



*National Executive  
Service Corps*

# ER9 Special Education Study



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## ***The NESC Mission***

*To make a meaningful contribution to our communities by strengthening the management of America's nonprofit organizations, schools and government agencies through high-quality, affordable consulting services.*



# Agenda

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- Purpose of this Project
- Scope and Methodology Used
- Major Findings
- Major Recommendations
- Q&A

# Purpose Of This Project

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**The purpose of this project was to identify potential opportunities for coordinating special education services in ER9 and the attending benefits and challenges for the students, staff and the respective communities**



# Scope and Methodology Used

- **Analyzed data and reports for each of the three school districts:**
  - 2013-14 Budget Function Summary
  - Board Report – Special Services Update – 11/12/13. (not prepared by Region 9 )
  - Distribution of Students by Classification School Year 2013 – 2014
  - Special Services Department – Table of Organization and staffing
- **Completed confidential interviews**
  - Parents- 15
  - School Administrators- 19
    - Central Office staff, Directors of Special Education, Principals and Assistant Principals
  - Special Ed Teachers- 10
  - Board Members\* 5

*\*Only Easton and Redding Board members were interviewed*
- **Surveyed all parents of students with special needs**
  - Total students surveyed 337
    - Easton 127 Redding 210
  - Response rate to the survey
    - Easton 49.6% Redding 64.8%



# Major Findings (1)

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- **Related to the 2013-2014 Special Education Budget**
  - Easton - 21.6% of total Education Budget = \$ 3.3 MM
  - Redding - 20.2% of total Education Budget = \$ 4.4 MM
  - Region 9 - 15.2 % of total Education Budget = \$ 3.4 MM
- **Related to IEP Students 2013-2014**
  - Easton EES (K- 5) – 9.2%      Easton HKMS (6 – 8) – 8.0%
  - Redding RES (K – 4) – 12.0%      Redding JRMS (5 – 8 ) – 13.8%
  - Region 9 JBHS – 9.7%
- **Related to Out placed Students**
  - Easton – 3
  - Redding – 0
  - Region 9 – ( Grade 9 -12) – 15
  - Region 9 – (Age 18 – 21) – 5

# Major Findings (2)

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- **Related to Board Input (only Easton & Redding Board members were available)**
  - Infrequent topic at Board meetings except for budget time
- **Related to Central Office and District Leadership**
  - Easton and Redding Directors report to Superintendent
  - Region 9 Director reports to Head of School Barlow
  - Due to competing priorities limited time is available to direct and evaluate each of the Directors of Special Education
  - It is reported that there is complete compliance with federal and state requirements
  - Role definitions and performance expectations for all stakeholders are not sufficiently clear resulting in ineffective team work and a lack of trust by parents

# Major Findings (3)

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- **Related to Special Education Teachers' Input**

- Too many general education teachers lack sufficient special education knowledge
- Scope of responsibilities of special education teachers is inconsistent
- There is lack of opportunities to share best practices
- Attendance in unproductive meetings detracts from time with students

- **Related to Factors Impacting Effectiveness and Efficiency**

- There is no set of standards/guidelines to measure program and staff effectiveness
- Limited coordination and cooperation exist with the general education Staff
- Sharing of best practices does not exist among the Special Education staffs
- The effectiveness and productivity of paraprofessional staffs are reported to be inconsistent
- A more robust philosophy of continuous improvement of the staff is needed to supplement the existing mandates of the state which is reportedly met by the staff
- The SRBI, SAIT and Integrated Response programs are not effective yet
- Little alignment and sharing of good practices exist among the three autism programs
- There is a desire but not a plan to lower the number of out placed students in Region 9



# Major Findings (4)

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- **Related to Parents' Perspective**

- About 37% of parents from Easton and Redding who attend the middle schools and high school use outside advisors at PPT meetings

- **Major Observations From the Open Ended Questions in the Parents' Survey**

- There is a relatively positive opinion of Special Education teachers and para professionals in all five schools
- There is a need to improve the trust of parents in the effectiveness of the PPT and IEP processes in the three school districts
- Communication with parents is seen as inconsistent in quality and frequency
- There is not enough done to educate parents on the PPT and IEP processes and what their role and responsibility should be in each of these steps
- There is not enough guidance provided to the parents on what realistic expectations the parents should have about their child's progress

# Major Findings (5)

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- **Major Observations From the Statistical Questions in the Parents' Survey**
  - The Easton parents, whose children attend the elementary and middle schools, have generally a significantly more positive feeling about the special education questions than the parents of elementary and middle school students who live in Redding
  - The Redding parents of students that attend the high school are more satisfied than the Easton parents about the several Special Education questions listed below

# Parents' Survey Results (1)

## **Question 15:- Were you satisfied with the recent Annual PPT meeting?**

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Easton</i>	<i>Redding</i>
Elementary	68.6%	65.9%
Middle	72.7%	58.1%
High	76.9%	82.1%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>71.3%</b>	<b>72.1%</b>

