

Report of the Study Group for

Special Act 08-5

AN ACT CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF  
CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND OTHER  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Presented to the Joint Standing Committees of the  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Regarding Education, Public Health and Higher Education

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## **Introduction**

In the 2008 session, the General Assembly passed Special Act 08-5, *An Act Concerning the Teaching of Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, hereafter referred to as “the Act” (Appendix 1). The Commissioners of the State Departments of Education (SDE), Higher Education (DHE), Developmental Services (DDS), and the President of Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) or their designees (Appendix 2) were charged with defining autism and other developmental disabilities for purposes of the Act and for developing recommendations for a statewide plan to incorporate methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities into (a) pre-service preparation programs; (b) requirements for Initial and Provisional educator certificates; (c) in-service training of educators; and, (d) training provided to school paraprofessionals, related school professionals, early childhood certificate holders, administrators and parents.

A study group comprised of designees from the four agencies was formed to complete this work. The study group gathered, analyzed and interpreted new and existing data from seven public forums, three online surveys, policy documents and information from state data systems (Appendix 3) to generate recommendations contained within this document. Multiple stakeholders (Appendix 4) were consulted throughout the process, including representatives from higher education and independent colleges and universities, the State Education Resource Center (SERC), parent groups and the regional educational service centers (RESCs).

Despite the challenges of the ambitious time line required by Special Act No. 08-5 and lack of appropriated funds to study issues across Connecticut, the study group has made an effort to solicit extensive input in identifying and describing existing resources in the state. This information has allowed the study group to assemble a statewide plan addressing the methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities in accordance with requirements of the Act. However, it is possible that other important resources and information were missed. If so, the study group would want to be notified of these unintended oversights.

As requested by the Act, this report defines autism and other developmental disabilities, outlines general findings and conclusions from a study of state needs regarding training, provides recommendations concerning nine specific issues identified in the Act and offers general recommendations for establishing a comprehensive, statewide plan.

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## **I. Definition of Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities**

### Autism

For purposes of this report, autism is defined using criteria consistent with the Connecticut State Department of Education's (SDE) document *Guidelines for Identification and Education of Children and Youth with Autism* (2005). These state guidelines maintain that a child with autism is between the ages of 3 and 21 who:

- has been evaluated by a professional with appropriate training, using an autism-specific instrument, and must be found to be functioning in the range of autistic spectrum disorders<sup>1</sup>;
- demonstrates a disability that adversely affects educational performance as evidenced by professional judgment and/or scores that fall significantly below average in all of the following areas: social interaction, verbal/nonverbal communication and atypical behaviors; and
- does not perform effectively in the social or academic area most of the time, despite the provision of general education accommodations and supports.

As noted in the *Guidelines for Identification and Education of Children and Youth with Autism* (2005), the SDE supports the National Research Council's (2001) conclusion that a child who receives a clinical diagnosis of any autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) that adversely affects educational performance should be eligible for special educational services under the educational category of autism.

The distinction between autism and autism spectrum disorders is an important consideration identified in the literature. Therefore, while the Act specifically addresses the term autism, the study group has decided that autism spectrum disorders (ASD) represents a more appropriate term for describing the full range of disorders and will be used in place of autism throughout this report. There is national agreement that autism is a complex disability with a wide range of symptoms and characteristics varying from mild to severe.

### Developmental Disabilities

A child identified as having a developmental disability (DD) for purposes of the Act meets two criteria. The child is:

- identified as having a disability in one of the 13 federal categories of disability as defined by the Individuals with Disability Education Act 2004 (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004*, 34 C.F.R. Section 300.8 IDEA) for children ages 3 to 21; and

- identified as having a developmental disability as defined according to the federal definition of developmental disability (*Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, Section 102(8)*):
  - a. Disability occurs before age 22.
  - b. A mental or physical impairment or a combination of both is identified.
  - c. A substantial limitation is identified in three or more of the major life areas of: self-care; expressive or receptive language; learning; mobility; capacity for independent living; economic self-sufficiency; or self-direction.

The study group concludes that approximately 1 to 2 percent the total school-aged population (ages 3-21) meets these criteria. This percentage primarily includes children who are identified for special education under the IDEA eligibility categories of intellectual disabilities, traumatic brain injury, deaf/blind, visually impaired, hard of hearing, autism spectrum disorder and multiple disabilities.

## **II. General Findings and Conclusions**

The following findings and conclusions result from the interpretation of new and existing data gathered for purposes of responding to Special Act 08-5. The study group reviewed information obtained from 280 participants attending seven public forums; 856 responses received from three surveys; data obtained through state databases; state policies and documents, including previously commissioned studies; and documents describing training offerings across Connecticut (Appendix 5). Additionally, the study group considered ongoing input from representative stakeholders consulted throughout the study (Appendix 4).

### **1. Resource Accessibility**

There appears to be inequitable access to or awareness of training or informational resources across different regions within Connecticut with respect to ASD/DD. Reviews of available resources (human, physical, fiscal resources) indicate that while resources do exist, there is little or no centralized coordination of these resources.

### **2. Quality Assurance**

There are inconsistent quality assurance procedures for ensuring existing statewide training opportunities provided to school personnel and families reflect evidence-based practices, specifically around content, delivery, expertise, results and alignment with national ASD/DD competencies. To ensure equity and quality across the state, it would appear that educators and others would benefit from a more centralized system of resource allocation and dissemination of information for ASD/DD that has undergone a quality assurance review.

### **3. Individualization for Student Needs**

There is inconsistent selection and implementation of appropriate and current educational practices that reflect student needs (academic and functional). There is inconsistent

understanding of student characteristics and the assessment of their needs (academic and functional) based on these characteristics. The data from surveys and forums indicated that there are individuals currently working with children with ASD who do not completely understand the disability. School personnel need different levels of knowledge based on their levels of certification and degree of engagement with students defined by this Act. At the pre-service and in-service levels there needs to be differentiated, high-quality levels or tiers of training addressing the implementation of appropriate teaching methods based on the unique needs of exceptional learners, including those with ASD/DD.

#### 4. Parents' and Professionals' Views

Significantly discrepant views exist between parents and school personnel concerning training needs and priority areas for districts and programs. The perceived needs of school personnel compared to families' perceptions of school personnel's needs also differ, as evident in the surveys. Yet, participants in the public meetings recognized that through the dialogue held during these forums, parents and school personnel identified similar needs. This suggests that there needs to be increased opportunities for joint dialogue and training among parents and professionals, which will contribute to shared decisions and strengthened perspective-taking resulting in improved outcomes for students.

## **II. A. State Issues Identified**

This section of the report highlights the nine issues specifically named within Special Act 08-5 and relevant findings grounding the study group's recommendations:

### **Issue 1: Competencies for school personnel and parents**

The study group used findings from a review of existing national publications, online survey responses and public meeting feedback to determine competencies necessary for school personnel working with children and youth with ASD and DD. Information reviewed included documents from the National Research Council, Council for Exceptional Children, the Autism Quality Indicators and Connecticut guidelines. An online survey was developed to measure public perception regarding training needs specific to the National Teacher Competencies for Educating Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Appendix 6). The items in this tool were validated by a group of Connecticut professionals for content alignment with these teaching competencies. There was agreement among 13 reviewers that the competencies were appropriate. Therefore, the study group recommends that four sources be referenced by those developing teacher preparation and in-service trainings and/or identifying strategies and trainings for parents to assure this alignment:

- (1) Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching competencies identified by the SDE for initial teacher preparation (Appendix 7) and proposed pre-service competencies (Appendix 8);

- (2) the competencies identified by the Council for Exceptional Children in the areas of mental retardation/DD as well as the newly proposed National Teaching Competencies for Educating Individuals with ASD identified by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) for the education of students with ASD (Appendix 6);
- (3) the relevant SDE guidelines and publications including guidelines on the identification of children and youth with ASD, for students with intellectual disabilities, a screening tool for traumatic brain injury, transition document with specifics on students with developmental disabilities and guidelines for paraprofessionals; and
- (4) the areas of need identified through the surveys and public forums conducted during this study.

## **Issue 2: Existing capacity to incorporate methods into personnel preparation and training**

The study group examined the existing capacity of higher education institutions and other training organizations to provide methods of teaching children with ASD/DD into teacher preparation programs, training requirements for candidates seeking Initial and Provisional educator certificates, in-service training for school personnel and training for parents.

### Higher Education

There are 16 colleges or universities in Connecticut that prepare teachers and related educational professionals and 12 community colleges that have programs in human services or education that prepare their students to work with individuals with disabilities, including students with autism and other developmental disabilities. A teacher preparation survey was developed for this study and an online link was sent to all 16 deans or directors of these teacher education programs, requesting their assistance in disseminating the request to complete the survey to their faculty members who would have cognizance of matters associated with the survey. A similar survey and a similar request were made of the 12 academic deans in the community colleges. Twelve of the 16 universities responded to the online survey for a 75 percent return rate and six of 12 community colleges responded for a 50 percent rate.

According to those responding to a survey of post secondary institutions, three educator preparation programs currently provide in-service training to teachers in ASD/DD while seven indicated they had the expertise to offer in-service training.

Two of the teacher preparation programs responding to the survey indicated that more than 10% of their preparation program contained information on ASD/DD, eight programs indicated approximately 5-10 percent and two indicated less than 5 percent. All institutions preparing educators reported offering one general course in exceptionalities and there were varying reports concerning how much time within this course was devoted to the needs of children and youth with ASD/DD.

To illustrate the state's training capacity, Table 1 shows the number of Initial teacher and Administrator certificates awarded over a seven-year period by Connecticut's preparation programs. The table reflects the sizes of the various teacher preparation programs in the state relative to the number of teaching and administration certificates issued by the SDE over this seven year period. The table also reflects those institutions that contain programs and or concentrations in ASD or indicate they are developing one (Southern Connecticut State University, Saint Joseph College, Central Connecticut State University and Eastern Connecticut State University) and identifies those institutions that indicated the existence of faculty expertise in ASD (Southern Connecticut State University, Eastern Connecticut State University, Fairfield University, Saint Joseph College, University of Connecticut and Western Connecticut State University). These data reflect only certificates issued to candidates completing professional education programs at Connecticut institutions and not the total number of certificates issued by the SDE during this period.

The study group identified five universities and colleges as having a greater level of attention paid to ASD/DD than others in the state. Four of these schools have programs that are specifically targeted to preparing educational personnel to work with the ASD/DD school-aged population: Eastern Connecticut State University, Saint Joseph College, Central Connecticut State University and Southern Connecticut State University; while the A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at the University of Connecticut Health Center appears to have a greater emphasis on generic preparation of community service providers and other education and health professionals for the ASD/DD population. Several of these higher education institutions also provide programs for school administrators and related service providers such as school psychologists, social workers, school counselors and speech language pathologists, all important school team members involved in program development and delivery of programs for children with ASD/DD.

