# An Analysis of States' 2007-08 Annual Performance Report Data for Indicator 1 (Graduation)

A Report Prepared for the
U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs
by the
National Dropout Prevention Center
for Students with Disabilities

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# **INDICATOR 1: GRADUATION**

## INTRODUCTION

The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) was assigned the task of compiling, analyzing and summarizing the data for Indicator 1—Graduation—from the 2007–08 Annual Performance Reports (APRs) and amended State Performance Plans (SPPs), which were submitted by states to OSEP in February of 2009. The text of the indicator is as follows.

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

In the APR, each state reported its graduation rate for special education students, compared its current graduation rate with the state target rate for the 2007-08 school year, discussed reasons for its progress or slippage with respect to the target rate, and described the improvement activities it had undertaken during the year.

In the amended SPP, states revised their targets for improvement or their strategies and activities, as was deemed necessary by the state or by OSEP. The main reasons given by states for making such changes were: 1) the identification of additional needs during the year, 2) revision or replacement of activities that were not working satisfactorily, and 3) changes in requirements or definitions. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the revisions made.

Table 1
Revisions to the State Performance Plans, as submitted in February 2009

Type of revision made	Number of states
Activities only	33
Measurement only	1
Targets only	2
Activities and baseline only	2
Activities and targets only	2
Activities, baseline and targets only	1
Activities, baseline, measurement, and targets	1
None	18

This report summarizes the NDPC-SD's findings for Indicator 1 across the 50 states, commonwealths and territories, and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), for a total of 60 agencies. For the sake of convenience, in this report the term "states" is inclusive of the 50 states, the commonwealths, and the territories, as well as the BIE, except when noted.

The evaluation and comparison of graduation rates for the states was confounded by several issues, which are described in the context of the summary information for the indicator.

# The definition of graduation

The definition of graduation remains inconsistent across states. Some states offer a single "regular" diploma, which represents the only true route to graduation. Other states offer two or more levels of diplomas or other exiting documents. For example, some states offer a Regular Diploma, a High School Certificate, and a Special Education Diploma. Some states include General Education Development (GED) candidates as graduates, whereas the majority of states do not.

#### **COMPARING GRADUATION RATES – CALCULATION METHODS**

Comparisons among the states are still not easily made because the method of calculation varies from state to state, though this situation will improve with the adoption of a standard graduation-rate calculation in the 2010-11 school year. The graduation rates included in the APRs generally were calculated using one of three methods: an event rate calculation, a leaver method or a cohort method.

#### **Event rate**

Event rate calculations provide a single-year snapshot of the graduation rate. While they are relatively easy to calculate, they do not account for dropouts of other attrition from year to year. Event rate calculations used by states generally followed the form below.

# of special education graduates receiving a regular diploma

Total special education enrollment (from 618 Table 4)

#### Leaver rate

The leaver rate calculation provides a graduation rate that takes into consideration students who exited by receiving a regular diploma, a certificate, or GED; dropped out; reached the maximum age to receive services; or died. Leaver rate calculations used by states generally follow the form below.

# of graduates receiving a regular diploma

# of graduates + # of GEDs + # of certificates + # of dropouts + # that maxed out in age + # deceased

## **Cohort rate**

The adjusted cohort rate calculation provides a measure of on-time graduation rate for a 4-year cohort of students. It considers transfers in and out of the cohort, as well as students who died during the period. This is the method recommended by the National Governors Association. This method, as applied in the APRs, generally followed the form below.

# Sp Ed graduates receiving a regular diploma who entered HS as 1<sup>st</sup> time 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2004

# Sp Ed students who entered HS as 1<sup>st</sup> time 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2004 + transfers in – transfers out – died

Graduation rates calculated using these three methods cannot properly be compared with one another. Event rates tend to over-represent the graduation rate, providing a snapshot of the

graduation rate for a particular year that ignores attrition over time; leaver rates provide a good measure of a graduation status rate in the absence of individual student data; whereas the adjusted cohort method provides a more realistic description of the number of students who progressed through four years of high school and graduated.

