THE BUREAU BULLETIN

From the Bureau of Special Education

CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Brief from the Chief

The recent warm weather has many of us outdoors in our gardens preparing for the growing season ahead. Spring as a time of planting and planning holds true for the educational community, as well, whether it's planting ideas that will germinate into future staff training or planning budgets for the 2009-10 school year. When making decisions for the upcoming summer and next school year, families and school personnel need data, information and resources to inform those plans. This edition of the Bureau Bulletin is intended to help support many of these planning efforts in which you are engaged. Whether it's district budgeting [ARRA], developing IEPs [ESY, Para], planning for transitions of young children into school [ECO], preparing teams for next year's students [Autism], or analyzing data and reviewing guidance documents [BSE Happenings, APR, Coming Attractions], this issue has something to offer to you. We hope that the upcoming calendar of events and Resources & Opportunities are helpful in your planning as well. Please note the 2009-2010 Back To School event for directors of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services has been scheduled for **September 16, 2009** at the Crowne Plaza, in Cromwell. Also, let us know how the BSE may continue to be helpful in your spring planning as you develop your ARRA and IDEA budgets and put final touches on the IDEA application.

AARA Parent Meeting Announcement

Click here for information concerning an important information session for parents and families on ARRA funding on May 19, 2009!

Featured Story

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is responsible for ensuring states' compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA guarantees the free appropriate public education (FAPE) of children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). To assist states in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, OSEP has developed a continuous improvement monitoring process. OSEP is required to provide a yearly report to congress on outcome measures. The Monitoring and State Improvement Planning (MSIP) Division carries out major activities related to the IDEA grant programs. The MSIP Division is divided into four Monitoring and State Improvement Planning Teams and each MSIP Team works with a cross-section of states, territories and other entities that are assigned to individual State Contacts. Dr. Richard C. Steffan is the contact for the State Contact for Connecticut, who recently contributed an article to the *Bureau Bulletin* to inform readers about OSEP's work with states and outreach initiatives underway.

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Mark Your Calendars…

- **May 7, 2009 Teleconference on AARA from 9:30—11:30 AM—e-mail notification out to districts soon!**
- **May 15, 2009 Special Education Grant Program applications due!**
- **May 19, 2009 from 5:00-7:00 PM Parent Information Session: AARA funding @ Hamden High School**

State of the State:

National Teacher of the Year: Connecticut Special Educator Recognized

Tuesday, April 28, 2009: Photo by Associated Press.

Anthony Mullen was named 2009 National Teacher of the Year by President Barack Obama at a White House ceremony on Tuesday, April 28, 2009. Mr. Mullen, a ninth through twelfth grade special education teacher at The ARCH School, an alternative education branch of Greenwich High School in Greenwich, Connecticut, will begin a year as a full-time national and international spokesperson for education on June 1, 2009. The *Bureau Bulletin* will keep readers updated as Mr. Mullen moves into this important leadership role. The BSE is proud of Mr. Mullen's recognition and wishes him all the best!

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ARRA IDEA Part B Funding: Ongoing Information

The IDEA entitlement grants will infuse substantial amounts of money into schools and districts across the nation. If we maximize our resources by combining funding streams, continue the process of collecting and analyzing data to inform our practice, and focus on areas where we believe we can make the biggest difference in the lives of children, we will have taken one of the largest steps toward lasting school reform. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has released the following materials to help districts plan for expending funds specific to The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA):

- CSDE ARRA link on website and Governor Rell's Recovery website
- Commissioner McQuillan's white paper on ARRA funding
- ConnCASE presentation slides from March 25/26, 2009 session and other hand-outs (CEIS, Proportionate Share, Maintenance of Effort) located on the BSE website