The University of Connecticut (UConn) Health Center is home to the A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). In 2008, UConn received a \$550,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide leadership training to child health professionals who will improve the health status of infants, children and adolescents, with or at risk for neurodevelopmental and related disabilities, with a special emphasis on autism spectrum disorders within the state.

Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) currently offers undergraduate courses in applied behavior analysis<sup>2</sup> (ABA) in its psychology department. The content of these courses has been approved by a national certification board in applied behavior analysis. ECSU is ranked third, with respect to the five institutions highlighted here, in producing general educators (1,098) and does not produce other school personnel (see Table 1).

Saint Joseph College has recently initiated a 15-credit certificate program in ASD on the graduate level. It can be taken as a stands alone certificate or embedded into a full master's degree program in Special Education or Elementary Education. Of these five institutions, Saint Joseph College is the second largest producer of special education

teachers (264) in the state (see Table 1). Compared with these other higher education institutions that produce general educators (early childhood, elementary and secondary teachers) and related service professionals, Saint Joseph College is the smallest producer of either professional group and does not produce school administrators.

Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) has introduced a nine-credit ASD certificate through its continuing education program. CCSU is the second-largest producer of general educators (2,323) in the state (see Table 1). Compared with these other higher education institutions that produce special educators and related service professionals, CCSU ranks fourth and third, respectively, in the numbers produced. CCSU produces the smallest number of school administrators.

**Table 1: First-time Teaching/Administrative certificates issued by the SDE from January 2001 to August 2008**

		Special Education	School Psychology	School Counselor	Speech/Language Pathology	School Social Work	Elementary Education	Early Childhood Education (0-8)	Administrator/ Superintendent	Secondary Education/ Other	Total
Albertus Magnus College									56	56	
CCSU	<sup>1</sup>	104		213		2	763	143	347	1,417	2,989
Connecticut College						1	101	4		94	200
ECSU	<sup>1,2</sup>						263	333		502	1,098
Fairfield University	<sup>2</sup>	79	82	91	1		69	1	2	311	636
Mitchell College								33		0	33
Quinnipiac University							363			219	582
Sacred Heart University		1					1,383	8	811	478	2,681
SCSU	<sup>1,2</sup>	620	120	131	191	45	992	179	707	2,000	4,985
St. Joseph College	<sup>1,2</sup>	264	1	33			375	82		269	1,024
U. of Bridgeport				2			1,263		182	556	2,003
U. of Connecticut	<sup>2</sup>	138	51	59	54	95	395		467	671	1,930
U. of Hartford		105	57	77			300	123	132	202	996
U. of New Haven							622			396	1,018
WCSU	<sup>2</sup>			96		1	413	1	4	327	842
Yale University							1	7		85	93
CREC		16								0	16
Teach for America							76			78	154
ARC*										1367	1,367
Total		1,327	311	702	246	144	7,379	914	2,652	9,028	

1. Institutions that have undergraduate or graduate concentrations in ASD or who indicated they are developing one

2. Institutions that indicated training capacity in ASD among faculty

Note: All institutions have faculty members with expertise in DD

\* Alternate Route to Certification

Source: CT State Department of Education, Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification, Sept. 22, 2008

Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) offers the most comprehensive and most established program for teachers in ASD/DD in the state. SCSU's program offers a 30-credit master's degree program in special education with a concentration in ASD/DD. Current enrollment exceeds 100 students. SCSU's Department of Special Education and Reading collaboratively delivers courses with the Department of Counseling and School

Psychology and the Department of Communication Disorders at SCSU, as well as the Yale University Child Study Center. SCSU supports and collaborates with school districts in program development for children with ASD/DD and conducts clinical experiences in both urban and suburban school districts. SCSU has additional initiatives with paraprofessionals for teacher certification in special education and early childhood education. SCSU produces the largest overall number of certified general education teachers (3,111), special education teachers (620), and related services professionals (487), and the second-largest number of school administrators (707) in Connecticut.

While some capacity exists in the state's higher education institutions, surveys show little consistency across programs as to competencies covered by course content addressing the identification and education of children with ASD/DD. It would appear that the majority of pre-service training for teachers includes only the one overview course in exceptionalities as is required for certification. Of this course, only about 5 to 10 percent would be devoted to discussion of the needs of students with ASD and DD. At least five universities and two community colleges report having expertise and ability to conduct some in-service training, however, there was no evidence that this expertise was consistently tied to the needs of districts and parents.

These data and previous information show that SCSU is in a unique position to expand the initiative in this Act to train school personnel working with children with ASD/DD.

#### Training Offerings

Hundreds of trainings and outreach efforts occurred across Connecticut in 2007-08 by over 50 organizations (Appendix 5). A preliminary review of brochures, annual reports, flyers, catalogues and other materials indicated a wide array of content covering topics relevant to educating and supporting individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities. Additionally, online survey respondents verified availability of offerings in their areas. Some offerings advertised to school personnel and families included:

- assistive technology in the classroom for supporting individuals with ASD/DD;
- basic and advanced ABA;
- transition planning and assessment;
- evaluation of related service providers and individual coaching to related service providers;
- sensory and auditory integration training;
- parent and family advocacy;
- community awareness;
- general overviews of ASD/DD characteristics; and
- behavior management techniques.

A majority of training and technical assistance seemed concentrated in the Southwest and Central regions of the state in terms of the physical location of offerings. The study group was able to identify 20 organizations that provided training and/or support to parents and professionals in the area of ASD and 35 for DD. Thirteen of the organizations providing training in ASD and 10 in DD are approved by the SDE to award Continuing Education

Units to educators and administrators. It was unclear to the study group, however, the extent to which training content and outreach emphasis was reflective of national standards or evidence-based practices. It was not always easy to discern the qualifications of those listed as providing the training given the lack of course instructor information available.

The study group suggests further investigation of these initial findings as well as information from the providers on the number of participants in attendance, the roles of attendees, and any quality assurance regarding provider or content evaluation.

### **Issue 3: Needs of School Readiness Programs, Elementary and Secondary Schools and Institutions of Higher Education**

The study group used the public meetings and online surveys to identify the needs of school personnel in grades K-12, inclusive and higher education personnel. While the survey results identified the needs of early childhood educators, this data collection did not distinguish school readiness providers from other early childhood providers. This area should be followed up with closer study.

The study did not reveal any significant difference among the grade levels in which school personnel worked, although there were fewer respondents at the secondary levels than at the preschool and elementary levels. The majority of responders identified themselves as working at the elementary level. The survey results revealed that responders who identified themselves as early childhood educators had similar needs to other school personnel who completed the survey.

An overarching theme from the findings was all staff members in schools that come in contact with students with ASD/DD may need further information or training. The following are common themes reported by parents and personnel working at or having a child receiving an education at the preschool through high school levels. Representatives from the RESCs, SERC and higher education placed these themes into the following priority order:

1. **Social Skills**: The need for teachers and paraprofessionals to provide social skills instruction and training for all students, including general education students and students with ASD/DD, emerged as a consistent concern of parents and professionals. There was a particular concern with regard to the generalized lack of training and limited instructional approaches used by teachers and paraprofessionals who work with children with ASD/DD to assist these children in their social development.
2. **Communication**: Students with ASD/DD are in need of communication skills, including pragmatics, semantics, syntax and phonology, as well as the foundation skills in communication. Because some students with ASD/DD are unable to fully develop the use of speech as their primary mode of communication, augmentative or alternative systems and supports such as assistive technology devices, picture communication systems, visual supports and/or sign language must be available

options. The lack of training and ongoing support in the use of these instructional approaches was again noted to be of concern to professionals and parents across the state.

3. Understanding the Individual: Parents, administrators, educators and paraprofessional staff members need to better understand the core characteristics of ASD in order to effectively support program development and consistently implement appropriate, evidenced-based practices. The need to understand the uniqueness of each child was frequently identified throughout the public forums. What was learned from the data was that selection of instructional strategies or methodologies to assist students with ASD/DD was often based on availability or what was deemed the conventional wisdom among educators from a particular region in the state. Seldom were strategies targeted to the unique characteristics of the learner, particularly students with ASD.
4. Behavior Management Strategies: The data indicate that there is a significant need for personnel skilled in behavior management strategies and situational approaches. Behaviors serve a function and the identification of the appropriate educational intervention to address the behavior is warranted. Staff members need skills in assessing behavior based on its function. In this particular skill area the lack of consistency of practice, available expertise throughout the state, and awareness of available resources in this area was a concern.
5. Well-Functioning Teams: The need for more effective teaming and knowledge of how to maximize skills and resources of a student's support team was identified. School personnel need increased knowledge and skills for teams to effectively assess, use assessment in developing the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and measure progress for students with ASD/DD. Using appropriate measurements to assess outcomes, using standardized tests and curriculum-based measures to assist with measuring progress and developing programs, explaining assessments and their results to parents, planning appropriate programs based on assessment data, planning for transitions across settings and to independent living, and planning for generalization of student learning were all identified as important skills for school personnel to have in order to serve on an effective team. The expertise needed to provide this training and to demonstrate its use to teachers and administrators was perceived as currently limited.
6. Parents as Partners: Ensuring parent involvement and partnership in the educational planning process for students with ASD/DD is inconsistent across the state. Frequent concerns were expressed at the public meetings, particularly as expressed by parents, that schools do not appreciate their perspectives. There is a recognition that parents bring to the team knowledge of their child and family that is essential in serving the educational needs of their child. The need for training of parents and school personnel in the importance of and skills needed for engaging parents in educational planning and placement decisions for their children was deemed critical. Moreover, as noted in our General Findings and Conclusions section above, joint dialogue and training between parents and professionals may be critical to cementing these kinds of partnerships.

7. Methodology and Instruction: Respondents reported that greater expertise is needed by school personnel regarding the impact of classroom instruction on the learning needs of students with ASD/DD; academic instruction and other content instruction specific to this population of students; curricular and instructional modifications based on unique student needs; the need for explicit instruction in reading; and the use of sensory integration strategies and student strengths (rather than deficits) for identifying educational programming techniques to assist these students. The data suggest that there is a lack of awareness among teachers of what resources are available to help gain this expertise or where to look for ongoing support when further expertise may be needed. It was identified that staff members working with these students need improved skills in identifying appropriate methodologies for instruction that meet the unique, individual needs of each particular student.
8. Meaningful Participation and Climate of Relationships: Closely related to the social skills theme above, a common viewpoint expressed in the forums was that teachers need more assistance in integrating children with ASD/DD into the fabric of the classroom, particularly with respect to engaging the children with ASD/DD with their typical peers and vice versa. Respondents identified that simply placing a child with ASD/DD into the classroom did not assure that the child would be meaningfully and appropriately engaged or included as an integral part of the class community. The development of social relationships was identified as being vital to the child's overall educational performance and should be a major consideration for training. Consistent with other themes, such training is provided sporadically across the state with regional gaps in the availability of and ongoing support for accomplishing this educational goal. It is also important to have school personnel with the knowledge and skill to aid students with ASD/DD acclimate or assimilate to their learning environments.
9. Resources: As evidenced throughout the forums, the online surveys, and from an analysis of other data sources, there is a serious need to identify in detail the current availability of resources and the capacity of the state to provide the needed resources to meet the unique and individual needs of the students defined for this Act. Ongoing technical assistance to schools, rather than one-time, in-service trainings, are much more effective in helping school personnel implement the kinds of interventions discussed in this report. These findings reinforced the need identified by passage of this Act.

