

THE BUREAU BULLETIN

THE BUREAU
BULLETIN

CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

From the Bureau of Special Education

BRIEF FROM THE CHIEF

What a busy, vibrant time of year, here in the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) as it must be in your districts and home. Given the excitement of the holiday season and upcoming school vacation, we can imagine the bustle of activity occurring as 2009 draws to a close. In our November-December *Bureau Bulletin* edition, we've selected articles to keep you informed on federal, state, and bureau happenings, ranging from BSE customer service changes to the status of the Connecticut State Department of Education's Race to the Top grant application. In the upcoming winter and spring editions, the BSE will continue to focus on the following themes: family involvement, assessment, technology, summer programming and bringing 2009-10 to a close.

We recognize that the new year will remain a busy one for all of us and during these times we appreciate that through partnerships... in our work to improve the lives and educational experiences and outcomes for students with disabilities... we are better together! It is through developing personal relationships and identifying common messages with school personnel, families, community and professional organizations, advocates and others that we can leverage support to achieve great things for students with disabilities.

This past fall has brought me in touch with many people as I have traveled to speak with conference attendees, boards, councils and statewide or district level work groups. Within Connecticut, I have had opportunities to dialogue with these groups' leaders, as well as individuals within their membership, along with families that are served by these organizations, agencies and institutions reinforcing for me the collective power this wealth of experience and expertise has and can have in serving our children, families and schools in Connecticut.

In October, I had the intense and inspiring experience of meeting and dialoguing with other state directors of special education (National Association of State Directors of Special Education) and national leaders in education who are partners with us in the process of educating students with disabilities within this country. For more of this article and a hearty season's greetings from the BSE, click [here](#).

Mark Your Calendars...

- Evaluation Timelines Individual Student Verification Spreadsheet Due Date: December 23, 2009



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Thank you again for your support and ongoing dedication to the field! We enjoy serving you and look forward to future collaboration - *Anne Louise Thompson*

Featured Story:

Race to the Top Grant Program

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is preparing a grant application for the new federal grant competition entitled *Race to the Top*. The *Race to the Top* program is authorized under sections 14005 and 14006 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). *Race to the Top* is a competitive grant program established to reward States that are implementing significant reforms in the four education areas described in the ARRA: enhancing standards and assessments, improving the collection and use of data, increasing teacher effectiveness and achieving equity in teacher distribution and turning around struggling schools. Students with disabilities are one of multiple groups in Connecticut schools to benefit from this major reform initiative



As Connecticut prepares its application in time to meet the January 19, 2010, deadline for Phase I applicants, state education Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan and his staff have been working to respond to complex requirements of the grant. The Commissioner has called together teams of local superintendents, other education leaders, university and business representatives and teachers to help fashion Connecticut's proposal for public school reform. Please click [here](#) to access the November 2009 memo released by the Commissioner regarding the CSDE's application and those contributing to its development.

According to the U.S. Secretary of Education [Arne Duncan](#), the *Race to the Top* program "will go to States that are leading the way with ambitious yet achievable plans for implementing coherent, compelling and comprehensive education reform. *Race to the Top* winners will help trail-blaze effective reforms and provide examples for States and local school districts throughout the country to follow as they, too, are hard at work on reforms that can transform our schools for decades to come." The program is aimed at improving efforts that meet the needs of students with and without disabilities and to proactively address the achievement gap measured by statewide assessments and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) will make awards in two phases, with Phase 1 funding awarded in Spring 2010 and Phase 2 funding awarded by September 30, 2010. Section 14006(c) of the ARRA requires at least 50 percent of the *Race to the Top* funding to States to be sub-granted to participating local education agencies (LEAs) according to their relative shares of funding under the Education and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I, Part A program for the most recent year. States have flexibility in allocating the remaining 50 percent of their *Race to the Top* awards, which are available for State-level activities, disbursements to LEAs



and other purposes the State may propose in its plan. As part of its support to States preparing applications, the USDOE released a [notice for public meetings](#) announcing a series of expert and public input meetings regarding technical assistance on assessment. For more information on the *Race to the Top* program, please visit the federal [Web site](#) for an [overview](#) as well as to access the Frequently Asked Questions [document](#) released November 2010.

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Stay tuned via *The Bureau Bulletin* and the CSDE Web site for multiple opportunities to engage, statewide, in strengthening partnerships! We appreciate your involvement.

