

State of Connecticut  
General Assembly  
M.O.R.E Commission-Special Education Select Working Group

Written Testimony  
December 8, 2014

**What are the systematic challenges to special education and what are possible solutions?**

An all-encompassing systematic challenge faced in special education is the issue of compliance... compliance with service delivery, paperwork distribution and timelines. This is primarily impacted by inadequate federal and state funding along with local budget constraints. Districts are mandated to provide a free and appropriate education, individualized instruction for students with special needs and to adhere to timelines related to such. This is an undeniable necessity; however, adequate personnel and programs are lacking. While schools are tasked with developing programming to meet individual needs, it is often the case that programming is determined by services available. This includes all models on the continuum of services. While schools struggle to increase inclusion to offer the least restrictive environment, there are not enough staff members to support that inclusion. If special educators are working in general classrooms, there is often an inability to work with students requiring more individualized instruction. If special educators are addressing needs in resource rooms, inclusion suffers; thus students are not receiving adequate interventions and are not progressing as hoped. Not all students are best served in the general education setting all day due to a variety of reasons; but balancing appropriate instruction and supports with available services and programming is a tremendous challenge.

Students who require more intensive, therapeutic interventions and are best served in more restrictive or alternate settings also create funding concerns. While districts are able to offer some specialized "in-district" programs, they are unable to meet every intensive need and outplacement becomes necessary at a significant cost.

Instructional and related services compliance is also impacted by the numerous meetings, increasing paperwork and evaluations that are required as part of the special education process. Special educators are expected to assess students, complete Planning and Placement Team Meetings (PPT) paperwork, consult, offer behavioral interventions and teach; but there are only so many hours in a school day. Teaching should be our priority. Our students require the most consistency of instruction and personnel, yet often receive the least due to meeting attendance, assessment schedules and paperwork requirements.

This leads to timeline issues. Paperwork distribution, including prior written notice, is a significant concern. It is extremely difficult to complete PPT paperwork within five school days,

and our state as a whole, will reap the benefits. As Brad Henry, former Governor of Oklahoma, said, "No other investment yields as great a return as the investment in education..."

Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ms. Jill Tedesco".

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