#### **Issue 4: Availability of persons with expertise**

##### State Department of Education (SDE)

SDE teacher certification and the Department of Public Health's licensing are the two processes for validation of qualifications in educating children with ASD/DD in Connecticut schools. The State does not validate qualifications of any other agency or individual in the area of ASD/DD.

Currently at the SDE, there are several staff members with expertise and responsibilities specifically dedicated to ASD (.5 FTE) and DD (3 FTE). These individuals are responsible for autism initiatives; the P.J. Settlement Agreement<sup>3</sup>; serving as liaison to the Birth-to-Three System initiatives on ASD, the Department of Developmental Services, and serving as representatives on advisory committees to the Developmental Disabilities Council, to Board of Educational and Services for the Blind, Committee for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and to the UCEDD as well as other agencies focused on supporting the educational needs of children and youth with ASD/DD; explaining and disseminating the guidelines for the identification and education of students with ASD/DD and monitoring federal/state requirements (IDEA and No Child Left Behind) concerning children and youth with ASD/DD.

#### The Connecticut Birth to Three System

The Connecticut Birth to Three System, administered by the DDS, currently has 10 comprehensive autism-specific programs across Connecticut for infants and toddlers. Additionally, the Birth to Three System produces service guidelines and other documents available to districts, programs and families. Finally, the Birth to Three System frequently partners with SERC and the SDE in the provision of state training through SERC.

#### Higher Education Faculty

Of the 12 (of 16) higher education teacher preparation institutions and six (of 12) community colleges that responded to the surveys administered by the study group, only five teacher education programs and two community colleges reported to have faculty members with expertise in ASD. All of the teacher education programs reported to have faculty members with expertise in DD.

#### Related Service Providers

There is a national board certification in applied behavioral analysis that an individual can secure. There are 134 individuals in Connecticut that have this credential. This board certification does not specifically address ASD/DD, although the skills achieved with this certification can be useful in working with students having ASD/DD, other disabilities, and students without disabilities. While there remains a need for professionals who can appropriately diagnose autism in very young children, and those who can develop appropriate evidence-based treatments, interventions and supports across the lifespan, districts and RESC representatives expressed concern regarding shortages of qualified related service providers in the areas of speech/language and behavior analysts. Speech and language pathologists have been identified as a high shortage area profession for multiple years in Connecticut and across the country.

#### RESC and SERC

Of the six RESCs in the state, the Capital Region Education Council (CREC), Cooperative Education Services (C.E.S.), EASTCONN, LEARN and Area Cooperative Education Services (ACES) report having specific expertise in providing direct services to students identified as ASD/DD. EDUCATION MEMBER CONNECTION provides direct early intervention services. All six report having staff to provide training and

technical assistance to school districts regarding students with ASD/DD. The SERC has staff members with expertise in ASD/DD to provide training and technical assistance to school personnel. SERC annually publishes a directory of Connecticut summer camps and programs for exceptional children which provides information according to specified disability categories including ASD and disabilities associated with DD.

#### Parent Advocacy Organizations

There are seven parent advocacy organizations focused specifically on the needs of individuals and families with ASD. Several of these organizations serve a specific region of the state while others provide services statewide. Additionally, towns have local parent support groups that often feature guest speakers and discussion forums within their communities. There is one advocacy organization identified generically for persons, including students, with DD, and then individual organizations specific to disability categories that are most frequently identified as DD. Additionally, there are organizations that address the needs of families with children identified as ASD and DD as a subset of the total breadth of disability categories served by their organizations.

#### Information Resources: Independent Consultants, Programs, Services and Guidelines

There are several resources available across Connecticut including guides for locating professional and independent consultants. However, these resources offer no quality indicators regarding the expertise, background, knowledge and experience of these self-identified experts. In 2005 the SDE created a resource directory of self-identified qualified experts in the area of intellectual disabilities called *Resource Directory of Specialists: Educating Students with an Intellectual Disability in the General Education Environment*. The Connecticut-based Autism Spectrum Resource Center annually publishes a manual which contains information specific to individuals with ASD on advocates, attorneys, therapists, physicians, counselors, other health practitioners and organizations available across the state.

The State Department of Education also has published guidelines that offer information that is of assistance in the education of students with ASD/DD (see Appendix 3). These include guidelines on the identification of children and youths with ASD, for students with intellectual disabilities, a screening tool for traumatic brain injury, transition document with specifics on students with developmental disabilities and guidelines for paraprofessionals.

The SDE has published both a *Directory of Community Rehabilitation Providers for Youth in Transition and Adults with Disabilities in Connecticut* (2005) and a *Directory of Transition Programs in College, University and Community-based Settings in Connecticut* (2005). The *Directory of Approved Private Special Education Programs* (2008), maintained by the SDE, currently lists 14 approved private special education programs that self-reported offering services for students with ASD/DD. In 2008, the SDE revised and published its *Connecticut Resources for Families* brochure. All of these resources are of specific interest to families and professionals in the area of ASD/DD.

Additionally, multiple state agencies maintain links on their Web sites that connect users to available resources of specific interest to these populations, including the Office of Protection and Advocacy, the Developmental Disabilities Council, the UCEDD and DDS, to name several.

The Autism Spectrum Resource Center, Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment and the Autism Society of Connecticut have online information clearinghouses and provide frequent newsletter communication of events and resources.

### **Issue 5: Collaborative partners who should be involved in the process of the development of training**

Through this study, it was identified that the planning and development of training is occurring primarily within, not between or among, individual organizations and agencies. The study group believes this is not the most effective or efficient strategy for ensuring access and sharing of resources. Findings from the study indicated that there was enthusiasm and support for developing a stronger coordination of training. The study group recommends that the SDE assume the responsibility of coordinating a core group (see Recommendation #1) to be engaged in advising the SDE on the process of developing training identified for personnel preparation and training. This core group should engage the stakeholder group that was convened for the development of the SDE's *Guidelines for the Identification and Education of Children and Youth with Autism* (2005) and assure representation from DHE, DDS, SCSU, the UCEDD, the SERC, the RESCs, the consortium of parent organizations for ASD and the Parent Training and Information (PTI) center for the state known as the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC).

This core group should call upon professionals and parents from throughout the state's institutions of higher education, school districts, professional associations, state agencies and national experts, as appropriate, to inform the work. In addition to the groups mentioned above, the SDE's School Paraprofessional Advisory Committee would be useful to assist in identifying further needs and training for paraprofessionals in the schools.

### **Issue 6: Best practices in pedagogy concerning teaching and research-based strategies**

The Act calls for the identification of best practices in pedagogy concerning teaching and research-based strategies specifically regarding student characteristics, curriculum planning, curricular and instructional modifications, adaptations and specialized strategies and techniques, assistive technology and inclusive educational practices, including collaborative partnerships.

The *Guidelines for the Identification and Education of Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders* (2005) and the *Guidelines for the Identification of Children with Intellectual Disabilities* (2008) include information on characteristics of effective programs that Connecticut has identified for students with ASD and intellectual disability

(a population of students which comprises the majority of students identified as DD), respectively.

Additionally, the study group believes the professional development sections of the *P.J. et al. v. State of Connecticut, et al* Annual Reports (2002-2006) provides descriptions of best practices in pedagogy concerning the education of students with developmental disabilities and for inclusive educational practices. The SDE also has developed a document that provides guidance on the characteristics of students with traumatic brain injury, one of the disability categories of which a large percentage of whom would most likely be identified as DD.

It is recommended that best practice pedagogy of evidence-based practices be identified and made available to schools and families and that this effort be more comprehensive and specific than what this study group was able to compile, given its resources. Additionally, identification of effectively implemented evidence-based practices being implemented in Connecticut would be beneficial for schools and families to observe.

#### **Issue 7: Methods that are in compliance with requirements of IDEA**

While the IDEA does not recommend or mandate methods regarding the needs of individuals with ASD/DD, the study group strongly recommends that teacher preparation programs and other training initiatives highlight the following regarding training around the development a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), as these are mandatory elements for complying with federal and state requirements:

- specific supports and services to school personnel to meet the needs of the student (C.F.R. §300.156) in order to identify necessary training needs and resources that a student's education staff would need to assist the successful implementation of that student's IEP;
- positive behavior supports that would benefit the education of students with ASD/DD (C.F.R. §300.324);
- provision that an IEP must include "a statement of the program modifications or supports that will be provided for the child" which should be to assist the teacher in meeting the unique needs of the child (C.F.R. §300.347);
- assessment and evaluation techniques to be used in the identification of the student's present levels of performance and identification of appropriate assistive and adaptive technology to aid instruction and facilitate the student's communication (C.F.R. §300.343);
- training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education or rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of that child.(C.F.R. §300.6); and
- related services for parents, such as parent counseling and services in order for the child to receive a free, appropriate public education (C.F.R. §300.24 (7)).

The IDEA also provides that the IEP team must include "an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results..." 20 USC Section 1414(d) 1(B)(v). Additionally, the IDEA (C.F.R. §300.156) maintains that the State Education Agency (SEA) establish and maintain qualifications to ensure that personnel are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained and have the content knowledge and skills to serve children with disabilities. As it applies to educator preparation, consistent with §300.156 and section 612(a)(14) of the Act, Connecticut is responsible for ensuring that teachers, related services personnel, paraprofessionals and other personnel serving children with disabilities under Part B of the Act are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained and have the content knowledge and skills required to serve children with disabilities.

### **Issue 8: Budget and Time Line**

Special Act 08-5 requested that a budget and time line for implementing the statewide plan be developed. Given the current economic situation in Connecticut, the study group recognized that requesting funds to implement this plan in a timely manner poses great challenges in decision-making regarding where to allocate the states' limited resources. The budget proposed is intended to provide a realistic expectation of necessary resources. Please refer to page 27 of this report following the General Recommendations section for this information.

### **Issue 9: Steps to Assess Impact**

Special Act 08-5 requested that the study group develop an assessment of the impact of this statewide plan. Please refer to page 23 of this report following the General Recommendations section for this information.

