



# Students with Disabilities & Parental Choice in Connecticut

-  CHARTER Schools
-  Interdistrict MAGNET Schools
-  OPEN CHOICE Program
-  Regional Vocational AGRICULTURE Centers
-  Regional Vocational TECHNICAL Schools

# Students with Disabilities & Parental Choice in Connecticut

JOHN G. ROWLAND  
Governor

THEODORE S. SERGI  
Commissioner of Education

## State Board of Education

CRAIG E. TOENSING

Chairperson

JANET M. FINNERAN

Vice Chairperson

Amparo ADIB-SAMII

Jennifer E. CHUDY

Donald J. COOLICAN

Andrew GLADSTEIN

Patricia B. LUKE

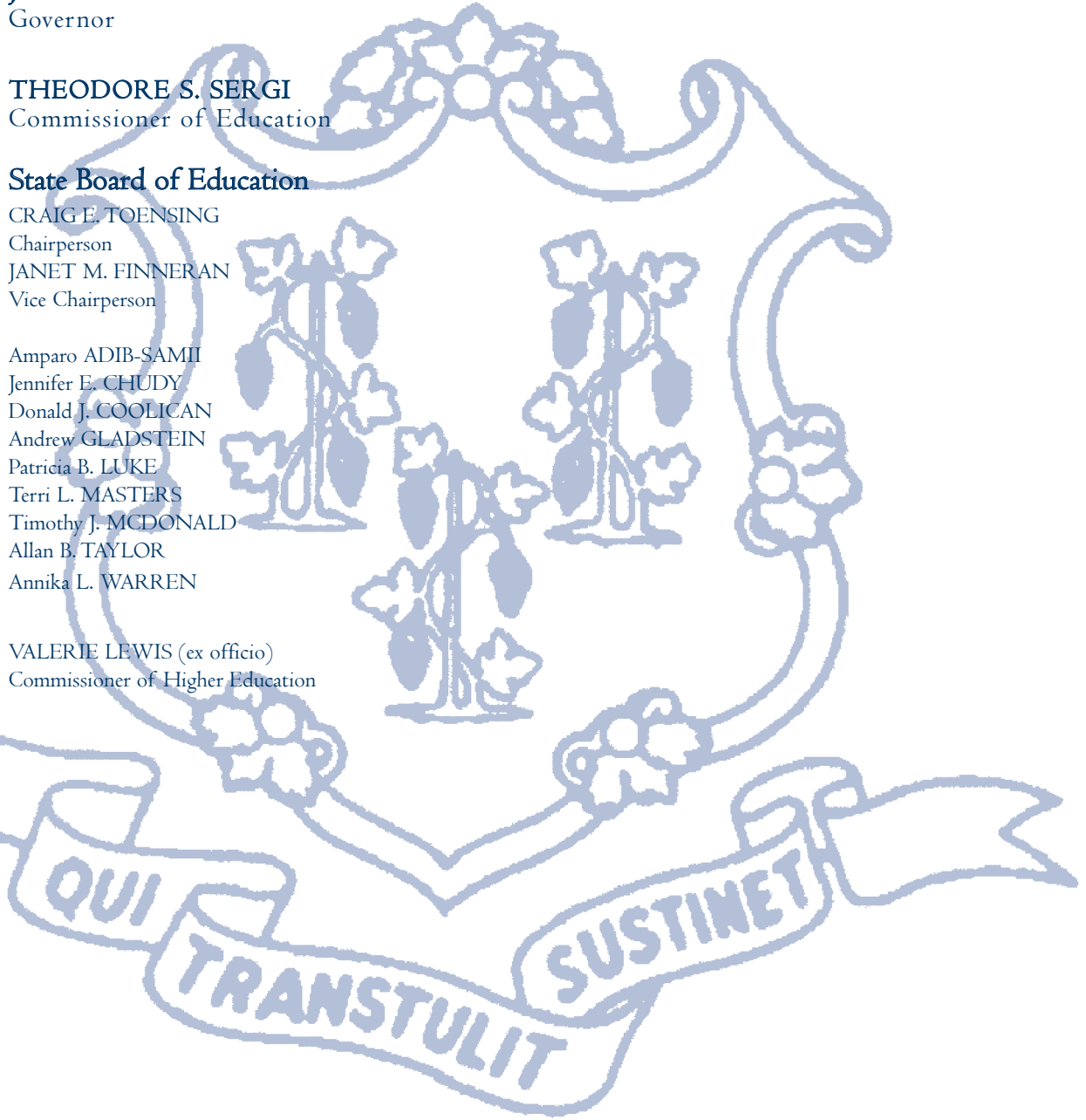
Terri L. MASTERS

Timothy J. MCDONALD

Allan B. TAYLOR

Annika L. WARREN

VALERIE LEWIS (ex officio)  
Commissioner of Higher Education



**T**he Connecticut State Board of Education is committed to ensuring the highest possible achievement level for every Connecticut student. Over the last 10 years, Connecticut has instituted a program to expand school choice options for parents and students. By offering parents and students choices among a range of educational programs and settings, the State Board of Education believes our educational system will maximize the opportunity for each student to achieve her/his highest potential.

**A**ll students with disabilities have access to choice programs and retain all rights and protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The expectation is that students will be included, regardless of any disability. It is a parental option to place a student with a disability in a choice program. It is not determined by the school district. Every effort must be made to accommodate these students. Only in the event that a student could not achieve satisfactorily in the choice program, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, could it be determined by a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) that the program was not appropriate. This would include the provision of a variety of service delivery options for students. Parents may always challenge the decision of the PPT through due process.

**T**he Department encourages the receiving and sending schools to communicate early on about the services and programs in that particular choice program. The choice program should contact the school district in which the student resides as soon as the student is enrolled to ensure the transfer of student records. This should be done within ten days pursuant to Section 10-220h of the Connecticut General Statutes. Technical assistance from the State Department of Education is available to school personnel and families. The Department has awarded grants to school districts for developing strong linkages with choice programs.

**T**his brochure was developed to assist families and school personnel as they plan for students with disabilities enrolled in choice programs in Connecticut. Further information about each program may be obtained on the State of Connecticut, Department of Education's website at [www.state.ct.us/sde](http://www.state.ct.us/sde).

You may also contact

Nancy M. Cappello, Ph.D., Education Consultant, at the State Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education and Pupil Services, at (860) 807-2035 or by email at [nancy.cappello@po.state.ct.us](mailto:nancy.cappello@po.state.ct.us).