State of the State

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Certification Update

The Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification within the CSDE presented a [final draft](#) of proposed regulatory changes to the Connecticut State Board of Education (SBE) on December 2, 2009. One of the proposed changes is the inclusion of a new endorsement as a special education teacher and intervention specialist PK-12 and the discontinuation of the comprehensive special education (bachelor's level) endorsement. All the information is on the "Proposed Regulations [webpage](#). Further, it is recommended that readers review the Summary of Regulations Changes for the SBE on December 2, 2009, [document](#) or the full detailed [document](#) as presented at the December meeting. Draft 2014 Certification regulations Presented to the SBE on December 2, 2009. The tentative procedural timeline for approval of the regulations is as follows:

Regulations Promulgation Steps	Timeline
1. Intent to adopt regulations submitted to Board	January 2010
2. Proposed regulations sent to Office of Policy and Management and governor's office for review	January 2010
3. Intent to adopt published in Connecticut Law Journal	February 2010
4. Public hearings on proposed regulations	March 2010
5. Resolution to adopt submitted to Board	June 2010
6. Regulations submitted to the Attorney General's office for approval	June 2010
7. Regulations submitted to the Legislative Regulations Review Committee for approval	July 2010
8. Regulations filed with the Secretary of State	Fall 2010



Department Collaboration on SRBI Initiative

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As part of the recent CSDE reorganization brought about by the early retirement incentive this summer, the Scientifically Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) initiative is now managed within the Bureau of Accountability and School Improvement with support from consultants and managers throughout the Department. Perri Murdica and Anne Louise Thompson from the Bureau of Special Education provide input regarding special education issues as they interface with the SRBI initiative, including eligibility determination, services to students with disabilities, the use of IDEA funds and the role of special educators and integrated support service specialists. The Departmentwide team oversees program offerings in SRBI and provides technical assistance along with the RESC/SERC/CAS alliance for the state. Currently, the team is developing Q and A documents and white papers to assist the field with implementation; developing training for secondary level implementation and continuing the development of on-line training modules describing the identification of learning disabilities using SRBI as part of a comprehensive evaluation. For more information regarding SRBI please contact Iris White in the Bureau of Accountability and School Improvement at 860-713-6794, or iris.white@ct.gov, or Perri Murdica in the BSE at 860-713-6942, or perri.murdica@ct.gov.

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Bureau Happenings

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Orientation for New Connecticut Special Education Administrators

The BSE in partnership with the State Education Resource Center (SERC) is pleased to introduce an orientation series for new special education administrators offered as webinars and face-to-face sessions. Topics will range from identifying resources available to support administrative practices to discussing strategies that ensure ongoing compliance with state and federal requirements. Districts will receive monthly e-mail alerts with dates, times and topics concerning upcoming webinar events. Attendees will need access to a computer and either speakers or headphones to hear the presentation. If attendees would like to be able to converse with the presenters and other attendees during the session, be sure to also have a microphone connected to the computer. Attendees will need to register for each session and, upon registering, will receive a confirmation e-mail containing more information about joining the webinar. We look forward to your participation and developing Webinar content that will meet your professional needs. For more information, please contact Chief Anne Louise Thompson by e-mailing Annelouise.thompson@ct.gov or by calling 860-713-6912. Information from the November session is located [here](#). While there will be no January session, the next session will occur on Friday, February 5, 2010, 1:30-4:00 p.m. in the SERC Classroom in Middletown. If you are a director or supervisor of special education and pupil personnel services new to your position within the past two years or new to Connecticut within the past two years, please contact Lisa Spooner at lisa.spooner@ct.gov in the BSE to be sure you are on the listserve to receive more specific information.



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LD Guidelines Q & A Section

The Bureau of Special Education is in receipt of questions districts are posing during the case study training sessions on the *Guidelines for Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities*. The BSE will periodically publish frequently asked questions and answers as we encounter them. Questions are being collected and presented in a hand out disseminated at the training sessions. The first two questions presented are as follows:

- Q 1. On the NEW Multidisciplinary Evaluation Report Form (ED 629), what information does a LEA need to provide for the Statement of Assurances "I" where it says: "Student's parents were notified about state policies for performance, strategies for increasing the student's rate of learning and parent's right to request an evaluation"?
- Q 2. If a parent makes a referral for a special education evaluation, how should a district proceed – particularly if the LEA is still working on developing a [SRBI/RTI] process to provide quality data to document that a child's difficulty is not due to "lack of appropriate instruction"?

For answers, please click [here](#). For more information about the LD Guidelines, contact Patricia Anderson by calling 860-713-6923 or Perri Murdica by calling 860-713-6942.

Assistive Technology

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The CSDE is pleased to announce that the Comprehensive System of Professional Development Council (CSPD) of the Connecticut Birth-to-Three System, the BSE and the SERC will direct the revision of the Guidelines for Assistive Technology (AT). This revision project will begin in January 2010 and span the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. [Sarah Harvey](#) will serve as the SDE liaison to the AT guidelines revision project. After careful consideration, the CSDE determined potential revision projects for the Guidelines for Occupational Therapy in Educational Settings and the Guidelines for Physical Therapy in Educational Settings will be undertaken following the AT guidelines revision project.

Bureau Happenings

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Findings, Corrective Actions and Compliance Monitoring

IDEA establishes a state's authority to conduct district monitoring to assure compliance with the IDEA and state statutes regarding special education. As part of this monitoring responsibility, the state reviews districts' submission of annual data that informs the 20 indicators constituting the State Performance Plan and resulting in the District Annual Performance Report and Determination. Of the 20 indicators, several require a district to be either at 0% or at 100% compliance. Anything other than this results in corrective action at a district and/or individual student level. For districts achieving 95 – 99.9% compliance with a 100% compliance indicator, their APR determination status may indicate Substantial Compliance; however, the district has not fully met the target and the BSE is obligated to investigate individual cases of noncompliance. The extent the district deviates from the 0% or 100% and the degree of progress the district has made from prior years affect the overall district determination of compliance which is identified annually in June.

