

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.

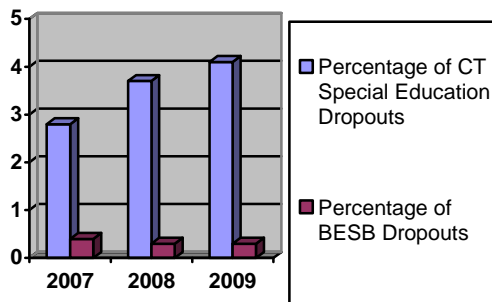
Contribution to Result: By providing direct teaching to children with visual impairments, equipment and educational materials, and training and consultation to local educational teams and families, BESB ensures that children can be successful in school along with their sighted peers. Instruction in all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

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%

Dropout rate of BESB students with visual impairments:
 2007: 1 / 232 = 0.4%
 2008: 1 / 293 = 0.3%
 2009: 1 / 316 = 0.3%



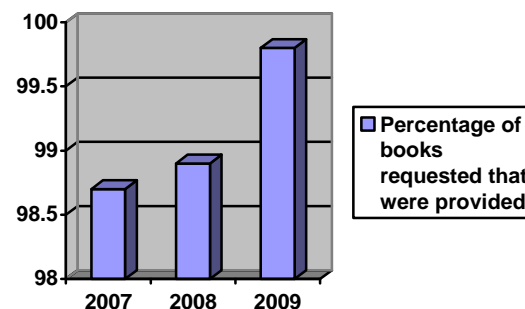
Story behind the baseline: Dropout rates for special education students statewide are significantly higher than the dropout rate for students with blindness and visual impairments served by BESB. Extensive services provided by BESB ensure a higher degree of success in

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: Caseload sizes have risen slightly since budgetary constraints have precluded the hiring of certified Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) to replace losses incurred through attrition. BESB will seek to increase group training opportunities for students to supplement individualized instruction.

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%



Story behind the baseline: The graph illustrates the commitment of BESB to ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired have accessible textbooks available to fully participate in classroom activities. Letters are sent to special education directors stressing the importance of timely requests for books that need to be produced in an accessible format. Late requests cause delays in timely provision of materials. For materials such as math, science, and foreign language texts that require specialized Braille transcriptionists, late requests may mean the book can not be provided in the student's preferred format.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: BESB 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 DOC for training inmates to produce Braille. This combination of efforts must be maintained to meet a goal of providing 100% of requested texts.

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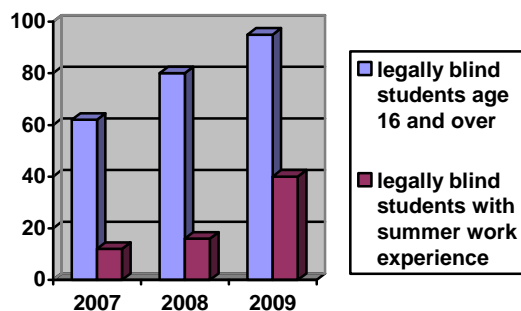
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BESB also provides monthly training in Braille for paraprofessionals serving students who read tactually. Well-trained paraprofessionals produce the daily materials needed by students in Braille, as well as some of the materials that cannot be purchased on short notice. Training of students on methods of downloading books electronically supplements hard copies of texts and ensures students have skills to access materials independently when they transition to college.

Performance Measure 3: Increase in the percentage of transition eligible students who are legally blind, age 16 and over, who successfully completed a summer job experience through BESB over the last 3 years.

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

2007: $12 / 62 = 19\%$
2008: $16 / 80 = 20\%$
2009: $40 / 95 = 42\%$



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. The agency presently has only one Transition School-to-Work Coordinator, assigned to the Vocational Rehabilitation division. That program works exclusively with transition-age students who are legally blind. The annual increase in summer work opportunities for these students is evident in the data chart. Similar initiatives for students with visual impairments would yield greater successes after high school for all students served in Children's Services.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: Seek to increase the number of students with summer work experiences

by utilizing the cost-efficient approach of reclassifying an existing position in Children's Services to encompass the role of transition coordinator to mirror the transition coordinator currently employed at BESB in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Division. A Children's Services transition coordinator would increase the number of summer work experiences by fostering participation of an additional 70 students who are visually impaired.