

# THE BUREAU BULLETIN

## THE BUREAU BULLETIN

CONNECTICUT STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

*From the Bureau of Special Education*

## BRIEF FROM THE CHIEF

Dear Readers-

October is an exciting time – fall carnivals, parent-teacher conferences, field trips to apple orchards and pumpkin patches, and so much more. October is also about getting ready for the upcoming holiday season where families and communities come together and celebrate a sense of togetherness. For the 2009-10 school year, the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) will feature a theme for each month in its Featured Story section. It seems appropriate at this time to reflect on the topic of inclusion and collaboration. Special education inclusion means the participation of special education students in general education environments with appropriate provision of support services. Inclusion is about successfully accommodating in order to meet the needs of diverse learners in



Anne Louise Thompson, Chief, Bureau of Special Education speaks at the 6th Annual Back-to-School Meeting

ways that promote equity, respect, and meaningful interactions. Inclusive education ensures that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses, become part of the school community. Every student develops a feeling of belonging with other students, teachers, and support staff. It's that sense of connection and belonging so essential for children and youth with and without disabilities. Teaching students with disabilities in inclusive learning environments can be a challenging, demanding task; however, as we are very aware, the investment is well worth the effort, given the positive benefits for all students when done right and well. We hope you enjoy our Featured Story on inclusion and other information in October's Bureau Bulletin intended to keep you informed and apprised of activities and events at the local, state and federal levels.

### Mark Your Calendars...

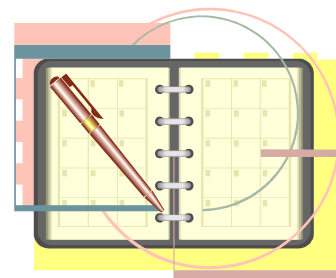
- Early Childhood Outcomes - Timely Due Date: November 1, 2009
- Early Childhood Outcomes - Accurate Due Date: November 15, 2009
- Individual Student Verification (Indicator 11)- Due Date: November 20, 2009
- SEDAC-G December final certification statutory Due Date: December 1, 2009
- SEDAC – Oct 1 Child Count Timely Due Date: December 11, 2009



*Mattabeset Trail - Photo by: Jay L Clendenin*

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Thank you again for your support and ongoing dedication to the field! We enjoy serving you and look forward to future collaboration - *Anne Louise Thompson*

## Featured Story: Inclusion & Collaboration

*Inclusion considers that all students are full members of the school community and are entitled to the opportunities and responsibilities that are available to all students in the school. In an inclusive school setting, students with disabilities are provided specially designed instruction in their least restrictive environment (LRE). LRE varies according to the individual needs and goals of each student. In order to determine the LRE, federal laws require that the individualized education program (IEP) team first develop the individual goals for the student, then determine how and where the student's goals can be met. The State Education Resource Center (SERC) provided the following information recently to the BSE regarding preparing paraprofessionals to support the development and implementation of inclusive practices. The BSE hopes you enjoy this month's Featured Story! Please feel free to contact Rhonda Kempton at 860-713-6924 or via e-mail at [Rhonda.kempton@ct.gov](mailto:Rhonda.kempton@ct.gov) with questions regarding inclusion.*



Paraprofessionals are critical partners in the inclusion of all students in the general education classroom. On October 29, the SERC held its annual Paraprofessionals as Partners conference to help paraprofessionals increase their effectiveness as educational partners with general and special education teachers, student support services professionals, administrators and families. Connecticut defines a paraprofessional as an employee who assists teachers, other professional educators or therapists in the delivery of instructional and related services to students. The paraprofessional works under the direct supervision of the teacher or other certified or licensed professional. The ultimate responsibility for the design, implementation and evaluation of instructional programs, including assessment of student progress, is a collaborative effort of certified and licensed staff. SERC, in collaboration with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), has compiled a series of answers to Frequently Asked Questions about paraprofessionals. The questions include: **What resources are available for the training of paraprofessionals?** SERC provides many professional development opportunities through its Paraprofessionals as Partners Initiative. Its goal is to enhance the skills of paraprofessionals providing instructional support to students, including students with disabilities, in various educational settings. Through a variety of professional development opportunities, paraprofessionals working in collaborative partnerships with general and special education teachers and support services professionals can acquire skills to enhance their ability to effectively provide instruction and other direct services to meet the diverse needs of all students. **Is the teacher the paraprofessional's supervisor?** Yes, but there is a difference between the person responsible for hiring and evaluating performance (an administrator) and the person directing day-to-day work with students (the teacher). Often the teacher provides the day-to-day supervision of the paraprofessional, while an administrator, such as a principal, program manager, or special education director, completes the evaluation. Click [here](#) for more of this article.



