

*From the Bureau of Special Education*

## BRIEF FROM THE CHIEF

Every September with children's return to school, the goal of every parent, teacher and administrator is high expectations and enthusiasm for each child's growth and achievement. Ensuring that children's IEPs have been reasonably designed for attaining educational benefit is of importance to everyone. Over the course of this year the Bureau will be providing heightened support to districts to achieve this end for students with disabilities.

With improved academic achievement continuing to be one of the Commissioner's top priorities for the state, the Bureau of Special Education, in collaboration with other colleagues in the Department, SERC, the RESC's and institutions of higher education, will be providing professional development to support school personnel in attaining high academic performance for all students, including students with disabilities. Specific efforts will also be focused on monitoring of district's policies, procedures, practices and data related to the achievement of students with disabilities. The tools used to conduct these investigations will be available to all districts in future Bureau Bulletins.

Opportunities for professional development and other avenues for support will be identified as well. Keep alert for these resources that can assist in improving results for students with disabilities. Pay particular attention to the [SERC offerings](#) for October on achievement of students with disabilities. Trainings are being held that may be of particular interest for districts and buildings that did not meet AYP for students with disabilities. We wish you continued success in 2008-09!

- Anne Louise Thompson



*At the end of the day in Hartford...*

### Mark Your Calendars...

- **Early Childhood Outcomes: Timely Due Date—November 1, 2008**
- **Early Childhood Outcomes: Accurate Due Date—November 15, 2008**
- **ED 166: Accurate Due Date—October 3, 2008**



*Mohawk Mountain Magic –Fall approaches Connecticut.*

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We look forward to your feedback as the *Bureau Bulletin* is intended to assist you. We aim for this tool to support ongoing collaborative efforts directed toward ensuring each child with a disability receives an individualized, appropriate educational program.—Anne Louise Thompson, Bureau Chief

## Featured Story: Back to School Event

With over 200 in attendance, there was a strong turnout for the **Fifth Annual CSDE Back-to-School Meeting** on September 15, 2008. The Marriott Hotel in Farmington was filled with personnel from public and approved private agencies responsible for providing a free, appropriate public education to students with disabilities across Connecticut. Other attendees included representatives from the Special Education Advisory Council (SAC), the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education (ConnCASE), the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Council and the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC). The Bureau of Special Education (BSE) hosted the event to introduce the BSE staff and share information regarding regulation changes, policy updates, data collection deadlines, and resources available to those in attendance. The agenda included the latest on the [Early Childhood Outcomes](#), [District Determinations](#), [Focused Monitoring](#), [IEP Amendments](#), the [Modified Assessment System](#), and recent [Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities](#) legislation. This edition of *The Bureau Bulletin* features highlights from the Back-to-School meeting with electronic links to presentations made by CSDE staff. Chief Anne Louise Thompson from the BSE kicked off the event noting that Connecticut is nationally recognized for its work in special education due largely to the efforts occurring within its local education agencies (LEAs).



*Fifth Annual Back-to-School Meeting in Farmington. Photo by SERC. Photo by Thomas Jones.*

Ms. Thompson encouraged continued excellence despite challenges in tough economic times. She assured attendees that the role of the BSE is to be of service in addition to ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations; further she stated that the BSE would be seeking ways to strengthen this partnership. Ms. Thompson alerted attendees to some of the changes currently



*Tom Badway from the BSE emceed the event. Photo by Thomas Jones.*

under consideration such as a decreasing BSE physical presence in districts while increasing the use of technology to support initiatives (namely teleconferencing). She cautioned the audience not to fall into the pattern of merely “waiting for the storm to pass” in this era of accountability and time of change; she shared her vision for the State to concentrate more on “learning to dance in the rain” rather than waiting for the storm to pass. The meeting ended at noon with [BSE staff](#) facilitating small group breakout sessions with attendees.