Recently, 129 districts across Connecticut received written notification of noncompliance based on data reported on initial evaluations as part of Indicator 11 Evaluation Timelines. Although districts were already aware of their performance through the Annual Performance Reports, they had not yet received formal written notification regarding their 2006-07 status. The BSE sent districts compliance notification with respect to 2006-07 data in the same electronic package as written notification of noncompliance based on 2007-08 and 2008-09 data submissions. Please contact Indicator 11 Manager, Jacqueline Kelleher, by e-mailing Jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov.



Customer Service Changes

The BSE education consultants are changing their outreach approach in working with Connecticut school districts. Each BSE consultant will be assigned as a liaison to 8-10 LEAs. Any phone or e-mail communication initiated by someone from a particular district will be directed to the BSE liaison to whom the district is assigned. Please click [here](#) for a listing of district assignments by individual consultants. The BSE anticipates beginning this format for outreach effective December 23, 2009.

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Root Cause Analysis Overview & Strategic Solution Session



In November 2009, twenty five [districts](#) came together as part of special education focused monitoring. Districts with concerning data, around the achievement of students with disabilities as measured using Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), were given a month to prepare a data wall for the purpose of sharing with the CSDE and their peers, how they are analyzing their data, policies, procedures and practices to ground strategies for addressing this priority.

Historically, districts have been asked to respond in writing to questions aligned with the Key Performance Indicator determined by the Focused Monitoring Steering Committee and investigated by the BSE for any given year. This year the BSE implemented a more interactive process; instead of requiring formal written responses from each district identified as struggling with the Key Performance Indicator, the BSE called the districts together for some technical assistance up front. Using the Doug Reeves data wall process, districts brought display boards filled with their analyses of data, analyses of root causes behind the concerning data, other data sources they intend to investigate and a preliminary list of strategies they are considering for implementation. Districts presented their work to peers and were tasked with evaluating the products other districts had developed. Education consultants from the CSDE reviewed each data wall and provided written feedback. Based on this peer review process and the quality of the products as assessed by education consultants, a smaller group of districts were targeted for receiving more intensive technical assistance and support December 17, 2009.

Another highlight from these events was a presentation on conducting a root causes analysis and digging deeper into district data to fully understand the real problems so that strategic solutions can be implemented. The BSE shared some ideas from its own practices in discovering root causes of noncompliance across its various monitoring activities. SERC staff offered strategic solutions and training to participating districts. Readers can review slides on Root Causes Analysis from the Data Wall Day by clicking [here](#). For more information on focused monitoring, the Key Performance Indicators, district selection or on how to be more involved with focused monitoring, please contact Dana Corriveau by e-mailing [Back to *Inside this Issue*](#)

Federal Focus

SSI and PASS—Information on Two Student Benefits

As its name implies, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) supplements a person's income up to a certain level. SSI is a program that pays monthly benefits to people with low incomes and limited assets who are 65 years of age or older, are blind, or have other disabilities. Children with disabilities identified by districts as eligible under IDEA may qualify if they meet Social Security's definition of disability and if their income and assets fall within the eligibility limits. The level varies from one state to another and may increase each year to reflect changes in cost-of-living. The local Social Security office can tell families more about SSI benefit levels in Connecticut. The Social Security Administration may also approve a Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS), in which a student is able to set aside income and resources that are being used toward a specific vocational goal (such as college tuition) and still receive SSI payments. However, be aware that earnings from employment may affect SSI benefits. For more information on SSI and PASS, contact your local Social Security Administration office or consult <http://www.ssa.gov/disability/>.



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Resources & Opportunities

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Free Curricula Addressing Cyberbullying

The National School Board Association and its Technology Leadership Network has created a free CyberSmart! Cyberbullying Package to schools nationwide. In developing these lessons, all current research findings concerning cyberbullying were examined as well as best practices from the fields of cyber security, school violence prevention, and character education which impact behavioral change. These materials were developed as an avenue for schools to begin a dialogue with students and build a sustained cyberbullying prevention campaign that continually reminds each school community about safe, ethical online use. Interested readers can access the curriculum and related materials [here](#).



Please note recent legislative revisions related to special education services by RESCs and cooperative arrangements between 2 or more boards of education. By clicking [here](#). Stay tuned to the Bulletin for coverage on these and other updates relevant to your work in special education.

CSDE Assessment Training Updates

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The Bureau of Student Assessment within the CSDE has announced dates and descriptions of winter training sessions on CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist, Accommodations, the Measurement Incorporated Secure Testing (MIST) Application, Assessment Guidelines, and so forth. Please click [here](#) for a complete list. Readers may contact Janet Stuck by [e-mail](#).



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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 emailing jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov.

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