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Stay tuned via *The Bureau Bulletin* and the CSDE Web site for multiple opportunities to engage state-wide in strengthening partnerships! We appreciate your involvement.

## State of the State

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### Connecticut Prepares for NAEP



Photo by: Sam Turgeon

Inclusion in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) of students with disabilities is encouraged, if that student (a) participated in the regular state academic assessment in the subject being tested, and (b) if that student can participate in NAEP with the accommodations NAEP allows. Even if the student did not participate in the regular state assessment, or if he/she needs accommodations NAEP does not allow, school staff are asked whether that student could participate in NAEP with the allowable accommodations. To learn more about NAEP and its policies concerning students with disabilities, click [here](#). The NAEP will be administered nationally in 2010 to students with and without disabilities in Grades 4, 8 and 12. Results will be released for U.S. history, civics and geography. Pilot assessments also will be administered in mathematics and writing. Connecticut's [participation](#) in NAEP 2010 will be limited to the Grade 8 and Grade 12 writing assessments, which will be administered on computers exclusively. Please click [here](#) for more of this article.

### Fiscal Report

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The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) appropriates significant new funding for programs under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). Part B of the IDEA provides funds through the state educational agency to local education agencies (LEAs) to help them ensure that children with disabilities, including children ages 3 through 5, have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to meet each child's unique needs and prepare each child for further education, employment, and independent living. Building from April, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) released [additional guidance](#) on the use of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and IDEA funds under the ARRA on [September 4, 2009](#). This document provides additional examples of potential ARRA expenditures relevant to improving results for students with and without disabilities and more detailed explanations and suggestions regarding the coordination of multiple funding streams to support common efforts. Brian Cunnane, Education Consultant with the BSE, continues to work with districts on ARRA resource allocation and identifying appropriate ways to expend and track funds. ♡ Brian Cunnane is beginning to pilot a fiscal verification audit procedure and anticipates revising his monitoring tools to reflect fiscal tracking requirements as they are made clear by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). ♡ Also of note in September, the BSE disseminated a [memo](#) to clarify how an LEA should establish [per pupil expenditure](#) costs for students with disabilities. Once this cost has been established, LEAs should use it to determine the dollar threshold before the LEA can use IDEA funds to supplement a student with disabilities' program costs. Please take note that a **separate** calculation is needed for **both your elementary and secondary students** (Section 602(8) of IDEA). Brian can be reached via e-mail at [Brian.cunnane@ct.gov](mailto:Brian.cunnane@ct.gov). Please stay posted via the Bureau Bulletin for the latest developments!

### Connecticut Benchmark Assessment Information

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The Connecticut Benchmark Assessment (CBAS) fall testing window opened October 1. Some other dates districts should be considering are as follows:

1. CBAS fall testing window closes October 31
2. CBAS winter testing window: January 15 – February 26
3. CBAS spring testing window: May 3 – June 15

For more information, readers should visit the CBAS Informational web page: <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/assessment/cbas/index.htm> or e-mail: [CBAS@ct.gov](mailto:CBAS@ct.gov)

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## Bureau Happenings

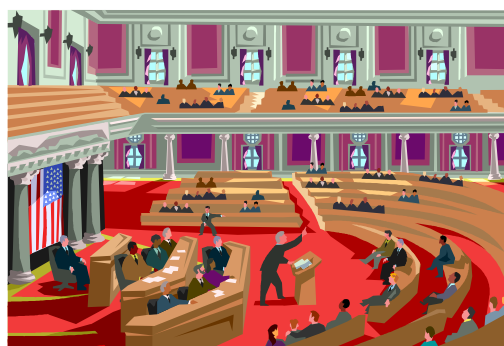
### P.J. Notes

The plaintiffs and defendants have had active court involvement since the plaintiffs filed for substantial noncompliance of the CSDE with the *Settlement Agreement*.

