in the "percent of parents with a child who receives special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities." In September of 2008, CPAC published a [bulletin](#) that outlines specific ways CPAC can help school districts support parent involvement.



CPAC provides multiple supports and resources for families. In addition to speaking with parents on a daily basis, CPAC staff conducts in-service presentations for schools, teachers-in-training and service providers throughout the state so that they may better understand and serve the parents with whom they work. CPAC staff and Board members serve on numerous statewide committees and various organizations, representing issues that are of concern to parents and families in Connecticut. Workshops are offered throughout the year on topics such as legal rights, eligibility, programming and placement, early childhood education. Other workshop topics are listed at <http://www.cpacinc.org/workshops.htm>. CPAC has developed both parent and community support groups as a [resource to families](#). For other resources follow this link <http://www.cpacinc.org/support.htm>. CPAC has also created and compiled booklets, information sheets, the [Speak Out](#) newsletter and materials from national education organizations that may be of use to families and districts. Some of the topic areas addressed are: transition to adulthood, dispute resolution, and communication. For a more exhaustive list, select the following link <http://www.cpacinc.org/materials.htm> or visit the CPAC website at [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org).

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In the next featured story, the BSE will continue its focus on statewide leadership organizations and highlight the Connecticut's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD).

## State of the State

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### Legislative Update



The legislative session began January 7, 2009, and the 2009 legislative committee membership roster has been [released](#). The Education committee reviews all matters relating to the Department of Education; local and regional boards of education and the substantive law of collective bargaining covering teachers and professional employees of such boards; vocational rehabilitation; the Commission on the Arts; and libraries, museums and historical and cultural associations. Senator Thomas Gaffey and Representative Andrew Fleischmann serve as co-chairs. For more information and legislation effective January 1, 2009, click [here](#). Readers may also wish to read statements made by Governor Jodi Rell during the 2009 State of the State [address](#).

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### Certification

The State Board of Education will be reviewing and discussing proposed certification regulation changes now through July 2009. During this time, the State Department of Education will continue to work with education stakeholders to discuss and refine the proposed changes. Under the new certification requirements, Connecticut teacher preparation programs in early childhood, elementary education, secondary education and special subject areas will be required to ensure that all new teacher candidates are provided additional training in specific competency areas including but not limited to following:

- Understanding the growth, development and characteristics of typical and atypical learners including students with disabilities, English language learners, and struggling learners;
- Using evidence-based principles of instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities and diverse learning needs and provide interventions to students who don't respond to primary instruction alone;
- Selecting, administering and interpreting data from a variety of assessments to document students' growth to inform planning and instruction and to determine where targeted assistance to struggling students should be directed;
- Understanding evidence-based classroom and behavior management; and
- Providing explicit instruction on social skills that are conducive to ensuring learning, including setting behavioral expectations, implementing typical classroom and school routines, teaching self-management strategies and study skills.

The new regulations, which are scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2014, will focus on improving teacher preparation programs through the provision of specialized training that will help educators to understand and work with diverse learning needs, use test data effectively and better manage their classrooms. These requirements will apply to all new teachers seeking Connecticut certification in early childhood, elementary, secondary subjects, special subjects (including, but not limited to, music, PE, health, art, world languages, etc.). All current certificate holders will retain their valid certificates, but will be provided with the opportunity to complete additional professional development to obtain any new certification endorsements offered under the new regulations.

*Certification Continued*

## Certification (continued)

Additionally, a special education certificate is being proposed for teachers who want to advance their knowledge and teaching skills concerning learners in need of interventions and students with disabilities. Programs approved to provide for this proposed certification would prepare candidates to serve in areas including: facilitator of the IEP team, administrator of diagnostic assessments, case manager, trainer or coach for paraprofessionals and teachers, and other administrative responsibilities. For more information, contact Georgette Nemr from the Bureau of Educator Preparation at [georgette.nemr@ct.gov](mailto:georgette.nemr@ct.gov) or your BSE certification liaison, Jacqui Kelleher, by e-mailing [jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov](mailto:jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov). Stay tuned to the Bulletin for upcoming updates and clarification.

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Congratulations SDE for receiving the United States Marine Corps Commander's Award recognizing outstanding achievement in support of the 2008 Toys for Tots toy drive program.

## Bureau Happenings

### Approved Transition/Vocational Programs

Over the past several years there has been an increase in the number of school districts contracting with rehabilitation facilities and adult service providers for the provision of transition/vocational services for high school students with disabilities. These services include, but are not limited to, vocational evaluations, job development, job-coaching support, job placement and life/social skills assessment and training. This [article](#) expands upon previous bureau guidance issued in December, 2000, and help to clarify current bureau practices and procedures related to the approval, coding and use of new and existing adult services to assist students in meeting individualized education program (IEP) transition goals and objectives. Readers will find information specifically addressing locating and/or determining coding for:

- **Transition/Vocational Programs;**
- **District-wide Special Education Programs that Provide Transition/Vocational Services; and**
- **Transition/Vocational Programs Located within Public High Schools.**

Contact Dr. Patricia Anderson at 860-713-6923 or [patricia.anderson@ct.gov](mailto:patricia.anderson@ct.gov) with additional questions about the coding and/or use of transition/vocational programs and services to assist students in meeting postsecondary goals or post-school outcome goal statements.