## **II. B. Proposed Categories for Personnel Preparation and Training**

The Act specifically requested recommendations for a statewide plan to incorporate methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities into:

- Programs for teacher preparation;
- Requirements and competencies for candidates seeking Initial and Provisional educator certificates;
- In-service training; and
- Training and competencies for paraprofessionals, related services professionals, early childhood certificate holders, administrators and parents.

As recommended in Issue #1 of Section II A the development of teacher preparation and in-service trainings should reference four sources when preparing and educating school personnel and parents:

- (1) Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching competencies identified by the SDE for initial teacher preparation (Appendix 7) and regulatory requirements (Appendix 8);
- (2) the competencies identified by the Council for Exceptional Children in the areas of mental retardation/DD as well as the newly proposed National Teaching Competencies for Educating Individuals with ASD identified by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) for the education of students with ASD (Appendix 6);
- (3) the relevant SDE guidelines and publications including guidelines on the identification of children and youths with ASD, for students with intellectual disabilities, a screening tool for traumatic brain injury, transition document with specifics on students with developmental disabilities and guidelines for paraprofessionals; and
- (4) the areas of need identified through the surveys and public forums conducted during this study (refer to Issue #3 of Section II A. Training priorities should include social skills, communication, behavior management and understanding the unique differences of students defined for this Act.

The study group recommends the following approach to incorporating these methods into the various personnel preparation and training opportunities:

### **EDUCATOR Preparation and Training**

#### *Entry Level Educators and Those Seeking A Provisional Certificate*

This level of training addresses what entry level teachers, including those seeking an early childhood certificate, need to know for educating students with ASD/DD upon seeking Initial and Provisional certification. This level of training is offered at teacher preparation institutions and organizations providing alternative routes to certification for the entry level teacher, including educators in early childhood.

The SDE, in collaboration with appropriate partners in higher education, will provide guidance for developing course syllabi and course content for meeting the required SDE teacher preparation competencies and needs of children and youth with an ASD/DD. This work will inform the pre-service competencies for entry level educators which include:

- Development and characteristics of students with ASD/DD;
- Evidence-based/standards-based instruction;
- Evidence-based classroom and behavior management;
- Assessment;
- Professional behaviors and responsibilities.

#### *Educators Seeking A Professional Certificate*

This level of training addresses more specific attitudes, knowledge and skills for teachers seeking professional certification who would be interested or were currently educating

students with ASD/DD. This tier of instruction would be appropriate for entry level special educators who were educating students with ASD/DD.

This level of training may be offered as graduate credit or CEUs at teacher preparation institutions and organizations or CEUs at school districts providing in-service training and would be appropriate for the teacher seeking a Professional Educator certificate.

The SDE, in collaboration with appropriate partners, would develop training modules specific to ASD/DD that teacher preparation programs or in-service training organizations could follow when developing course syllabi/instruction or preparing for workshops, training or technical assistance to teachers already providing services to children with ASD/DD or whom are interested in learning more about this population of students.

The competencies that an educator would need at this level would be based on the competencies identified by the Council for Exceptional Children in the areas of mental retardation/DD as well as the newly proposed National Teaching Competencies for Educating Individuals with ASD identified by the Council for Exceptional Children for the education of students with ASD (Appendix 6) and the findings from the public meetings and online surveys conducted for this study.

#### *Special Educators/Advanced Preparation*

This level of training addresses areas of expertise specifically geared for educators that are interested in becoming special educators or acquiring more advanced expertise in the area of ASD/DD.

This level of training may be offered as graduate credit or CEUs at teacher preparation institutions and organizations, or CEUs at school districts providing in-service training, and would be appropriate for the teacher seeking a Professional Educator certificate.

The SDE, in collaboration with appropriate partners, would develop training modules specific to ASD/DD that teacher preparation programs or in-service training organizations could follow when developing course syllabi/instruction or preparing for workshops, training or technical assistance to teachers already providing services to children with ASD/DD or whom are interested in learning more about this population of students and want to develop specific expert level knowledge and skills.

#### **PARAPROFESSIONAL Preparation and Training**

Connecticut has established requirements for paraprofessionals and as indicated in this study's findings and from the study group's review of the literature, paraprofessional development is critical in ensuring positive results on student learning as it pertains to individuals with an ASD or DD. Paraprofessionals need access to training where the content is concerned with evidence-based practices that lead to meeting the needs of the students they are serving.

### Entry Level Paraprofessional

This tier addresses what all entry level paraprofessionals need to know for working in classrooms that serve this population. CREC currently offers on line training modules that would meet this tier of training for paraprofessionals in general education classrooms that serve students with ASD/DD.

### Paraprofessional

This level addresses more specific attitudes, knowledge and skills for paraprofessionals who are currently working or intend to work specifically with students with ASD/DD. CREC, in collaboration with the SDE and SERC, is currently creating advanced training modules that would be appropriate for this tier of paraprofessional training.

## **RELATED SERVICE PROVIDERS Preparation and Training**

The SDE should develop guidance documents regarding ASD/DD to be provided to colleges and universities that provide certification or licensing credentials for personnel who work in schools where students with ASD/DD receive an education. These guidance documents would also be provided to school districts that employ these professionals where students with ASD/DD receive and education.

The SDE, in collaboration with appropriate partners, would develop these guidance documents specific to ASD/DD concerning the role of other professionals including school administrators, school counselors, occupational therapists, physical therapists, nurses, social workers and school psychologists. Guidelines would be intended for use by colleges and universities or in-service training organizations, including school districts, as references when developing course syllabi/instruction or preparing for workshops, training or technical assistance to the appropriate professional group teachers already providing services to children with ASD/DD or whom are interested in learning more about this population of students.

The competencies in this guidance document would be based on the competencies identified by the Council for Exceptional Children in the areas of mental retardation/DD as well as the newly proposed National Teaching Competencies for Educating Individuals with ASD identified by the Council for Exceptional Children for the education of students with ASD (Appendix 6) and the findings from the public meetings and online surveys conducted for this study.

## **SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS Preparation and Training**

The SDE should develop a guidance document regarding ASD/DD for colleges and universities regarding the preparation of school administrators who work in Connecticut schools. This guidance document also would be provided to school districts that employ these professionals.

The SDE, in collaboration with appropriate partners, would develop this guidance document specific to ASD/DD and school administrators. It would be intended for use by colleges and universities or in-service training organizations, including school districts as a reference when developing course syllabi/instruction or preparing for workshops, training or technical assistance to school administrators already providing services to children with ASD/DD or whom are interested in learning more about this population of students.

The competencies in this guidance document would be based on the competencies identified by the Council for Exceptional Children in the areas of mental retardation/DD as well as the newly proposed National Teaching Competencies for Educating Individuals with ASD identified by the Council for Exceptional Children for the education of students with ASD (Appendix 6) and the findings from the public meetings and online surveys conducted for this study.

### **PARENTS Training**

Parents of children with ASD/DD need to be closely involved in the educational process. Parents can learn techniques for teaching adaptive skills and managing the behavior of their children which maximizes the learning and improves the quality of family life. While there are several effective organizations across the state engaged in parent training and advocacy, as noted by survey respondents and meeting attendees, other respondents indicated problems in the relationships between parents and school districts in the areas of communication, forging partnerships and collaborating through the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for infants and toddlers and the IEP for students ages 3-21. As was noted within the public forums, opportunities for parents and district/school personnel to attend joint training on ASD/DD has been found to be an effective strategy for breaking down communication barriers and forging partnerships.

While tremendous responsibility falls to the parent as an advocate for their child and as the monitor of the IEP or IFSP, the parent is also in the position to support the learning at home. It is important for schools to recognize that parents need both initial training and on-going support to sustain efforts in building the home-school connection. Providing parents with a basic training course in teaching principles is often insufficient to ensure the sustainability of the student's skill acquisition outside of the regular school day.

Strategies and training for parents that will be supportive to families in their homes and that will help to clarify and build a better understanding of their child's instructional needs in school will need to be developed. Any training will be tailored to the unique needs of families and will be informed by the competencies identified by the Council for Exceptional Children in the areas of mental retardation/DD as well as the newly proposed National Teaching Competencies for Educating Individuals with ASD identified by the Council for Exceptional Children for the education of students with ASD (Appendix 6) and the findings from the public meetings and online surveys conducted for this study.

### **III. Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation #1**

The Commissioner of the State Department of Education or his/her designee should seek advisement from a consortium of agencies in addressing the teaching of children with autism and other developmental disabilities. This Consortium should have as its core group the Commissioners of the Departments of Higher Education and Developmental Services or their designees and the President of Southern Connecticut State University or his/her designee. Additionally the Consortium should seek representation from:

- the University of Connecticut Health Center's Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD);
- the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI- Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC);
- the State Education Resource Center (SERC);
- the Connecticut Chapter of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE-CT);
- the Consortium of Independent Colleges;
- the alliance of Directors of Special Education of the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs);
- the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities; and
- the Independent Advisory Council of the Division of Autism Services (IACDAS).

It is further recommended that the SDE, whenever possible and appropriate, invite individuals with ASD/DD and parents and family members of children with ASD/DD in the planning and development of recommendations emanating from this Consortium.

The Commissioner of Education should seek advisement from the Consortium in the following priority areas:

1. The identification of competencies necessary for preparing educators and school personnel to assist in creating consistency of expectations for staff knowledge, attitudes, skills and dispositions for educating children and youth with ADS/DD throughout the state's teacher preparation and in-service training programs.
2. The incorporation of best practices for educating children and youths with ASD/DD into:
  - the state approval process for education programs of institutions of higher education;
  - potential amendments to the special education requirements for all Initial teaching certificates and programs leading to Initial certification in special education as well as advanced programs beyond the master's degree for professionals seeking the issuance of an Administrator certificate;

- the CEU approval process for new teachers; and
  - the approval process for the induction of new teachers (formerly known as the BEST Program).
3. The identification of funding sources to achieve these and other initiatives consistent with this report and any Special Act 08-5 requirements to follow.

The purpose of this recommendation is to promote ongoing collaboration between the organizations and agencies listed above and to solicit stakeholder and expert input to inform decision-making regarding educator preparation, requirements for continuing professional development of teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and other educational personnel, and the provision of statewide training for teachers, administrators, parents and families regarding children defined by this Act.

### **Recommendation #2**

The state should promote the establishment of a Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders at Southern Connecticut State University, whose primary mission is to coordinate information and training throughout the state to support children and youths with ASD. The Center would provide a centralized source of evidence-based information and training, and provide coordination and technical assistance to service providers, school districts and families throughout Connecticut. The primary components of the Center would focus on training coordination, resource dissemination, collaboration/networking and identification of effective practice. This Center would collaborate with organizations, including the Consortium, the RESCs, the SERC and the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) in developing new and augmenting existing training programs, conducting applied and policy research and analysis, disseminating research-based practices and serving as a clearinghouse of trainings and resources. The director of the Center shall also be a member of the Consortium.

