

From the Bureau of Special Education

CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Brief from the Chief

The State Department of Education (SDE) is working internally and in partnership with other state agencies to get timely and accurate information to districts and programs regarding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). On March 25 and 26, 2009, the SDE, in collaboration with [ConnCASE](#) and the State Education Resource Center (SERC), featured an information session on preliminary guidance concerning ARRA funding and implications for IDEA Part B. The session provided an overview of federal goals, auditing processes, award timelines, distribution of funds, and SDE recommendations for use of AARA funds in compliance with federal and state laws specific to entitlement grants. Documents from the ConnCASE session as well as the AARA grant applications will be available shortly under the [RFP](#) section on the SDE website with an anticipated open date for applications around **April 15**. Districts, however, may apply after this April 15 date. The AARA grant awards will be awarded shortly after April 30 and on a regular basis thereafter. While it is expected that 50 percent of AARA funds will be awarded first, each district's application needs to be for 100 percent of the funding opportunity— the second 50 percent will be awarded contingent upon revisions to the AARA application due to Bureau of Special Education (BSE) on **September 18, 2009**. All ARRA funds are considered to be 2009-2010 funds and will need to be obligated by the state on or before June 30, 2011.

Please click [here](#) for this article in its entirety which includes more information on what districts and programs can expect from the BSE during this process and how to access current ARRA information.

The BSE recognizes that exciting change coupled with tensions during unsettling economic times may lead to questions, concerns, and confusion. The BSE is committed to working with districts and programs in navigating through these AARA requirements and the next steps in the process. We wish to assure you that our staff is keeping abreast of information provided by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and other relevant agencies as it is made available. If you have questions about AARA and upcoming grant application packages, please contact Brian Cunnane, IDEA grant funds manager, in the BSE at 860-713-6919 or through our main line at 860-713-6910.



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Mark Your Calendars...

- **May 15, 2009 Special Education Grant Program [applications](#) due!**

Featured Story:

THE BUREAU BULLETIN

NERRC: Regional Resources with National Connections



The National Education Regional Resource Center (NERRC) is funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to provide support and technical assistance to the state departments of education and state lead agencies for Part C (early intervention) in the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). Specifically, they deliver “targeted, accessible, research-based information and support to improve results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities and their families.” NERRC coordinates regional workgroups or Communities of Practice that provide staff in state departments of education and lead agencies a forum to discuss current issues, promising practices and exchange relevant information. In Connecticut, for example, targeted work in the past several years has included:

- conducting a series of statewide focus groups with stakeholders to solicit feedback on proposed changes to state teacher licensure standards for general and special educators;
- assistance in preparation and participation in the OSEP Verification Visit in 2006;
- assistance with orientation and training for the new chair and members of the State Advisory Committee (SAC); and
- collaboration with the National Center on Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRES), conducting an evaluation/case study of two Connecticut Local Education Agencies (LEAs) regarding the implementation of strategies to address disproportionality.

Additional information, including more about their work, contact information and links to other resources can be found at their website: <http://www.rrfcnetwork.org/nerrc>. A brochure that highlights NERCC activities is [attached](#).

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Coming Attractions!

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is putting a heavy emphasis on all SEAs (State Education Agencies) to better track the use of federal funds for special education at the local level. Thus, commencing this spring, the Bureau of Special Education will be conducting random fiscal audits. These audits will concentrate on documenting the existence of specific policies and procedures that should be in place at the local district/school level. These include, but are not limited to:

- Tracking procedures for property and equipment bought with IDEA funds;
- Non-supplanting of federal funds (e.g. staff, out of district placements);
- Procedures for calculating proportionate share for parentally placed private school students;
- Understanding the concept of Maintenance of Effort (MOE) by district personnel; and
- Proper use of federal funds for Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS).

These fiscal audits will be conducted by Brian Cunnane, IDEA funds manager at the Bureau of Special Education. Districts can contact Brian at brian.cunnane@ct.gov for more information.

