



**FEASIBILITY OF EXPANDING THE PRESCHOOL
THROUGH 20 WORKFORCE INFORMATION
NETWORK AND REPORTING ON EMPLOYMENT
OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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List of Acronyms Used in This Report

BESB	Bureau of Education & Services for the Blind
BOR	Board of Regents for Higher Education
BRS	Bureau of Rehabilitative Services
CCIC	Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
CSDE	Connecticut State Department of Education
DDS	Department of Developmental Services
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles
DOL	Department of Labor
DORS	Department of Rehabilitation Services
EOP	Employment Opportunities Program
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized education program
IES	Institute for Education Sciences
IHE	Institutions of Higher Education
JJPOC	Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee
LON	Level of Need
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCWD/Youth	National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth
NSC	National Student Clearinghouse
OPM	Office of Policy and Management
OSEP	U.S. Office of Special Education Programs
P20 WIN	Preschool through 20 Workforce Information Network
PII	Personally identifiable information
PRI	Office of Program Review and Investigations
PSIS	Public School Information System
RSA	U.S. Rehabilitation Services Administration
SASID	State Assigned Student Identifier
SERC	State Education Resource Center
SLDS	State Longitudinal Data System(s)
SPP	State Performance Plan
SSN	Social Security Number
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
TCS	Teacher-Course-Student
UConn	University of Connecticut
UI	Unemployment Insurance
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
YPE	Years post exit

Executive Summary

Through the passage of Senate Bill 1502 (Budget Implementer Bill), the Connecticut General Assembly commissioned the State Education Resource Center (SERC) to conduct a study of data collection regarding employment outcomes for Connecticut's students with disabilities. Specifically, the bill requires SERC "to study the collection, assimilation, and reporting of longitudinal student data related to special education outcomes. The study must examine the feasibility of (1) expanding the Preschool through 20 Workforce Information Network (P20 WIN) to include Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and Bureau of Rehabilitative Services (BRS) participation and (2) using the network to create an annual report containing data on students who received special education and have exited the public school system, including data related to subsequent employment and participation in state programs, at regular intervals over a ten-year period following such students' exit from the public school system. The study must also project the costs related to such annual report and expanding P20 WIN to include these additional agencies" (§ 286).

I. Overview of the P20 WIN

Connecticut's P20 WIN is a multi-agency data-sharing network that facilitates longitudinal analysis of education and employment outcomes *across* PK-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems. (The number 20 denotes advanced and lifelong learning.) Linking data across systems allows stakeholders to gain a more complete picture of public policy, and serves as a key mechanism by which state agencies can audit and evaluate the effectiveness of major education and workforce programs.

To match data about the same individual across multiple systems, P20 WIN agencies temporarily utilize personally identifiable information (PII). Once individual records are linked across agencies, the resulting record contains randomly generated identifiers and group numbers that can be used for analysis by the authorized representative who is conducting an approved audit or evaluation. Once an individual record is linked across agencies, the PII is destroyed and not available as part of the linked data set.

Participation in the network is voluntary and currently includes the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), Department of Labor (DOL), the University of Connecticut (UConn), and the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC). A formal protocol for expanding the P20 WIN is available on

the P20 WIN website. The developers of the P20 WIN expected the network to be expanded in the future to include other agencies that interact with individuals who are moving through the education-to-workforce pipeline. The protocol outlines the benefits of participation, the process of joining the network, the technical requirements that an agency must be able to meet, and the criteria by which a request to join is evaluated.

The P20 WIN was developed with funding from the federal Institute for Education Sciences' (IES) State Longitudinal Data Systems Grant (SLDS) Program. Under this program, IES awarded CSDE a five-year, \$2.9M grant in 2009 and a four-year, \$1.5M grant in 2005. As of the writing of this report, funds from the 2009 IES grant were entirely depleted. Any remaining project activities are taking place due to the BOR providing in-kind support for a project manager. Projected costs for sustaining the P20 WIN over the next five years total approximately \$2.2M, not including fringe benefits for staff.

A data sharing/linking initiative similar to the P20 WIN was approved by the General Assembly this past spring. Effective July 1, 2015, as per Public Act 15-142 (An Act Improving Data Security and Agency Effectiveness) Section 4, the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) was charged with developing "a program to access, link, analyze and share data maintained by executive agencies and to respond to queries from any state agency, and from any private entity or person that would otherwise require access to data maintained by two or more executive agencies." As part of launching the initiative, state leaders are exploring potential areas for initial focus.

II. Feasibility of Expanding the P20 WIN to Include BRS and DDS

BRS is a program of the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). Individuals with a physical and/or mental disability that is a substantial barrier to employment, and who require vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to obtain and keep competitive employment are eligible for BRS services.