This Center will aid in assuring consistency in providing higher education faculty members, service providers, school personnel and families with access to the variety of resources available to address the unique needs of the children defined for this Act. This Center needs the expertise to develop training, provide technical assistance and be positioned to work extensively with school districts, teacher preparation institutions and other training and advocacy organizations. Training needs to be aligned with:

- (1) Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching competencies identified by the SDE for initial teacher preparation (Appendix 7) and proposed pre-service competencies (Appendix 8);
- (2) the competencies identified by the Council for Exceptional Children in the areas of mental retardation/DD as well as the newly proposed National Teaching Competencies for Educating Individuals with ASD identified by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) for the education of students with ASD (Appendix 6);

- (3) the relevant SDE guidelines and publications, including guidelines on the identification of children and youths with ASD, for students with intellectual disabilities, a screening tool for traumatic brain injury, transition document with specifics on students with developmental disabilities and guidelines for paraprofessionals;
- (4) the areas of need identified through the surveys and public forums conducted during this study (refer to Issue #3). Training priorities should include: social skills, communication, behavior management and understanding the unique differences of students defined for this Act.

The Center should be charged to:

1. Develop and expand on-ground, distance and online learning opportunities that include offerings related to all areas of autism and related disabilities using evidence-based practices in assessment, instruction and curriculum development as the focus;
2. Develop and expand opportunities for in-district programs/child-specific training using evidence-based practices in assessment, instruction and curriculum development as the focus;
3. Provide coordinated team training for the RESCs, which would then function as the training team for teachers and staff members within school districts;
4. Work with multiple, community organizations to provide parent training and resource dissemination of important information to parents and other caregivers;
5. Work with all teacher preparation programs in Connecticut, develop expertise among the faculties on ASD/DD for inclusion into their educator preparation programs;
6. Develop a paraprofessional plan for training and support focused on ASD/DD in partnership with the SERC and the SDE's School Paraprofessional Advisory Council. This plan should be informed by the competencies and training modules and other source documents reviewed by the study group.
7. Develop training modules and guidance documents that address the competencies identified in this report, to be made available to institutions of higher education and other training organizations to assist in creating consistency of content to be delivered regarding staff knowledge, attitudes and skills for educating children and youths with ASD/DD throughout the state's teacher preparation and in-service training programs.
8. Conduct transdisciplinary summer clinics for children with ASD/DD as model training sites to allow for assessments, interventions and recreational opportunities;
9. Coordinate with universities in Connecticut to establish an applied research component to the Center that seeks to identify the scientific basis of the efficacy of specific interventions used with children and youths with ASD;
10. Conduct policy analysis that impacts children and youths with autism spectrum disorders;
11. Disseminate information to parents, professionals and paraprofessionals regarding translating research into evidence-based practice;

12. Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of services and policies impacting children and youth with ASD; and
13. Apply for applicable state, federal and foundation grants to support the efforts of the Center to reach these goals.

The purpose of this recommendation is to assure consistency and coordination of information and services to teacher preparation institutions, service providers, school districts and families throughout all regions of the state in the use of evidenced-based and best practices for children and youth with ASD.

**Recommendation #3**

The State Department of Education, in partnership with the proposed Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders and the proposed Consortium, should identify and recognize effective implementation of evidence-based practices occurring throughout the state and arrange for school personnel and parents to speak with and observe the implementers of these practices for dissemination and replication.

The purpose of this recommendation is to assist families and school personnel in their access to and development of skillful and consistent application of evidenced-based and best practices for the education of children and youths with ASD.

**IV. Budget**

Special Act 08-5 required the development of a proposed budget to support a statewide plan. Given the current economic situation in Connecticut, the study group recognized that requesting funds to implement this plan poses great challenges in decision-making regarding where to allocate the states’ limited resources. The establishment of a Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, in particular, will require the infusion of significant fiscal resources. For this reason, and because Southern Connecticut State University has already been seeking to support its initiatives in this area, SCSU is currently pursuing federal and foundation support to cover start-up costs. The budget makes good use of in-kind contributions and minimal financial support for the Consortium and for identifying best practices across our state.

**Recommendation #1- Consortium**  
First-Year Budget

Budget Category: Personnel	
Consortium members – Representatives from designated organizations and agencies	In-kind contribution
Part-time secretary (.5 FTE)	In-kind contribution from consortium members
Benefits	In-kind contribution
<u>Travel</u>	

In/out of state based on state govt. travel rates	In-kind contribution from consortium members
<u>Equipment</u>	
Computer (workstation, desk, set-up, searches, communication)	In-kind contribution from consortium members
<u>Supplies</u>	
General office supplies, mailings, etc.	\$ 1,500.00
Work site	In kind from agencies
<u>Personal Service Contracts</u>	
Parent stipends	\$ 3,000
Total	\$4,500

**Recommendation #2- Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders**  
First-Year Budget

Budget Category: Personnel	
Executive Director	\$100,000
Trainers/Facilitators (2 @ \$60,000)	\$ 120,000
Secretary	\$ 35,000
Part-time parent advisor	\$ 20,000
Benefits (40% of total)	\$100,000
<u>Travel</u>	
In/out of state based on state govt. travel rates	\$ 1,000
National conference	\$ 3,000
<u>Equipment</u>	
Computer workstations (5 @ \$10,000)	\$ 50,000
<u>Supplies</u>	
General office supplies, mailings, copying	\$ 6,000
Library Materials	\$1,000
Web site/video production costs	\$50,000
<u>Personal Service Contracts</u>	
Parent stipends	\$ 3,000
Expert Product Development	\$61,000
Total	\$ 550,000

**Recommendation #3- Identification and Showcase of Evidence-Based Practices**  
First-Year Budget

Professional Technical

Grants to LEAs/Programs (12@\$25,000)	\$ 300,000
Printing Costs	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$305,000</b>

**V. Time Lines**

**Recommendation #1- Statewide Consortium for Educational Training and Technical Assistance Concerning Educating Children and Youths with ASD or Other DD**

*The proposal below describes the first year of activities necessary for implementing Recommendation #1.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>
<b>July – August 2009</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convene Consortium and draft vision, mission and purpose.</li> <li>2. Review legislation and reports from the Special Act 08-5 Study Group.</li> <li>3. Conduct a task analysis of Special Act 08-5 recommendations for Consortium, make assignments and develop a management plan.</li> <li>4. Seek recommendations to inform the identification of best practice strategies across Connecticut and proposal process for selection and verification of demonstration models across state.</li> </ol>
<b>October - November 2009</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish criteria for evaluating the desired outcomes of the Consortium as outlined in the Special Act 08-5 report.</li> <li>2. Seek advisement on professional learning opportunities, ASD/DD public education programs, and federal/state requirements specific to preparing personnel who work with pupils with disabilities that would contribute to building on the Special Act 08-5 report.</li> <li>3. Conduct a Training Gap analysis (building on Special Act 08-5 Preliminary Needs Assessment): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is in place statewide?</li> <li>• What do we need?</li> <li>• What resources are necessary?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

<b>January – February 2010</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Run cost-benefit analysis of current funding/ expenditures for personnel training with projections made based on trend data statewide.</li> <li>2. Suggest areas for in-service training and guidance documents for pre-service training</li> </ol>
<b>April – May 2010</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review of state approval process for teacher preparation programs, certification requirements and CEU provider approval.</li> <li>2. Seek advisement on further information needed for statewide planning which addresses recommendations in the 08-5 report (i.e.; Long-term strategic plan for educational development, supports and trainings, evidence-based goals focused on provisions for pupils with ASD/DD, establishing performance standards and benchmarking targets for IDEA-funded programs and services and other federal or state-regulated entities, measurable outcomes identified and time line and management plan.</li> </ol>
<b>July 2010</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proposal for recommendations of any changes to existing policies and practices drafted.</li> <li>2. Annual report due on progress toward strategic plan goals and objectives.</li> </ol>

**Recommendation #2: A Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders (CASD)**

*The proposal below describes the first year of activities necessary for implementing Recommendation #2.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Tasks</b>
<b>July 2009</b>	<p>Convene planning team to draft vision, mission and purpose of the CASD.</p> <p>Review legislation and reports from the 08-5 Study Group.</p> <p>Conduct a task analysis of 08-5 recommendations for Consortium, make assignments and develop a management plan.</p>
<b>August 2009</b>	<p>Development of multi-year strategic plan for the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders in partnership with Consortium – goals, objectives, benchmarks and action strategies identified. Statewide partners identified and review draft of plan.</p>

	Primary components of the Center articulated and three-tiered model of support for training developed and reviewed by statewide partners.
<b>September 2009</b>	Professional competencies for those working with children and youths with ASD/DD drafted in consultation with the Consortium drafted and reviewed by statewide partners.
<b>October 2009</b>	Establish criteria in consultation with the Consortium for desired outcomes specific to training aligned with the necessary job tasks/standards and competencies described in the 08-5 study report and aligned with Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching and Council for Exceptional Children standards.  Formulate business plan that identifies perspective donors, fiscal needs and a time table for approval.
<b>November 2009</b>	Research in consultation with the Consortium resources available such as public funds, infrastructure, educational/training programs, and support services that will support Center development. Potential funding sources targeted for the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders identified.  Develop request for funding and submit them to individuals, foundations and perspective grantors.  Final draft of competencies, Center primary components, and three-tiered training model complete.  Create and develop data collection procedures for all activities of the Center.
<b>December 2009</b>	Establish staffing structure and finalize development plan that includes budget and anticipated time line for implementation.  Create a marketing plan.  Apply as a federal Center for Excellence and as a State Resource Center.  Expansion of formal partnerships and collaborative projects across state agencies and organizations.
<b>January – March 2010</b>	Using work from Consortium, engage in organized evaluation of current programming and determine future agenda for consumer groups to provide information about programming needs.  Development and dissemination of model for creating parent/professional networks.
<b>April – June 2010</b>	Work with stakeholder groups to develop CEU course credit modules.  Creation of mentoring group with school districts for supporting in-service

	teachers and support staff.  Web site and other electronic communication networking infrastructure developed.
<b>July 2010</b>	Funding for the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders contacted/located/secured.