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State of the State

IDEA Part B Applications Available

The IDEA grant application is now available [online](#) for local education agency (LEA) Special Education/Pupil Personnel directors to file for their district's IDEA entitlement funds. As in past years, a hard copy of the grant must be received at the Bureau of Special Education by May 15, 2009. Meanwhile, unless otherwise informed by the SDE, directors should use their IDEA 08-09 final figures as their starting point for the IDEA 09-10 grant application. This grant is limited to LEAs. If you have any questions please contact Brian Cunnane at

brian.cunnane@ct.gov.

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Please be sure to check the State Department of Education [website](#) for regular updates on Request for Proposal grant opportunities.

Highly Qualified Teachers & AYP



Pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Connecticut school districts were required to meet the goal of having all core academic subjects taught by highly qualified teachers (HQT) by the 2006-07 school year. Districts received a [circular letter](#) January 2009 that described consequences for not meeting the 100 percent HQT goal and district requirements for improvement plans submission due March 2009. Further, the letter included [details](#) on requirements starting with the 2009-10 school year for those not meeting the 100 percent HQT goal for three consecutive years AND have not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for three consecutive years:

- Districts must enter into an agreement with the CSDE concerning the use of the district's Title II, Part A, Teacher Quality funds to ensure that the funds are used to reach the 100 percent HQT goal; and
- Title I districts will be prohibited from using Title I funds to pay for new paraprofessionals unless certain conditions are met.

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Reminder: Restraint & Seclusion

Districts are reminded that appropriate oversight of restraint and seclusion policies and practices are critical, including regular review of policies and procedures regarding restraint and seclusion. As detailed in a [circular letter](#) from Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan to Superintendents on August 16, 2007, at initial planning and placement team meetings, boards of education must provide the parent, guardian, surrogate parent or pupil with information about the laws and regulations concerning physical restraint and seclusion in schools (Sections 1 to 5, inclusive, effective October 1, 2007). Best practice would indicate that this information also be shared with parents of currently identified students at the annual review or next scheduled PPT. Staff needs to be well-trained and continuously educated regarding proper use of restraint and seclusion and policy guidelines. When adopted by the State Board of Education, regulations concerning the use of restraint and seclusion in schools will be shared with superintendents, special education directors and parents. Please call Colleen Hayles, BSE education consultant, at 860-713-6922 with questions.



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State of the State

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NAEYC Accreditation Support



The State Department of Education's Early Childhood Special Education Program (e.g., IDEA 619) in collaboration with the Connecticut Charts A Course Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP) is reminding school district personnel that IDEA 619 funds are available to support a program in attaining accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Funds are available for: (1) school district programs that provide integrated classroom opportunities for young children, 3 through 5, with an individualized education program (IEP) and (2) community early childhood programs demonstrating a collaborative relationship with the school district specific to serving and supporting young children, 3 through 4, with an IEP. The Department of Education's Early Childhood Special Education Program has designated a section of their web site on NAEYC accreditation. Eligibility requirements and the application for funding support to become NAEYC accredited is available at: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320750#NAEYC> Specific information on accreditation is available through the National Association for the Education of Young Children's web site at: <http://www.naeyc.org/academy/>.

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Exiters: Special Education Data Concern

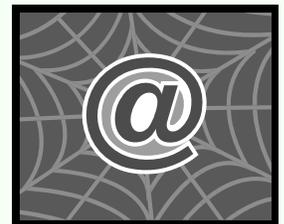
The State Department of Education (SDE) has been working to reconcile the 2007-08 exiters data used to report to the federal government on November 1, 2008, with a more recent data file that reflects changes made in PSIS up through February 2009. The federal report includes students who exited between July 2007 and June 2008. Upon investigation, consistent themes of concern are arising across districts subsequently impacting district-level reporting. Please click [here](#) for the complete story.