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



## Federal Focus: IDEA-Policies and Procedures

### Response to Intervention

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) is responsible for [Project Forum](#), a federally funded project that focuses on researching and communicating special education policy issues. Project Forum released a policy brief outlining changes that 49 states have made (as of March 2008) in making eligibility determinations with classifications of learning disabled (LD). The IDEA 2004 allows states to use student progress data that show a student's "responsiveness to intervention" instead of the "severe discrepancy model" to classify students as learning disabled. The severe discrepancy model – which compares the student's IQ test performance with achievement scores – has been used by IEP teams for over 15 years without a solid research-base showing its efficacy. The NASDSE brief highlights changes and lists several RTI web resources which may be of interest to *Bulletin* readers.



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### General Supervision: Findings

OSEP requires each state to have a system of General Supervision, which includes a set of integrated monitoring and enforcement activities leading to findings of noncompliance with IDEA 2004. In Connecticut, monitoring includes activities leading to a decision of compliance such as focused monitoring, dispute resolutions, approved private programs, Annual Performance Report (APR) and P.J. determinations, redirection of funds, fiscal verification, State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators, and others. OSEP has provided [clarification](#) regarding identification and correction of noncompliance.

A finding is written notification from the State to a local educational agency (LEA) or early intervention services (EIS) program that contains the State's conclusion that the LEA or EIS program is in noncompliance, and that includes the citation of the statute or regulation and a description of the quantitative and/or qualitative data supporting the State's conclusion that there is noncompliance with that statute or regulation. Regardless of the specific level of noncompliance, if the State finds noncompliance, it must notify the LEA or EIS program in writing of the noncompliance, and of the requirement that the noncompliance be corrected as soon as possible, and in no case more than one year after the State's identification. While the State may determine the specific nature of the required corrective action, the State must ensure that any level of noncompliance is corrected in no case later than one year after the State's identification.



A state General Supervision system depends on timely and accurate data collections, many of which are featured in the 2008-09 [Timely & Accurate Data Collection](#) calendar. District participation is critical to complying with the law and building a foundation of credible data for making decisions regarding SPP performance. For information regarding Connecticut's system of General Supervision, contact Jacqui Kelleher by e-mailing: [jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov](mailto:jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov).

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## LRE

The P.J. ET AL vs. the State of Connecticut , Board of Education, ET AL Settlement Agreement resulted in five goals that the BSE tracks as part of compliance monitoring under General Supervision. Goals include:

- Regular class placement
- Time with nondisabled peers
- Home school placement
- Extracurricular activities
- Disparate identification

District notification of compliance with the five goals outlined in the P.J. et al. Settlement Agreement were sent in the same packet as the district APR determinations and can be found in Appendix B. For more information on P.J. and the determinations, contact Mike Smith by e-mailing [michael.s.smith@ct.gov](mailto:michael.s.smith@ct.gov) or visit the State website for the [PJ Class Action Suit](#).



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## Legal/Due Process

### IEP Changes



*Gail Mangs addresses the Back-to-School meeting audience. Photo by Thomas Jones.*

There are several proposed changes to the individualized education program (IEP) form concerning transition planning. BSE consultant, Gail Mangs, presented the latest updates in IEP [amendments](#) concerning these areas at the Fifth Annual Back-to-School meeting. Changes focus primarily on specific transition planning changes will become effective for all IEPs released on or after October 1, 2009. Gail is available to take your comments and feedback as well as to clarify reasons behind the proposal. Please email Gail at [gail.mangs@ct.gov](mailto:gail.mangs@ct.gov) or by phone: 860-713-6938. Additionally, Dr. Patricia Anderson of the BSE works with districts and programs regarding transition services. Please refer to the [Secondary Transition](#) section of the *Bulletin*.

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## Approved Private Special Education Program

Connecticut works with a number of approved [private special education](#) programs each year as part of its monitoring responsibilities. In this section Donna Cambria presents highlights from 2007-08 and a glimpse of what is to come in 2008-09 for those seeking and needing to maintain approval. Readers can download a copy of schools [approved](#) as of July 2008 and contact Donna by e-mailing [donna.cambria@ct.gov](mailto:donna.cambria@ct.gov).