**Recommendation #3: The Connecticut ASD/DD Evidence-Based Practices Project**

*The proposal below describes the first year of activities necessary for implementing Recommendation #3.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>
<b>July – August 2009</b>	<p>Convene Evidence-Based Practices Project team and review legislation and reports from the 08-5 Study Group.</p> <p>Environmental scan of programs in public and approved nonpublic settings and resource allocations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and inventory current practices, resources, supports, Web sites, and materials in public and approved private schools.</li> </ul> <p>Program/Services Gap analysis (building on 08-5 Preliminary Needs Assessment):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is in place statewide?</li> <li>• What do we need?</li> <li>• What resources are necessary</li> </ul>
<b>September - October 2009</b>	<p>Develop criteria for site selection and appropriate protocol materials including intent to apply applications, application scoring rubric, validation site visit observation tools, and so forth using recommendations from Consortium.</p> <p>Funding sources targeted, identified and/or secured to implement the Connecticut ASD/DD Evidence-Based Practices Project Development and communication.</p> <p>Funding obtained to award grants.</p>
<b>November 2009</b>	<p>Information session for interested applicants held.</p> <p>Disseminate information and materials to public.</p>
<b>December 2009</b>	<p>Applications received and evaluated by review team.</p>
<b>January 2010</b>	<p>Site visits to prospective evidence-based practices.</p>
<b>February 2010</b>	<p>Decisions made on model sites for pilot projects.</p>

<b>March - June 2010</b>	Disseminate evidence-based practice locations Visitations occur
<b>July 2010</b>	Evaluate project

## **VI. Assessing Impact**

Steps to assess impact of implementation on school readiness programs, elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education would require that a results-based accountability (RBA) measure be established. Although a more comprehensive assessment of impact is needed (this study group did not have the necessary resources to provide sufficient detail), the study group recommends a similar approach in measuring the impact of these ASD/DD statewide initiatives. Each entity tasked with the recommendations will be expected to oversee the development of measurable outcomes, identification of meaningful indicators, management design, analyses of quantitative and qualitative data, and use of results to monitor growth across initiatives. Legislators and senior agency staff members frequently require information on long-term outcomes (and, in some cases, inputs) while program and provider staff members require details on inputs, processes and outputs as well as outcomes. For each indicator, baseline data need to be collected to identify the starting point from which progress is examined and allows decision-makers to evaluate the progress of programs and policies. Assigning responsibility for indicator data collection to individuals or entities in an organization helps to assure that data will be regularly collected. Evaluation and data collection efforts should be targeted to assess use of project resources, professional development and technical assistance, evidence-based practices, as well as child, family and practitioner outcomes.

Information to be considered in this assessment of impact would include:

- Increasing the number of highly qualified personnel serving individuals with autism spectrum disorders and developmental disabilities;
- Implementing evidence-based practices for children and youths with ASD and DD equitably across regions;
- Documenting and using scientifically rigorous evaluation studies of the use of evidence-based practices at the preschool, elementary and middle/high school levels;
- Determining relationships of and making predictions based on pre- and in-service professional development to child, family, practitioner, and system levels outcomes; and
- Benchmarking toward a sustainable system of ongoing professional development and technical assistance for the provision of high quality services for individuals with ASD and DD.

## **VII. Concluding Remarks**

The study group has made a concerted, inter-agency effort to develop recommendations for a statewide plan concerning the teaching of children with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities. The study group has collaborated with many parents and professionals across the state, reviewed current best practices concerning these issues and developed a comprehensive policy analysis that details the steps necessary to deliver high quality educational services to a group of students often left behind. To this end, the study group hopes these efforts will merit recognition and support for the needs of this population of children and youths in Connecticut's schools.

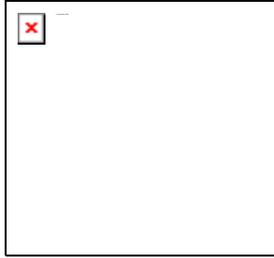
## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are complex developmental disorders of neurobiological origin that are diagnosed on the basis of behavioral and developmental features. Specifically, ASD refers to the diagnosis given to those individuals identified as meeting the descriptive characteristics of either Asperger's Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified, Autism, Rett's Syndrome, or Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. ASD symptoms can occur in any combination and with varying degrees of severity. A consistently accepted triad of deficits characterizing ASD consists of social interaction, communication and repetitive behaviors. These behaviors may not become apparent in infancy, but usually become obvious during early childhood (18 months to 6 years).

<sup>2</sup> This set of skills, well recognized for improving learning, is utilized in many disciplines and incorporated into most higher education psychology and/or education programs. These skills for observing and changing behavior (operant and respondent conditioning) are utilized in education and business to improve performance of individuals in these situations. Applied behavioral analysis (ABA) principles are used pervasively in the teaching of students with and without disabilities, including students with ASD/DD.

<sup>3</sup> In 1993, a handful of parents of school-aged children (i.e.; students) with mental retardation (the largest category of children within developmental disabilities and now referred to as intellectual disability) filed a class action lawsuit in Connecticut against the Connecticut State Department of Education alleging the state's lack of assurance of the protections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for students with mental retardation/intellectual disability to receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. This resulted in the P.J. et al., v. State of Connecticut, et al., Settlement Agreement in 2002. One of the explicit goals to be achieved during the five years was increased placement of students with intellectual disability in the regular education classroom, defined as 80% or more time with nondisabled peers. The agreement also stipulated a role for the state in monitoring the use of best practices in providing these students access to the general education curriculum and monitoring the progress of these students in the general education curriculum.

## **APPENDICES**



*Substitute House Bill No. 5590*

*Special Act No. 08-5*

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Commissioners of Education, Higher Education and Developmental Services and the President of Southern Connecticut State University, or their designees, jointly and in consultation with such state, local and other entities as they deem appropriate, including, but not limited to, the constituent units of the state system of higher education, as defined in 10a-1 of the general statutes, independent colleges or universities, as defined in section 10a-37 of the general statutes, the State Education Resource Center, established under section 10-4q of the general statutes, and the regional educational service centers established under section 10-66a of the general statutes, shall define autism and developmental disabilities for purposes of this section, and develop recommendations for a comprehensive state-wide plan to incorporate methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities into:

(1) Programs for teacher preparation pursuant to section 10-145a of the general statutes;

(2) Requirements for candidates seeking an initial educator or provisional educator certificate pursuant to section 10-145b of the general statutes;

(3) In-service training pursuant to section 10-220a of the general statutes; and

(4) Training provided to school paraprofessionals pursuant to section 10-155j of the 2008 supplement to the general statutes, related service professionals, early childhood certificate holders, administrators and parents.

(b) In developing recommendations pursuant to this section, the commissioner and chancellor, or their designees, shall, at a minimum, address the following issues related to the incorporation of methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities into the programs, requirements and training described in subsection (a) of this section:

(1) Competencies for individuals described in subdivisions (2) and (4) of subsection (a) of this section;

(2) Existing capacity to incorporate methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities into the programs, requirements and training described in subsection (a) of this section and the extent to which new capacity is needed at the elementary and secondary school levels and in institutions of higher education;

(3) The extent to which methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities need to be implemented in school readiness programs and grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive;

(4) The availability of persons with expertise concerning the methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities;

(5) Collaborative partners who should be involved in the process of the development of training concerning the methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities;

(6) Best practices in pedagogy concerning the teaching of children with autism and other developmental disabilities, including research-based strategies that at a minimum address:

(A) Characteristics of students with autism and other developmental disabilities;

(B) Curriculum planning, curricular and instructional modifications, adaptations, and specialized strategies and techniques;

(C) Assistive technology; and

(D) Inclusive educational practices, including, but not limited to, collaborative partnerships;

(7) The incorporation of methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities into the programs, requirements and training described in subsection (a) of this section that are in compliance with

requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1400 et seq. , as amended from time to time;

(8) A budget and timeline for implementation of the plan developed pursuant to this section; and

(9) Steps to assess the impact of the implementation of the plan developed pursuant to this section on school readiness programs, elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

(c) Not later than February 1, 2009, the Commissioner of Education and Chancellor of the Connecticut State University System, or their designees, shall, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, report recommendations developed pursuant to this section to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, public health and higher education.

## Appendix 2

### **List of designees and meeting dates 2008-2009**

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Meeting Dates for Study Group

**July 16**  
**August 8**  
**September 4**  
**October 2**  
**October 17**  
**October 31**

**November 6**  
**November 13**  
**November 16**  
**November 24**  
**December 4**  
**December 11**

**December 16**  
**December 23**  
**December 30**  
**January 8**  
**January 14**  
**January 22**

## Appendix 3

### **Methodology and Initial Data Analysis Overview**

#### Methodology

To respond to the issues posed in the Special Act 08-05, the study group designed a multiple method study comprised of reviewing of key documents, soliciting comment through public community meetings, conducting a statewide online survey, performing a linguistic analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions on the survey, referring to historical trend analyses, observing findings from related legislation and public policy in Connecticut, reading needs assessment results obtained from selected states across the country, examining data collected in the state database on Connecticut schools, and collecting responses from university faculty to an online survey. In order to cross-validate the findings, the data from the different study components were compared and contrasted. For example, several sources of data were analyzed together to discern the high priority training needs: the quantitative data from the statewide online survey, the responses to the open-ended questions on the survey and the comments made at the public community meetings were triangulated and interpreted in light of both current research in the field and the requirements listed in Special Act No. 08-5. At every step, the study group made efforts to elicit feedback from stakeholders. Representatives from state stakeholder groups provided targeted feedback on the content validity of the survey, definitions, terms and prioritization of training needs. Additionally, a draft of report recommendations was critiqued by stakeholders. Thus, this report represents the collective wisdom of those who have a stake in the life success of individuals diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder or other developmental disabilities.

#### **1. Public Forums**

In collaboration with the regional educational service centers (RESCs) and the State Education Resource Center (SERC), the study group conducted 7 public forums across the state during September and October. The locations of these public forums were:

- North Haven – September 18
- Old Lyme – September 25
- Hampton – October 2
- Hartford – October 9 and October 29
- Trumbull – October 16
- Litchfield – October 23

Data was collected through a series of structured questions posed to participants using a trained facilitator from SERC. The participants' verbal responses were summarized by a second SERC staff. The questions were designed to elicit information about ASD/DD in an effort to uncover issues relevant to Special Act 08-5. Each forum generated additional issues not contained in the questions and essentially functioned as an open forum for professionals and parents to bring up issues of concern to them.

To identify the high priority training needs, the study group conducted a linguistic and content analyses of the quantitative data from the statewide online surveys, the responses to the open-ended questions on each survey, and the comments made at the public forums. From these analyses, themes related to training needs emerged. The themes were organized by priority level by a stakeholder group consisting of Special Education Directors or their designees of the Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) and a representative from the Connecticut Chapter of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE-CT), which represents all teacher education programs in Connecticut.

## 2. Online surveys

Three online surveys were conducted via Survey Monkey to elicit feedback from a variety of constituents: (1) Connecticut professionals and parents interested in ASD/DD, (2) Connecticut Community College faculty who have involvement in the preparation of paraprofessionals, early childhood educators, other education and related services workers, and (3) teacher preparation faculty in four year institutions of higher education.

Multiple choice and open-ended questions were designed to elicit structured feedback on (1) issues identified in Special Act 08-5, (2) the current capacity for providing training in ASD/DD, and (3) suggestions regarding the building of future capacity. Additional content validation procedures were completed via an initial review of survey content by the stakeholder group noted previously.

