

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

SUBJECT: Report on Special Education

DATE: January 6, 2016

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report provides the Connecticut State Board of Education with an overview of special education regulations, services and grants as administered by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Bureau of Special Education (BSE). The BSE ensures compliance with State statutes (C.G.S. 10-76(a)-(q)) and Regulations (R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-76a-1 to 10-76h-16) and the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Background

Federal Statute IDEA

The IDEA is a federal law that requires school districts and schools to serve the educational needs of eligible students with disabilities. Part B provides this entitlement to children ages 3-21, which is the age group the BSE and public school districts are responsible for serving.

Local education agencies (LEAs) are required to provide for the evaluation of students in the suspected disability. The provision of services, if determined necessary, must be a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This means that education must be at no additional cost to the family and equal to that provided to a student without a disability. Additionally, the education must be provided within the general education setting, alongside a child's nondisabled peers, whenever possible.

Student Data SY 2014-15

Student data collected in October for the 2014-15 school year reveals that, although the overall state student enrollment continues to decline, special education enrollment is growing. There has been a 3.5% growth (2,300 students) in the number of students identified needing special education compared to the October data of the 2013-14 school year. The BSE is examining the school year 2013-14 through 2014-15 data to determine why this growth exists.

State Systemic Improvement Plan

The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) revised its accountability system under IDEA. Results-Driven Accountability (RDA) shifts the USDE's accountability efforts from a primary emphasis on compliance to a framework that focuses on improved results for children with disabilities, while continuing to ensure that states meet IDEA requirements. RDA emphasizes improving child outcomes such as performance on assessments, graduation rates, and early childhood outcomes. To support this effort, states are required to develop a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) as part of their State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR).

With the input of stakeholders and through the process of data analysis and infrastructure analysis, Connecticut has identified its State Identified Measurable Result for Children with Disabilities (SIMR) as follows:

Increase the reading performance of all 3rd grade students with disabilities statewide, as measured by Connecticut's Approved ESEA Flexibility Performance Index.

The attached SSIP Theory of Action Model Flow Chart describes the three tiers of intervention and implementation.

SIMR Data Review

In preparation for the identification of the SIMR, a CSDE cross-agency team reviewed state assessment data which revealed a significant gap in special education students' reading performance statewide, compared to their general education counterparts. The data showed no significant growth over several years. Further data analysis revealed that the achievement/growth of special education students was similar, regardless of disability type; however, when compared to other sub-groups, students with disabilities statewide performed lower than all, with the exception of English Learners (ELs). The data also revealed that within the Alliance Districts, reading performance for students with disabilities was more than 10% lower than the statewide performance of students with disabilities within non-Alliance Districts.

Based on this data, it was determined to focus the SSIP and SIMR on the reading performance of students with disabilities. BSE worked very closely with the Turnaround Office, as the students most at risk are within Alliance Districts. Finally, BSE focused on Grade 3, to align with the CSDE initiative in Grade 3 literacy.

Targeted Activities

Parent and Family Engagement

BSE has set the theme for the year 'Culturally Relevant Family Engagement Practices' and has purposefully and meaningfully taken steps to engage the field in learning opportunities in this area. Activities for the 2015-16 school year include:

- ✓ 2015 Back to School Event for Directors of Special Education: Lead and facilitated a panel discussion to initiate this central theme, "Making the shift from parental involvement for compliance to family engagement for student success."
- ✓ Facilitated meetings with representation from State Education Resource Center (SERC), BSE and ConnCase to set the agenda/charge for the BSE/ConnCase Leadership Forums
 - December 9, 2015: *Partners in Education: Introducing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships and the Welcoming Walkthrough Protocol*
 - February 3, 2016: *Strategies to Build Staff Capacity within schools to Reduce Parental Dissatisfaction with Special Education.*
- ✓ Facilitated meetings with specific Steering Committee members of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Council (CSPD) to set the charge of implementing culturally relevant family engagement practices for the 2015-2016 year.
- ✓ Facilitated a discussion with the CSPD Steering committee to identify a stakeholders' workgroup to create an action plan for building staff capacity to implement family engagement practices statewide to address the needs of families and children. The purpose statement of this workgroup is as follows: *Families with children with an identified disability(ies) are able to effectively advocate for their children and partner with providers, centers, and schools in collaborative decision making regarding their children's learning, behavioral, medical and social-emotional needs.*

- ✓ Established a series of six regional chat sessions with the Chief of the BSE across the state for directors of special education around the theme, “Evolving Relationships that Work for Kids.” Topics include:
 - *Partnerships Aligning with State Regulations and New Laws*
 - *Building the Capacity of General Education Administrators*
 - *Working with Families in the Places Where They Live*
 - *Creating Advocacy Opportunities for Students with Disabilities Within the Boards of Education and Central Office*
 - *Working Together to Racially, Culturally, and Linguistically Diversify Our Special Education Directors Workforce*
 - *Developing Community Partners*

- ✓ Based on this central theme of implementing culturally relevant family engagement practices, specific strategies have been specifically and explicitly embedded within the BSE/SERC three-day series, “*What Every Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Chairperson Should Know*” – *Learn how to foster culturally relevant family engagements; and examine/practice strategies for dealing with challenging situations at PPT meetings.*

Additional Bureau Work and Responsibilities

Support: The BSE provides support and guidance to LEAs in the implementation and compliance of Federal and State regulations related to special education in several ways. Examples include: technical advisories regarding IDEA interpretations and State regulatory changes; monitoring and support through the various IDEA indicators through data collection and analysis, stakeholder group review and corrective action reports; and professional development with the support of SERC and other area vendors in various key topic areas such as transition, dyslexia, restraint and seclusion, holding PPT meetings, etc.

Compliance: The BSE ensures that LEAs are compliant with the requirements set forth by both federal and state regulations. To support this effort, the BSE facilitates a dispute resolution system which allows for complaints to be filed with the BSE for noncompliance of IDEA. These complaints can be resolved either as a complaint, through mediation or through a due process hearing with a hearing officer. Additionally, to monitor for district compliance, the BSE implements the focus monitoring system which is a system of monitoring the LEAs on a rotation basis for compliance aligned with results driven accountability efforts. Finally, if the CSDE receives a complaint of ‘general compliance issues’ related to a district, the BSE performs a general supervision audit.

Additional Programs/Grants: The BSE administers the following programs:

- Surrogate Parent Program: Approximately 70 surrogates for over 1000 students.
- Special Education Pre-School Program: Provides special education to 3-5-year-olds with disabilities.
- Approved Private Special Education Programs: Monitoring and support of approved private special education programs.
- State Personnel Development Grant and School Climate Grant: Awarded \$991,527 for fiscal year 2015 and \$787,937 for fiscal year 2016. Focus on professional development and support in scientific research-based interventions (SRBI) and school climate.