If a district did not meet IDEA requirements based on their Annual Performance Report determination, the state is obligated to uphold federal requirements and prohibit that district from reducing its "maintenance of effort" (MOE). According to the USDE guidance, districts not meeting requirements based on their 2007-08 data are not allowed to utilize the IDEA provision that might have enabled them to spend up to 50% of IDEA funds apart from special education. Additionally, may utilize 15% of IDEA funds for CEIS activities to address disproportionality (by race, disability category, or discipline) unless otherwise directed by the CSDE. Districts who have any restrictions concerning CEIS expenditures have already been contacted by the CSDE. Districts and the public have many questions about how decisions are made concerning expenditure of AARA funds and related requirements as well as about their determination status based on 2007-08 data. Brian Cunnane is the lead BSE contact regarding IDEA Part B and ARRA funding. Districts are encouraged to submit their fiscal questions to Brian who can be reached at 860-713-6919. Districts should submit questions about APR determinations to Mike Tavernier who can be reached at 860-713-6929. The IDEA-ARRA application and ARRA FAQ are now available online.

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State of the State

Extended School Year Reminder

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

With the summer months fast approaching, planning and placement teams are addressing the provision of extended school year services (ESY) for children eligible for special education. The provision of ESY is determined on an individual basis and is not a service all students receiving special education and related services are eligible to receive. ESY services are provided beyond the length of the regular school year as described in the IEP and is provided at no cost to the parents. Eligibility for ESY must be determined each year for individual students who may be eligible to receive these services. Please click here for more of this article. Districts are encouraged to review the Topic Brief on Extended School Year services found on the BSE website or questions may be directed to Theresa DeFrancis at 860-713-6933.

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CSDE Talent Pool

The State of Connecticut maintains a talent pool that consists of a cadre of distinguished teachers and principals. The CSDE seeks to update its pool of **secondary educators** who will be considered for membership on advisory boards and task forces, as well as candidates for special recognition programs. Please click here to review the Commissioners letter and learn more about becoming part of this unique leadership initiative. There are several steps in the application process. Interested candidates are urged to plan now in order to meet the May 15, 2009 deadline.

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Paraprofessional Guidance

The CSDE would like to point readers' attention to the many resources available for paraprofessionals on our website. Please remember that staff training is an important consideration for everyone responsible for implementing a child's IEP (and written into page 8). Districts may wish to review these web materials as they plan for professional development and training that prepare and support paraprofessionals for their roles and responsibilities in implementing the IEP. Additionally, the BSE website has the most recent Paraprofessional guidelines available for download. Readers can contact the BSE's Perri Murdica for information on supporting paraprofessionals and planning for the new school year. Perri can be reached at 860-713-6942. Another resource contact is Iris White from the Bureau of School and District Improvement who can be reached at 860-713-6564.

State Response to "Swine Flu"

The State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) recently provided information to school districts on reported cases of the novel influenza virus, swine flu, identified in the U.S. and other countries. The guidance provided here gives some basic information about swine flu and lists additional resources that will be frequently updated as this issues evolves. Please check the DPH website for additional information.

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State of the State

Autism Awareness Month

April is Autism Awareness month throughout the world. The BSE has been involved in a variety of ways in support of state autism initiatives including the following:

- Completion of the Final Report to the Connecticut General Assembly recommendations for a statewide approach to educating children and youth with an autism spectrum disorder or other developmental disabilities;
- Technical assistance and presentations on the State Guidelines for Educating Children and Youth with Autism to parent and school groups;
- Service on the inter-agency Advisory Council to the Division of Autism Services;
- Guidance on national grant opportunities and 2008-09 legislative activities;
- Partnership with the RESC Alliance and SERC in building capacity regionally to provide access to credible assessment tools and procedures including the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS);
- Work with districts on developing compliant individualized education plans for those on the spectrum.

The last bullet identifies an area of concern expressed by many professionals across Connecticut—developing and implementing IEP's reflective of the needs characterized by autism spectrum disorders. The BSE is working on a guiding document of professional development, training opportunities and location of providers across the state who offer training and support services. The BSE will use the findings from the Special Act No. 08-5 final report to highlight areas district should consider as part of any school personnel's professional growth and development in educating children and youth with autism. Additionally, this guiding document will provide information on involving families as partners in the IEP and training that should be considered to meet their needs. Please click here for information on what districts have been reporting as training needs and a sample of providers across Connecticut offering trainings. This is just a preliminary list—the comprehensive document will be available in the June *Bureau Bulletin*. Please contact Dr. Jacqueline Kelleher at 860-713-6918 or by e-mail for more information.