### Connecticut parent and professional surveys

The Parent and Professional survey was developed using a variety of sources including the *Connecticut State Guidelines for Educating Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) proposed professional standards for working with students with ASD, and data from other states with training programs for professionals working with students with ASD. The survey was divided into knowledge competencies and application competencies. Participants were asked to respond based on their perceptions of the training needs in their school, district, or university.

**Table 2: Survey Respondent Roles**

	Number		Number
1 Advocate	13	11 Psychologist or School Psychologist	35
2 Autism Specialist	14	12 Regular Education Teacher	32
3 Case Manager	11	13 School Administrator	85
4 Early Childhood Educator	37	14 School Social Worker	16
6 Higher Education	8	15 Special Education Teacher	135
7 Individual with an ASD or a DD	2	16 Speech Language Pathologist/Provider	57
8 Occupational or Physical Therapist	14	19 Staff Developer	1
9 Paraprofessional	55		
10 Parent/Primary Caregiver	286		

## **Teacher preparation surveys**

The Teacher Preparation survey was developed and the online link was sent to all 16 deans or directors of these teacher education programs, requesting their assistance in disseminating the request to complete the survey to their faculty who would have cognizance of matters associated with the survey. A similar request was made of the 12 academic deans in the Community Colleges. Twelve of the 16 universities responded to the online survey for a 75% return rate, whereas six of 12 community colleges responded, for a 50% rate.

There are 16 colleges or universities in Connecticut that prepare teachers and related educational professionals and 12 Community Colleges that have programs in human services or education that prepare their students to work with individuals with disabilities that would include students with autism and other developmental disabilities.

Among the colleges and universities that responded, five with teacher education programs and two community colleges reported to have faculty with expertise in Autism Spectrum Disorder and all of the teacher education programs reported to have faculty with expertise in developmental disabilities. This later finding reflects the state regulatory requirement to have at least one course on special education as part of any teacher education program. Of the twelve teacher education programs that responded to the question about the percentage of their teacher education programs that address ASD/DD, two indicated that more than 10% of their program includes information on ASD/DD, eight programs indicated 5-10%, and two provide less than 5% of their courses contain information about ASD/DD. All offer a general course in exceptionalities, but variations in the percentages were seen across programs. Additionally, two universities have graduate programs in ASD and DD that include at least 6 graduate courses devoted specifically to this content. One university is developing coursework to offer certification in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Three programs currently provide in-service training to teachers in ASD and DD. Seven universities indicated that they had the expertise to offer in-service training.

A total of 33 responses were analyzed on the following predetermined topics: Identification/Evaluation, Behavior/Crisis Intervention; Programming; Staffing issues; Social Skills; Transition Services; Due Process/Compliance, Skills for Employment, and Family Support. These topics were selected from the literature on autism and developmental disabilities and were asked in such a way so as to identify issues relevant to faculty and students within the respective college or university. Table 4 below presents a breakout of these data.

As can be seen from these data, the most common issues raised by students and faculty within these programs are issues related to Identification/Evaluation, Behavior Management/Crisis Intervention, and Social Skills training for students with ASD/DD. It is interesting to note that “Skills for Employment” and “Transition Services” were rated somewhat lower than most other issues, suggesting that post-school outcomes may not be a concern within the college or university preparation programs. Moreover, these results tended to correspond to the findings from the public forums, adding credibility to the data.

**Table 4: Issues raised by faculty and students in higher education about ASD/DD**

What are the most prevalent questions or issues raised by your faculty or students regarding DD or ASD? (check all that apply)				
Answer Options	CT Community Colleges		Teacher Education programs in higher education	
	Response Frequency	Response Count	Response Frequency	Response Count
Identification/evaluation	85.70%	6	77.80%	21
Behavior/crisis intervention	71.40%	5	81.50%	22
Programming	71.40%	5	55.60%	15
Staffing Issues	57.10%	4	29.60%	8
Social Skill Issues	85.70%	6	51.90%	14
Transition Services	42.90%	3	40.70%	11
Due Process/Compliance	42.90%	3	29.60%	8
Skills for Employment	57.10%	4	22.20%	6
Family Support	57.10%	4	33.30%	9
None	0.00%	0	3.70%	1
Other (please specify)	28.60%	2	14.80%	4

### 3. Review of Key Policy and Research Documents

The study group reviewed the following key documents to define terms, clarify language, develop criteria and guide discussions concerning the definition for autism and other developmental disabilities:

- Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Section 10-76a and Section 10-76a-1 of the [state special education regulations ] Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies;
- Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities Definition and Amendments to State Plan (2008)
- *Guidelines for the Identification of Children with an Intellectual Disability (2005)*
- *Guidelines for Identification of Children and Youth with Autism (2005)*
- *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals (2008)*
- *Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, Section 102(8)*
- *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, 34 CFR Section 300.8*
- The Birth to Three System Service Guideline #1, Autism spectrum disorder: Intervention guidance for service providers and Families of young Children with Autism spectrum disorders (January 2008).
- *Procedural Safeguards in Special Education*  
[http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/DEPS/Special/Prosaf\\_fullversion.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/DEPS/Special/Prosaf_fullversion.pdf)
- Draft of the *National Teacher Competencies in Autism Spectrum Disorder*

- Final Report from the Advisory Commission on Services and Supports for Persons with Developmental Disabilities who do not have Mental Retardation to Connecticut General Assembly (July 2002)
- Other States' agencies with electronically published definitions of the population to be served.
- Connecticut teacher certification regulations and requirements, including the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (*NCATE*) standards used by the CT State Department of Education in their review of teacher education programs in Connecticut's institutions of higher education;
- Data from state system: special education – October 1, 2007 Child Count, placement data collected for the IDEA Part B State Performance Plan Annual Performance Report, educator statistics, Continuing Education Unit Providers
- Other CT data reviewed for autism spectrum disorder themes: Bureau of Special Education phone call inquiry themes, complaints, hearings, disproportionality risk indices, October child count 04-05/05-06, recommendations from Autism Guidelines Writing Group [January 2008]
- State Strategic Plans for autism and other developmental disabilities reviewed: Nebraska, California, Illinois, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Ohio, Maine, New Jersey, Alaska and Michigan;
- State Need Assessment Tools for autism and developmental disabilities reviewed: Wisconsin, Indiana, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Alaska, Ohio and Texas;
- Reports from National Research Council, National Teacher Competencies in ASD, Autism Program Quality Indicators, U.S. Department of Education Institute on Educational Sciences, National Institute of Health and best practices in comprehensive needs assessment practices;
- Previous legislation and research reports from the Connecticut Office of Legislative Research: insurance coverage for autism; teacher and paraprofessional training on students with autism and other developmental disabilities; and professional development for people working with individuals with autism;
- Annual Reports 1-4 of the *P.J. et al. v. State of Connecticut, et al* Settlement Agreement
- Guidelines for the Identification of children with Intellectual Disability and Guidelines for Paraprofessionals
- Websites for the University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and CT DD Council
- Survey results from the Institutions of Higher Education needs assessment survey
- Muller, E., & Markowitz, J. (2004). Disability categories: State terminology, definitions, and eligibility criteria. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

#### **4. Data from Connecticut Schools**

SDE's annual data collection for federal reporting purposes was examined in relationship to national data regarding the trends in prevalence of autism and the federal IDEA categories of disability that would most represent the developmental disability population as defined for purposes of this act. These disability groups included: intellectual

disability/mental retardation; deaf-blind; traumatic brain injury; developmental delay; multiple disabilities; visual impairment and deaf and hearing impairment.

Additionally, the training opportunities supported by the SDE through the SERC, RESCs, the UCEDD and other institutions of higher education, over the past five years in the areas of autism and the disability groups identified above were reviewed.

## Appendix 4

### **Stakeholder groups and representatives**

The Special Act 08-5 feasibility study group has been tasked to develop a working definition for autism and other developmental disabilities and create a set of recommendations for a state-wide plan to incorporate teaching methods into teacher preparation programs, certification requirements, and staff development for in-service school personnel specific to meeting the needs of these learners. The following individuals/groups have been integral to the work of the feasibility study group with respect to voluntary service as reviewers, readers, advisors, or evaluators of work on the definitions, survey content, preliminary findings, and/or overarching recommendations. We thank them all for their time and their input.

- Lois Rosenwald, Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center & Parent
- Patricia Anderson, Bureau of Special Education, SDE
- Michael S. Smith, Bureau of Special Education, SDE
- Maria Synodi, Bureau of Special Education, SDE
- Georgette Nemr, Bureau of Educator Preparation & Standards, SDE
- Kim Newgass, Autism Society of Connecticut & Parent
- Roger Frant, Independent Consultant
- Shannon Knall, Autism Speaks & Parent
- Catherine Kurkjian, Connecticut Association of Reading Researchers
- Anthony Maida, Cooperative Education Services
- Beth Yurman, Regional School District No. 9
- Linda Goodman, Birth to Three, DDS
- Daniel Comeau, Parent
- David Cormier, Independent Consultant
- Sue Rosenfield, Waterford Public Schools
- Erica Ploof, Parent
- Stacy Hultgren, Benhaven
- Kate Weingartner, State Education Resource Center
- Deirdre Fitzgerald, Eastern Connecticut State University
- Sherri Edgar, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center
- Kate Zhao, Bureau of Data Collection, Research & Evaluation
- Iris White, Bureau of School Improvement
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- Suzanne Letso, Connecticut Center for Child Development
- John Burnham, Mansfield Middle School
- Vanessa Taragowski, ACES,
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- Mary Beth Bruder, UCEDD
- Ron Morin, EASTCONN
- Mark Kostin, EDUCATION CONNECTION
- Nitza Diaz, SERC
- Gayle Donawitz, LEARN
- Tom Parvenski, CREC
- Liz Mackenzie, C.E.S.
- Donn Sottolano, ACES
- Juleen Flanigan, EDUCATION CONNECTION

**Appendix 5**

**Training Providers in CT and Audience\***

<b>Region of the State (corresponding RESC region)</b>	<b># of Organizations that provide training in ASD</b>	<b># of trainings in ASD provided during 2007-08</b>	<b># of Organizations that provide training in DD</b>	<b># of trainings in DD provided during 2007-08</b>
1- North Central (CREC)	Total: 9 ** S= 1 F= 2 B= 6	55	Total: 24 ** S=2 F=12 B=10	200
2- Eastern (EASTCONN)	Total: 1 ** S= F= B=1	10	Total:1 ** S= F= B=1	20
3- Northwest (EdCONNECT)	Total: 1 ** S= F= B=1	10	Total:2 ** S= F= B=2	18
4- Southeast (LEARN)	Total:2 ** S= F= B=2	67	Total:3 ** S= F=2 B=1	20
5- Southwest (CES)	Total: 2 ** S= F= B=2	27	Total:1 ** S= F= B=1	25
6- Central (ACES)	Total:5 ** S= F= B=5	86	Total:4 ** S=1 F= B=3	200
Totals	20 organizations	255 trainings	35 organizations	483 trainings

\* While each organization was asked to verify the accuracy of the information in this report, not all organizations responded in time for the printing of this document.