Next Steps

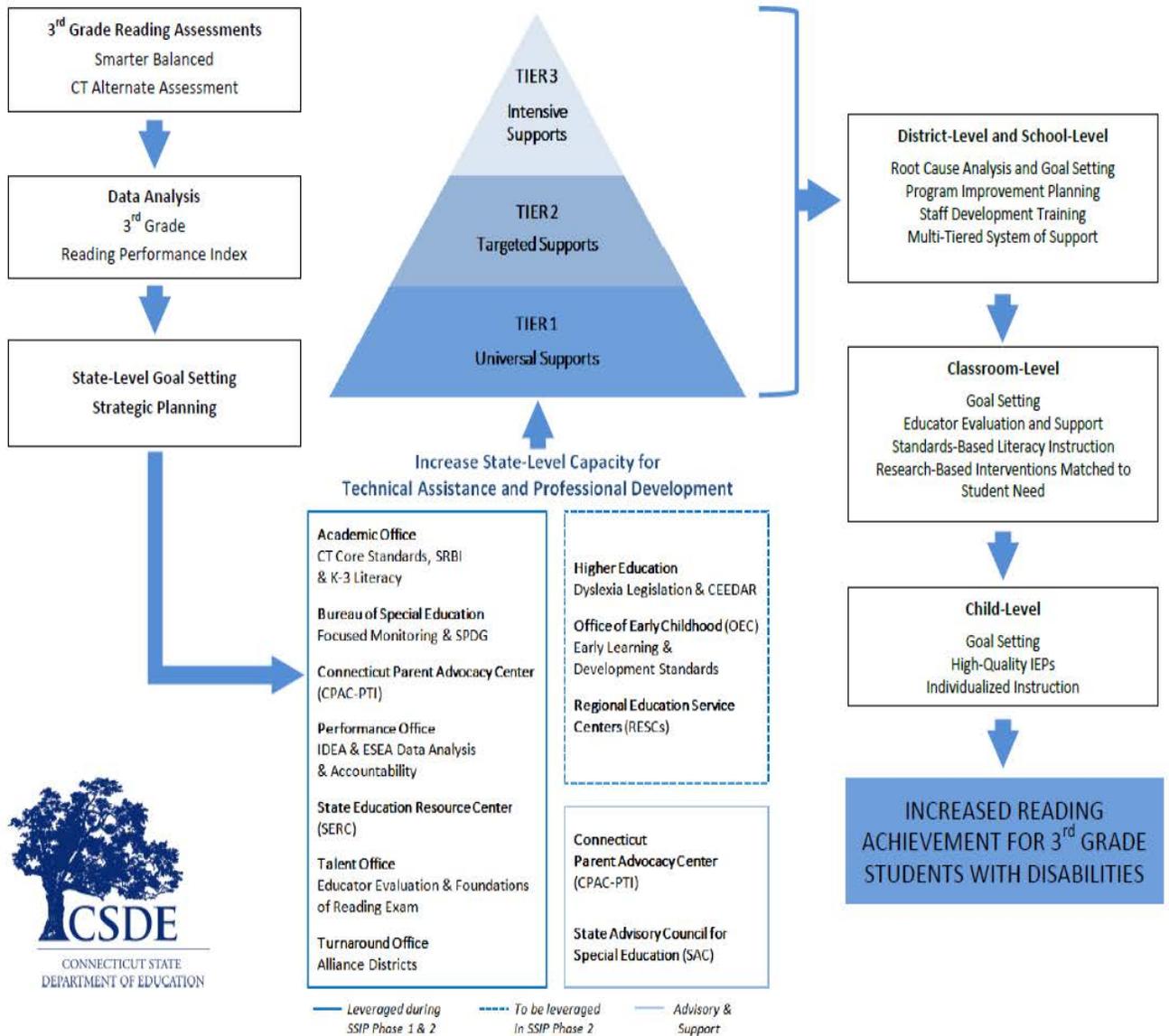
The BSE provides support to LEAs to ensure academic success for students with disabilities. The Bureau will continue its support through policy and program implementation, including management of the Federal IDEA grant, awarded annually. This fiscal year CSDE was funded \$131,323,590, for Part B and \$4,587,514 for Section 619 of IDEA (3 & 4-year-olds).

Prepared by: Isabelina Rodriguez, Ed.D., Chief
Bureau of Special Education

Approved by: Charlene Russell-Tucker
Chief Operating Officer

SSIP – THEORY OF ACTION

SIMR - Increase the reading performance of all 3rd grade students with disabilities statewide, as measured by Connecticut’s Approved ESEA Flexibility Performance Index





CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Bureau of Special Education

Presentation

to

The State Board of Education

January 6, 2016



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Overview of Presentation

1. Brief overview of IDEA and Special Education Process
2. Information on Students served, Schools, LRE and Funding
3. State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and State Identified Measurable Results (SIMR) for Children with Disabilities
4. Focus/vision of BSE on Parental Engagement
5. Brief Overview of Other Initiatives within the Bureau

Legal Landscape

- Federal Statute: The individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 [Public Law 108-446]
- IDEA has four (4) parts:
 - Part A: General Provisions
 - Part B: Assistance for the Education of All Children with Disabilities
 - Part C: Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities
 - Part D: National Activities to Improve the Education of Children with Disabilities
- Federal Regulations: IDEA Implementing Regulations at 34 CFR Parts 300 & 301: *“Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities”*
- State Law: Statute (C.G.S. 10-76(a)-(q)) and Regulations (R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-76a-1 to 10-76h-16): *“Students with Disabilities Requiring Special Education”*

Special Education Defined

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines **special education** as:

“a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided to a child with a disability who requires special education and related services.”

FAPE requires that education services must be:

- provided at public expense, under public supervision, and without charge to parents;
- appropriate and individualized to meet the needs of each child with a disability, meet the standards of the State Education Agency (SEA) and the IDEA; and
- part of the public education provided to all children and in conformity with a child’s individualized education program (IEP).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

- To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled; and
- Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Ages Served

IDEA [Part B]: Education of Students/Special Education

- Children, ages 3 through 21, or graduation from high school, whichever is first attained
 - Includes eligible children beginning by their third birthday
 - Extends to eligible children/youth until age 21 or high school graduation, whichever occurs first
 - Under CT regulations, a student with a disability maintains eligibility through the end of the school year (June 30) in which s/he turns 21