Twenty-two states (37%) used the cohort method for calculating their special-education graduation rates, though several also calculated a 5-year cohort to account for students with disabilities' likelihood of needing more than four years to complete their graduation requirements. Sixteen states (27%) employed the event method and 21 states (35%) computed a leaver rate.

#### 2007-08 GRADUATION RATES

Across the 60 states, the highest reported graduation rate for special education students was 90.2% and the lowest was 8.0%. These extremes occurred in states that calculated an event graduation rate. It also should be noted that the low extreme was reported by a state in which very few students with disabilities were eligible to graduate in 2008.

Figure 1 shows the special education graduation rates for all of the states. States are grouped by the method used to calculate their graduation rate.

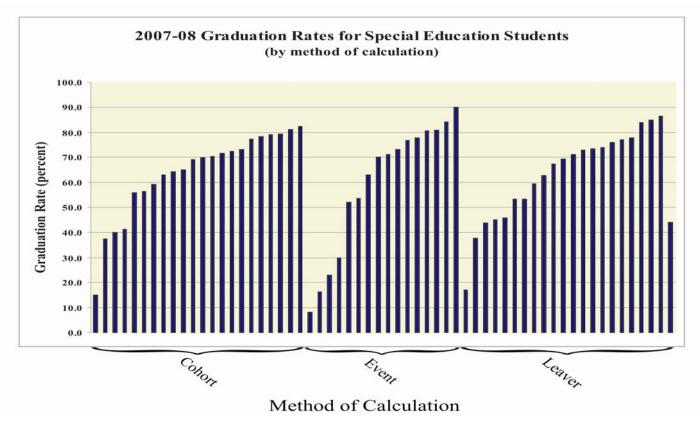


Figure 1

Figures 2, 3 and 4 show the graduation rates for states that employed each of the three methods of calculation. Please note that the BIE's graduation rates are calculated using the method favored by each state in which its schools operate; hence, they are not reported in these charts.