The *P.J. et al. v. State of Connecticut, State Board of Education, et al.* Settlement Agreement reached the end of the five years of court jurisdiction stipulated in the agreement in August 2007. For an additional three more years, until August 13, 2010, the court has jurisdiction to entertain plaintiffs' motions for the state's substantial non-compliance with the agreement.

The plaintiff's filed such a motion in the spring of 2008 which was subsequently denied. Additionally, the plaintiffs filed a motion requesting the court to allow discovery to include preparing interrogatories and collecting depositions for state and school district personnel as well as parents of class members.

During the initial five years of the Agreement's implementation, an Expert Advisory Panel (EAP) advised the State Department of Education (SDE) and the court regarding its implementation including the establishment of benchmarks and targets for each school district and the state. The final report of this panel to the court in February 2007 made recommendations particularly regarding those districts that had not attended to the agreement, the critical role of general education leadership in addressing the agreement, expectations of the state for monitoring and implementing sanctions for specific districts, as well as continued training and technical assistance to support districts with implementation of effective practices. The State's and EAP's reports are located on the SDE Web site at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320792>. Please refer to these for specific information contained therein regarding specific districts. While many districts need to make progress, others should be recognized for the significant work to date, resulting in positive outcomes for students! Continued vigilance is critical to sustaining these successes. BSE Education Consultant, Rhonda Kempton, is the contact for more information regarding the Settlement Agreement and related activities. She can be reached at [Rhonda.kempton@ct.gov](mailto:Rhonda.kempton@ct.gov). Please click [here](#) for more of this article.



### CGA Information

Connecticut's state legislature is known as the Connecticut General Assembly. (CGA). The General Assembly consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Readers wishing to track the legislative process relevant to educational issues in Connecticut should become familiar with the Connecticut General Assembly [Web site](#). Additionally, please continue to check the State of the State section in each Bureau Bulletin. We aim to provide relevant information concerning policies and procedural changes that impact students with disabilities and those supporting their education. The legislative liaison for the CSDE is Jen Widness, an attorney within the Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs.

## Bureau Happenings

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### Focused Monitoring



The Key Performance Indicator for the 2009-10 school year is around the participation and performance of students with disabilities on statewide assessments, which also aligns with indicator 3 of the State Performance Plan (SPP). Twenty-five districts have been invited to a technical assistance (TA) session on November 12 to begin looking at root causes contributing to the achievement of students with disabilities in their district. The session is a data showcase in which districts conduct their own root cause analysis and use data to look for trends or anomalies that need to be addressed. Out of the 25 districts, a small number will be invited back in December for an all day TA session to dig further into the data and develop an action plan to address root causes. Some districts will be visited in the spring or fall if they demonstrate a need for further support and monitoring after December. Districts will receive communication at each stage of subsequent assistance or monitoring. Dana Corriveau is the contact person for focused monitoring and can be reached via e-mail at [Dana.corriveau@ct.gov](mailto:Dana.corriveau@ct.gov).

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### Special Education Accountability: SPP Q & A

The following are frequently asked questions and answers regarding school district special education levels of determination and how categories have been derived. Readers are encouraged to review the CSDE's [webpage](#) dedicated to the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report.

Are States required to make "Determinations"?

Yes, Pursuant to the IDEA section 616(a)(1)(C), States are required to enforce the IDEA by making determinations annually on the performance of each LEA.

Must States use the same four categories that the Office of Special Education Programs uses?

Yes, States are required to enforce this part in accordance with IDEA Section 616(e) by using the same four OSEP categories which include: Meets Requirements, Needs Assistance, Needs Intervention and Needs Substantial Intervention.

What will the Connecticut State Department of Education consider in making the determinations? OSEP requires States to consider the following: performance on compliance indicators; whether the data submitted by the LEA are valid, reliable and timely; uncorrected noncompliance from other sources; and any audit findings. The CSDE follows this requirement.

Will there be information and resources if our school district is in Needs Assistance or Needs Intervention? Yes, districts will be given information and advised of available technical assistance through the CSDE, SERC and other sources.

How long will districts have to correct noncompliance areas?

Districts are expected to correct noncompliance as soon as possible, but in no case later than one year from identification (refer to the date on the citation notice). The State must verify the correction within that one year timeline as well.