Special Education Eligibility

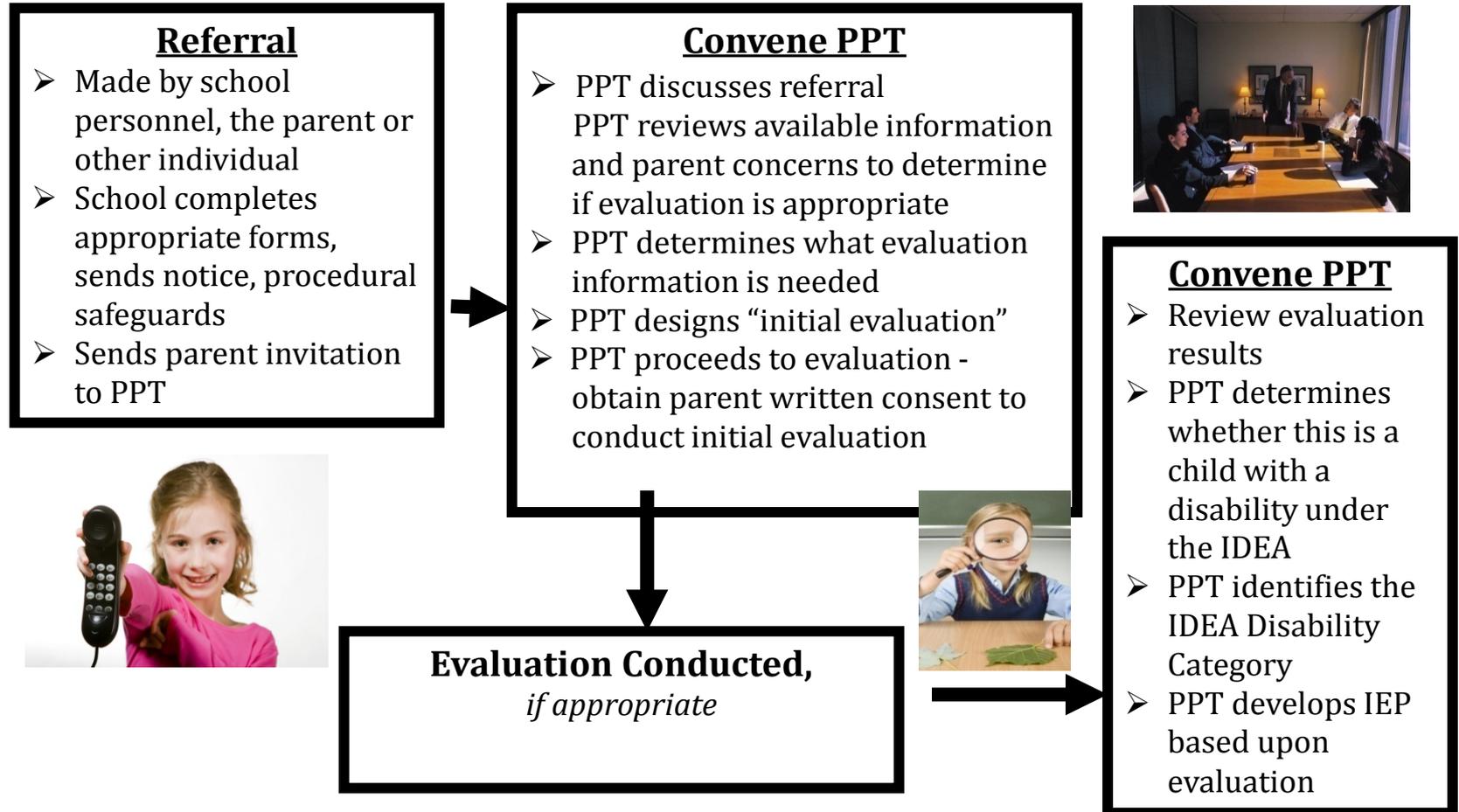
To be eligible for special education and related services:

- A child must be identified with a disability as determined by IDEA;
- The disability must adversely affect the child's educational performance; and as a result
- The child must require a specially designed instructional program to address his or her unique educational needs.

What are Related Services?

- Related services include transportation and development, corrective and other supportive services as required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and can include:
 - Speech-language pathology
 - Audiology
 - Physical and occupational therapy
 - Interpreting services
 - Counseling
 - Mobility services
 - Social work service in schools
 - Parent counseling and training

Referral, Evaluation, Eligibility, IEP



Key Aspects of Special Education

- **Child Find:** To identify, locate and evaluate children, birth-21, who may require special education
- **Individual child with a disability** versus a group of children in a grade
- **Free appropriate public education (FAPE)** beginning at age 3 until age 21 or high school graduation, whichever occurs first
- **Least restrictive environment (LRE)**
- **Parental participation**
- **Procedural safeguards and Due Process** (parent/child rights, obtaining copies of records)
- **State Education Agency (SEA) Obligations for General Supervision, Monitoring, Surrogate Parents**
- **Decision-making:** A group of professionals called a “Planning and Placement Team” (PPT) which includes the child’s parents
- **Response to Intervention (RTI or Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI)):** activities and interventions prior to referral to special education
- **Comprehensive Evaluation:** to identify all of a child’s educational needs
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** Identifying goals, personnel, services
- **Progress Monitoring:** To help ensure services are appropriate and effective

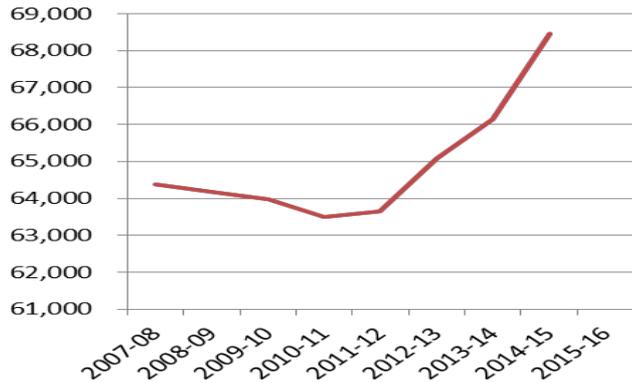
Who Is Receiving Special Education?

Child is determined to have a disability and that disability requires that the child receive special education.

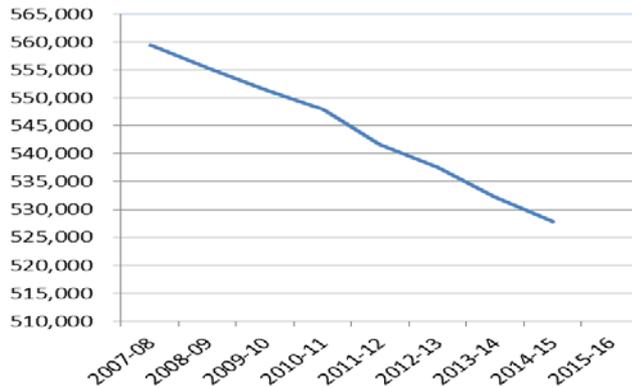
- ❖ Intellectual Disability: 2,380 students, .5%
- ❖ Speech or Language Impairment: 10,058 students, 1.9%
- ❖ Emotional Disturbance: 5,400 students, 1.0%
- ❖ Autism: 7,788 students, 1.5%
- ❖ Other Health Impairment: 13,946 students, 2.6%
- ❖ Specific Learning Disability: 23,416 students, 4.4%
- ❖ All other Disabilities: 5,457, 1.0%
- ❖ Note: In 2014-15 = 68,445 students, 13% received special education