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Annual Performance Reports Available

As required by IDEA 2004, OSEP makes an annual determination of each state's compliance with IDEA and, in turn, each state makes a similar determination about every one of its districts or local education agencies (LEA). While the BSE has not received its determination status by OSEP as of this printing, districts are now able to view their individual Annual Performance Reports and current determination status on-line.

Please contact the Bureau of Special Education to speak with Mike Tavernier with questions and concerns regarding the APR, the determination process, and individual indicators required in Connecticut's State Performance Plan (SPP). Mike can be reached at 860-713-6929. The BSE is available to provide guidance to districts that are planning for sustaining or improving efforts toward meeting compliance expectations. The BSE is preparing additional resource documents that districts can turn to that will advise on available resources of technical assistance developed to address areas of need across compliance indicator. Questions about district-level data and upcoming data collection efforts may be directed to Diane Murphy via email.

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Bureau Happenings

The BSE seeks to provide statewide leadership, ensure the availability of technical assistance, monitor those in receipt of IDEA funding for compliance with state and federal regulations and promote collaboration among parents, educators, students, communities and other agencies to ensure that **all** children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education. We work on initiatives which are cross-categorical in nature, but also provide direct guidance and consultation to the State with respect to specific disability categories such as the creation of and training on Guideline documents. We are focusing on using technology to promote and disseminate information and services. Please be sure to regularly check the BSE website for information which might enhance your planning such as:

- Our section on Bureau Bulletin, Blogs, and Updates contains information on current state and national issues in Special Education—take some time to review the articles and plan for district-level conversations around the latest information.
- Our link to Focused Monitoring (in addition to articles in the Bulletin) includes district access to materials used by team members conducting on-site visits—these tools can be used by your district to internally evaluate your practices and procedures for meeting compliance regulations and best practice standards.
- The Publications link has the latest guiding documents covering categorical issues, legal/due process topics, parent documents—the BSE is available to support your district in understanding this information and putting it into practice—give us a call or e-mail!
- A great learning opportunity is reviewing descriptions of Due Process Hearings as they occur in Connecticut—it allows districts to review regional findings made across multiple areas that can be used to keep abreast of compliance concerns.

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Indicator 14: Post-School Outcomes

The *Post-School Outcomes Survey* asks former students about their employment status, whether they have taken any college or training classes and additional information about other resources they may be using in the first year after leaving high school. Currently, the first mailing of the *Post-School Outcomes Survey*, coordinated through the University of Connecticut, is being disseminated to 2008 exiters. The data collected in the 2009 survey process can assist districts in determining how effective their transition services have been in helping students reach their post-school goals. Districts must have a minimum of 20 survey respondents in order for the CSDE to provide districts information about the post-school outcomes of their specific students. Each year there is a large percentage of non-responders to the *Post-School Outcomes Survey*. Therefore, in spring 2009, districts are strongly encouraged to participate in a **data collection pilot program**, coordinated through the University of Connecticut, to increase districts' students' response rate to the 2009 *Post-School Outcomes Survey* and obtain specific information about the impact of transition services. In addition, district personnel are requested to share information about the *Post-School Outcomes Survey* process with students and parents during annual reviews or when the student receives his/her Summary of Performance. Information sheets, developed by the Transition Task Force, and a sample of the most recent *Post-School Outcomes Survey* are helpful resources district personnel may use when sharing information about the survey process with students and parents. Please contact Sarah E. Harvey at sarah.harvey@ct.gov no later than May 18, 2009, if your district would like to participate in the pilot.

