NATIONAL PSO
POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES CENTER

Post-School Outcomes Data Collection and Use:

Questions State Directors of Special Education Should Ask

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NASDSE

IDEAs that Work
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is give state directors of special education, especially those who are new in their positions, a guide to understanding their role and responsibilities with respect to the collection, analysis and reporting of post-school outcomes data for Indicator 14 of the Part B State Performance Plan (SPP).

To assist state directors, the National Post-School Outcomes Center, a technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), has developed this set of questions designed to help state directors understand the formative issues that will enable them to collect quality data and improve post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. As you read through this document, it is important to understand the interrelationships between Indicator 14 and the other indicators that are designed to help states mark progress on improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Ultimately, everything that happens during the course of a student's elementary and secondary education will impact how well the student does once he or she leaves school. Thus, in order for state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) to show success in reaching their targets for Indicator 14, they will be achieving success with other Indicators in the SPP.

BACKGROUND

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) continues a focus on improved outcomes for students with disabilities that began with the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA and the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. The NCLB reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Both IDEA 2004 and the NCLB have stressed the need for students with disabilities to be challenged to their maximum potential. The NCLB requirements for proficiency for students with disabilities has provided an additional impetus to the LRE requirements in IDEA to ensure that these students have access to the general curriculum in the least restrictive environment. Since IDEA already calls for students to be placed in the least restrictive environment, special educators were already well aware of the benefits of having students with disabilities in general education settings. NCLB has now made general educators aware of the need.

To ensure that students with disabilities reach proficiency, more collaboration than has previously existed between general and special educators is required. Collaboration needs to be modeled at the highest levels in order to encourage it at every level. At the state level, this means that the state director of special education should extend an offer of collaboration to his/her counterparts throughout the state education agencies. Some state directors are already doing this by funding positions in other departments within their state agency to "share the special education perspective" with other programs. By modeling this type of behavior, local and

building special educators can see how they can reach out to their general education counterparts.

IDEA 2004 includes an entire new section on monitoring SEAs and LEAs with respect to their success in ensuring successful educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Monitoring is linked to a set of 20 indicators for Part B (students with disabilities aged 3-21). In December 2005, states submitted SPPs that reflected baseline data (where available) and target outcomes for each of the 20 Indicators. In February 2007, SEAs will report to OSEP for the first time in their Annual Performance Report (APR) on the progress they are making with respect to each of the indicator targets. While a discussion of all of the indicators is beyond the scope of this brief paper, it is important to understand the linkages between and among indicators that will ultimately impact successful post-school outcomes. These include, but are certainly not limited to:

- **Indicator 1:** the percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma compared to percent of all youth in the state graduating with a regular diploma.
- **Indicator 2:** the percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school compared to the percent of all youth in the state dropping out of high school.
- **Indicator 13**: the percent of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the child to meet the postsecondary goals.
- **Indicator 14:** the percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school.
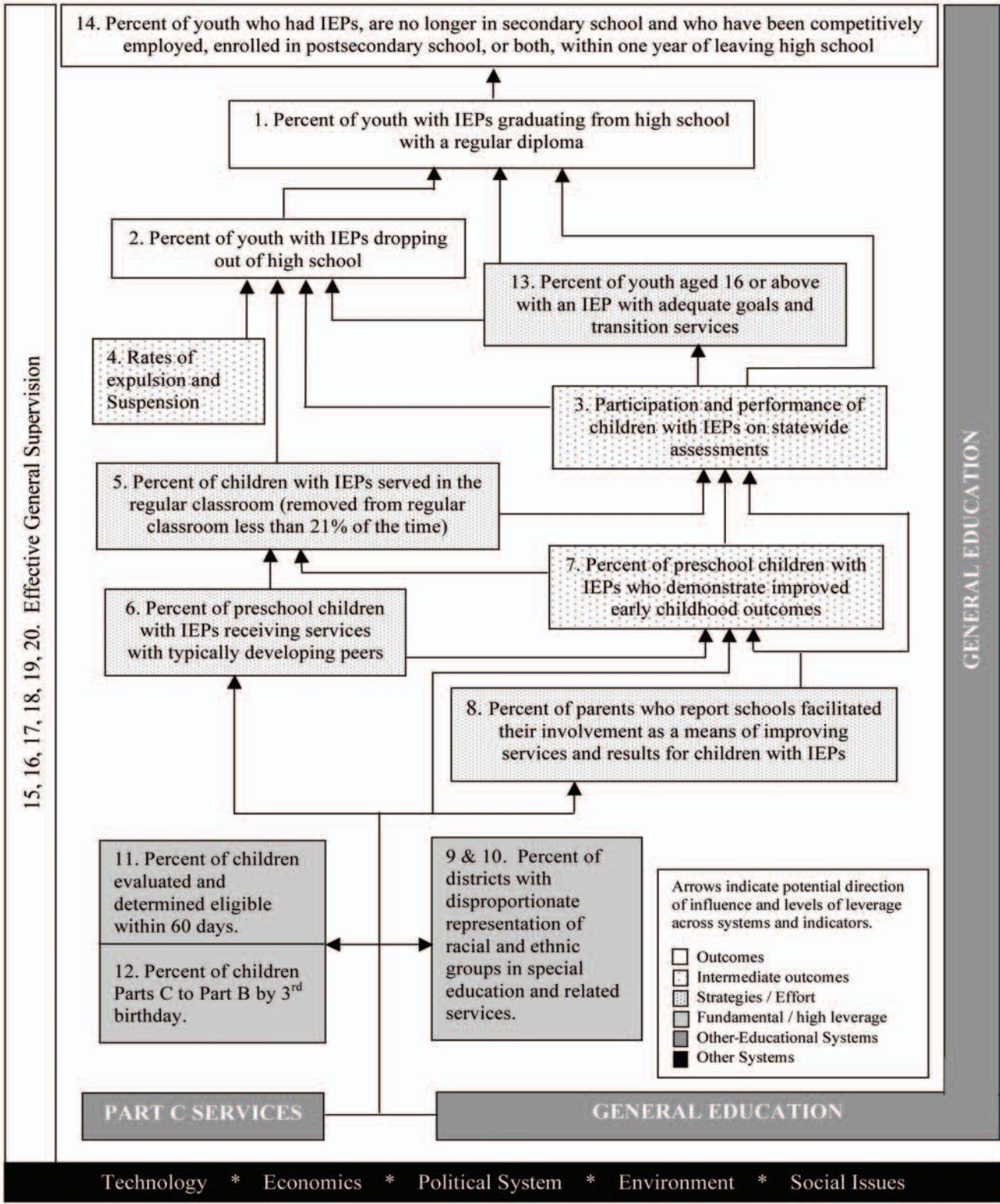
The relationship between indicators is graphically depicted by the diagram on the next page. The Western Regional Resource Center developed this Part B "Tree of Influence". Students with disabilities will not have successful post-school outcomes unless and until LEAs and SEAs make progress on the other indicators as illustrated by the arrows indicating potential direction of influence. The "Tree of Influence" links the indicators together beginning at the bottom of the diagram with students entering special education either from Part C services or from general education. Following the arrows upward, one sees the connections and eventual impact on post-school outcomes (indicator #14) for youth with IEPs.

The data sources, measurements, and targets differ depending on the indicator. For Indicator 14, for example, states are allowed to use a variety of sources for reporting purposes and can use sampling as long as they provide a description of the sampling methodology and describe how the sampling will provide valid and reliable estimates. The data collected must address graduates, dropouts, and other school leavers (e.g., those who aged out). In describing employment, SEAs must define what it means by

"Collecting post-school outcomes data is going to help us more closely align the curricular content and programs provided in public secondary schools with the reality of adult life for students. We are going to look at outcomes, what has led to those outcomes, and what components have been successful in helping our students be successfully employed or successful in attending postsecondary school."