Special Education Prevalence Rate

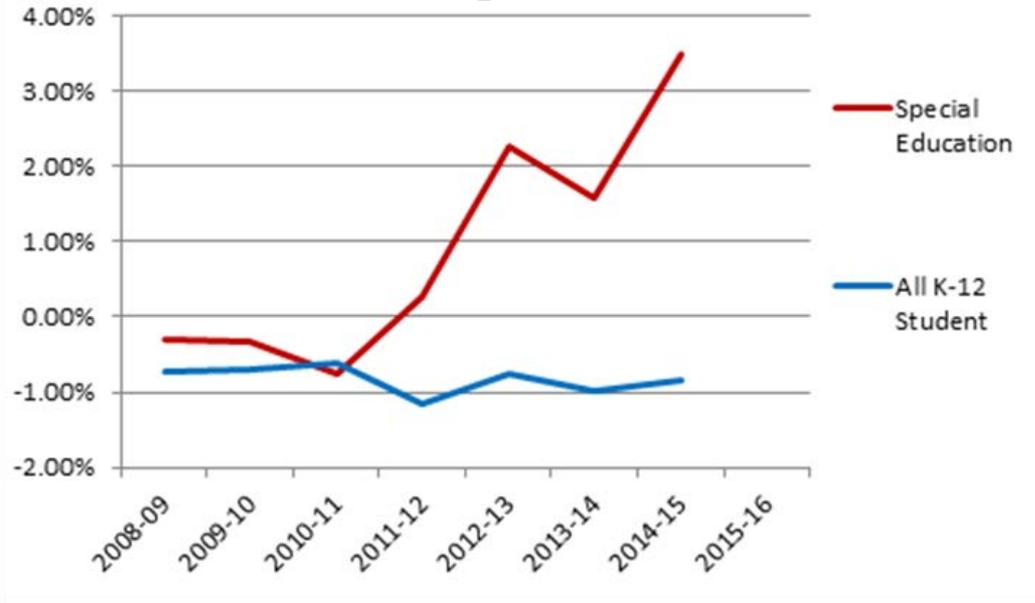
Special Education K-12 Student Count



All Student K-12 Count



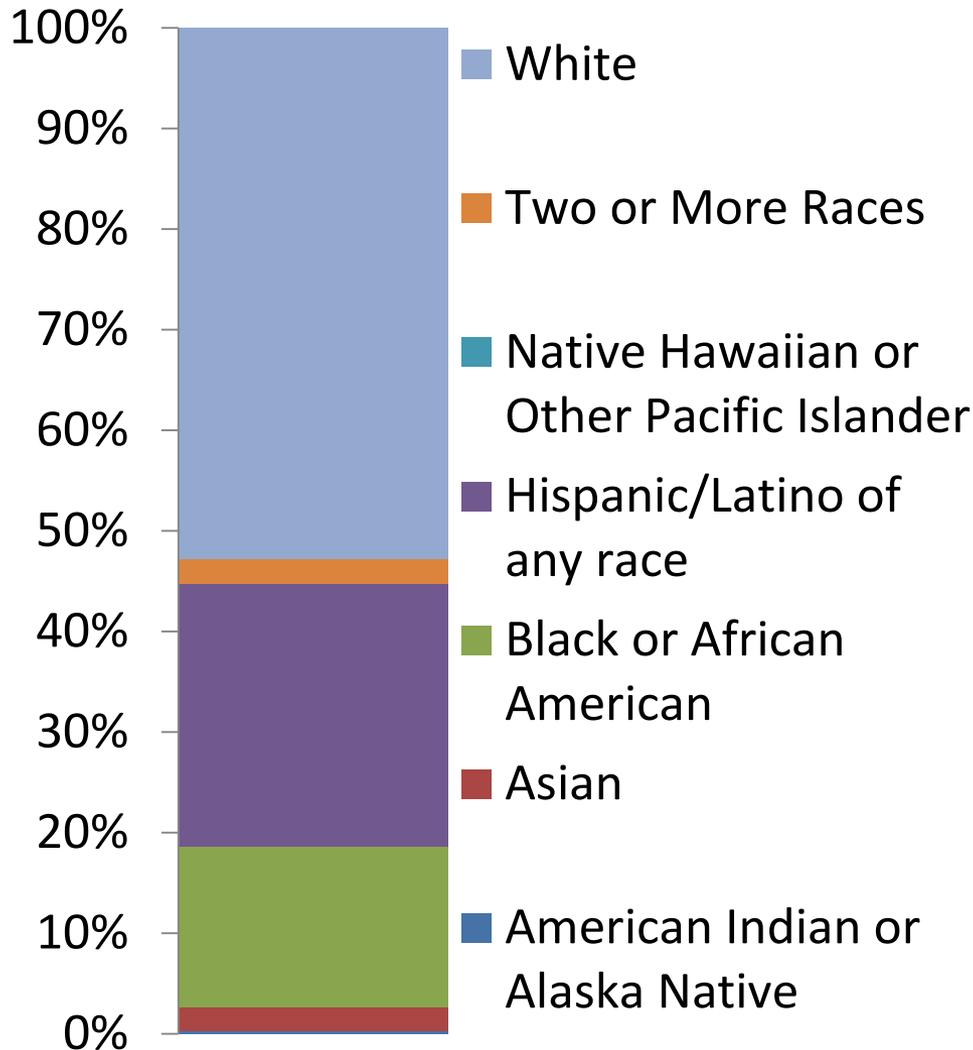
Rate of Change in Child Count



	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Special Education Prevalence	11.5%	11.6%	11.6%	11.6%	11.7%	12.1%	12.4%	13.0%	

Students With Disabilities: Demographics

Race/Ethnicity



Students with Disabilities

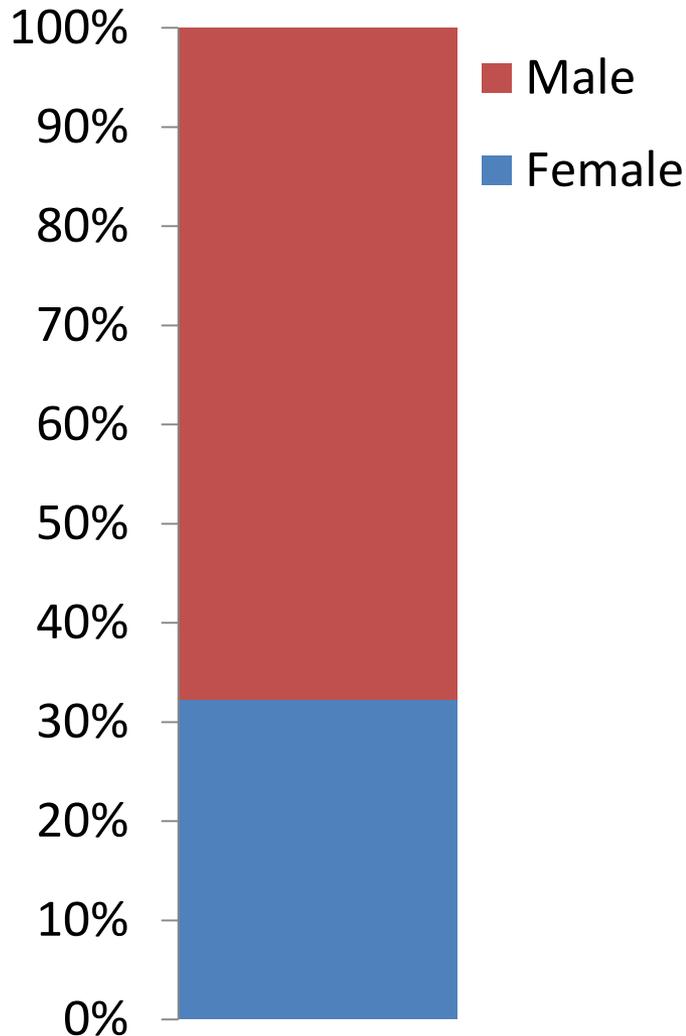
- White: **52.8 %**
- Hispanic/Latino of any Race: **26.1 %**
- Black or African American: **15.9 %**

All Students

- White : **57.3 %**
- Hispanic/Latino of any Race: **22.1 %**
- Black or African American: **12.9%**

