

Dear Education Committee,

As a parent of a child being stalled in the system, I have a serious problem with the elimination of SRBI related language in HB 6501. I have read the proposed bill and wonder why SRBI was removed from it. I believe it is detrimental that SRBI be included in this bill. I read that "each local and regional board of education shall promptly request parental consent to evaluate a child pursuant to this section and in accordance with applicable federal law and regulations "if" such board suspects that a child requires special education and related services". What if the person(s) dealing with the child is not versed on what the child's problems are? Then the child gets overlooked. There are so many disabilities and it is not possible for someone to recognize them all. This is so unfair to the child! As in my child's case, my child needed to be tested but the school didn't think so. They were already helping her in SRBI and the school didn't see any other problems and that in itself is where the problem was. They were not educated on what was wrong with my child. They used the SRBI as an excuse to not have to deal with any other issues that were present with her. She became so frustrated with her troubles with schoolwork and focus troubles that she started acting out so badly I had to send her to a psychologist. The school dismissed my concerns. Finally, I as a parent had to go outside the school board and prove that she had a problem before they would even consider looking at her or talking to me. This alone wasted an entire year of meeting regularly with my child's teacher, speaking to many other parents and researching where I can get the help and testing my child needed. In my opinion, all people involved in helping her in SRBI did not know what to look for. Furthermore, the school diagnosticians that did more testing did not know there was a reason why testing answers did not match up so they just dismissed the testing with excuses that the test scores were inconsistent but that there was no problem because she did good in "other" areas. I feel like SRBI was put into place so school boards don't have to do the testing. That is just wrong. It is a use by the schools to not have to speak to parents to let them know there may be a problem. Why? Maybe they want to protect their pockets at our children's expense and this is the perfect excuse. I can only guess. I understand that budgets are tight right now but to turn away our children is inexcusable. They are our future! There should never ever be any reason like SRBI a child is ignored. Every child who is put into any special program should be tested at any cost to see where their problems lay before they can be treated and this is not being done. SRBI is an excuse our children don't need. All children deserve a chance to learn and if we only treat the symptom without treating the problem then they are not serving the child or bettering the situation. In fact they could be seriously damaging the situation and the child. My child is still in the system. She has not been fully diagnosed but an assumed diagnosis that needs to be confirmed has been suggested. IF, what they are assuming is correct then she is the one who has been hurt. The damage has been done. Early intervention has been lost. SRBI can not be an excuse.

Melinda Rossi

A Case of Delayed Comprehensive Evaluation and Denied Eligibility Due to SRBI

Madison is a fourth grade student with above average intelligence. She has struggled with reading her entire academic career. She scored at the below basic level on the third grade Connecticut Mastery Test.

She has been receiving Tier II reading services since third grade, September 2009.

The district never referred her for special education eligibility

Madison's parents, concerned about both her struggles with reading and resulting emotional distress, referred her for consideration of eligibility under IDEA in the fall of her fourth grade, 2010.

The PPT finally convened after more than a year of Madison receiving tier II services and agreed to go forward with a comprehensive evaluation acknowledging a lack of response to intervention.

When the PPT met to review the evaluation and discuss eligibility, the district determined that Madison did not qualify under the classification of specific learning disability because she was responding to tiered services, even though after more than a year of tier II services she still was not meeting grade level expectations in reading. Although special education eligibility was denied, the district planned on continuing the same tiered services.

The district did not qualify Madison under the classification of other health impaired – ADHD because it felt she did not require direct services, despite the fact that she was currently receiving tier II one to one reading instruction 30 minutes, 4 times a week.

The Connecticut State Department of Special Education was contacted and informed that a district was leaving a child in tier II interventions for well over a year and denying eligibility despite the continued need for tiered services. Its response was that it was a general education issue and no assistance could be provided.