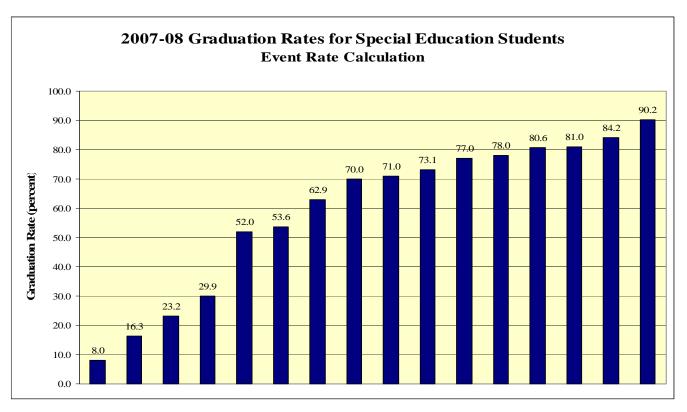


Figure 2

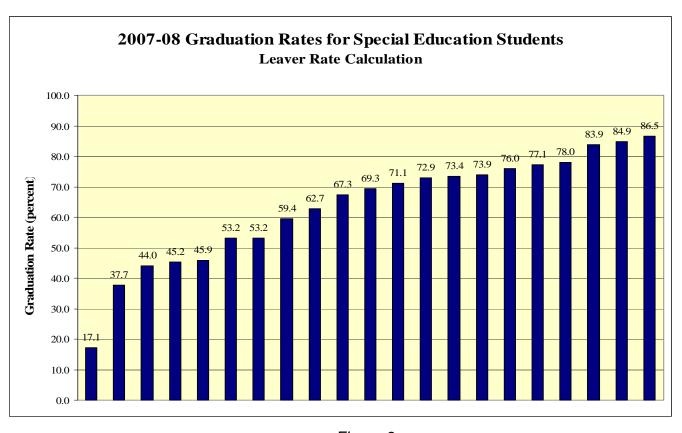


Figure 3

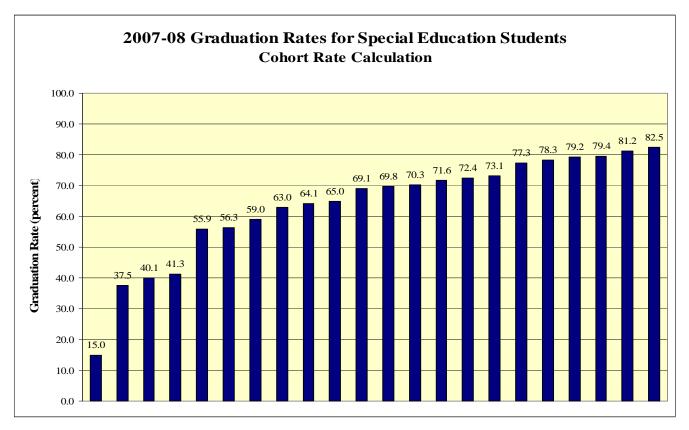


Figure 4

#### **GRADUATION RATE TARGETS**

Thirty-four states (57%) achieved their targeted graduation rate for students with disabilities in 2007-08 and 26 states (43%) did not. This represents a trend of improvement from the previous two years of graduation data.

# **PROGRESS AND SLIPPAGE**

Thirty-eight states (63%) made progress from their rates reported in the 2006-07 APR and eighteen states (30%) experienced slippage during the year. The graduation rates of 3 states (5%) remained the same as reported in the 2006-07 APRs. This represents an improvement from the 2006-07 school year, in which 32 states made progress, 23 states showed slippage and 2 states lacked the data to determine progress or slippage. The BIE was excluded from these calculations.

Figure 5 represents the changes in reported graduation rates from the 2006-07 school year. Positive values indicate an improvement in graduation rate from the previous year's data. Once again, it should be noted that the two extreme values were reported by SEAs with low numbers of students. In these states, a change in the number of graduates of 4 or 5 students can result in an enormous fluctuation in the graduation rate from the previous year.

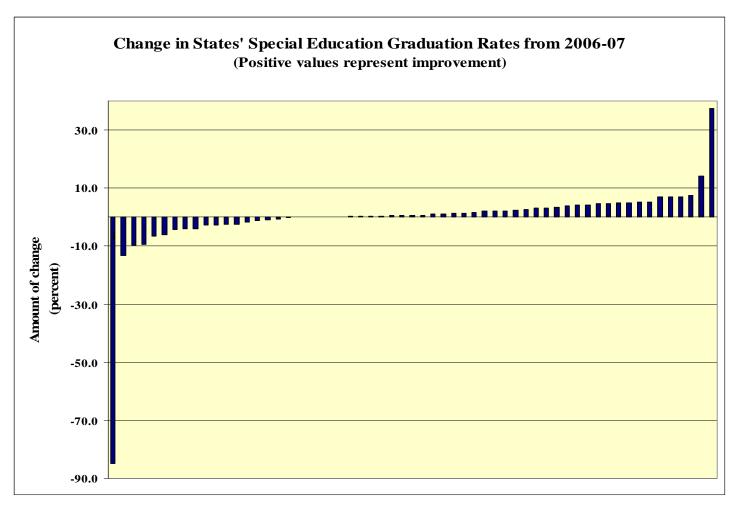


Figure 5

### **CONNECTIONS AMONG INDICATORS**

Fifty-five states (92%) made explicit or at least implicit connections between Indicators 1 and 2, and frequently included the other transition indicators, Secondary Transition and Post-School Outcomes (Indicators 13 and 14, respectively), as well.

#### NDPC-SD INTERACTIONS WITH STATES

All 60 states received some form of technical assistance from NDPC-SD during the 2007-08 school year. Twelve states (20%) received technical assistance from the Center at the universal level (Tier 1 in NDPC-SD parlance). This level of technical assistance may take the form of participation in a Teleseminar or Webinar, receipt of the Center's Big IDEAs newsletter, downloading of documents or other materials from the Center's website, or short-term consultation with the Center via email or telephone. Forty-two states (70%) received targeted technical assistance (NDPC-SD Tier 2), which represents participation in an NDPC-SD conference or receipt of small-group assistance from NDPC-SD. Finally, 6 states (10%) received intensive or sustained technical assistance from NDPC-SD in 2007-08, representing Tier 3 in the Center's hierarchy. NDPC-SD worked to establish model program sites in 3 of these states and worked with the other 3 states in an ongoing manner during 2007-08.