Students With Disabilities: Demographics

Gender



Students with Disabilities

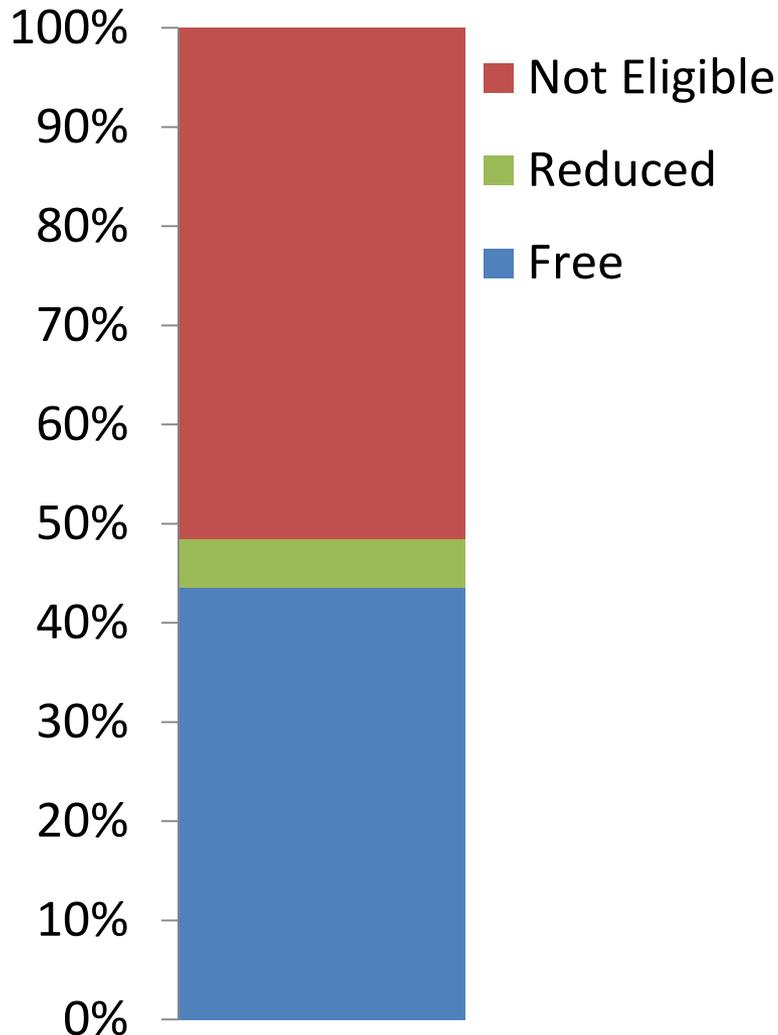
- Male: **67.7 %**
- Female: **32.3%**

All Students

- Male: **51.5%**
- Female: **48.5 %**

Students With Disabilities: Demographics

Free/Reduced Price Meal Eligibility



Students with Disabilities

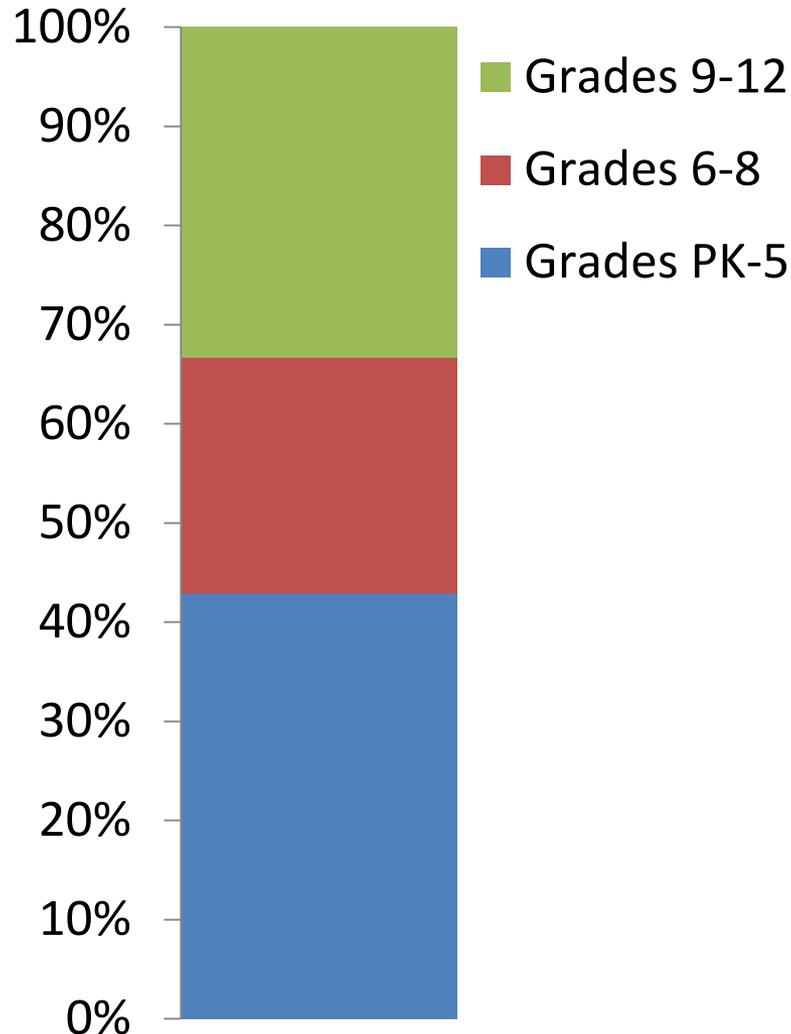
- Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals: **48.4 %**

All Students

- Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals: **37.7 %**

Students With Disabilities: Demographics

Grade



Students with Disabilities

- Grade PK-5: **42.9 %**
- Grade 6-8: **23.8 %**
- Grade 9-12: **33.3 %**

All Students

- Grade PK-5: **46.5 %**
- Grade 6-8: **22.5 %**
- Grade 9-12: **30.9 %**

FUNDING

FFY 2015 IDEA Part B Grant 611						
	Total Award	Maximum Available for Administration	Maximum Other Set-Aside	July 1 to September 30 Regular Awards	Regular Awards After October 1	Flow through to LEA
Table I Chart Grants to States 7/1/2015	\$131,525,104	\$ 3,027,590	\$13,172,325	\$24,300,566	\$107,224,538	\$115,325,189
Table I Chart Grants to States 10/1/2015	\$131,323,590	\$ 3,027,590	\$13,172,325	\$24,300,566	\$107,023,024	\$115,123,675
Connecticut Final Calculation	\$131,323,590	\$3,027,590	\$3,172,325	\$24,300,566	\$107,023,024	\$115,123,675
FFY 2015 IDEA Part B Grant 619						
	Total Award	Maximum Available for Administration	Maximum State Set-Aside	Minimum Flow-Through to LEAs		Flow through to LEA
Table II Chart Grants to States	\$ 4,587,514	\$ 253,317	\$1,266,588	\$3,320,926		\$3,067,609
Connecticut Final Calculation	\$ 4,587,514	\$ 253,317	\$ 630,061			\$3,704,136

State Systemic Improvement Plan

SSIP

- State Identified Measureable Result (SIMR)
Must be:
 - **aligned** to Annual Performance Report (APR) Indicator
 - **individual child-level result**
 - **connected** to other state-level initiatives (doable!)
 - Narrow enough that the state has resources to support the plan.
 - Large enough to move the statewide numbers & effect real change.