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## Bureau Happenings (continued)

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### Focused Monitoring

Districts who are receiving focused monitoring visits were notified by a letter from Charlene Russell-Tucker, Associate Commissioner, Division of Family and Student Support Services. The bureau will be using the Educational Benefit Review Process during the visits to address the academic achievement of students with disabilities. In addition, there will be classroom visitations, staff interviews, a parent phone survey, and a review of policies and procedures that take place during the visit.

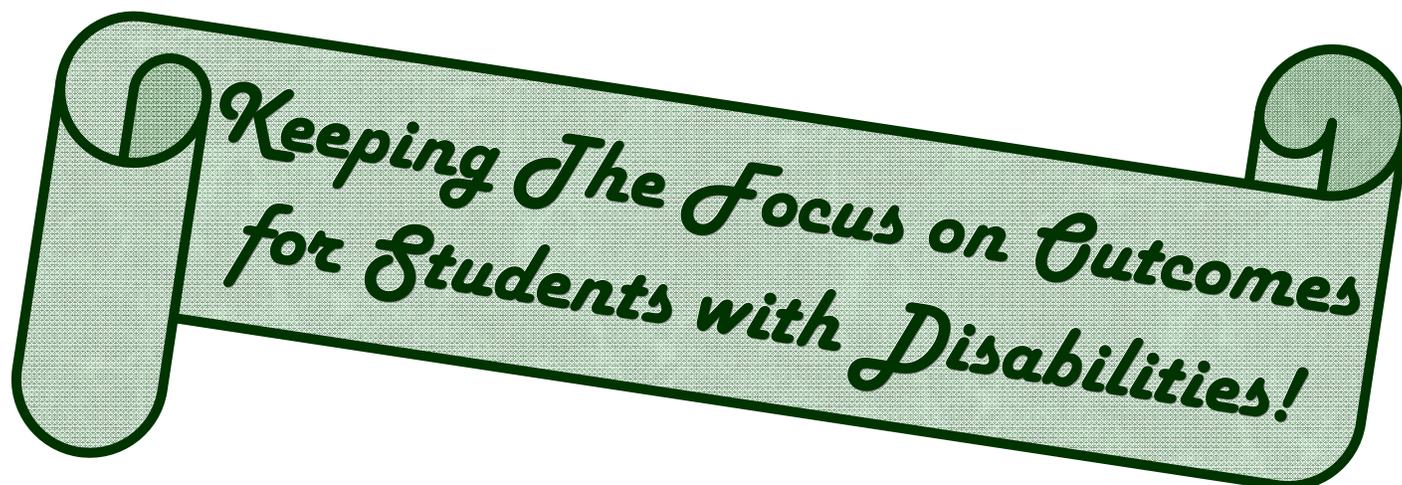
There are four districts that the Bureau of Special Education will visit this spring beginning the week of February 23, 2009. After visits are conducted, an improvement planning session will help districts make progress in identified areas of weaknesses. The bureau would like to thank the Focused Monitoring Steering Committee and members of the site visit teams in helping us develop the focused monitoring system.

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### APR

Connecticut will be submitting its third Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs on February 2, 2009. This report will address the State's performance in special education for the 2007-08 school year against the targets set in the State Performance Plan ([http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/State\\_Perf\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/State_Perf_Plan.pdf)). Connecticut received a determination of "Meets Requirements" for the 2005-06 school year, and "Needs Assistance" for the 2006-07 school year. Workgroups and stakeholders met through the fall and winter to analyze data and discuss areas of slippage or progress across 20 indicators. Additionally, section 300.602(b)(1)(i)(A), states that the Department is required to report annually to the public on the performance of each district on the targets in the State Performance Plan no later than 120 days following the state's submission of its annual performance report. Therefore, district annual performance reports and determinations for 2007-08 data will be posted to the Department's website in early June 2009. Please visit the SPP/APR website for more information (<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322094>). The Department would like to express appreciation to all stakeholders involved in the reporting process.

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## LD Guidelines Update

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As of July 1, 2009, the revised Connecticut state *Guidelines for Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities* will no longer allow the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement as one of the criteria for determination of a specific learning disability. As a result of this change, beginning in the 2009-2010 academic year, school personnel must incorporate data that provide evidence that a child does not make sufficient progress to meet age or State-approved grade-level standards in oral expression, listening comprehension, reading, writing or math, when using a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention. Additional guidance in the revised *LD Guidelines* will assist districts in this process by further defining a comprehensive evaluation. Specifically, the guidelines will provide information to assist districts in identifying scientific, research-based interventions; identifying resources to provide initial assessment and progress data for use in the team decision-making process; and offering suggestions for improved parent/family involvement in determining eligibility as a child with a specific learning disability who is eligible for special education services (i.e., specially designed instruction). While the *LD Guidelines* are being finalized, district personnel, professionals and families can find a great deal of selected information on the [www.sharedwork.org](http://www.sharedwork.org) website. Please click [here](#) for log-in information.