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Bureau Happenings

Consult with Consultants

Our districts ask great questions. The BSE plans to feature a few each month since others are likely to have them, too. Please feel free to send in questions to Maria Synodi by e-mailing maria.synodi@ct.gov by the middle of each month. *Confidentiality is assured.*

Question: What are differences between statutes and regulations?
Answer: Statutes are laws passed by either a state legislature or Congress. Regulations are rules adopted by executive branch agencies (such as the State Department of Education) to implement existing statutes, interpret statutes or make them more specific. Agencies can only make regulations regarding the subjects for which they have been given authority by the statutes. Regulations should be read together with the statutes they were made under; both must be adhered to. Other April Inquiries:

Early Childhood Education Questions

1. What is a Developmental Delay? Click here for the latest guidance.
2. What Is An Appropriate Class Size and Adult to Child Ratio for Preschool Special Education? Click here for the latest guidance.

The State Department of Education, in collaboration with the six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), will have training and technical assistance available in the 2009-2010 school year. Each RESC is planning a half-day event in the fall for 'new' administrators, teachers and speech and language pathologists. The goals of the half-day training are to provide an overview of ECO, test administration and data reporting requirements. Additional training and technical assistance opportunities will also be available for district administrators and personnel Contact information for the individual in each RESC is available at www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Early/preschoolSE/ECO_RESC.pdf. Specific information related to ECO, including an *ECO Question and Answer* document can be found on the Early Childhood Special Education web site at: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320750#ECO

Individual questions on the ECO requirement can be directed to Maria Synodi at (860) 713-6941 or via e-mail at maria.synodi@ct.gov

Federal Focus

The TA Center on Positive Behavior Supports and Intervention established by the OSEP and US Department of Education (USDOE)is urging districts to invest stimulus funds quickly in sustainable efforts that will not create unsustainable funding burdens and is encouraging local education agencies (LEAs) to use their IDEA Recovery Funds for professional development in school-wide positive behavioral supports (PBS). LEAs should consider the provision of: *Intensive district-wide professional development for special education and regular education teachers that focuses on scaling-up, through replication, proven and innovative evidence-based school-wide strategies in reading, math, writing and science, and positive behavioral supports to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.*

OSEP views PBS training as "aligned with the core goals" of the stimulus because PBS can be sustained effectively with limited district oversight once the stimulus funds are gone. Please click here for more information on federal guidance on the PBS investment.

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Resources & Opportunities

Upcoming Training and Professional Development

Self-advocacy, effective time management, organization and study skills are keys to success in college. The Preparing for the Road Ahead conference will address these areas and provide valuable resources to help make a successful transition from high school to college. This conference is a collaborative effort among CSDE, SERC, and Central Connecticut State University open to students, families, and school personnel.

SLP & SERC: Free Web-Based Training

The State Education Resource Center (SERC) created a tutorial designed to ensure that CT school Speech-Language Pathologists are practicing in accordance with the re-authorization of IDEA 2004 and standards outlined in Connecticut's **Guidelines for Speech & Language Programs: Determining Eligibility for Special Education Speech and Language Services under IDEA** (CSDE, Revised 2008). There is no cost to access this tutorial.

VSA Arts: Call for Proposals

VSA arts is seeking presentation proposals from policy-makers, artists, school and program administrators, researchers, and educators around the world for its international conference, to be held in Washington, D.C., June 10-12, 2010. The conference will discuss using the arts to advance inclusive education and to promote 21st-century learning skills. Education proposals may include successful arts-education programs within the regular school day, arts-integrated curriculum across the general curriculum, and extracurricular arts activities beyond the regular school day. Please click here for more information and the application.

BSE Coming Attractions...

The BSE is finalizing the following documents which will be available **before** the beginning of the 2009-10 academic year to support district-level planning:

- Professional Development and Technical Assistance Table for ensuring compliance with the State Performance Plan indicators;
- White paper on use of ARRA funds in support of the development of programs for individuals with autism;
- General Supervision System manual;
- ARRA FAQ and planning materials;
- Guidelines for program evaluation using key quality indicators;
- Best practice model site information;
- Child Find tools;
- Templates for developing effective and compliant IEPs;
- New courses, certificate and specialization programs through Connecticut's higher education system; and,
- Much more!

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Nondiscrimination Statement

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

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