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Early Childhood Special Education: E-Mail Distribution List

School district personnel serving young children, ages 3 through 5, with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) have asked the SDE how they can keep up-to-date on evidence-based practices. To that end, the Department's Early Childhood Special Education Program (e.g., IDEA 619) will be developing and piloting an e-mail distribution list of personnel working in school districts with young children, 3 through 5, with an IEP. E-mails will be sent periodically when the SDE receives information that reflects evidence-based practices, current research and literature and/or includes possible resource options and opportunities for school districts. The SDE does not distribute advertisements for products or services commensurate with state policy and does not recommend, endorse or promote specific products and services. Interested personnel working in the preschool or kindergarten grade and serving children with an IEP can send an e-mail to maria.synodi@ct.gov if they are interested in being included in an early childhood special education e-mail distribution list. E-mails sent to the Department must include the following information:

- the name and e-mail address of the individual;
- the individual's professional role (e.g., teacher, speech and language pathologist, etc);
- the grade or grades with which the individual works;
- the age or ages of the children with which the individual works; and
- the school district in which the individual is employed.



Questions can be directed at Maria Synodi at 860-713-6941 or via e-mail at maria.synodi@ct.gov.

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Recent IEP Clarification

As indicated in the February 2009 *Bureau Bulletin*, four pages of Connecticut's Individualized Education Program (IEP) were recently revised and disseminated to assist districts with more accurate data collection and maintaining compliance with the secondary transition requirements found in IDEA 2004. The revised IEP forms and updated manual are posted on the Department's website: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=320730#IEP>. At the request of the field, a new document, highlighting the changes that were made on pages 6, 7, 9, & 12 of the IEP has also been posted. The [attached memo](#) was sent to districts on March 11, 2009, to clarify directions for using the new IEP pages. District personnel must use the new pages when developing or revising student IEPs **as soon as possible** (either hard copies or updated electronic IEP pages as they become available) in order to have the student data necessary to be reported in the October 1, 2009, Child Count in SEDAC. However, the only page that has NEW information that must be included in a student's current IEP is page 6. The new information is **mandatory** under IDEA for transition-age students (i.e., the IEP that is to be in effect when a student turns 16, or younger if appropriate). In addition, the check boxes at the top of the annual goal page (page 7) must also accurately correspond to the Post-School Outcome Goal Statements on page 6 (e.g., postsecondary education/training, employment, independent living). Check boxes may be changed or circled by hand on a hard copy of the IEP. Additional information recorded on pages 7, 9 and 12 must be updated for the purpose of reporting student data in SEDAC. This will require districts to update student IEPs prior to the October 1, 2009, Child Count. District's with electronic IEPs may continue to use the current page 7 (if check boxes are modified on a hard copy of the IEP), page 9a for the Modified Assessment System, and page 12 until electronic IEPs are updated. All hard copies of any IEP must have the required information even if it needs to be temporarily recorded by hand on a hard copy. Please contact any consultant in the Bureau of Special Education if you have additional questions about the IEP revisions or using the revised IEP by calling 860-713-6910.

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Focused Monitoring Tools Available

For the 2008-09 school year, the BSE conducted focused monitoring using Key Performance Indicator: *Improve the district's effectiveness of efforts to educate students with an individualized education program (IEP) as demonstrated by procedural compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and students with disabilities' participation and performance on statewide assessments.*

The Key Performance Indicator and development of the visits was done in collaboration with the Focused Monitoring Steering Committee. Data used to identify districts included subgroup performance of students with disabilities on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) as "not achieved"; less than 95 percent of students with disabilities participated on the CAPT Reading Assessment; less than 25 percent of students with disabilities met Proficiency on the CMT and/or CAPT Reading Assessment; and a comparison of performance between students with disabilities and nondisabled peers on the CMT and/or CAPT Reading Assessment.