# CHARTER Schools



Charter Schools

# CHARTER SCHOOLS

## **WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?**

A charter school is a nonsectarian public school that operates independently of a local board of education. Charter schools are granted by the State Board of Education and receive funding from the state on a per pupil basis.

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A CHARTER SCHOOL?**

The purpose of a charter school is to improve academic achievement; provide for educational innovation; provide a vehicle for the reduction of racial, ethnic and economic isolation; and provide a choice of public educational programs for students and parents.

## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND?**

Charter schools are open to all students on an equal basis, including students with disabilities, but the charter may limit the geographic areas from which students may attend. The charter school holds a lottery if there are more applicants than spaces available. Districts are required to give charter school personnel access to schools for recruiting purposes.

## **HOW WILL STUDENTS GET TO SCHOOL?**

The local or regional board of education where the charter is located must provide transportation for students who are enrolled in the charter school who reside in the district. Parents of students who reside out of the district where the charter is located may need to provide transportation for their child if the charter does not. For students with disabilities, the same rules apply unless transportation is considered a related service and is required by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONVENING THE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT TEAM (PPT) MEETING AND DEVELOPING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)?**

Pursuant to Section 10-66ee of the Connecticut General Statutes, the school district in which the student resides is responsible for holding a PPT and must invite representatives from the charter school to participate in the meeting. The district in which the student resides must convene the PPT for those students who are referred by charter school personnel for consideration of special education.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES?**

Pursuant to Section 10-66ee of the Connecticut General Statutes, the charter school is ultimately responsible for ensuring that services are provided as mandated by the student's IEP. These services may be provided directly by the charter school or in cooperation with the Local Education Agency (LEA) in which the student resides.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PAYMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES?**

The school district in which the student resides is responsible for paying the charter school on a quarterly basis an amount equal to the difference between the reasonable cost of special education and related services and the sum of the amount received by the charter school from federal, state, local and private sources calculated on a per pupil basis.

