

2012 Program Report Card: BRS- BESB Program

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

*Contribution to the 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.

Actual SFY 11 Total Program Expenditures:\$ 4,850,993  
 Estimated SFY 12 Total Program Expenditures:\$ 5,066,844

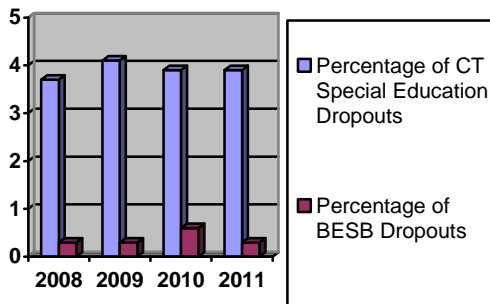
State Funding:\$ 4,625,443  
 Federal Funding:\$ 226,945

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

**Performance Measure 1:** Students with blindness and visual impairments, who are supported by the BRS-BESB Program 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):  
 2008: 3.7%  
 2009: 4.1%  
 2010: 3.9%  
 2011: 3.9 (estimated-data not yet available from SDE)

Dropout rate of BESB students with visual impairments:  
 2008: 1 / 293 = 0.3%  
 2009: 1 / 316 = 0.3%  
 2010: 2 / 313 = 0.6%  
 2011: 1 / 330 = 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 BRS-BESB. Extensive services provided by BRS-BESB ensure a higher degree of success in school than if specialized support was not available. BRS-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 the 2009 RBA review process, BRS-BESB began gathering data on high school graduation rates to supplement dropout information. This data was specifically requested by the Appropriations Committee, and methods were immediately put into place to gather, record and track whether students completed high school with a standard diploma, or whether they received an alternate certificate or aged out of special education. BESB reported last year that 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. For 2011, 47 students exited high school. Of these, 21 (45%) received standard diplomas, and 26 (55%) received alternate certificates or aged out of special education. It is important to be aware that many children who are diagnosed with visual impairments also have

additional significant disabilities. Of the 26 students who exited with an alternate certificate or aged out, 21 were identified as having additional significant disabilities. Of the students whose primary disability was visual impairment (or whose only disability was visual impairment) 21/26 (80.7%) graduated with a standard diploma. A direct comparison to national or statewide graduation rates would be difficult to make, since that measurement is based on students graduating in 4 years. Students with visual impairments have a more comprehensive curriculum than their peers without visual impairments. In addition to the core curriculum (reading, math, social studies, etc.), students with visual impairments need to master additional skills referred to as the Expanded Core Curriculum which may include such skills as orientation and mobility, Braille, and assistive technology. It is not unreasonable for a fully academic student to require more than four years to complete this demanding curriculum.

**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:  
 2009: 1763 / 1776 = 99.8%  
 2010: 1878 / 1878 = 100%  
 2011: 1873 / 1873 = 100%

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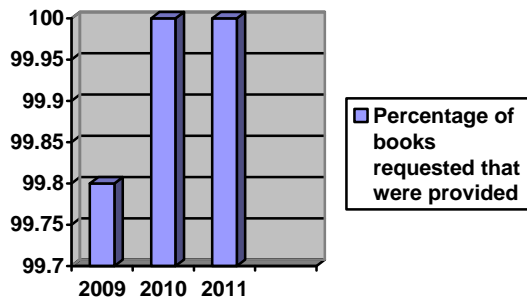
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**Story behind the baseline:** The graph illustrates the continued commitment of BRS-BESB to ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired have accessible textbooks available to fully participate in classroom activities.

**Proposed actions to turn the curve:** BRS-BESB has a dedicated Braille Unit to coordinate the provision of accessible materials for all CT 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 DOC for training inmates to produce Braille. The work of the Braille Unit is under the supervision of the Braille Coordinator, who determines which resources will be used to provide all requested texts in the most cost-effective and timely manner. She communicates regularly with all TVIs in CT, as well as

special education directors when needed, to ensure 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 2010-2011 school year.

**Performance Measure 3:** Increase in the percentage of transition eligible students who have visual impairments, age 15 and over, who participate in work experiences through the BRS- BESB Program.

Students with work experience / total eligible transition-age students:

2009: 40 / 95 = 42%

2010: 17 / 77 = 22%

2011: 32 / 131 = 24%



**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 work experiences to youth with disabilities, in addition to providing independent living training, will lead to a greater likelihood of career success after graduation. In late 2010, Children's Services hired an Education Projects Coordinator (EPC) to serve in a similar capacity to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) transition coordinator. Therefore 2011 was the first year that we could offer work experiences to students who are classified as visually impaired, as well as those students served by VR who are legally blind. This accounts for the large increase in eligible transition age students in the report. In previous years BESB could only offer summer programming. Beginning in 2011, we were able to offer weekend work experiences for students throughout the year as part of our expanded programming made possible by the hiring of the EPC.

The large number of students receiving work experiences in 2009 was a result of the one-time influx of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding for One-Stop Centers to provide work options for youth that year. We are now using existing resources within BRS-BESB and yet are approaching the high number of work experiences that ARRA funds made possible in 2009.

**Proposed actions to turn the curve:** The number of students who received work experiences through BRS-BESB nearly doubled from 2010 to 2011. As our program develops, we plan to continue this increase.