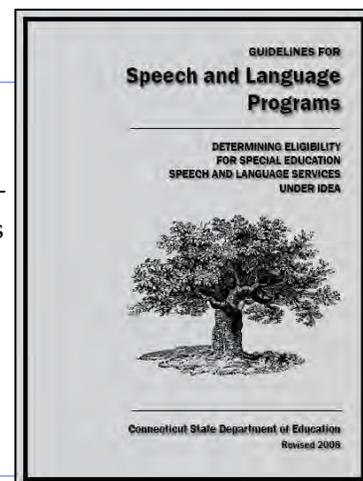
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## Guidelines

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### Speech & Language Guidelines Available

Updated *Guidelines for Speech and Language Programs* are now available on the BSE [website](#). The State Department of Education (SDE) offers these guidelines to help school districts determine which children are eligible for speech and language services under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This document addresses critical issues and recent research in the areas of assessment and identification, and builds on the philosophy and procedures described in the CSDE 1993 *Guidelines for Speech and Language Programs*. Updated *Related Forms* will soon be available on line. Please contact [Colleen Hayles](#) at 860-713-6922 with any questions.



### Proposed Revisions to the LD Guidelines

According to the IDEA 2004, each state must adopt criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability that may: *Prohibit the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability (SLD); not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement for determining SLD; and, permit the use of a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures.*

Learn more about Connecticut's LD Guidelines from the recent Back-to-School [presentation](#). Please address additional questions to: Perri Murdica at [perri.murdica@ct.gov](mailto:perri.murdica@ct.gov).

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## Secondary Transition

### Updates & Changes

In order to comply with the changes in secondary transition required of districts under the **IDEA 2006** regulations, the Bureau has proposed some revisions to two pages of the current IEP forms. These pages, 6 & 7 respectively, involve transition planning and writing transition goals and objectives. For a preview of the first DRAFT of these pages, see the [IEP Changes](#) power point presentation that was delivered at the September 15<sup>th</sup> Back-to-School Meeting. The revised forms should be available by the end of the fall and will be required for all student IEPs from that point forward. For further questions about these revisions, contact: Dr. Patricia Anderson at 860-713-6923 or [patricia.anderson@ct.gov](mailto:patricia.anderson@ct.gov).



Secondary Transition is a rapidly changing process. In order for all district personnel to keep abreast of the most current assessment and instructional materials, professional development, and revisions in practices and procedures, the Bureau uses a Transition Contact Person email dissemination list to circulate information in a timely fashion. Please review the attached list to make sure that there is at least one person from each district on the dissemination list and that all contact information is accurate. Email Dr. Patricia Anderson [patricia.anderson@ct.gov](mailto:patricia.anderson@ct.gov) with any additions or changes to contact information provided on the 2008-09 [Transition Contact Person](#) list.

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## State Performance Plan Indicators? APR?

The District Annual Performance Reports (APRs), which include 2006-07 data and determinations, have been mailed. To understand how district determinations were made as well as to consider possible enforcement actions, please refer to Appendix A in the mailing or contact the BSE. District APRs and determinations for 2007-08 data will be mailed in winter 2009. There will be an online module which includes a voice narrative and closed captioning to walk through the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report, as well as understanding your District Annual Performance Report and the determination that was made. This module will be on the SPP website. The Bureau has been highlighting the requirement for timely and accurate data. There is a timely and accurate [calendar](#), with definitions, on the SPP [website](#) in addition to SPP requirements for the February 2009 submission. Parents in thirty districts will be surveyed this year as part of the Indicator 8 data collection. The survey is confidential and non-identifiable. Please encourage parents and families who receive the survey to complete and return it. The presentation given by Dana Corriveau at the Back to School meeting will also be posted on the Bureau website. Please contact Dana Corriveau by e-mailing [dana.corriveau@ct.gov](mailto:dana.corriveau@ct.gov).