Dr. Mabrey Whetstone, Director of Special Education for the State of Alabama and president-elect of NASDSE

Part B Tree of Influence
Using the System of SPP Indicators as a
Blueprint for State Improvement

14. Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school

1. Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma

2. Percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school

13. Percent of youth aged 16 or above with an IEP with adequate goals and transition services

4. Rates of expulsion and Suspension

3. Participation and performance of children with IEPs on statewide assessments

5. Percent of children with IEPs served in the regular classroom (removed from regular classroom less than 21% of the time)

7. Percent of preschool children with IEPs who demonstrate improved early childhood outcomes

6. Percent of preschool children with IEPs receiving services with typically developing peers

8. Percent of parents who report schools facilitated their involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with IEPs

11. Percent of children evaluated and determined eligible within 60 days.

12. Percent of children Parts C to Part B by 3rd birthday.

9 & 10. Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services.

Arrows indicate potential direction of influence and levels of leverage across systems and indicators.

☐ Outcomes
▫ Intermediate outcomes
▨ Strategies / Effort
▤ Fundamental / high leverage
▥ Other-Educational Systems
■ Other Systems

15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. Effective General Supervision

GENERAL EDUCATION

PART C SERVICES

GENERAL EDUCATION

Technology * Economics * Political System * Environment * Social Issues

This is work in progress! (Last revision, March 2007)

"competitive employment," whether the work is full or part-time and the definition of "postsecondary" school that the SEA is using. See NPSO Tools for "Helpful Hints" that include recommended definitions. The remainder of this document poses some questions for state directors of special education to think about as they seek to improve outcomes for students with disabilities under Indicator 14.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT
Stop: Before reading any further, make sure you recall exactly what you said in your SPP about Indicator 14 (especially if you are a new state director and did not participate in the writing of the document). Once you have looked over your SPP, the following questions may make more sense.

State-Level Collaboration
1. Who else in your state agency do you need to talk to as you seek to improve outcomes for students with disabilities under both NCLB and IDEA 2004?
2. What mechanisms can your state agency put into place to establish regular avenues of communication (e.g., regularly scheduled meetings; infusing staff funded by federal IDEA monies into other areas of the department; joint planning, etc.)?
3. How can you involve stakeholders to improve your post-school outcomes? What other state agencies would you need to include (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation, Human Service, Health, Medicaid, etc.)? What other non-public stakeholder groups would you need to include (e.g., parents, teacher associations, etc.)? Consider building a community of practice (CoP) to establish shared goals around transition and post-school outcomes. (See NASDSE Resources for information on how to start a CoP.)

Getting Started with Data Collection
1. Who on your staff is responsible for collecting the data for Indicator 14? Is it the same person who initially wrote the indicator or will it be someone else? If it's someone else, is that person already familiar with the both the targets in the SPP and the APR reporting requirements? What does that person need to get "up to speed" on the indicator? Does this person understand the connectivity between Indicator 14 and related indicators?
2. Who else needs to be involved? (Consider the individuals working on the related indicators and those who will be working on the data collection and analysis.)
3. Have you established timelines for completing the data collection, data analysis, and reporting of data? Are your timelines reasonable given other priorities, staff assignments, etc. If not, is there any flexibility in changing them?
4. Have you established a meeting calendar for pulling your

What Is a Community of Practice?

A Community of Practice (CoP) is quite simply a group of people that agree to interact regularly to solve a persistent problem or improve practice in an area that is important to them. CoPs are a way of working that invite the groups that have a stake in an issue to be a part of the problemsolving. The CoP develops its own schedule or 'rhythm' for interacting and creates mechanisms to communicate that give access to all the members.

From IDEA Partnership at NASDSE
http://www.ideapartnership.org/

5. Have you kept everyone who needs to be informed (e.g., your chief state school officer, your data manager, members of the state legislature; governor's staff; local superintendents; local special education directors, other stakeholders) in the loop? How will you keep them informed? What do they need to know and when should they know it?
6. Do your LEAs understand what is expected of them regarding data to be collected, format and reporting requirements and most importantly, WHY they are collecting the data?