*Note*

- 1. The percentage in the table is the measure of parents answering yes to the question.*
- 2. Elementary in the table above also includes the responses for Kindergarten students*

## **Question 17:- Are you satisfied that the IEP has the appropriate measures to track the progress of your child?**

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Easton</i>	<i>Redding</i>
Elementary	65.8%	50.9%
Middle	63.6%	54.8%
High	61.5%	66.7%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>63.1%</b>	<b>59.6%</b>

*Note*

- 1. The percentage in the table is the measure of parents answering yes to the question.*
- 2. Elementary in the table above also includes the responses for Kindergarten students*

# Parent's Survey Results (2)

**Question 19:- Are you satisfied that the goals & objectives are specific enough in your child's IEP to measure their progress?**

Age Group	Easton	Redding
Elementary	62.8%	55.9%
Middle	72.7%	45.2%
High	53.8%	71.8%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>63.3%</b>	<b>61.3%</b>

*Note*

1. The percentage in the table is the measure of parents answering yes to the question.
2. Elementary in the table above also includes the responses for Kindergarten students

**Question 21:- Are you satisfied that the services recommended in your child's IEP are actually being provided?**

Age Group	Easton	Redding
Elementary	60.9%	55.9%
Middle	63.6%	48.4%
High	61.5%	71.8%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>60.8%</b>	<b>60.9%</b>

*Note*

1. The percentage in the table is the measure of parents answering yes to the question.
2. Elementary in the table above also includes the responses for Kindergarten students

# Parent's Survey Results (3)

**Question 27:- Overall are you satisfied with the quality of the services being provided by the Special Education program?**

Age Group	Easton	Redding
Elementary	75.4%	54.5%
Middle	81.8%	45.2%
High	61.5%	66.7%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>73.0%</b>	<b>59.1%</b>

*Note*

1. The percentage in the table is the measure of parents answering yes to the question.
2. Elementary in the table above also includes the responses for Kindergarten students

**Question 29:- Are you satisfied with your child's progress?**

Age Group	Easton	Redding
Elementary	68.4%	45.5%
Middle	63.6%	38.7%
High	61.5%	66.7%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>65.1%</b>	<b>56.2%</b>

*Note*

1. The percentage in the table is the measure of parents answering yes to the question.
2. Elementary in the table above also includes the responses for Kindergarten students

# Major Recommendation (1)

## Build greater trust & cooperation among all stakeholders

**TO BE COMPLETED BY SEPTEMBER 2014**

- Amplify Connecticut statutory guidelines to all Special Education stakeholders in order that they better understand their obligations and responsibilities.
- Position Special Ed. program as a continuum from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Promote a partnership attitude among all stakeholders. Clarify the roles in the PPT meetings, IEP goal setting meeting and the execution of the program.
- Establish both quantitative and qualitative effectiveness guidelines for the special education program for each of the next two school years. Clarify performance expectations for all staff members at all levels. These expectations, when communicated to the parents will also contribute to greater transparency and trust.
- Establish efficiency/productivity guidelines and goals for each district and school for each of the next two school years, without impacting the effectiveness of the program and trust of parents.



# Major Recommendation (2)

**Respond to important program improvement needs in each school/district that can be accomplished with limited resource**

**TO BE COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 2014**

- Create a Special Education Committee consisting of the special education directors and the five principals. Decide what immediate changes to the program should be made for the students' benefit while not compromising the trust of the parents.
- As time allows share good practices and innovations among all staff members at all levels within each school, district, and possibly all districts, demonstrating a tangible commitment to continuous professional development.

# Major Recommendation (3)

**Create an organization structure and role consistency in the ER9 special education program to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the program and the staff**

***TO BE COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 2014***

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- Establish special education performance goals and budget for each school and district for 2014 – 2015.
- Decide on the ER9 and district special education organization structure required to meet the agreed to goals.
- Review and redefine as required the job description/tasks to be performed and the accountability for performance for all key positions involved in the special education program in the central office and the districts.
- Integrate the accountability for performance criteria and measures with the new evaluation processes. Make sure there is alignment between all levels of those that have any involvement with the special education program.
- Initiate/expand the informal observation and coaching of all individuals at all levels. Encourage the staff to invest in their own continuous improvement.



# Recommendation (4)

**Implement consistent program policies and procedures in all districts that improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and communication with the parents**

**TO BE COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 2014**

- PPT processes.
- IEP goals and related processes.
- Record keeping/data bases and statistical reports.



# Recommendation (5)

## Reevaluate the policy & procedures related to out-placing students ***TO BE COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 2014***

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- Complete a formal review of the benefits to each out-placed student and their family, of bringing the student back to their respective school.
- Conduct a comprehensive cost benefit analysis for implementing the changes.
- If feasible, create an implementation plan and related schedule.