*Dana Corriveau explains the District APR to the audience. Photo by Thomas Jones.*

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## Focused Monitoring

The Department is moving towards investigating the area of "academic achievement" for students with disabilities for the 2008-09 cycle. The Focused Monitoring Steering Committee will be convening twice in the fall to provide further guidance around pertinent areas of the investigation and to review data. Districts will be notified in mid-October of their status for focused monitoring. Visits will be occurring in the winter and spring of 2009. Stay tuned for more [details](#). Dana Corriveau will be coordinating work with the Focused Monitoring Steering Committee, districts selected for focused monitoring, and compliance monitoring for the Key Performance Indicators.



## Assessment

Special education teachers and other members of a child's PPT team should be very familiar with the specific eligibility criteria for choosing students to take the Skills Checklist and the new CMT/CAPT Modified Assessment System (MAS). The Bureau of Student Assessment cautions administrators to not put limits on how many students should be allowed to take the Skills Checklist and the new CMT/CAPT MAS based on eligibility criteria. Additionally, the staff in Assessment are alerting assessment coordinators to all the new paperwork involved with the CMT/CAPT MAS including the IEP page 9a, new accommodation pages and new CMT/CAPT MAS eligibility registration/questionnaire. To review the recent presentation at the Back to School meeting click [here](#). For more information, please contact Janet Stuck ([janet.stuck@ct.gov](mailto:janet.stuck@ct.gov)) or Joe Amenta ([joseph.amenta@ct.gov](mailto:joseph.amenta@ct.gov)) in Assessment, or Mike Smith ([michael.s.smith@ct.gov](mailto:michael.s.smith@ct.gov)) in Special Education.



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## State Performance Plan

### Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities Legislation

Over the summer, Governor Rell Signed [Special Act No. 08-5: An Act Concerning the Teaching of Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities](#). The Act requires the Commissioners of Education, Higher Education, and Developmental Services in partnership with the President of Southern Connecticut State University to develop a state plan. The plan must address the incorporation of teaching methods into teacher preparation programs, certification, and school personnel training. The Commissioners designated a core group of professionals to study the needs of the State in these areas. This feasibility study group has been requesting input from the public to further understand various perspectives and opinions with respect to training needs specific to this population of learners.

Schools, parents, advocacy groups, statewide organizations, and others have received [notices](#) inviting the public to participate on a state survey and/or at one of the public meetings throughout the month of October. Please note that a public meeting date was added in the Hartford area on **October 29th**. The public will receive an e-mail on or after October 1, 2008 with an electronic link to access a survey regarding the training needs of school personnel and other providers educating students with an autism spectrum disorder or other developmental disability. The survey is also posted on the [SERC](#) website. All interested members of the public are encouraged to submit opinions regarding these issues. Information will be used to frame a state plan due February 2009 to the General Assembly. For more information, contact Dr. Jacqueline Kelleher by e-mail at [jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov](mailto:jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov).



*Jacqueline Kelleher describes ways to be involved with Special Act 08-5. Photo by Thomas Jones.*

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### Indicator 11: Evaluation Timelines

The determinations are out! Indicator 11 has become an area of concern given the high number of districts out of compliance with the 100% target established by the federal government. The BSE seeks to identify root causes for noncompliance and plans to work with stakeholder groups to study trends and practices. Indicator 11, commonly referred to as the Evaluation Timelines indicator, is a measure in the SPP used to monitor the percent of children with parental consent to evaluate who were evaluated and received an eligibility determination within 45 school days. The summer 2008 data collection of 2007-08 cases submitted by districts yielded compliance percentages ranging from 70-100%.