Connecticut

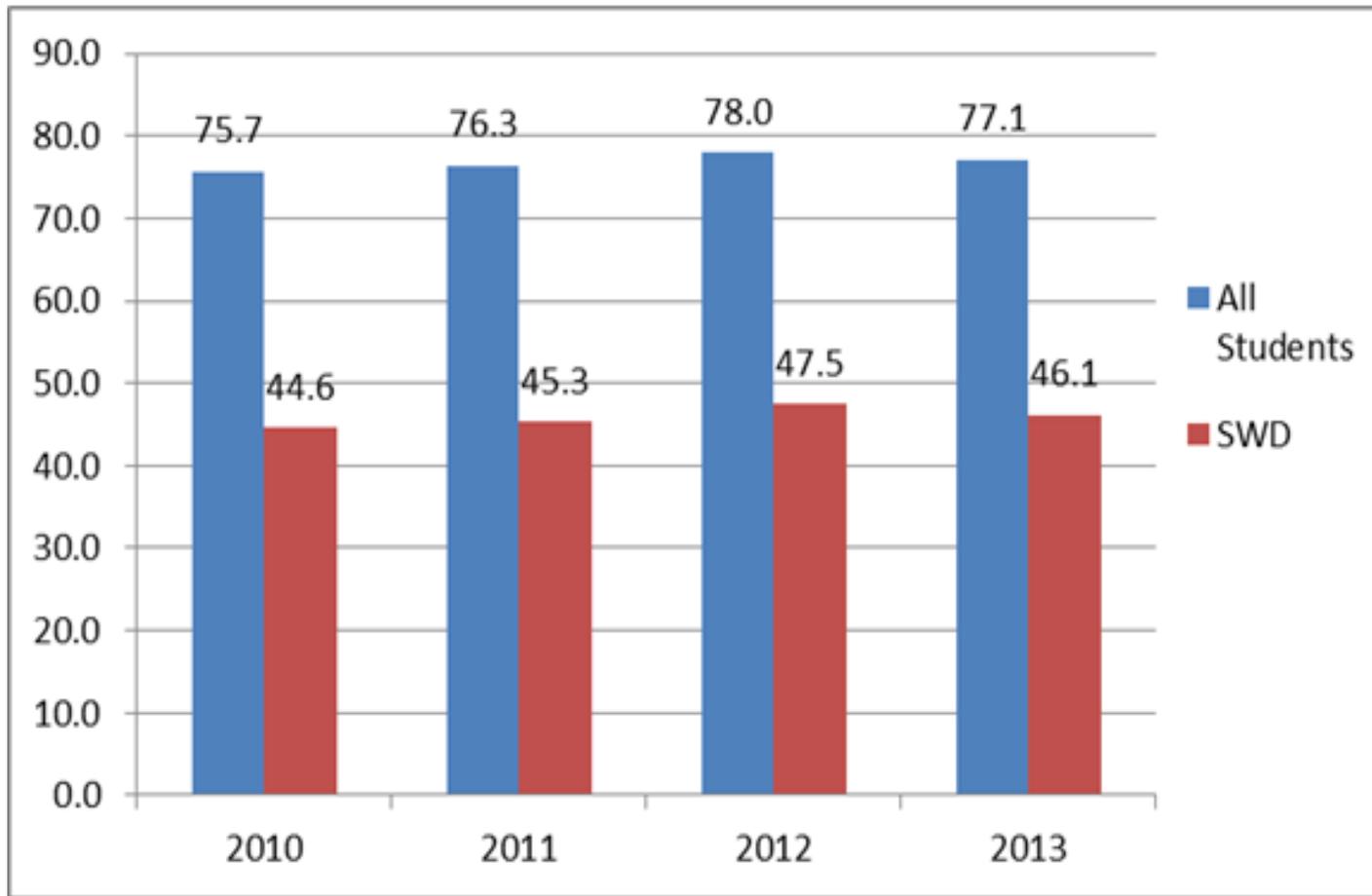
STATE IDENTIFIED MEASURABLE RESULT
for CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (SIMR):

**Increase the reading performance of all
3rd grade students with disabilities statewide,
as measured by Connecticut's approved
ESEA Flexibility Performance Index.**

