

2011 Program Report Card: **Children's Services Division, BESB**

Quality of Life Result: All children who are blind, visually impaired or deafblind are successful in school and in life.

Contribution to Result: By providing direct teaching to children with visual impairments, equipment and educational materials, and training and consultation to local educational teams and families, BESB ensures that children can be successful in school along with their sighted peers. Instruction in all areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum maximizes each child's ability to live independently as an adult.

Total Program Funding: \$4,870,277

State Funding: \$4,633,943

Federal Funding: \$236,334

Other Funding: \$0

Partners: CT Birth to Three (DDS), State Department of Education, Department of Correction (DOC), Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (DSS), New England Center for Deafblind, school administrators, and community volunteers.

Performance Measure 1: Students with blindness and visual impairments, who are supported by BESB, remain in high school at a higher rate than the overall population of special education students.

Statewide dropout rate for special education students reported by SDE (dropouts / total enrolled grades 9-12):

2007: $620 / 22,211 = 2.8\%$

2008: $803 / 21,944 = 3.7\%$

2009: $879 / 21,640 = 4.1\%$

2010: Estimated- not available from SDE at this time

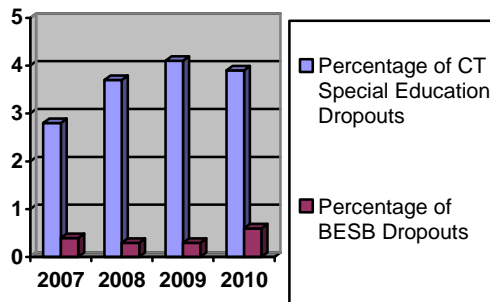
Dropout rate of BESB students with visual impairments:

2007: $1 / 232 = 0.4\%$

2008: $1 / 293 = 0.3\%$

2009: $1 / 316 = 0.3\%$

2010: $2 / 313 = 0.6\%$



Story behind the baseline: Dropout rates for special education students statewide are significantly higher than the dropout rate for students with blindness and visual impairments served by BESB. Extensive services provided by BESB ensure a higher degree of success in school than if specialized support was not available. BESB provides direct instruction in the following areas: compensatory skills (including Braille instruction), assistive technology, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure, sensory efficiency, self-determination, orientation and mobility, and career education. These supports, along with training and consultation for families and local school districts, enable students to be successful in their educational programs.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: As a result of recommendations made by the Appropriations Committee during the 2009 RBA review process, BESB now collects data on high school graduation rates to supplement dropout rate information. Information gathered by BESB thus far indicates that in school year 2009-10, of 45 students who exited high school in June 2010, 23 received a standard diploma (51%). Twenty-two students (49%) received an alternate certificate or aged out of special education. Many children who are diagnosed with visual impairments also have additional significant disabilities. Of the 22 students who exited with an alternate certificate or aged out, 20 were identified as also having significant cognitive disabilities. The current graduation rate of students whose primary disability is visual impairment (or whose

only disability is visual impairment) is 92% (23/25 students). Comparisons to statewide graduation rates and drop out rates for 2010 can be made after the State Department of Education data is available (anticipated in March 2011).

Performance Measure 2: Provision of Braille and large print books requested by local school districts to ensure that students with blindness or visual impairments have the same access to the curriculum as their sighted peers.

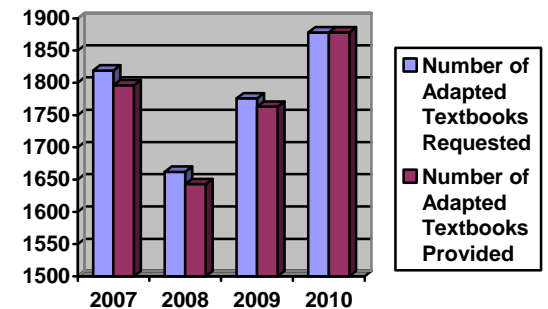
Books provided / books requested:

2007: $1796 / 1819 = 98.7\%$

2008: $1643 / 1662 = 98.9\%$

2009: $1763 / 1776 = 99.8\%$

2010: $1878 / 1878 = 100\%$



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Story behind the baseline: The graph illustrates the continued commitment of BESB to provide this mainstay service to ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired have accessible textbooks available to fully participate in classroom activities.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: BESB has a dedicated Braille Unit to coordinate the provision of accessible materials for all Connecticut children who are blind or visually impaired. The Braille Unit uses a combination of purchased texts, an agency maintained resource library, training of community volunteers who can produce Braille texts via computer, as well as collaboration with the Department of Correction for training inmates to produce Braille. The Braille Unit Coordinator communicates regularly with all Teachers of the Visually Impaired in the state to ensure that book requests are submitted with enough lead time to allow for Braille production if the material is not readily available from existing sources. This effort resulted in the provision of 100% of requested texts for the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, BESB continues to provide monthly training in Braille transcription for school district paraprofessionals serving students who read tactually, so that daily classroom materials needed by students in Braille can be produced. Training of students on methods for downloading books electronically supplements hard copies of texts and ensures students have skills to access materials independently when they transition to college. A combination of all these efforts enables students who

require large print or Braille texts to gain equal access to education.

Performance Measure 3: Increase in the percentage of school-age Vocational Rehabilitation clients who are legally blind, age 16 and over, who successfully completed a summer job experience through BESB.

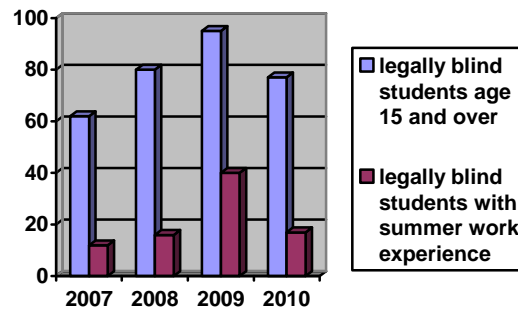
Legally blind students with summer work / total school-age Vocational Rehabilitation clients:

2007: 12 / 62 = 19%

2008: 16 / 80 = 20%

2009: 40 / 95 = 42%

2010: 17 / 77 = 22%



Story behind the baseline: The opportunity to experience work while in high school is strongly

correlated with successful employment as an adult. Unemployment rates for adults with disabilities averages approximately 70% nationally. Providing job opportunities to youth with disabilities, in addition to providing independent living training, will lead to a greater likelihood of career success after graduation. A significant increase in the number of students with summer work experience occurred in 2009 due to a one-time infusion of funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided to Regional Workforce Boards for youth in transition. Summer work experiences for students in 2010 returned to prior levels of performance, reflecting the efforts of one BESB Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Coordinator and VR funding, which is only available to serve youth who are blind. It was an identified priority in last year's RBA report for the agency to identify alternative approaches to serve children who are visually impaired as well as legally blind.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: As of August 2010, the agency now has a full time Transition School-to-Work Coordinator assigned to the Children's Services Division, accomplishing this through the cost-efficient approach of reclassifying an existing position in Children's Services to encompass this role. Although this change is too recent to affect data for 2010, it is fully anticipated that the efforts of the new Coordinator will result in increased numbers of work experiences for the summer of 2011 for both legally blind and visually impaired children.