Who is responsible for funding activities to correct noncompliance issues?

Each LEA is responsible for funding the activities it uses to correct noncompliance issues.

In an upcoming Bureau Bulletin, we will explain in greater detail district determination levels, consequences for being identified as not meeting requirements, and state resources available to address ongoing noncompliance. Contact Mike Tavernier with any questions regarding the SPP-APR process by e-mailing [Michael.tavernier@ct.gov](mailto:Michael.tavernier@ct.gov).

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## Bureau Happenings

### Indicators 9 & 10 Update

Forty-two districts had data of concern based on 2008-09 data for students either over- or under-represented in all races (American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, black not Hispanic, white not Hispanic, and Hispanic) and all disability categories (learning disability, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, speech or language impairments, other health impairment and autism) as required by IDEA and indicators 9 and 10 of the SPP. Some districts are completing a self-assessment and action plan for the first time while other districts are revising previously submitted plans which were due October 16 to the bureau. A small group of districts is conducting a sample of file reviews, in district, to ensure identification practices are appropriate with that documentation due November 16 to the bureau. The bureau will be reviewing all documents to determine if noncompliance exists which must be cited under indicators 9 or 10 of the Annual Performance Report (APR) due to the U.S. OSEP by February 1, 2010. Districts that are found to have noncompliance will be notified with required corrective actions and a timeline to verify that correction has occurred. Districts that do not demonstrate noncompliance at this time will also be notified. The bureau recognizes a number of districts demonstrating data of concern in autism and has received volumes of correspondence from the field regarding this issue. A stakeholder group is being convened to discuss this with implications at the state and district level. Information will be shared in future editions of the Bulletin and possibly through technical assistance or professional development opportunities. Districts should know that all disproportionality data for each district and the state is posted on our [SPP Web site](#) in the spring and can be easily retrieved. Look for an announcement in a spring bulletin. For more information with respect to Indicators 9 and 10, please contact Dana Corriveau via e-mail at [Dana.corriveau@ct.gov](mailto:Dana.corriveau@ct.gov).



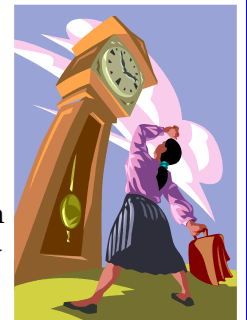
**Legislative Update**  
Revisions have been made to Section 10-158a of the general statutes, effective July 1, 2009, which added language regarding boards of education's ability to establish cooperative arrangements for special education.

Click [here](#) for Public Act [09-01: \(p. 48\)](#) AAC Educator and Professional Development and Other Education Issues.

## Indicator 11 Evaluation Timelines

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In indicator 11 news, there are two items to report. First, districts will soon be receiving written notification regarding compliance findings with Indicator 11 that cover academic years 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09. The letters include a description of the noncompliance, data tables delineating the areas of noncompliance, a table of required corrective actions and a spreadsheet table districts should use when compiling information for the BSE concerning students found eligible for a special education beyond the timelines. Each written finding will be counted and included in the SPP-APR annual report due February 2, 2010. Second, the BSE has a visual description to share! Districts have requested a visual aid to depict the similarities and differences between the state and federal requirements for conducting and completing initial evaluations. Using a tool developed by Jeff Forman of the Windham Public Schools, the BSE modified the original illustration to show how the Connecticut Implementation Timelines interface with the Indicator 11 Evaluation Timelines. Please click [here](#) to review the latest draft. The BSE wishes to thank Windham for allowing us to modify and work with its existing tool. Please contact Jacqueline Kelleher via e-mail at [Jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov](mailto:Jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov) with questions.



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## Federal Focus

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### OSEP Rolls Out New Verification Tool for States



BSE education consultants reviewed the Critical Review Elements and Analysis Guide ([CrEAG](#)) over the summer. OSEP has rolled out the CrEAG to assist states in preparing to demonstrate that each is carrying out its responsibilities of implementing IDEA 2004. OSEP will use the CrEAG as part of a verification visit, which includes an on-site meeting with OSEP to review and verify information Connecticut will provide beforehand. The new Part B verification process focuses on three areas: general supervision, data and finance. Connecticut anticipates a verification visit to occur within the next 8-24 months.