These results represent an increase from the figures reported in the 2006-07 APR. Table 2 shows a breakdown of these interactions in 2007-08 using the categories specified in the OSEP template for this report.

Table 2

NDPC-SD Interactions with States during the 2007-08 school year

Nature of interaction	Number of states
A. NDPC-SD provided information to State by mail, telephone, teleseminar, listserv, or Communities of Practice	12
<b>B.</b> State attended a conference sponsored by NDPC-SD or received small-group or direct on-site assistance from NDPC-SD	42
C. NDPC-SD provided ongoing, on-site TA to the State and/or worked toward the end of developing model demonstration sites	6

## **IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES**

States were instructed to report the strategies, activities, timelines and resources they employed in order to improve the special education graduation rate. The range of proposed activities was considerable. Many states are implementing evidence-based interventions to address their needs. Table 3 shows the number of states employing various evidence-based practices.

Table 3

Evidence-based practices listed in improvement activities of the 2007-08 APR

Type of activity	Number of states
One or more evidence-based practices	48
Positive Behavior Supports	26
Literacy initiatives	13
Response to Intervention	20
Mentoring programs	8

Forty-eight states (80%) listed one or more evidence-based improvement activities in their APR, while the remaining 12 states (20%) did not propose any evidence-based improvement activities. There are a limited number of evidence-based programs that have demonstrated efficacy for students with disabilities; however, there are a number of promising practices.

Using the 9 categories listed in Table 4, NDPC-SD coded each state's improvement activities. Figure 6 shows the number of states engaging in each of the categories.

Table 4
Activity categories for the 2007-08 APRs

Code	Activity
Α	Improve data collection and reporting
В	Improve systems administration and monitoring
С	Build systems and infrastructures of technical assistance and support
D	Provide technical assistance/training/professional development
Е	Clarify /examine/develop policies and procedures
F	Program development
G	Collaboration/coordination
Н	Evaluation
I	Increase/Adjust FTE
J	Other activities

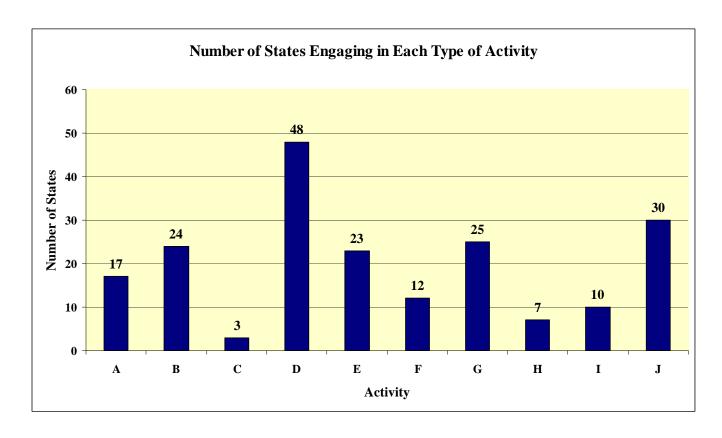


Figure 6

Figure 6 shows that the majority of states (48 states, or 80%) are engaging in one or more technical assistance, training or professional development activities (D). This followed by thirty states (50%)

that engaged in one or more unique improvement activities, specific to the state, which were designed to improving school completion rates (J). Twenty-five states (42%) engaged in some form of collaborative activity with technical-assistance providers, other state or local agencies, community organizations, or businesses (G). Twenty-four states (40%) carried on activities that would improve their monitoring or systems administration (B). Twenty-three states (38%) developed, reviewed and/or adjusted their policies and procedures related to school completion (E). Seventeen states (28%) took steps to improve the quality of their data or addressed data collection or data management systems (A). Twelve states (20%) implemented new programs or initiatives directed at improving their school completion rate (F). Ten states (17%) added or reassigned staff to address school-completion issues (I). Seven states (12%) engaged in the evaluation of improvement processes and/or outcomes related to their improvement activities (H). Finally, three states (5%) reported activities related to the development of statewide or regional support systems or infrastructure designed to deliver technical assistance (C).