Throughout 2009, the Department and SERC will offer multi-level professional development sessions on the revisions of the *LD Guidelines* and identification of children with a specific learning disability, each building upon prior learning, increasing in intensity; and targeted to specific audiences. The first in this series is an overview of the changes provided in the Executive Summary of the *Guidelines for Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities*. Six regional sessions will be offered during the month of January. Please review the **online only** registration information at the following site: [www.ctserc.org/ldguidelines](http://www.ctserc.org/ldguidelines). Stay tuned to the **Bureau Bulletin** and [www.sharedwork.org](http://www.sharedwork.org) for additional information regarding **professional development** on the *LD Guidelines*. For additional information about the revision of the *LD Guidelines* or subsequent professional development, please contact: Dr. Patricia Anderson ([patricia.anderson@ct.gov](mailto:patricia.anderson@ct.gov); 860-713-6923) or Perri Murdica ([perri.murdica@ct.gov](mailto:perri.murdica@ct.gov); 860-713-6942).

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## Federal Focus

### Revised IDEA Regulations Released

The final Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) regulations, which took effect on December 31, 2008, clarify previously published [federal regulations](#) in the following areas: parental consent for continued special education and related services; non-attorney representation in due process hearings; State monitoring, technical assistance, and enforcement; and allocation of funds. The regulations now include a statutory requirement regarding efforts to employ and advance employment of individuals with disabilities. An additional change is that parents may revoke consent for special education services. School districts will not be able to challenge the decision through mediation or due process which is consistent with the other parental consent provisions of the IDEA regulations requiring parents to give written consent for the initial provision of special education services and state that consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. For the complete document, access <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/E8-28175.htm>.



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## ADAAA

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The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), [S.3406](#), signed into law September 2008, makes changes to the ADA term of disability. Reforms in the law, which will take effect in January 2009, apply to both the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The Act retains the ADA's basic definition of "disability" as an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment. However, changes as a result of ADAAA passage include the following:



1. Currently, courts consider "mitigating measures" such as medications and assistive devices in determining disability. Under the ADAAA, the only mitigating measures that can be considered are eyeglasses or contact lenses that fully correct visual acuity or eliminate refractive error.
2. Under the ADAAA, the definition of "major life activities" will include new items: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. Major life activities will also include normal functioning of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.
3. Under the ADAAA, an impairment that is episodic or in remission is a disability if it substantially limits a major life activity when active.

The ADA aspects of the ADAAA are also relevant as youth with disabilities transition from school post-secondary environments. Readers can retrieve the full text of the new law by clicking [here](#).

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## BSE Participates in National Dispute Resolution Study

[Project Forum](#), sponsored by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, provides research and information to practitioners and policy makers on a variety of current special education issues. Following the release of results from a national survey on alternate dispute resolutions in May 2008 ([Optional IDEA Alternative Dispute Resolution](#)), Connecticut was one of eight states selected for further analyses. Over the summer, representatives from the BSE participated in a series of interviews conducted by Project Forum and the Consortium For Appropriate Dispute Resolution in



Special Education (CADRE). In October, Project Forum published *Resolution Meetings: State Supports and Practices* which highlights some Connecticut practices in facilitation training and overall impact that mediation has on resolution meetings. Additionally, Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin are featured. Click [here](#) for the complete article. For more information on the dispute resolution process, visit the BSE [website](#) or contact Tom Badway in the BSE Due Process Unit: 860-713-6935.

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## Resources & Opportunities

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### The Personnel Center

The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2008-09 states that the number of special education teachers is expected to increase by 15 percent from 2006 to 2016, which is faster than the average for all occupations across the United States. The National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Service Providers ([Personnel Center](#)) works to increase the nation's capacity to successfully recruit and retain special educators, early intervention and related service providers to serve the needs of infants, young children and youth with disabilities and their families. This Center provides access to low and no cost resources for best practice in recruitment, retention, and preparation of personnel. The [Personnel Center](#) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) through a Cooperative Agreement with the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). In addition to serving as a site to house information on models and practices, the Personnel Center announces grant competitions, updates research articles target personnel topics, reports on trends nationally, and provides materials for public use and distribution.

Click [here](#) for an updated phone listing for the Bureau of Special Education!

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

Be sure to visit the [SERC website](#) for the latest information on professional development opportunities and other resources such as the [paraprofessional assessment checklist!](#)

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### Transition Planning

On Tuesday, February 3, 2009, two well known Connecticut professionals in the field of Autism will be presenting an entire day focused on [Transitioning Students with Autism to Higher Education and Employment](#) at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cromwell from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Don't miss out on this fabulous opportunity to learn from Jane Therfield Brown, Ed.D. and Lauri DiGalbo, M.Ed., CRP about how to provide appropriate transition services for students who have autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and whose postsecondary goals are to be competitively employed and/or to attend college or further training.

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### 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.



Interesting idea for a featured story? Willing to write as a guest columnist? Comments or feedback on the format? Share your thoughts with the Bureau Bulletin coordinator by e-mailing [jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov](mailto:jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov).

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