

The Connecticut State Department of Education concluded its lengthy investigation into concerns regarding systematic practices of the special education department during the 2012-13 school year. The conclusions of the State, including the one that “substantive changes to IEPs were made by the district outside the PPT/amendment process during the 2012-13 school year. . . and is in violation of the IDEA” are quite serious. The CSDE has ordered corrective actions that the district will take. Attached is the letter from the State.

Earlier this summer, the State issued an initial partial decision identifying numerous violations of the law in the promulgation of special education materials found to be inconsistent with the law. The school district fully accepted the decision. In response, we immediately withdrew the use of any training materials used during 2012-13 and I went to each school building to reiterate my expectation that all decisions need to be made at a PPT, that all participants must fully participate in those meetings, information shared at those meetings be used to inform decisions, and that students receive the services necessary to learn.

We continue to work with Attorney Theresa DeFrancis and the State to develop new, compliant special education materials and train school staff, Board members and parents using these materials. As a reminder, parents are encouraged to attend, if possible, Ms. DeFrancis’ training session on October 8th and 10th. This important work is already underway and will continue throughout this school year. Unilaterally altering a student’s IEP is wrong. As noted, the CSDE has ordered corrective actions that the district will take, including sending current IEP documents to families, offering facilitated PPTs, notifying and training administration and staff of specific legal obligations, and fully cooperating with Attorney Gamm’s investigation.

My message to the Darien community is simple: I will hold those whose actions were in violation of the law accountable. Beyond accountability, however, I will continue to be front and center in the on-going training and education of staff, Board members and parents. I want to again express my appreciation to the parents who filed the complaint as well as those parents and staff who submitted comments to the state for their review; I commend them for their advocacy on behalf of Darien students. I also thank the State for the time, effort and dedication of its team of investigators who have spent countless hours on this matter.

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT:

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Every Darien student must receive a high-quality education that prepares them for the twenty-first century. I look forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders -- staff, administrators, parents and the Board -- to ensure that we have a system that supports this essential mission. I am confident that our collective efforts will benefit all children and make our district stronger.

Read the [Letter from the State](#) 