As was the case in last year's APRs, the collections of activities listed in states' APRs seem improved over those of the previous years. More states appear to be recognizing the benefit of combining activities across indicators to minimize duplication of effort and maximize effect. A substantial number of states described a group of activities that would work well to address their students' needs across the transition indicators (Inds. 1, 2, 13, and 14). Several other states included activities that addressed Indicators 3, 4 and 5 in addition in their mix of improvement activities in support of school-completion. Appendix A contains selected examples of each activity.

#### **EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-COMPLETION ACTIVITIES**

There is no magic bullet to improve the graduation or dropout rates for students with or without disabilities, though there are strategies that appear to help in these issues of school completion. Among the successful strategies described in this year's APRs are several, which will be discussed below. Some are obvious—some less so.

The use of data spanning multiple SPP indicators to identify needs and risk factors at the system level as well as at the building and student level has increased. While there is not a great deal of evidence to support this practice in the arena of school completion (because the studies have not been done), it is a logical step to take when considering any new initiative or intervention program. Among the states that reported developing or using some sort of cross-indicator risk calculator for identifying students in need of intervention were Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

Sharing information and strategies at all levels—state-to-state, agency-to-agency, LEA-to-LEA, and teacher-to-teacher—is an effective strategy that is increasingly being adopted around the country. While sometimes difficult to initiate, it offers benefits that, once experienced, become difficult to do without. Most capacity building efforts within a state or LEA can benefit from such collaboration. To this end, many states held or participated in a statewide forum on graduation, dropout and/or transition at which district and school teams participated in content sessions about the topic(s), shared experiences and strategies, and developed or continued work on a state improvement plan in the area(s) of concern.

OSEP's three transition-related technical assistance centers (NDPC-SD-SD, NSTTAC and NPSO) co-hosted one such annual institute in Charlotte, NC in May 2007, which was attended by teams from 43 states. Additionally, states, with and without the participation of these national TA centers, hosted other such forums. Among the states that held such forums were Colorado, the District of Columbia,

Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas.

Tiered systems of intervention offer a practical approach to managing and delivering both technical assistance and student interventions. Kansas offers one example of a state that is adopting a multitiered system to support LEAs in their efforts to improve dropout and graduation rates. Nineteen states reported having adopted the use of an Rtl model for identifying and delivering interventions for students with disabilities in a tiered fashion. Among these states are California, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, the Virgin Islands, and Wisconsin.

Efforts to provide smaller learning communities, such as career academies, freshmen academies and graduation academies have been adopted with success in many states. Such programs can offer students a personalized and/or focused learning experience and, as in the case of freshmen academies, can provide some of the supports that will help students make the difficult transition from middle school to high school. Among the states reporting the use of such programs were Georgia, Maryland, South Dakota, and Virginia.

Some state and local policies actively support school completion, whereas, others inadvertently can push some students out of school. Many states described efforts to review policies, program structures and procedures that impact school completion for students with disabilities toward the end of revising such hostile policies and putting into place policies that would support school completion. Among the states that reported activities of this nature were Florida, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Louisiana, Montana, South Dakota, and Washington.

Finally, the involvement of parents/family in the education of their children is a critical factor impacting school completion. Several states reported activities intended to bolster participation of, and support for parents of students with disabilities. Such statewide efforts included parent mentor networks (SD, GA). At the local level, programs to foster communication among the school, parents and students were also reported in several states.

While the majority of states engaged in a variety of improvement activities that supported school completion, a few states' activities were more concerted and exhibited a higher level of scope, organization and potential effectiveness. For example, Georgia's statewide dropout-prevention initiative, the *Georgia Dropout Prevention/Graduation Project*, has involved teams from districts from around the state in capacity-building training with the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, analysis of the factors impacting their districts and schools, identification of their most pressing school-completion needs, development of focused and sustainable plans for addressing the needs, implementation of the plans, and evaluation of the efforts throughout the entire process. This approach appears to be an effective one. The state, as a whole, achieved its graduation-rate target and made progress. Additional information about the project may be found at www.pioneerresa.org/programs/glrs/default.asp.