- **Quick Review – “Why Reading Achievement?”**

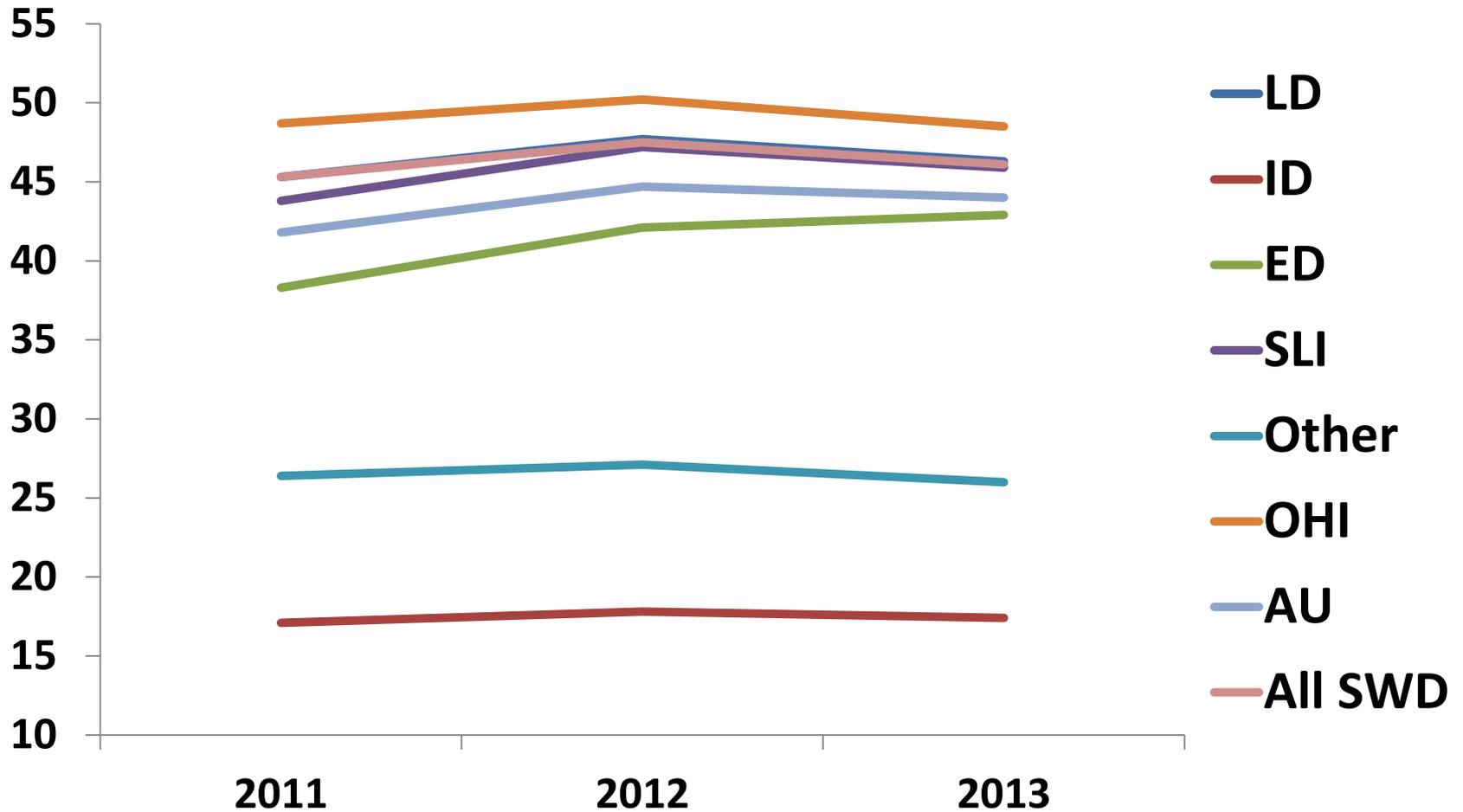
Academic Achievement

Reading CMT Performance Index





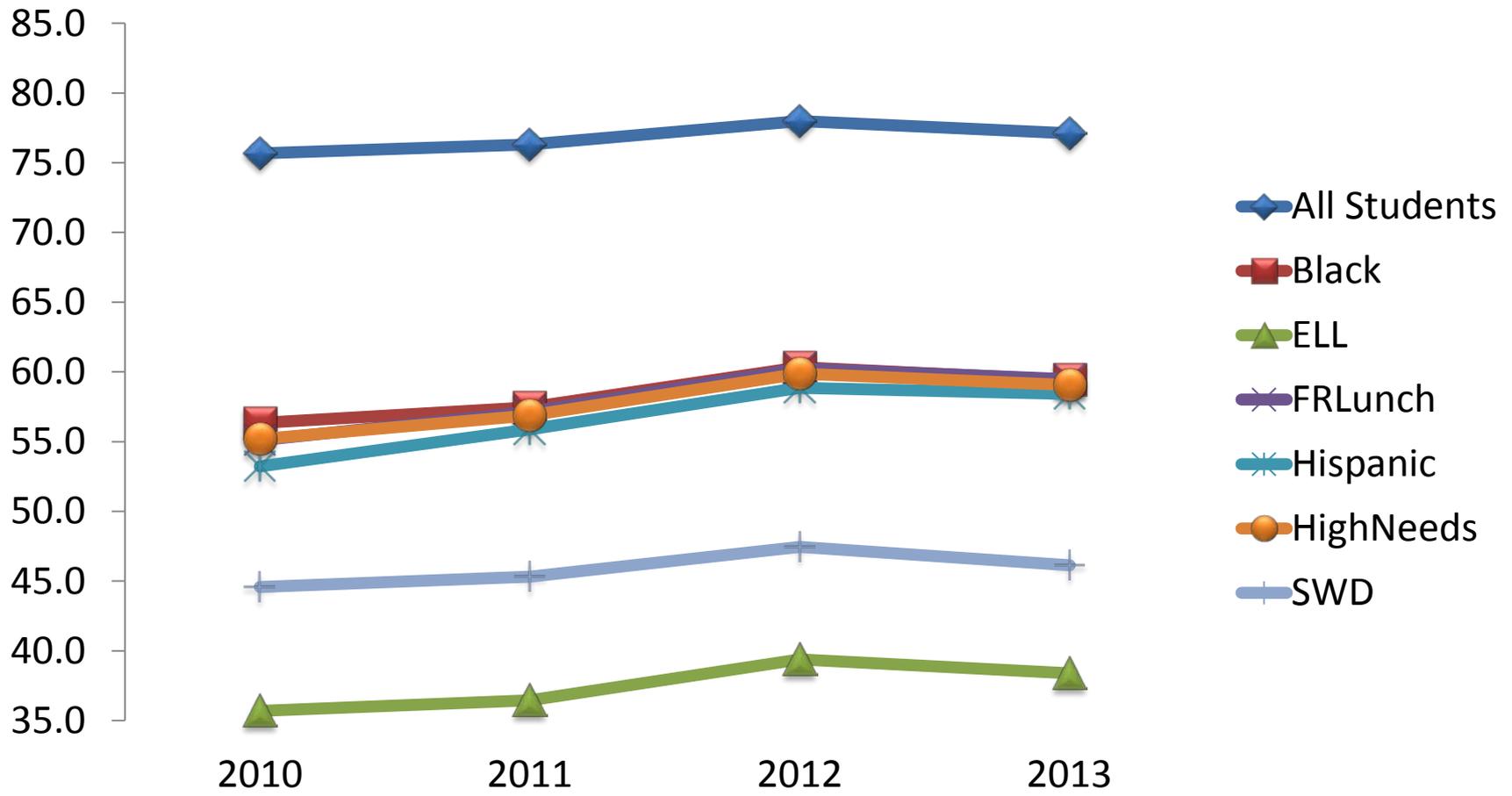
Reading Performance Index by Major Disability Category