DDS' statutory responsibility includes the planning, development, and administration of complete, comprehensive, and integrated statewide services for persons with intellectual disability and persons medically diagnosed with Prader-Willi Syndrome. DDS employment services include competitive job supports, individual supported employment, and individualized day vocational programs.

The inclusion of BRS and DDS in the P20 WIN could augment what is known about the pre-employment/employment services and supports that eligible special education students receive, starting as early as age 14. The collection of data related to these services and supports is not currently available through the existing P20 partners. By linking to wage and industry data provided by the DOL, the inclusion of BRS and DDS could allow stakeholders to identify and understand the types of programming that positively impact a young person's employment trajectory.

The most significant direct cost to participating agencies is dedicated time for a database administrator/analyst to prepare the databases requested for audits or evaluations. Assuming a fringe rate of 70%, **the total cost for a half-time and full-time analyst** would be **\$72,250** and **\$157,899** respectively.

A feasibility analysis was informed by in-person interviews with agency leaders and staff. Conclusions and recommendations include:

- Before any investments are made in the expansion of the P20 WIN, its short- and long-term sustainability questions must be resolved. A potential strategy for the short term is to **commit resources to fund a full-time P20 WIN project manager for one year**, rather than having this position funded on a very limited basis through in-kind support from BOR.
- For the long term, it will be important for the legislative and executive branches to **articulate the relationship between the P20 WIN and the new OPM data sharing initiative**. More clarity is needed regarding why these separate data networks are needed and how they are expected to interact and/or collaborate with one another.
- To increase awareness and lessen confusion regarding the various data sharing initiatives in the state, **a central portal listing all available data resources should be created and widely publicized**. The myriad coalitions, advisory committees, and task forces across the state could benefit greatly from this type of resource, avoiding unnecessary research and/or duplication of efforts.

Until these systemic issues are addressed, expansion of the P20 WIN is premature and may undermine the network as a whole by diverting attention away from broader sustainability strategies. However, it is also clear that collaboration with the P20 WIN would have much to offer to BRS and DDS in the medium and long term.

III. Feasibility of Reporting on the Employment Outcomes of Students with Disabilities

Using the parameters outlined in Senate Bill 1502, a feasibility analysis was conducted regarding how Connecticut agencies could collaborate to produce annual reports that focus on (1) students who received special education and have exited public school and (2) employment outcomes for these students, including their participation in state programs after exiting public school. The proposed reporting period would cover the 10 years following students' exit from public school.

The feasibility analysis considered the size of the proposed cohort, possible state programs in which students could participate after exiting public school to prepare for work/career, fields available for matching data across agencies, limitations of available data for reporting employment outcomes, a proposed reporting schedule and costs, and how this report could assist the state with meeting federal reporting requirements. CSDE, BOR, DOL, and OPM personnel were consulted for this analysis.

A proposed reporting schedule was developed in consultation with CSDE staff, who recommended four reporting points during the 10-year period following a student's exit from public school. These points include 1, 2, 5, and 10 years post exit (YPE). At each of these intervals, students' participation in state programs and/or employment activity may have some unique characteristics.

The proposed report would allow stakeholders to better understand outcomes for students with disabilities during critical junctures after their exit Connecticut public schools. Approximately 5,200 students with disabilities exit each year, and to date, the only instrument available for tracking their employment and education outcomes is the Connecticut Post-School Outcomes survey. This survey has consistently low response rates, and it only captures outcomes at 1 YPE.

Conclusions and recommendations from the feasibility analysis include:

- Prior to investing in the human and technological resources required to produce these annual reports, **additional validation research is needed** regarding the match rates between DOL and CSDE data. Match rates considered acceptable and/or desirable can be determined by the P20 WIN Data Governance Board and made known to data requestors, who in turn can decide if they would like to proceed with their request.

- If acceptable and/or desirable match rates are achieved between CSDE and DOL data, **a coordinating agency to oversee the reporting should be designated.** Given that CSDE has an immediate use for the data in relation to SPP indicators, it makes sense for the reporting coordination to live there. The 1-2-5-10 YPE frequency would both make the reporting workload more manageable and capture a variety of outcomes across a 10-year trajectory.
- Regardless of where the coordination is housed, policy makers must **ensure that the participating agencies have the internal capacity to carry out their share of the reporting requirements.** This type of repeated, multi-cohort analysis will call for significant investment of staff hours, as reporting procedures are carried out and continuously improved. The chief data officers at each agency can make the most accurate projections about how to phase in these costs.

It is critical for educators, families, and policymakers to understand how to support students with disabilities during the critical transitions that follow exit from the public school system. Given the many challenges that these students are facing in securing employment, coupled with states' growing capacity to analyze outcomes through longitudinal data systems, the time is right to begin planning the implementation of the proposed report. However, as with the question of including new partners in the P20 WIN, policymakers must take a hard look at the various data sharing initiatives across the state and ensure that a plan for coordinating resources also is in place.