## **WHO REPORTS THE STUDENT ON THE DECEMBER 1 PCI COUNT?**

The school district in which the student resides is responsible for reporting the student and is eligible for any reimbursement available pursuant to Section 10-76g of the Connecticut General Statutes. These students may also be counted for purposes of any federal reimbursement. Students enrolled in charter schools are placed by their parents and, although not attending school in the district, are unlike other out-of-district placements. The current enrolled school, where the student attends, and the home school code will be the same, which is code 89 in PCI.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973?**

The charter school is responsible for ensuring compliance with Section 504, which includes the identification, evaluation and educational placement of a student with a disability.

INTERDISTRICT  
**Magnet**  
Schools



Interdistrict Magnet Schools

# INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOLS

## **WHAT IS AN INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOL?**

A magnet school is a publicly funded school operated by a local or regional school district, by a Regional Education Service Center (RESC) or by a cooperative agreement involving two or more districts. Each magnet school has an educational theme or focus. Magnet schools receive funding from state grants and may receive funding from local boards of education, federal grants, private sources and in some cases tuition from parents. Students who attend magnet schools continue to "belong" to sending districts. Sending districts receive full ECS credit for these students and must keep these students formally enrolled in the school district.

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF AN INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOL?**

The purpose of a magnet school is to reduce, eliminate, or prevent the racial, ethnic, or economic isolation of public school students while offering a high-quality curriculum that supports educational improvement.

## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND?**

Magnet schools are open to all students in school districts participating in the magnet school program, on an equal basis, including students with disabilities. Districts may limit the number of participants and must hold a lottery if there are more applicants than spaces available. Districts are required to give magnet school personnel access to schools for recruiting purposes.

## **HOW WILL STUDENTS GET TO SCHOOL?**

The local or regional board of education where the magnet school is located must provide transportation for students who are enrolled in the magnet school and who reside in the district. A local district or Regional Education Service Center (RESC) or cooperative arrangement that chooses to transport out of district students is eligible for a state grant. Where out of district transportation is not provided, parents of students may need to provide transportation for their children. For students with disabilities, the same rules apply unless transportation is considered a related service and is required by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONVENING THE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT TEAM (PPT) MEETING AND DEVELOPING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)?**

Pursuant to Section 10-264l of the Connecticut General Statutes, the school district in which the student resides is responsible for holding a PPT and must invite representatives from the magnet school to participate in the meeting. The district in which the student resides must convene the PPT for those students who are referred by magnet school personnel for consideration of special education.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES?**

Pursuant to Section 10-264l of the Connecticut General Statutes, the magnet school is ultimately responsible for ensuring that services are provided to students attending a magnet school on a full-time basis as mandated by the student's IEP. These services may be provided directly by the magnet school or in cooperation with the LEA in which the student resides.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PAYMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES?**

The school district in which the student resides is responsible for paying the magnet school an amount equal to the difference between the reasonable cost of special education and related services and the sum of the amount received from federal, state, local and private sources calculated on a per pupil basis.

## **WHO REPORTS THE STUDENT ON THE DECEMBER 1 PCI COUNT?**

The school district in which the student resides is responsible for reporting the student and is eligible for any reimbursement available pursuant to Section 10-76g of the Connecticut General Statutes. These students may also be counted for purposes of any federal reimbursement. Students enrolled in magnet schools are placed by their parents and are unlike other out-of-district placements. The current enrolled school where the student attends and the home school code will be the same. For those students who are attending an interdistrict magnet school outside of the district, the code for both fields is 89 in PCI.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973?**

The school district in which the student resides is responsible for ensuring compliance with Section 504, which includes the identification, evaluation and educational placement of a student with a disability. The sending district must prepare the plan and pay the magnet school for the costs of implementing it in the same manner as required by Section 10-264l of the Connecticut General Statutes. This rule does not apply to physical accommodations such as the installation of a ramp or elevator.

