

# SOUTHINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## MEMORANDUM

To: Representative Brian Becker  
Representative Michelle Cook  
Representative Terrie Wood

From: Margaret T. Walsh – Director of Pupil Services

Date: December 18, 2014

Re: M.O.R.E. Commission – Special Education Select Working Group

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My testimony in response to the question, "What are the systematic challenges to special education and what are some possible solutions?" is as follows:

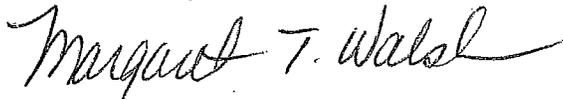
### Systematic challenges:

- Increase in number of 3 year olds being identified by B-3. Districts must have a program in place to meet the individual student's need by their third birthday.
- Increase in the number of students with significant medical issues entering public schools
- Increase in the number of children who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the specific interventions that are required in order to meet their needs. (ABA/DTI)
- Number of special education students identified with ASD – 9.6% (81 students out of 840).
- Increased number of students who are experiencing anxiety and school avoidance behaviors
- Lack of alternatives for identified students who are unsuccessful in a comprehensive high school/middle school and elementary school setting.
- Students who require curriculum for Activities of Daily Living Skills as their core instruction.
- Transitional programming and supports for students ages 18-21 as they enter the world of work
- Lack of mental health services and supports for students and their families in the municipalities.
- Cost of transportation for students placed in a state approved private, special education facility. Either placed by LEA or outside agency (DCF)
- Retention of highly skilled educators
- Magnet schools
- District responsibility with no ability to oversee

**Possible solutions:**

- State Department of Education – Bureau of Special Education work collaboratively with LEA's to meet diverse needs of our students in a supportive and collegial manner
- Shared responsibilities between LEA's to create regional programs including a fiscal incentive from the State to entice all communities to participate in this endeavor. The shared responsibilities should also include skilled professionals who currently work in the public education system to staff regionalized sites. (Least Restrictive Environment)
- Collaboration with outside agencies and resources for families to create comprehensive services to support the students.
- Create continuum of programs within districts to service students with significant needs at all levels.
- Increased mental health services for children and adolescents – partnering with community based programs and agencies
- Magnet schools support themselves
- Dual certification for teachers at the elementary level – special education and regular education endorsements combined
- Scientifically Researched Based Interventions (SRBI) – regular education initiative. Core differentiated instruction in the classrooms for Tier I and Tier II implemented with fidelity and consistency

Respectfully submitted,



Margaret T. Walsh  
Director of Pupil Services