Please watch the *Bulletin* for updates on a statewide plan for addressing issues emerging as district justifications are analyzed and investigated. The BSE has assigned Dr. Jacqueline Kelleher to manage this Indicator and work with districts on corrective actions and identifying resources to improve performance. Additional guidance is available on our website under the header [Topic Briefs](#). Dr. Kelleher can be reached by [e-mail](#) to address questions and concerns.

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## Early Childhood Outcomes



School districts have an obligation to collect and report on children's developmental and functional progress using the Brigance IED-II to collect entry and exit information on every child with an IEP in the preschool grade. That collection and reporting of information is known as the Early Childhood Outcome (ECO) requirement. Districts were reminded of their obligation for this data collection at the Bureau of Special Education's Back to School Meeting. That power point is [attached](#). The 2008-09 year will be a high stakes year in the collection and reporting of ECO data. The information submitted by school districts in 2008-09 will ultimately be used to establish a state baseline and targets for which school districts will annually be held accountable through their Annual Performance Report. Districts seeking support, training and/or technical assistance on their fidelity of implementation, including the timely and accurate reporting can contact Maria Synodi at [maria.synodi@ct.gov](mailto:maria.synodi@ct.gov).

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## Bureau Happenings

### Staff Directory & Bulletin Communication

The BSE is pleased to provide the districts with a photographic [staff directory](#) of all staff personnel employed by or affiliated with the BSE. Along with the listing, readers will find the title, telephone number, e-mail address and a brief description of duties assigned to each person. The description area has been color-coded according to staffing by different bureaus on various statewide projects. Additionally, the BSE continues to pilot an online newsletter, *The Bureau Bulletin*. In each issue, articles will contain the name and contact information for staff with primary duties in a particular area.

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### Due Dates & Deadlines—Coming soon!

*This section will feature a monthly calendar of federal and state reporting/data collection deadlines and related trainings!*

## Resources & Opportunities

### SEDAC Training

Districts sent representatives to the September SEDAC trainings presented by the Bureau of Data Collection, Research, and Evaluation. Participants were able to review some of the new changes to the system detailed in the SEDAC [presentation](#). Participants received the SEDAC [handbook](#). Please contact [Laura Guerrero](#) by phone 860-713-6898 with questions about future trainings or with regards to either the handbook or presentation materials.

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## Resources & Opportunities

## THE BUREAU BULLETIN

### DDS Guidance

Providing appropriate transition services for students with Intellectual Disabilities can be a complex task. The Department of Developmental Services - DDS (formerly the Department of Mental Retardation) has written a two-page [brief](#) to assist districts, students and families better understand how to negotiate the DDS system to receive assistance in transition planning and arranging for future adult services. Questions about this process can be directed to the DDS Transition Coordinators in each region .

### Assistive Technology: Laptop Loan

The Connecticut Tech Act Project, funded by the US Department of Education under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, is operated by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Social Services. The Tech Act Project's mission is to increase independence and improve the lives of individuals with disabilities through increased access to Assistive Technology for work, school and community living. The

Register now for the state-wide 13th Annual Conference for Paraprofessional: "Making Connections that Count" - Perri Murdica can respond to any questions regarding the conference and paraprofessional resources by e-mail: [perri.murdica@ct.gov](mailto:perri.murdica@ct.gov).

project helps individuals with disabilities of all ages and all disabilities, as well as family members, employers, educators and other professionals have access to Assistive Technology devices and services. In partnership with Southern Connecticut State University's Center for Adaptive Technology, the Tech Act Project initiated the [Computer Assistive Technology Loan Program](#), to help CT elementary, middle and high schools have access to loans of laptop computers equipped with adaptive software for students with disabilities to try out or use. For more information about this program and other activities offered by the Tech Act Project go to: <http://www.cttechact.com/>, or contact Arlene Lugo, Tech Act Project Coordinator 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 Affirmative Action Administrator, State of Connecticut Department of Education, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457-1543, 860-807-2071.



Missed the Fifth Annual Back to School Meeting? You might have missed the 2008-09 SERC Professional Development Booklet. Check out the SERC [website](#) for PD happenings!

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