#### NOTES

 While the comparison of special-education graduation rates to all-student rates has been removed from Indicator 1, it is important that states not lose sight of the significance of this relationship. In order to continue the push for progress in closing the gap between rates of school completion for students with disabilities and those of their non-disabled peers, it is imperative that we remain aware of how students with disabilities are achieving in relation to all students. While there are various data-related barriers to making such comparisons easily, keeping such comparisons in mind may help us avoid complacency in this area. This said we were pleased to note that several states continue to provide data for their students with disabilities as well as their entire student population.

- This year, many states cited improvements in their procedures around data collection as well
  as the newly gained ability to follow individual students' progress and movement among
  districts as having impacted their graduation rates. Some of those states credited their
  improvement in graduation rate to this, whereas others blamed it for their decreased rates.
- Activities that raise states' awareness of the interconnectivity among the Part B Indicators and assist states in understanding and managing data related to those activities will continue to be beneficial to states.

In one 2008 example of such an activity, the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, National Post-School Outcomes Center, and Regional Resource Centers collaborated to deliver three regional institutes, "Making Connections Among Indicators 1, 2, 13, and 14." These were attended by teams from a total of 38 states. The institutes focused on the relationships among these four indicators as well as the collection, reporting and use of Part B Indicator data related to school completion, transition from high school to post-secondary education and/or employment, and post-secondary outcomes. Using their own data, states worked through a series of guided questions and activities that helped them understand and identify strengths and needs around these indicators. After this step, each state team developed a plan for addressing their perceived data-related needs in these areas and described the technical assistance they would use to support the plan. The three centers have been following up with these states to provide requested assistance and to monitor their progress.

#### **IN SUMMARY**

In general, we have observed an improvement in the overall quality and organization of the APRs as well as continued improvement in the nature of the data submitted by states. The improvement activities are generally more concerted and focused than in previous years. It was encouraging to see 57% of states achieve their graduation-rate targets for students with disabilities last year and 63% of the states make progress in their graduation rates. There is a recognized lag between the time at which implementation of an intervention begins and the point at which it begins to shows measurable results. Despite this lag and the annual periodicity of the measurement for this indicator, it appears that things are gradually improving with Indicator 1.

The new graduation rate calculation, which was written into the final regulations for Title I in 2008, will require all states to calculate an adjusted 4-year cohort rate for all students by the 2010-11 school year. This rate will provide an accurate measure of the number of students who complete their high school education and receive a regular diploma within 4 years of entering high school. The calculation will take into account students who transfer into or out of the school system as well as students who die during that 4-year period of time.

States will also be allowed to calculate one or more extended-year, adjusted cohort graduation rates; however they must be reported separately from the 4-year rate. States will have to describe any additional calculations and how they will be used in determining AYP to the U.S. Department of Education and secure their approval. The expectation though, is that the majority of students will graduate within 4 years. This option for an extended-year rate is significant, as many students with

disabilities, need more than four years to meet the requirements for graduation in their particular state or school district.

A major implication of this coming requirement is the need to be able to follow individual students within the state education system—i.e., having a longitudinal student data system that employs unique student identifiers. Many states are currently developing such systems and the procedures necessary to avoid duplication of students within the system, ensure that student information is entered in a consistent manner and ensure that the transfer of student records occurs seamlessly.

Another consequence of this coming change will be that states not currently using the new rate calculation will have to revise their baseline graduation rates and targets for improvement, though this will be subject to the requirements set forth in whatever regulations are developed the coming years. These states will lose the ability to make comparisons of their new graduation rates with the rates from years before they adopted the uniform rate calculation. The benefits of using a uniform calculation for all states, however, will far outweigh this drawback.

## **APPENDIX A**

The following list contains selected examples of states' improvement activities for Indicator 1.

