

# THE BUREAU BULLETIN

THE BUREAU  
BULLETIN

CONNECTICUT STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



*Summer 2008 in Hartford, CT*

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*From the Bureau of Special Education*

## BRIEF FROM THE CHIEF

### Greetings!

After a several month hiatus, the electronic communication link between the Bureau of Special Education and all of you has returned. The Bureau is piloting a new format for sharing monthly information. We would like to introduce you to the *Bureau Bulletin*. As was the intent of our previous communiqués, such as the *Updates* and subsequent *Bureau Blog*, our intent is to keep you informed of critical issues that affect the promise of a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities. While the new features of the *Bulletin* are intended for readers who appreciate an electronic medium and prefer hypertext navigation, the layout has also been designed for easier readability when printed as a hard copy. Each month the *Bulletin* will be organized into the following sections:

- **Featured Story** – An in-depth article highlighting a change in regulation, practice, or policy to foster greater awareness on a topic.
- **Federal Focus: IDEA Policies & Procedures** – Information on and forecasts of federal activities regarding Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other national legislation specific to students with disabilities.
- **State Performance Plan** – Updates on State legislation, regulations, monitoring activities, Annual Performance Reports (APR), and State Performance Plan (SPP).
- **Guidelines** – Our latest news regarding State guideline documents.
- **Secondary Transition** – Updates on transition philosophy, planning, graduation, and results-oriented practices.
- **Bureau Happenings** – Notification of Bureau activities, staff contacts, and changes in responsibilities.
- **Resources & Opportunities** – Technical assistance, training, professional learning opportunities, calendar of anticipated events, and federally-funded resources available through the Bureau.
- **Legal/Due Process** – News on the State’s dispute resolution system.
- **Approved Private Special Education Programs** – Information regarding new and existing day and residential programs approved by the Bureau.
- **LRE** – Information on State initiatives specific to providing a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

We appreciate 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: IDEA and Disability by Race

States are expected to monitor each local education agency (LEA) for instances where individuals may be overidentified either inappropriately or disproportionately based on their race or ethnicity. To meet the federal requirements of the IDEA in the area of disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories, the following criteria have been adopted by the State:



*LEAs who have a relative risk index (RRI) equal to or greater than 4.0 by race and ethnicity in any of the six disability categories (Autism, Learning Disabilities, Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disabilities, Other Health Impairments, Speech or Language Impairments) or overall special education incidence for the past two years must reserve 15% of its IDEA funds for early intervening services.*

For example, if 2006-07 school year data indicate that the disability category of Speech and Language has an RRI of 4.2 for students who are white and 2007-08 school year data RRI is under 4.0 for white, but those identified as eligible under Emotional Disturbance with the RRI at 4.1 for students who are Hispanic or Latino, the district must reserve 15% of its IDEA funds. The funds must be used to serve children in the LEA who have not been identified. Additionally, to meet the requirements of the State Performance Plan (indicators 9 and 10), an LEA that has an RRI of equal to or greater than 2.0 by race and ethnicity in any of the six disability categories ) or overall special education incidence for one year (2007-08 data) must submit a self assessment and an action plan to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). Correspondence will be sent in September to the superintendents of the LEAs that meet the above requirements. For more information or specific questions regarding this federal law and the 15% requirement, contact Dr.

Nancy Cappello at [nancy.cappello@ct.gov](mailto:nancy.cappello@ct.gov) or 860-713-6789. LEA data from the school years 06-07 and 07-08, a self-assessment instrument, and the action plan template are available under at the following link <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322094> under *Indicators and Disproportionality*.



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## Federal Focus: IDEA-Policies and Procedures

### OSEP Determinations Announced

For a few years, the acronym SPP has been added to a host of other acronyms regularly used by the Bureau. The IDEA requires the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to make an annual determination as to whether each state is meeting the requirements of the statute and is meeting targets described in each state's SPP. The Connecticut Department of Education is required to have an SPP

or *State Performance Plan* that describes efforts to implement the requirements of IDEA using 20 indicators of compliance and performance. The CSDE is also required to submit an Annual Performance Report (APR) of overall State performance on targets described across these 20 indicators for OSEP's yearly review.