The BSE is making the tools used on the focused monitoring visits available to all districts in the event that districts wish to conduct their own internal review. For example, districts may wish to consider evaluating the content of their student IEP using the student checklist for [high school students](#) or checklist for [elementary/middle school](#). Please contact Dana Corriveau for details at 860-713-6944 or check the website for new postings. Further, districts can expect the updated manual on Connecticut Focused Monitoring by the end of June 2009 for a complete description of all tools and procedures used as part of focused monitoring.



Bureau Happenings

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Secondary Transition: Post-School Outcome Goal Statements

Click [here](#) for **Secondary Transition: Post-School Outcome Goal Statements** Frequently Asked Questions

A Post-School Outcome Goal Statement (PSOGS) is Connecticut's term for the "appropriate measurable postsecondary goals" required by IDEA 2004 for transition-age students that can be found on the revised page 6 of the IEP that was disseminated on February 23, 2009. Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when a student turns 16 (or younger), and updated annually thereafter, the student's IEP must include PSOGS that are based on "age-appropriate transition assessments" and that are **related to postsecondary education or training, employment**, and if appropriate, **independent living skills.**" Each "transition" IEP must include a minimum of two PSOGS and related annual goals: one PSOGS in postsecondary education or training (page 6, #5a) and an annual goal on page 7 with related objectives and one PSOGS in employment (page 6, #5b) and an annual goal on page 7 with related objectives. If appropriate, a student may also have a third PSOGS (page 6, #5c) with an annual goal on page 7 with related objectives. The Department developed a PowerPoint presentation (see October 2008 *Bureau Bulletin*, page 6) to assist district personnel in writing appropriate PSOGS's. For additional guidance and examples, see the attached *Frequently Asked Questions* that will also be posted as a Topic Brief on the SDE website.

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Post-School Outcomes Survey

One of the requirements for writing an appropriate PSOGS is that it must occur after a student graduates or exits from high school, for example: **"After high school, Carol will enroll in non-credit classes at the local community college."** Data indicating whether or not a student met his/her Post-School Outcome Goal Statement is collected by the Department using the *Post-School Outcomes Survey*. The Department has collected post-school outcome data on all (approximately 4,750 per year) exiters from special education (graduates with regular diplomas and certificates of completion, exiters reaching maximum age and drop-outs) every two years since 2000. In 2008, the Department began surveying all students every year, within one year after they exited special education. The *Post-School Outcomes Survey* disseminated between April and August each year is coordinated through the University of Connecticut. Students are asked about their employment status, whether they have taken any college or training classes and additional information about other resources they may be using after high school. This data can assist districts in determining how effective the transition services provided to students receiving special education have been in helping students reach their post-school goals. For additional information on secondary transition and for more details concerning the Post-School Outcomes survey, please contact: Dr. Patricia Anderson at 860-713-6923 or patricia.anderson@ct.gov.

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APR Reports Arriving Soon!

Connecticut districts will be receiving their 2008-09 annual performance determinations within the next few weeks—the district Annual Performance Reports (APR) based on 2007-08 data will be posted electronically to the SDE website. The Bureau of Special Education has assigned education consultant, Mike Tavernier, to coordinate the State Performance Plan and be the point of contact regarding the district APR. He can be reached by [e-mail](#) or phone 860-713-6929.

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Federal Focus

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ADAAA

As reported on page 7 of the in the [January Bulletin](#), The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), S.3406, was signed into law in September 2008 and took effect in January 2009. Some school teachers and administrators have expressed concern that changes made to the section of the ADA that defines “disability” preclude the use of accommodations on the CMT or CAPT assessments for a student with a temporary disability (e.g., a broken arm). They cite the clause in the ADAAA that reads:



“(B) Paragraph (1)(C) shall not apply to impairments that are transitory and minor. A transitory impairment is an impairment with an actual or expected duration of 6 months or less.”