# OPEN CHOICE Program



Open Choice Program



# OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM

## **WHAT IS THE OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM?**

The open choice program allows urban students to attend public schools in nearby suburban towns and suburban and rural students to attend public schools in a nearby urban center. A student who participates in the open choice program "belongs" to the receiving district.

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM?**

The purpose of the open choice program is to improve academic achievement; reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation; and provide a choice of educational programs for public school students.

## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND?**

The open choice program is open to all students who attend public schools on an equal basis, including students with disabilities. Enrollments are offered by school districts on a space available basis. A lottery is used to place students when there are more applicants than spaces available. The open choice program operates from a limited number of urban areas. Districts are required to give open choice personnel access to public schools for recruiting purposes.

## **HOW WILL STUDENTS GET TO SCHOOL?**

Transportation arrangements are made by the Regional Education Service Center (RESC) serving the area. Costs are paid by the state. For students with disabilities, the same rules apply unless transportation is considered a related service and is required by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONVENING THE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT TEAM (PPT) MEETING AND DEVELOPING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)?**

The receiving district is responsible for holding a PPT and should invite representatives from the district in which the student resides to participate in the meeting. The receiving district develops the IEP.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES?**

The receiving district is responsible for the provision of services for students with disabilities as mandated by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PAYMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES?**

Pursuant to Section 10-266aa of the Connecticut General Statutes, the school district in which the student resides is responsible for paying the receiving district an amount equal to the difference between the reasonable cost of special education and related services and the sum of the amount received by the receiving district for the state open choice program.

## **WHO REPORTS THE STUDENT ON THE DECEMBER 1 PCI COUNT?**

The receiving district is responsible for reporting the student for purposes of any federal reimbursement. However, should a sending district incur costs which would make them eligible for reimbursement available pursuant to Section 10-76g of the Connecticut General Statutes, they should contact the State Department of Education so that a determination can be made regarding which town should claim the child under these circumstances. The current enrolled school where the student attends and the home school code will be the same in PCI.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973?**

The receiving district is responsible for ensuring compliance with Section 504, which includes the identification, evaluation and educational placement of a student with a disability.

REGIONAL VOCATIONAL  
**Agriculture**  
Centers



Regional Vocational Agriculture Centers

# REGIONAL VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE CENTERS

## **WHAT IS A REGIONAL VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE CENTER?**

Regional vocational agriculture centers prepare students for entry level employment or higher education in the fields of agriculture, aquaculture, horticulture and the environment as part of their high school program. Local or regional boards of education may be designated as regional centers if approved by the State Board of Education. Students who attend vocational agriculture centers continue to "belong" to sending districts. Sending districts receive full ECS credit for these students.

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A REGIONAL VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE CENTER?**

The centers prepare students for a career in the environmental, natural resources and agriculture fields. The program is "hands-on" and combines rigorous academics, occupational skills development, and a work based component. Each student's abilities, talents and interests are developed through a diverse learning environment in 19 regional vocational agriculture centers located across the state.

## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND?**

Any student interested in a career in an agriculture related field is eligible to attend. Any school district that does not provide vocational agriculture instruction must designate a school for its students to attend. The state pays each center a per student grant for each student enrolled. The district where the student lives pays tuition to the district operating the center. There is no tuition cost to the parents.