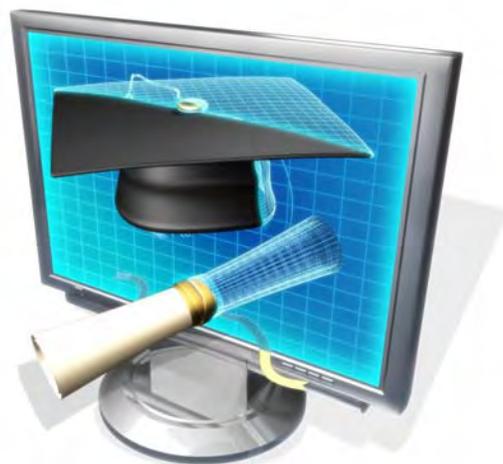


In June 2008, based on information provided by the State in the SPP/APR and other monitoring information, OSEP determined Connecticut was found in need of assistance in implementing the requirements of IDEA as detailed in a [letter to the Commissioner](#). A full [determination table](#) containing OSEP's responses across indicators was provided to the State. The CSDE 2008-09 [Timely & Accurate Data Collection](#) schedule and descriptions of related requirements for LEAs under IDEA 2004 are now available. For more information, contact Dana Corriveau by emailing [dana.corriveau@ct.gov](mailto:dana.corriveau@ct.gov).

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### NIMAC Requirements

Printed textbooks and other core printed materials used in elementary and secondary schools need to be available in formats that can be used by all students in the classroom by law. However, educators are equally aware enabling access is part of best and promising practices in support of individuals with disabilities. The National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) is part of the solution for districts in obtaining these materials in formats that their students can use. For more information on NIMAC, IDEA requirements, and access to resources regarding the NIMAC, refer to the article [NIMAS/NIMAC – Ensuring Access with Technological Advances](#). For additional information or assistance regarding the requirements, please contact Brian Cunnane in the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) at the CSDE at 860-713-6919.



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## Restraint and 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. On August 19, 2008, a public hearing was held on this issue in the SERC Classroom in Middletown from 9:30-3:30. Please call Colleen Hayles, BSE education consultant, at 860-713-6922 with questions.



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## LRE

### Facilitated Discussions Held

A facilitated discussion with the State Department of Education was held on April 10<sup>th</sup> for parents or other interested parties to share their thoughts and comments about their understanding of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The session was well-attended with participants providing valuable [feedback on LRE](#) to education consultants involved with the State's LRE initiative. The feedback from the session will be used to fine tune training and technical assistance for the 2008-09 school year. Future discussions are planned for fall. Those interested in learning more about LRE should contact Anne Louise Thompson's office at 860-713-6912.



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## Legal/Due Process

Coming soon! Back to [Inside this Issue](#)

## Approved Private Special Education Program

Coming soon! Back to [Inside this Issue](#)

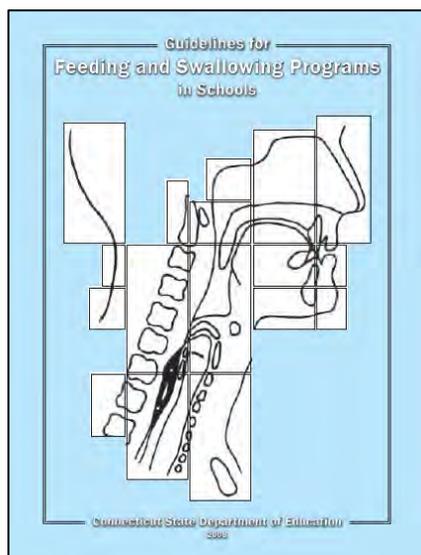
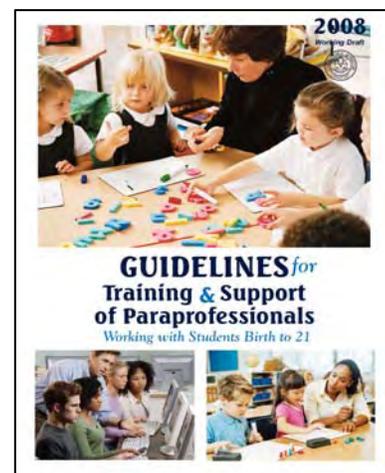
Coming soon...  
Calendar of Events  
& the Bulletin Back to  
School Edition!!