Keeping the Data Collection on Track
1. Do you have a budget for this work? Is it a realistic budget? If not, what can be done to change it?
2. Have you given LEAs a timeline and process to follow for collecting and submitting their data to the SEA?
3. Do you have a mechanism in place for responding to their questions?
4. Have you planned sufficient training for LEAs in how you expect them to collect their post-school outcomes data and in the use of survey forms?
5. Are you familiar with the survey question and methodologies for contacting former students?
6. Have you trained both your staff and LEAs in how to use the data for informed decision making to improve outcomes for students with disabilities?
7. Have you thought about how stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, teacher unions, other professional organizations, Vocational Rehabilitation, employment services) can help you with your data collection around post-school outcomes? Have you encouraged LEAs to involve stakeholders in a similar way?

Data Collection Decision Making
1) If decisions regarding data collection were made prior to your appointment as state director, do you understand the data collection procedures that have been put in place? Things to think about include:
   a) Are you using sampling to collect the data? If so, do you understand OSEP's requirements for sampling and are you confident that your sampling plan is consistent with those requirements?
   b) Do you have strategies in place to locate age-outs, dropouts and/or early leavers? Have these strategies been communicated to the LEAs?
2) Are you contracting with an outside agency to collect and/or analyze the post-school outcomes data?
3) Will the SEA work with LEAs to provide incentives for the data

collection? What kinds of incentives have you thought about? Do you have LEA buy-in to use them?

4) If other entities are involved in collecting data (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation), are there any issues of confidentiality that must be addressed? Do other entities understand what data they are being asked to collect and more importantly, why?

Data Reporting

1. Do your LEAs know your expectations for when data must be delivered to the SEA?
2. Do your LEAs know in what format the data must be delivered?
3. Do your LEAs know how to use the data they have collected to improve their programs? (This is one of the most critical aspects of the data collection.)
4. Do you have a plan in place for releasing the data to policymakers and the public? (It's always best to brief policymakers first so there are no surprises for them.)
5. How are you going to report the data to the public? What "story" do you want to tell with the data?
6. Have you considered holding a meeting with education reporters from various media (e.g., press, television, radio) to provide the assistance they need to tell an accurate story about your data?
7. OSEP requires you to report your data on your website. Have you met with your SEA website manager to discuss how and where to report the data on your website, making it accessible and understandable to the public?

What To Do Once the Data Is In Hand

1. Did you meet your targets for your APR? Whether the answer is yes or no, the question is the same: do you know what strategies are working and which ones can still be improved upon?
2. What mechanisms do you have in place to work with LEAs where improvement is needed (for both data collection and outcomes)? Think about setting up a mentoring system for LEAs, pairing an LEA that had good data collection results with one that is struggling. Similarly, have an LEA with good post-school outcomes for students with disabilities mentor one that needs improvement.
3. How can you use the CoP that you have established to revise goals and strategies once the data is in hand?

Because of the feedback on where students are and what they are doing after they complete their secondary education, data that your state collects for the post-school outcomes indicator will speak volumes about the overall success of your special education program as well as identify gaps where program improvements should be made.

The National Post-School Outcomes Center is available to provide technical assistance to your state to ensure fidelity of the data collected for this indicator. The Center also can coordinate with its partners, the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD), the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC), NASDSE, and the Regional Resource Centers to provide technical assistance.

NPSO TOOLS

Information is available on the NPSO Center's website at www.psocenter.org

Sampling

Establishing a Representative Sample of Your State to Address Indicator #14

Sampling and Response Calculators

Sampling Checklist: To Sample or not to Sample

Data Collection

Data Collection Procedures Checklist.

Post-School Data Collection Protocol Stage 1: Recommended Essential Questions to Address Indicator #14

Post-School Data Collection Question Bank Stage 2: Supplemental Questions to Address Indicator #14

Post-School Outcomes Data Collection and Use: Questions State Data Managers Should Ask

PSO Data Collection Guide: Training Interviewers

Reporting

Reporting Checklist.

Completing Indicator 14 (Post-School Outcomes) Template for FFY 2005 SPP/APR Submission due Feb. 1, 2007: Helpful Hints

Other

National Post-School Outcomes State Profile Database

Measuring Transition Success: Focus on Youth and Family Participation

NASDSE RESOURCE

The IDEA Partnership at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education has information on Communities of Practice