## **HOW WILL STUDENTS GET TO SCHOOL?**

The district where the student lives must pay the reasonable and necessary cost to transport the student.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONVENING THE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT TEAM (PPT) MEETING AND DEVELOPING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)?**

The responsibility for convening the PPT and developing the IEP belongs to the district where the student resides.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES?**

The district that operates the regional vocational agriculture center is responsible for the provision of services as documented in the student's IEP. These services may be provided directly by the center or in cooperation with the Local Education Agency (LEA) in which the student resides.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PAYMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES?**

The costs of special education and related services are the responsibility of the school district where the student resides. Any tuition paid by such board for special education students in excess of the tuition paid for non-special education students shall be reimbursed pursuant to 10-76g of the Connecticut General Statutes.

## **WHO REPORTS THE STUDENT ON THE DECEMBER 1 PCI COUNT?**

The school district in which the student resides is responsible for reporting the student and is eligible for any reimbursement available pursuant to Section 10-76g of the Connecticut General Statutes. The students may also be counted for purposes of any federal reimbursement. Students enrolled in regional vocational agriculture centers are placed by their parents and are unlike other out-of-district placements. The current enrolled school where the student attends and the home school code will be the same which is code 89 in PCI.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973?**

The school district in which the student resides is responsible for ensuring compliance with Section 504, which includes identification, evaluation and educational placement of a student with a disability. The sending district must prepare the plan and pay the district which operates the vocational agriculture center for the costs of implementing the plan. This rule does not apply to physical accommodations such as the installation of a ramp or elevator.

REGIONAL VOCATIONAL  
**Technical**  
Schools



Regional Vocational Technical Schools

# REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

## **WHAT IS A REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL?**

The regional vocational technical schools allow students in grades 9-12 to learn a technical skill while earning a high school diploma. There are 39 technical offerings, with students selecting an area of specialization after participating in a ninth grade technical exploratory program. Students attending vocational technical schools are also prepared to attend two or four year colleges after graduation. They can also earn college credit during their high school years through the Tech-Prep articulation programs with community colleges.

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THESE SCHOOLS?**

Regional vocational technical schools provide high school age students with academic and technical education leading to a high school diploma. There are 18 regional vocational technical schools across the state.

## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND?**

Any student who lives in Connecticut may apply to any regional vocational technical school. Each regional vocational technical school serves a geographic area and makes presentations to all eighth graders in the area. Districts are required to give access to schools for recruiting purposes.

## **HOW WILL THE STUDENT GET TO SCHOOL?**

The district where the student lives provides the transportation.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONVENING THE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT TEAM (PPT) MEETING AND DEVELOPING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)?**

Pursuant to Section 10-76q(a) of the Connecticut General Statutes the regional vocational technical school convenes the PPT and develops the IEP for a student with a disability.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES?**

The regional vocational technical school is responsible for the provision of services for students with disabilities. Pursuant to Section 10-76q(c) of the Connecticut General Statutes, if the PPT determines that a student requires special education services, which precludes such participation in the vocational education program offered by a regional vocational technical school, the student shall be referred to the board of education in the town in which the student resides for the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and such program shall be responsible for the implementation and financing of such program.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PAYMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES?**

The regional vocational technical school is responsible for the provision of services for students with disabilities.

## **WHO REPORTS THE STUDENT ON THE DECEMBER 1 PCI COUNT?**

The regional vocational technical school reports the student on the December 1 PCI count and is eligible for any reimbursement pursuant to Section 10-76g of the Connecticut General Statutes. These students may also be counted for purposes of any federal reimbursement.

## **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973?**

The regional vocational technical school is responsible for ensuring compliance with Section 504, which includes the identification, evaluation and educational placement of a student with a disability.