The definition of “disability” in the ADAAA is three-pronged. Paragraph (1) reads:

“(1) DISABILITY—The term ‘disability’ means, with respect to an individual—

- (A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
- (B) a record of such an impairment; or
- (C) being regarded as having such an impairment (as described in paragraph (3)).”

The “transitory and minor” clause cited above specifically and exclusively refers to the third prong (the “being regarded as” prong) of the disability definition which is stated in Paragraph (1)(C). It does not apply to the first prong under which a student with an actual impairment that substantially limits a major life activity would still qualify for appropriate accommodations even if the impairment is temporary.

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NCATE: Links to The NBPTS

National Board Certification for K–12 teachers is part of a growing education reform movement aimed at re-shaping America’s schools. In a Congressionally mandated report, the National Research Council of the National Academies (NRC) confirmed that students taught by National Board Certified Teachers advance student achievement and learning, stay in the classroom longer, support new and struggling teachers and assume other school-based leadership roles. The NRC acknowledged that students taught by National Board Certified Teachers make higher gains on achievement tests than students taught by non-board certified teachers. NBPTS, the organization that provides advanced standards and certification for classroom-based teachers and other educators, is creating national core propositions and standards for what educational leaders should know and national evidence-based assessments to measure educational leaders against those standards. James G. Cibulka, president of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, is a member of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards’ steering committee composed of educational and business leaders overseeing a national effort to develop an advanced certification for educational leaders. This initiative will include an advanced certification for both principals and teacher leaders.

Interested in NEA Foundation Teacher Grants?

Explore the possibilities:

<http://www.neafoundation.org/grants.htm>

The Third Annual Schools Conference and Celebration will be April 28, 2009. The CT Vanguard Schools Initiative focuses on school reform efforts that have demonstrated success in overcoming the challenges associated with raising student achievement scores. Successful schools that serve as model school improvement sites are identified. Please [click here](#) for conference information.

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Resources & Opportunities

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Upcoming Training and Professional Development

If you have students with special health care needs OR you would like to more adequately address the health care needs of your transition-age students, this [conference](#) is for you. As a result of a three-year collaboration among SDE, SERC, DPH, and BRS, two national speakers will discuss current issues in the field. Think about the following scenarios:

You have a college bound student who does not know how to renew his medical prescriptions for his disability related needs when he/she goes off to college or . . . a student gets sick at college and does not know where to go to get assistance (i.e., walk-in clinic, ER, local Dr.) nor what his/her insurance coverage is. You have a students with a medical disability who is having difficulty transitioning between his/her pediatric and adult health care providers. How will his/her medical needs will impact going to college or being able to work competitively.

These and other issues will be addressed. Space is limited at this conference so register early!

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Employer Symposium

If you or your district are interested in developing a relationship with health care workers to begin to set up some work experience opportunities, come to the Employer Symposium being held at St. Raphael's Hospital in New Haven on May 1. This is an [event](#) (sponsored by St. Raphael's Hospital, SERC and the Transition Task Force) intended as an opportunity for hospital personnel and district staff working with students with disabilities to see what St. Raphael's and the City of New Haven have developed to provide for the transition needs of students who want to work in the health care field to obtain work experiences while in HS. Registration is limited – register early!

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Assistive Technology Loan Program

In partnership with Southern Connecticut State University's (SCSU) Center for Adaptive Technology, the Tech Act Project initiated the Computer Assistive Technology (AT) Loan Program. There are laptops with AT software available NOW for short term loans to K-12 schools in Connecticut who are interested in trying out adaptive software for use with students who have disabilities. The loans are for six-week periods and are free for all CT schools. Programs available are: Kurzweil 3000, Dragon Naturally Speaking, WordQ, Solo, and Inspiration. Other technologies may be available as well. For more information about this program contact SCSU's Center for Adaptive Technology at 203-392-5799 or the Connecticut Tech Act Project at 860-424-4881.

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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 Equal Employment Opportunity Director, State of Connecticut Department of Education, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457-1543, 860-807-2071.

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