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### USDOE Guidance on H1N1

In September, the USDOE issued [guidance](#) to help prepare state education agencies (SEAs), LEAs, the USDOE's Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), schools and postsecondary institutions in the event of an outbreak of the **H1N1** influenza virus during the 2009-2010 school year.

### IES Practice Guides

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The USDOE's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) sponsors a webpage on practice guides, an extension of the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). Districts may access practice guides that range from addressing the achievement gap for students with disabilities to organizing instruction time in ways that improve student learning. Practice guides provide practical recommendations for educators to help them address the everyday challenges they face in their classrooms and schools. Developed by a panel of nationally recognized experts, practice guides consist of actionable recommendations, strategies for overcoming potential roadblocks and an indication of the strength of evidence supporting each recommendation. IES practice guides are subjected to rigorous external peer review. Practice guides can be accessed at no charge by clicking [here](#). It's important to note that the IES also funds ten regional education research centers that provide a wealth of information and resources to the field. More information on the Regional Education Laboratory Programs (RELs) can be found by clicking [here](#). Please watch the Resources and Opportunities section of the Bureau Bulletin for more on what REL has to offer.

### OSEP FAQ Posting

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OSEP posted responses to Frequently Asked Questions this past June on topic areas that included several areas of interest to Connecticut.

1. [discipline](#);
2. [disproportionate representation](#) ;
3. [procedural safeguards](#);
4. [monitoring and technical assistance](#); and
5. [secondary transition](#).

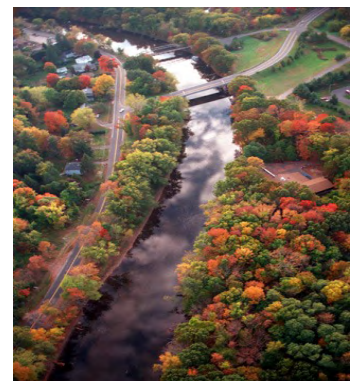


Photo by : Tony Bacewicz

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## Resources & Opportunities

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### Web Updates

#### Connecticut State Advisory Council Special Education (SAC)

The SAC is authorized under Chapter 164 Section 10-76i of the Connecticut General Statutes with the express purpose to "advise the General Assembly, the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education" on special education matters. To be in touch with the SAC, access their [Web site](#).

#### Data Accountability Center

This Web site provides public access to data about children and youth with disabilities served under the Individuals with *Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (IDEA) - Part B and C; TA materials to support the collection, analysis and reporting of IDEA data; and the forms and spreadsheets used for collection. <https://www.ideadata.org/default.asp>.

### Resource Fair

The Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center will be hosting its 4th Annual Autism Spectrum Resource Fair at Southern Connecticut State University from noon until 4:00 PM on November 7, 2009. Please click [here](#) for more information.

### Film Event

On November 5, 2009, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) will sponsor a free screening of "Including Samuel" followed by Q&A with the filmmaker. Norwich Public Schools will host the event which will take place from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at Kelly Middle School located at 25 Mahan Drive in Norwich, Connecticut. Registration is required. For more information or to register, please contact Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) at 1-800-445-2722 or [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org).

### Nondiscrimination Statement

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons and does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws. Inquiries regarding the Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to the Affirmative Action Administrator, State of Connecticut Department of Education, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457-1543, 860-807-2071.



### LD Guidelines Offerings

As part of the 2009-10 SRBI training series, the CSDE in partnership with SERC will be hosting upcoming trainings regarding Connecticut's 2009 "Guidelines for Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities". Click [here](#) to learn more about the session on implementing the *Guidelines* and click [here](#) for more information on training, using assessment and progress monitoring.

Please click [here](#) for the latest edition of the Statewide Paraprofessional newsletter publication.

The Connecticut Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities is pleased to host its 39th Annual Fall conference. Please click [here](#) for more information.

The 12th Annual conference on Educating Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms "Expanding Horizons: Curriculum, Collaboration and Community" is December 8, 2009. Please click [here](#) for more information.

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Interesting idea for a featured story? Willing to write as a guest columnist? Comments or feedback on the format? Share your thoughts with the Bureau Bulletin coordinator by e-mailing [jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov](mailto:jacqueline.kelleher@ct.gov).

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