## Guidelines

### Paraprofessional Guidelines

The CSDE is constantly reviewing and revising State guidelines for areas paramount to teaching and learning. The BSE is pleased to announce that the new *Guidelines for Training & Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21* are [now available](#). Any questions should be directed to Perri Murdica either by phone 860-713-6942 or [perri.murdica@ct.gov](mailto:perri.murdica@ct.gov). Readers can also access a full array of State guidelines for multiple areas including assistive technology, health screenings, physical therapy, and so forth by accessing the State website <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=320730>.

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### Feeding and Swallowing Guidelines

Updated *Guidelines for Feeding and Swallowing* are now available on our website. Please contact Colleen Hayles at 860-713-6922 with any questions. [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/Feeding\\_and\\_Swallowing.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/Feeding_and_Swallowing.pdf)

## Secondary Transition

### Post-Secondary Updates

Secondary transition planning and services are crucial to students' success after high school. Because students with disabilities often experience inconsistent levels of success after leaving high school, many new IDEA 2004 provisions seek to improve transition services so that students with disabilities can be more successful in their adult lives. One of the new IDEA provisions requires that ALL students who are of transition age (16 – 21) have [postsecondary goals](#) as well as annual goals in the IEP that will be in effect when a student turns 16. These IEPs are referred to as "transition IEPs." As part of the State Performance Plan (SPP) and continuing work to improve secondary transition, the BSE collects information via a survey from all students who exit special education one year after graduation, dropping out, or aging out. The *Post-School Outcomes Survey* asks students about their employment status, whether or not they have taken any college or training classes and additional information about other resources that they may be using after high school. All states are required to collect and report this data annually. To help students and families understand the importance of this post-school data collection, all components are posted on the [BSE](#) website. Dr. Patricia Anderson is available to answer questions and provide technical assistance by e-mailing [patricia.anderson@ct.gov](mailto:patricia.anderson@ct.gov) or calling 860-713-6923.

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## State Performance Plan

### Modified Assessment System (MAS) and Skills Checklist

Annual testing is one critical measure used to monitor the academic performance of Connecticut's children. The SPP includes indicators that specifically require Connecticut to describe academic gains on the statewide assessments (CMT/CAPT) in addition to other areas of academic performance (graduation, drop-out rates, and so forth). For many students the CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist and the new CMT/CAPT (MAS) will provide a more appropriate measure of the extent to which students with significant cognitive impairments have been given the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the general education curriculum. To be eligible for alternative assessment, a student must be identified through the PPT process and registered with the State. All special education teachers who administer the Skills Checklist must be trained directly by CSDE staff. For information on eligibility, training, supporting documentation, and an update on alternative assessments, please see [Assessment Information](#) or 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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### Parent Feedback 2007-08

The Bureau seeks ongoing feedback from parents and guardians in terms of programs and services available to individuals with disabilities and levels of involvement across the State. While this is an important part of monitoring districts, a part of best practice, it is also part of Connecticut's SPP. This past academic year, parents and legal guardians of students with disabilities in the 31 school [districts sampled](#) were mailed the 2007-08 *CT Special Education Parent Survey* in mid-May, a tool developed in partnership with Glen Martin Associates. Any questions regarding the survey may be directed to Mary Jean Schierberl at 860-713-6943 or [maryjean.schierberl@ct.gov](mailto:maryjean.schierberl@ct.gov). Additional information on sampling and data collection methods used to meet the requirements of this SPP indicator are contained within Connecticut's [Annual Performance Report](#).