\*\* - # of organizations with target audience:  
S=School Personnel,  
F=Families, caregivers or individual with disability, or  
B=Both School and Family

## **Appendix 6**

### **Draft Copy of *National Teacher Standards: Autism Spectrum Disorders* Under Review by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Fall 2007-Spring, 2008**

#### **Characteristics:**

##### *Knowledge*

Criteria used to diagnose or identify the continuum of autism spectrum disorders as defined by the most current version of the DSM and the IDEA.

##### *Skill*

Describe the core and associated characteristics of individuals with ASD.

##### *Skill*

Describe the distinguishing features between disorders on the autism spectrum.

#### **Assessment:**

##### *Knowledge*

Processes of diagnosis and identification of ASD, including specialized terminology and assessment tools.

##### *Skill*

Differentiate the processes of diagnosis and identification.

##### *Skill*

Collect and review pre-referral intervention data.

##### *Skill*

Use procedures and instruments to screen and evaluate for ASD eligibility and determine needs.

#### **Instructional Planning:**

##### *Knowledge*

General education curriculum, with an emphasis on all essential learning requirements and appropriate strategies, materials, and supports to facilitate the success of students with ASD in these areas.

##### *Skill*

Apply principles of LRE in the education of students with autism through adapting tests and testing situations; modifying and augmenting curriculum; identifying and supporting general education settings; and developing and implementing peer support programs.

**Instructional Strategies:**

*Knowledge*

Typical play and leisure skills, and methods and strategies for developing play and leisure skills in individuals with ASD.

*Skill*

Provide varied instruction on and opportunity to practice play and leisure skills.

**Professional Practice:**

*Knowledge*

Criteria for evaluating effectiveness of an intervention or strategy for use with individuals with ASD.

*Skill*

Consider an intervention's rationale, aims, limitations, practice, the individuals for whom it is intended, the likely outcomes and the evidence for its effects.

*Skill*

Evaluate own practice and adjust accordingly.

*Skill*

Use evidenced based practices in identification, instruction, and intervention across the life span.

*Skill*

Access information regarding theories, research, medical and legal requirements and their relation to current promising practices in education for individuals with ASD.

Appendix 7

**Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching  
(CCCT)\***

**Foundational Skills and Competencies**

**I. TEACHERS HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF:**

**Students**

1. Teachers understand how students learn and develop.
2. Teachers understand how students differ in their approaches to learning.

**Content**

3. Teachers are proficient in reading, writing and mathematics.
4. Teachers understand the central concepts and skills, tools of inquiry and structures of the discipline(s) they teach.

**Pedagogy**

5. Teachers know how to design and deliver instruction.
  6. Teachers recognize the need to vary their instructional methods.
- 

**II. TEACHERS APPLY THIS KNOWLEDGE BY:**

**Planning**

1. Teachers plan instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the curriculum and the community.
2. Teachers select and/or create learning tasks that make subject matter meaningful to students.

**Instructing**

3. Teachers establish and maintain appropriate standards of behavior and create a positive learning environment that shows a commitment to students and their successes.
4. Teachers create instructional opportunities that support students' academic, social and personal development.
5. Teachers use effective verbal, nonverbal and media communications techniques which foster individual and collaborative inquiry.
6. Teachers employ a variety of instructional strategies that enable students to think critically, solve problems and demonstrate skills.

**Assessing and Adjusting**

7. Teachers use various assessment techniques to evaluate student learning and modify instruction as appropriate.
-

### **III. TEACHERS DEMONSTRATE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH:**

#### **Professional and Ethical Practice**

1. Teachers conduct themselves as professionals in accordance with the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers (Section 10-145d-400a of the Connecticut Certification Regulations).
2. Teachers share responsibility for student achievement and well-being.

#### **Reflection and Continuous Learning**

3. Teachers continually engage in self-evaluation of the effects of their choices and actions on students and the school community.
4. Teachers seek out opportunities to grow professionally.

#### **Leadership and Collaboration**

5. Teachers serve as leaders in the school community.
6. Teachers demonstrate a commitment to their students and a passion for improving their profession.

**\*The CCT was adopted by the Connecticut State Board of Education in May 1999**

## **The Connecticut Competency Instrument (CCI)\*\***

### **I. Management of the Classroom Environment**

- A. Positive Learning Environment
  - (1) Rapport
  - (2) Communication of expectations for achievement
  - (3) Physical environment
- B. Standards of Behavior
  - (1) Rules and standards of behavior are maintained
- C. Student Engagement
  - (1) Student engagement
  - (2) -engagement
- D. Routines and Transitions
  - (1) Effectiveness

### **II. Instruction**

- A. Lesson Content
  - (1) Choice of content
  - (2) Level of difficulty
  - (3) Accuracy
- B. Structure for Learning
  - (1) Initiations
  - (2) Closures
- C. Lesson Development

- (1) Lesson Development
- (2) Use of Instructional arrangements and materials
- D. Questioning
  - (1) Cognitive level
  - (2) Responding to students
  - (3) Opportunities for student involvement
- E. Communication
  - (1) Precision of communication
  - (2) Clarity of speech
  - (3) Oral expressions

### **III. Assessment**

- A. Monitoring and Adjusting
  - (1) Monitoring for understanding
  - (2) Adjusting teaching when necessary

\*\*Adopted by the Connecticut State Board of Education in 1988 as a basis for an observation based assessment of beginning teacher performance in the BEST Program.

## Appendix 8

### **CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION** *Proposed Pre-Service Competencies for General Education Teachers* 6/26/07 DRAFT for Discussion

The following list of the competencies is based on state and national standards and generated as the result of discussions between the CSDE, representatives of higher education, and public school leaders. **The goal of the competencies outlined in this document is to ensure high achievement of all students.** These competencies are intended for **all teacher candidates seeking general education endorsements in early childhood, elementary, middle, secondary and special subject areas and articulate the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to teach students with diverse and/or exceptional learning needs.**

#### **Domain I: Development and Characteristics of Learners**

- 1.a. Demonstrate understanding of the growth and development of typical and atypical students including the characteristics and functioning of students with disabilities, English language learners and issues related to the impact of culture, linguistics and environment on the learning needs of students.

#### **Domain II: Evidence-based/Standards-based Instruction**

- 2.a. Organize, sequence, and teach the general education curriculum using evidence-based principles of instructional design and delivery to meet the needs of students with disabilities and diverse learning needs.
- 2.b. Teach and support reading and literacy skills and strategies within and across specific content areas.
- 2.c. Provide targeted supplemental or specialized academic instruction and intervention to students who don't respond to primary instruction alone.
- 2.d. Adjust instruction in response to information gathered from ongoing assessment and monitoring of performance and progress.
- 2.e. Design and implement appropriate instructional accommodations, modifications or differentiation to support student learning.
- 2.f. Maximize student engagement and motivation.

#### **Domain III: Evidence-based Classroom and Behavior Management**

- 3.a. Maintain a structured, safe, and positive learning environment that promotes and ensures socially valid behavioral outcomes and student learning.
- 3.b. Define, model, and acknowledge student learning behavior expectations and assess, document, and report both appropriate and problematic social behaviors of students.
- 3.c. Provide explicit instruction on social skills that are conducive to ensuring learning, including school-wide and classroom-wide positive expectations, typical classroom and school routines, self-management strategies, and study skills.
- 3.d. Reinforce appropriate behavior and minimize problematic social behaviors by proactively providing targeted supplemental, specialized or individualized behavioral instruction and intervention through a continuum of strategies such as:
  - modifying classroom management and/or environment,
  - using a variety of grouping options,
  - using positive reinforcement or corrective feedback
  - contributing to the design of individual behavioral support plans, and
  - facilitating problem-solving and conflict resolution processes.

#### **Domain IV: Assessment**

- 4.a. Understand the purposes, strengths and limitations of formal and informal assessments for making instructional decisions. Has the ability to select, administer and interpret a variety of assessments to document students' learning and growth to inform planning and instruction.
- 4.b. Design, implement and modify a variety of developmentally appropriate curriculum-based/classroom-based assessments to meet the needs of students.

- 4.c. Understand different assessment approaches for different purposes (i.e., screening, diagnosis, progress monitoring or evaluating outcomes), and the role of assessment in determining eligibility and developing IEPs for students with disabilities and the impact of inappropriate assessment and instruction that may lead to overrepresentation of students with cultural, ethnic, gender and linguistic differences.
- 4.d. Has the ability to communicate assessment results to students, parents, and other educators.
- 4.e. Review and interpret the results of externally-produced standardized tests including but not limited to the CMT, CAPT, Skills Checklist, Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA).

**Domain V: Professional Behaviors and Responsibilities**

- 5.a. Demonstrate knowledge of the rights of students and families and the legal responsibilities of teachers within the processes for referral, planning and placement, development and implementation of the individualized education program and the continuum of placements and services available.
- 5.b. Understand the roles of and when appropriate to seek support/consultation from special service staff such as the special education teacher, speech/language pathologist, school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker, guidance counselor or reading consultant to assess impact and progress of accommodations and modifications.
- 5.c. Understand the role of classroom teachers in coordinating support personnel working within the teacher’s own classroom.
- 5.d. Understand when and how to proactively communicate and collaborate with families about students’ progress.

Proposed regulatory **training/professional development** requirement that will impact those special educators seeking the professional educator certificate on and after July 1, 2014:

To receive a professional educator certificate for special education and intervention specialist or the comprehensive special education endorsement, an applicant shall present evidence of meeting the following:

A minimum of 90 hours of continuing education completed under a provisional educator certificate or interim provisional educator certificate, with a minimum of 75 hours focused on providing intervention and specialized instruction to students with intensive needs and in any of the following areas:

- (1) Advanced knowledge and skill related to services for students with autism, low incidence and multiple disabilities;
- (2) Behavioral interventions;
- (3) Communication strategies and impact on behavior, functional and daily living skills;
- (4) Assistive technology;
- (5) Occupational/Vocational Training including skills related to job coaching of students in work teams and coordination of instructional experiences that prepare students for work settings;
- (6) Assessment including functional behavioral assessment and instructional strategies such as applied behavior analysis; or
- (7) Teaching Daily Living Skills (such as hygiene, safety, cooking, etc.).

Persons provided with job-embedded training in these areas by the employing board of education may fulfill these requirements provided that the board of education or special education facility designs and evaluates the continuing education activities and issues appropriate continuing education credit.