# Position Statement on the Education of Students with Disabilities

Adopted January 3, 2001

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that all students are unique and are influenced by cultural, linguistic, intellectual, psychological, medical, social and economic factors. These factors create a need for a varied educational environment that provides for, and accommodates, each child's strengths and areas of needed improvement. The Board also believes that a unified and coordinated continuum of educational opportunities and supports, designed to address individual needs, serves and benefits all students. The Board encourages the implementation of educational models that promote multiple instructional strategies which encourage and accommodate students in the general environment to the maximum extent appropriate. It is the responsibility and obligation of educators to design and provide teaching strategies, methods and materials that are suitable for each individual learner. As appropriate, a continuum of these strategies should be implemented before a child is referred to special education. The Connecticut State Board of Education supports the principle that Connecticut's Common Core of Learning defines common goals for all students, including those with disabilities. Connecticut's public education system has the duty to provide opportunities for all students to achieve the statewide student goals (motivation to learn, mastery of the basic skills, acquisition of knowledge, competence in life skills and understanding society's values). The demonstrated performance of these skills, knowledge and attributes must become a greater focus and the acknowledged responsibility of all professionals in the education community. The Board presumes that these goals are best achieved in the child's local school, although it recognizes that some children who present significant and/or unique needs require placement in alternate settings to achieve those goals. Furthermore, the Board believes in the continuous monitoring of student growth and achievement.

Good practice requires that school districts:

- 1) Deliver support services based on early diagnosis of learning problems and early intervention strategies that accommodate different learning styles in the regular classroom, which results in fewer students unnecessarily being identified as requiring special education;
- 2) Align special education programs and services with all state, federal and local reform efforts to ensure involvement in all school improvement activities;
- 3) Support full participation in state and district wide assessment activities designed to assess the degree to which basic skills are mastered;
- 4) Use current medical, educational and psychological research to inform best practices in teaching strategies;
- 5) Identify and support activities that will enhance and promote a school climate that is conducive to positive development for all children, including children with disabilities;
- 6) Provide training to all educators that prepares them to teach children with varying abilities, interests and learning styles, and that enables them to, with the use of supplementary aids and services, modify curriculum, deliver individually designed instruction and implement effective instructional practices in the least restrictive environment;
- 7) Identify and support actions necessary to promote the appropriate and positive involvement of students with disabilities in the total school program, including extracurricular activities;
- 8) Provide sufficient allocation and efficient use of resources to provide quality instruction that results in improved student outcomes and focuses on activities with clear educational benefit;
- 9) Involve parents of students with disabilities in planning and assessing all aspects of the student's educational program;
- 10) Develop a collaborative approach to service delivery that includes parental involvement, use of community-based resources, learning experiences that are school-based and community-based, and pupil services and supports (psychology, guidance, counseling, social work, speech and language and health services);
- 11) Provide a continuum of teaching and learning options and settings that foster high expectations, continuing improvement and challenging curriculum for all students, and that prepare students for eventual entry into higher education and the workplace; and
- 12) Identify student needs and the implementation of student and teacher accountability measures to assess growth and the impact of services.

The Board believes that implementation of these practices will encourage all students to value themselves as capable individuals who make successful transitions to further education and employment. As a result, students will be self-sufficient, productive and contributing members of society, able to make informed personal choices and function successfully as family members, workers, learners, citizens, friends and consumers.

# Connecticut State Department of Education

## Division of Educational Programs and Services

GEORGE A. COLEMAN  
Associate Commissioner

## Bureau of Special Education and Pupil Services

GEORGE P. DOWALIBY  
Bureau Chief  
Nancy M. CAPPELLO  
Project Manager  
Tracey WHEELER  
Project Assistant

Nancy M. ALEMAN  
Thomas G. BADWAY  
Arthur J. CAREY  
Brian CUNNANE  
Theresa C. DEFRANCIS  
Roger D. FRANT  
Karen HALLIDAY  
Carolyn W. ISAKSON  
Ann KAMMERER  
Bob LICHTENSTEIN  
John D. PURDY  
Deborah RICHARDS  
Elizabeth SCHMITT  
Norma SPROUL  
Nancy STARK  
Ann Louise THOMPSON

## Bureau of Legal and Governmental Affairs

Karen FLANAGAN, ESQ.

It is the policy of the Connecticut State Board of Education that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise discriminated against under any program, including employment, because of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, mental retardation or past/present history of mental disorder, learning disability or physical disability.



25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457-1520 • 860-632-1485 • [www.ctserc.org](http://www.ctserc.org)