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### Early Childhood Outcomes Requirements

Indicator #7 in the State Performance Plan (SPP) outlines the Early Childhood Outcome (ECO) requirement. The purpose of this indicator is to collect and report on the developmental and functional progress of children receiving special education in the preschool grade. All school districts are responsible for administering the Brigance IED-II to all preschool children with an IEP and for reporting timely and accurate ECO data. Administration of selected sub-tests of the Brigance IED-II is required as children enter and then again as children exit preschool special education. The Bureau of Special Education has addressed an outstanding and frequently asked question regarding the ECO requirement. The [attached correspondence](#) reminds school districts of their reporting obligation and further identifies that there are no "opt out" allowances for the collection of ECO data. Parental written consent to administer and report the ECO data is not required. Parents should be informed of the policies and practices of the district and the district's obligations, but written consent from a parent is not required. The administration and reporting of assessment information, much like the CMT and CAPT, is a part of a federal obligation. Maria Synodi is the contact for ECO. She can be reached via e-mail at [maria.synodi@ct.gov](mailto:maria.synodi@ct.gov).

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## Bureau Happenings

### Staff Changes in Responsibilities

The BSE welcomes two new education consultants, Michael Smith and Colleen Hayles! Mike will focus on choice programs, assessment of students with disabilities, longitudinal data analysis, and other data projects as part of this new position. Colleen will represent the Bureau on initiatives regarding emotional disturbance, deaf/blind, students with visual impairments, speech/language, and restraint/seclusion. She will take leadership on revising guidelines in these areas as well as *Feeding and Swallowing Guidelines* and on parent initiatives. Christine Spak has been appointed permanently to the Surrogate Parent Program. Maria Synodi continues to coordinate Section 619 and early childhood special education and will physically relocate to the Bureau August 2008.



The Bureau of School and District Improvement has recently hired a new consultant, Iris White, to work specifically on the training of paraprofessionals in collaboration with Perri Murdica. Iris can be contacted at: 860-713-6564. Finally, the Bureau of Early Childhood recently hired Andrea Brinnel to support their efforts and the BSE regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs. Andrea's phone number is: 860-713-6556.

We ask that you please share the information provided above with relevant staff in your district. In the next issue of the Bulletin, the BSE will share a revised staff directory with more information regarding roles, responsibilities, and contact information for the 2008-09 school year.

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### Opportunities with the BSE

The BSE, a Bureau within the Division of Family and Student Support Services with the CSDE, has four vacancies currently available at the associate education consultant or education consultant levels. This is an opportunity for an instructional leader to provide support and leadership to Connecticut's public schools in the areas of special education and related services. The BSE seeks qualified candidates who will consider joining and contributing to our team and provide expertise in the provision of training, technical assistance, and program monitoring. For more information regarding job descriptions, qualifications, and the application process, please go to our [Career Opportunities](#) link to view postings.



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## Resources & Opportunities

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### Data Collection Training

Districts often request information on training and technical assistance regarding federal and state data collection as well as working with the Special Education and Data Collection (SEDAC) system. Regional trainings on SEDAC, evaluation timelines, specific forms, required data elements, and other data requirements are available in 2008-09 for those involved in data collection and submission. Please refer to the [training overview](#) or contact Laura Guerrero for more information or direct assistance at: 860-713-6898.

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### State Resources for Families and School Personnel

After receiving edits and revisions from participating organizations, the CSDE updated the *Helpful Resources from Local and State Organizations* brochure that highlights agencies with a focus on family support - [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/Resources\\_Families.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/Resources_Families.pdf)

In addition to this document and other BSE resource information, there are several federally mandated organizations required to exist and support IDEA-funded districts and programs. Districts are encouraged to explore all that these organizations have to offer. Some of the groups and websites include:

- SERC – State Education Resource Center: <http://www.ctserc.org/>
- CPAC – Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center: <http://www.cpacinc.org/>
- SAC – Connecticut State Advisory Council on Special Education: <http://www.ctsac.org/>

Districts are encouraged to share this document with families and school personnel working with families and individuals in need of information on available resources and services.

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### Feedback on the Bureau Bulletin?

Please contact Bulletin coordinator, Dr. Jacqui Kelleher, with suggestions, feedback, or specific Bulletin questions via e-mail:

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PO Box 2219—Room 369  
Hartford, CT 06145-2219  
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