

ANDOVER SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Parents of Andover Elementary School Students:

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that Andover Elementary School has elected to request an extension from the State of Connecticut Department of Education to implement the change in criteria for identification of children with specific learning disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and related state laws. The district has requested an extension until January 15, 2010 to implement this change, as permitted by the State Department of Education (SDOE) following the issuance of the Executive Summary of the 2009 Guidelines for Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities (“the Executive Summary”) in June of, 2009. Importantly, although the SDOE sought to require districts to comply with the 2009 Guidelines for Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities (“the Guidelines”) by July 1, 2009, the SDOE did not issue the Executive Summary until after July 1, 2009, and has not yet issued the actual Guidelines as of the date of this letter. Without the actual Guidelines in hand, we feel that the most prudent course of action is to obtain the extension and continue to implement the 1999 Guidelines for Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities.

Many of you have already heard about state and federal mandates for Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI), which are designed to improve the quality of instruction for all students in the core subject areas of reading, writing, and math. Some students are already participating in targeted programs of supplemental instruction that meet the standards of SRBI, and are reaping the benefits of those programs in the form of higher test scores and a stronger base of knowledge. We want to emphasize that we are fully committed to implementing SRBI in our district, and that this extension of the implementation of the Guidelines in no way compromises that commitment. We are committed to making sure that the district’s program for SRBI, including implementation of strong curriculum in reading, math, and writing, professional development for teachers, a system of assessment of progress in each tier of intervention, and our system for communication of results with parents, is equal to the task. At this point, we feel it would be unfair to our students to attempt to hold to the new standards described only in general terms in the Executive Summary to the Guidelines.

In preparation for the eventual implementation of the new Guidelines, if you would like to obtain more information about the policies of the State of Connecticut for student performance, strategies for increasing student rate of learning, and parental rights to request an evaluation of a child suspected of having a learning disability, we invite you to visit the following websites, which provide additional information:

1. Information concerning a parent's right to request an evaluation of a child suspected of having a learning disability can be found in the Procedural Safeguards in Special Education, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=320730#publications>.
2. The SRBI Framework that describes the state's perspective on SRBI can be found at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2604&Q=321716>, and the executive summary of this document can be found at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=320730#publications>.
3. Connecticut's framework for the Response to Intervention (RTI) model for identification of children with specific learning disabilities can be found under the heading of Resources for Parents and Families on the SDE website (www.sde.ct.gov) under the heading Publications/Resources-Best Practices, entitled A Family Guide: Connecticut's Framework to RTI.
4. Curriculum standards and CMT/CAPT grade-level goals for students can be found at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/Curriculum/Curriculum_Development_Guide_2009.pdf, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320866>, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&Q=322136>, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320850m>, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&Q=321834>.

If your child requires supplemental targeted instruction in the SRBI model, you will receive specific notification of that from your child's teacher and/or the school office, and his or her progress in this supplemental instruction will be tracked so that you can receive periodic updates concerning your child's progress. If you believe that your child is receiving or may require such instruction, please contact Dr. Michelle Zeuschner, Assistant Principal/Director of Special Education, for additional information regarding Andover Elementary School's SRBI process.

We know that this information can be confusing for parents, and we want to provide as much information as we can to help alleviate any concerns that may be raised by this process. Your child's individual progress is important to us, and it is only through parent-school partnership that every child can excel. If you have any questions regarding this notification, please feel free to contact Dr. Zeuschner at (860) 742-7339.

Sincerely yours,
Andrew Maneggia
Andrew Maneggia
Superintendent