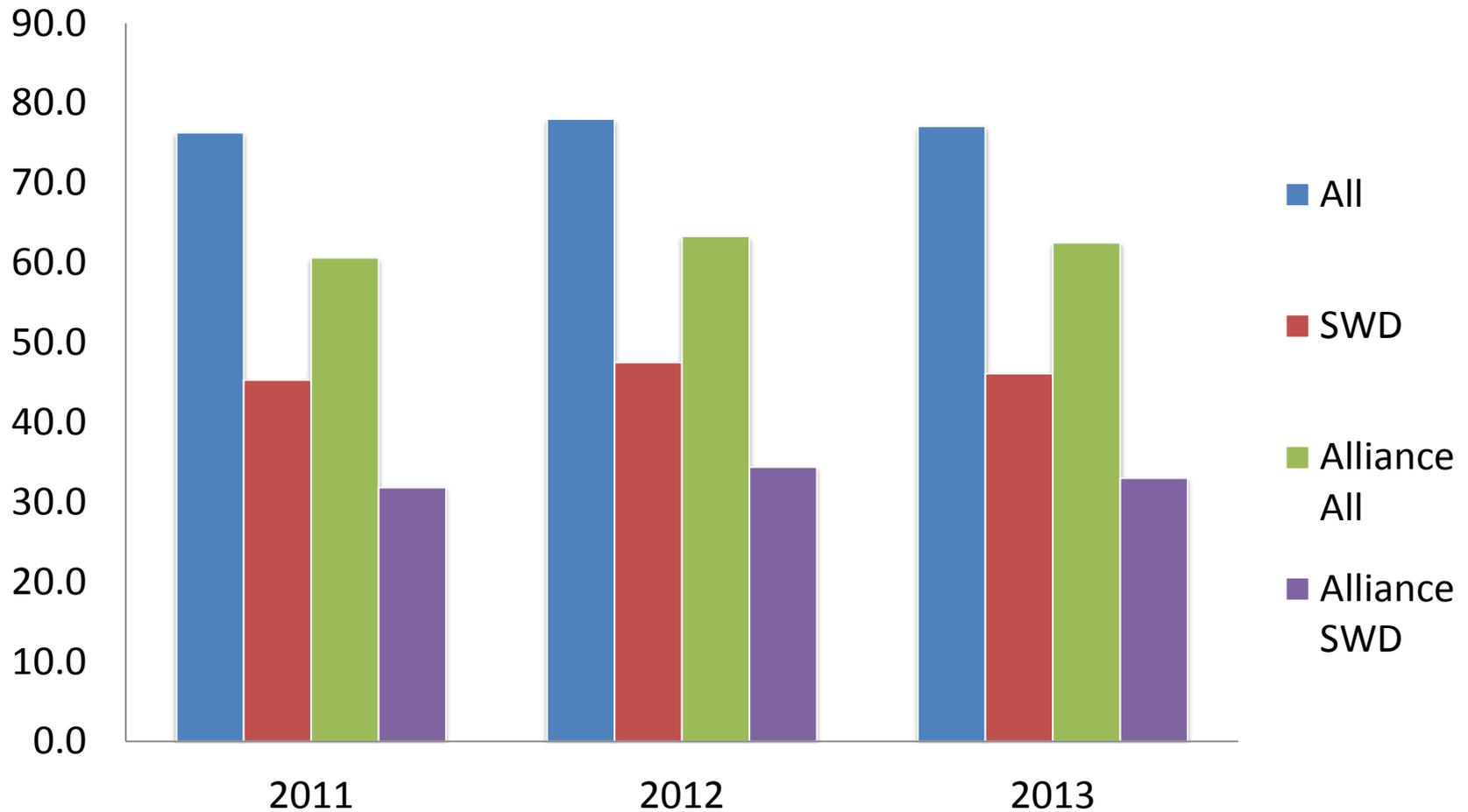
Academic Achievement

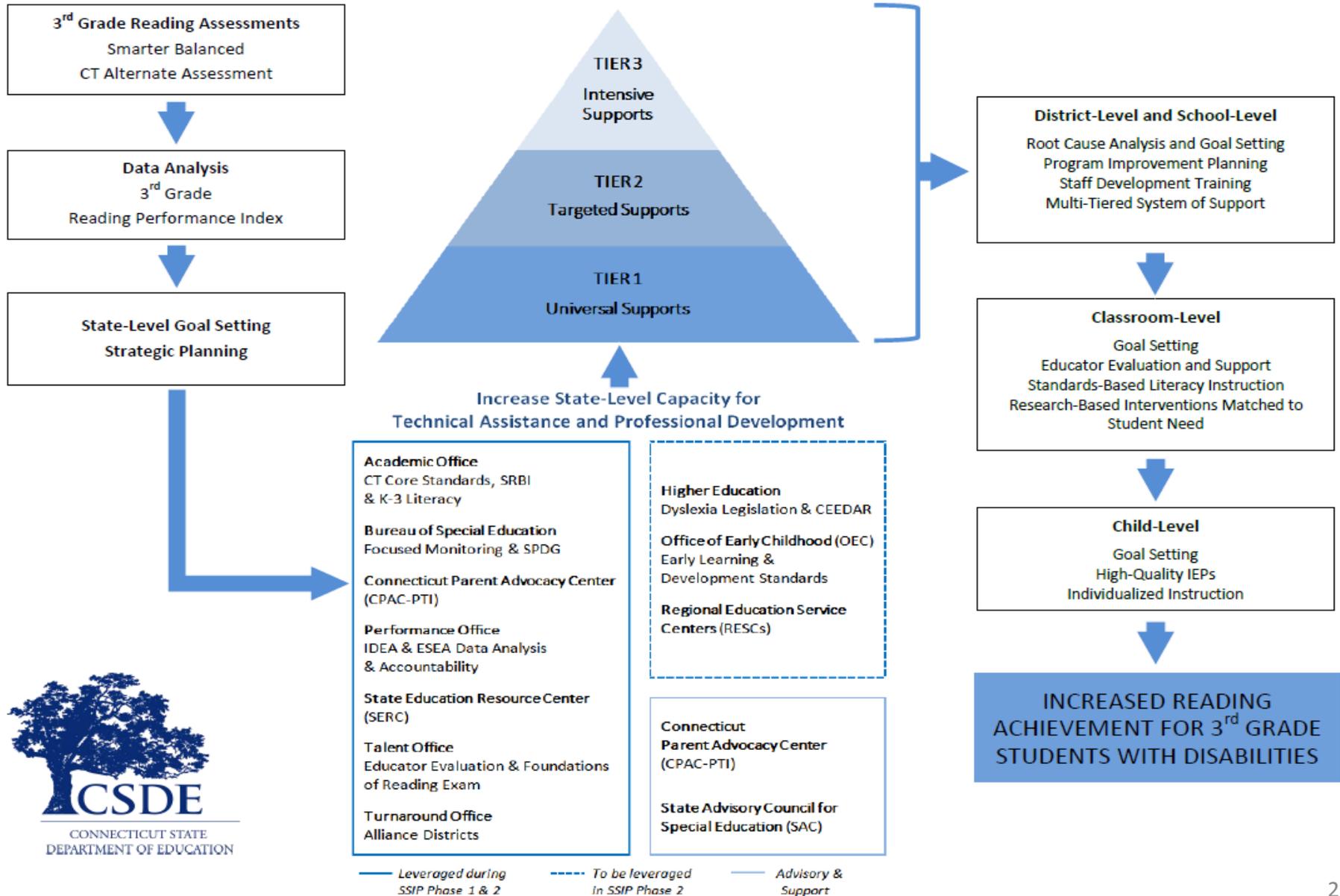
Reading CMT Subgroup Performance



Academic Achievement

Reading CMT Performance Index





Cross-Division Work (Including External Partners)

- Consolidated System of Monitoring and Providing Support and Technical Assistance
- Academic Office
 - CT Core Standards
 - SRBI (RTI Framework)
- CT Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC)
 - Partner in SSIP Implementation
- State Education Resource Center
 - Provide Professional Development to Focus Monitoring (FM) Districts
 - Partner with CSDE on FM Teams

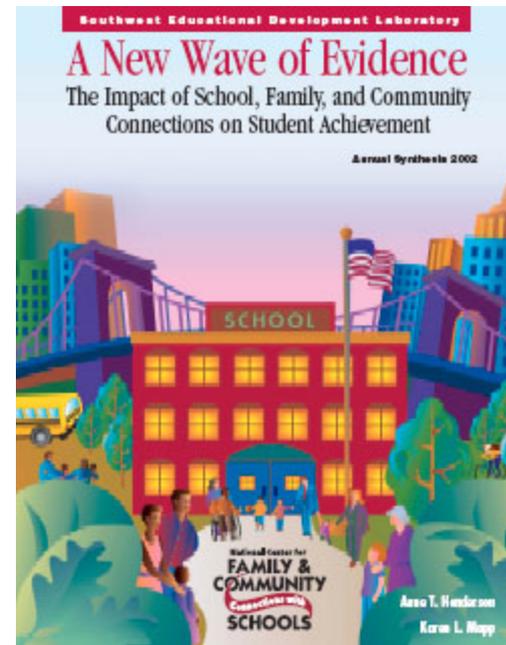


A New Wave of Evidence:

Family Engagement Has a Powerful Impact on Student Achievement

By Anne T. Henderson
and Karen L. Mapp

www.sedl.org/connections



School Practices are KEY

Specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage and guide parents to become involved are the **strongest predictors of whether parents are involved** at home and school.

Dr. Joyce Epstein

Johns Hopkins University



BUREAU OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

2015-16 GOAL/PRIORITY

SHIFT- PARENT OUTREACH TO PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Created a common theme/thread for the year:

- **Back To School Conference: Opening remarks; Panel of experts**
- **Regional Chats with the Bureau Chief**
- **CSPD Council**
- **Leadership Forums**
- **Parent Program Teacher Trainings**
- **Parent Chats with the Bureau Chief**
- **Work within the Bureau**

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

SUPPORT TO DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

- Technical Advisories: Written and Phone Calls
- Guidance Memos
 - Technical Edits
 - Time With Non-Disabled Peers (TWNDP)
 - Independent Evaluations
- Monitoring and Compliance Support
 - On-site support and Professional Development (PD)
 - LRE PD
 - Transition PD
 - Augmentative Communication PD
 - Restraint and Seclusion PD
 - Dyslexia PD
 - Indicator Monitoring
 - Evaluation Timeline monitoring

COMPLIANCE/CORRECTIVE ACTION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- FM Monitoring: Three-Year Cycle- 1/3 of the State/Yr
- General Supervision Audits: Larger scale audits
- Systemic Complaints
- Evaluation
- IDEA Dispute Resolution Complaints (60 day)
- IDEA Mediation Requests
- IDEA Due Process Hearing Requests

ADDITIONAL SPECIAL PROGRAMS

- SURROGATE PROGRAM
- APPROVED PRIVATE SPECIAL ED PROGRAMS
- SPECIAL ED EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
- STATE PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT GRANT
- SCHOOL CLIMATE GRANT
- SCHOOL CLIMATE TRANSFORMATION GRANT

Conclusion

Questions?