**Activity A** – Improve data collection and reporting – improve the accuracy of data collection and school district/service agency accountability via technical assistance, public reporting/dissemination, or collaboration across other data reporting systems. Developing or connecting data systems.

**Illinois**: Utilize data warehousing capabilities to compile, analyze and report data. Idaho: Collaborate with the IBEDS system to cross-reference 618 with NCLB data to ensure that the special education data it collects and reports are accurate.

**Massachusetts**: Over this past year, MASSDE further developed its public reporting of graduation rates and other special education data. Data for Indicator 1 are reported through tables, and thematic maps have been developed to display the graduation rate for students with disabilities for each district. The information can be viewed at http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state\_report/special\_ed.aspx. From this table, viewers can select a specific district to access more detailed data and the thematic maps for that district.

**Montana**: Implement a student information system and special education records and information management system (SERIMS). The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) completed the second year of implementation of the statewide student information system, Achievement in Montana (AIM). This system is the general education record system that collects census, demographic and assessment data for all students enrolled in the public schools. Additional information regarding AIM can be found on the OPI Web site at: http://www.opi.mt.gov/AIM/Index.html.

The OPI Division of Special Education staff continued their work with the vendor to develop the Special Education Module of the AIM system. The OPI staff spent many hours testing the system and working with the vendor to ensure that the Special Education module will provide LEA staff with a product that reduces the amount of time staff must spend completing paperwork, leads to procedural compliance, and collects valid and reliable data for federal reporting and compliance monitoring purposes. It is anticipated that the special education records and information management system will begin to be implemented during the 2008-2009 school year, with full implementation achieved during the 2009-2010 school year.

**New Mexico:** Implement new data warehouse system that requires graduation pathway reporting at the 40th, 80th, and 120th day and EOY. Data will be reviewed regularly to identify patterns.

**Activity B** – Improve systems administration and monitoring – refine/revise monitoring systems, including continuous improvement and focused monitoring. Improve systems administration.

**North Carolina**: Annually review and analyze the LEAs' Continuous Improvement Performance Plans (CIPPs) to identify LEAs that are reducing dropout rates and identify their effective practices as well as those LEAs that are in need of additional and/or targeted technical assistance.

**New Jersey:** Effective February 2007, NJOSEP realigned its self-assessment/ monitoring system to be consistent with the SPP indicators. Districts are selected for monitoring based on federal monitoring priorities – placement in the least restrictive environment and disproportionate

representation of specific racial/ethnic groups in special education. The new system links compliance, data and programming by requiring districts to review compliance in areas related to SPP indicators and to examine their data compared to state targets. Following the review conducted through self-assessment, districts must identify activities to correct noncompliance and activities for continuous improvement toward state SPP targets. Districts are required to develop activities for continuous improvement in areas where their data do not meet state SPP targets.

Monitoring activities in the areas of graduation rate, dropout rate and transition service needs are linked in the self-assessment. Each district identified for self-assessment reviews their graduation and dropout rates against the state annual SPP targets, completes a protocol to identify needs for continuous improvement in transition planning and reviews related compliance requirements.

Districts that self-identify noncompliance are required to correct noncompliance within one year. If a district has identified noncompliance or their graduation and dropout data do not meet state SPP targets, a verification visit is conducted approximately six months following identification of noncompliance to review related requirements and verify correction of any noncompliance identified during self- assessment. A review of implementation of activities for continuous improvement toward state SPP targets is also conducted. Improvement strategies related to transition have included, but are not limited to:

**Nevada**: Collaborate with Title I and school improvement personnel to refine the state's school, district, and state improvement process (SAGE), including the SAGE manual, to support the effective analysis of appropriate data sets related to the performance of students with disabilities.

**Pennsylvania:** BSE is also continuing to review LEA graduation rates and practices as a component of cyclical monitoring. All corrective action of findings from FFY 2006 for this Indicator has been completed by the LEAs and closed by the BSE.

BSE Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) are provided with graduation data and detailed reports on the performance of each of the LEAs in their assigned regions in meeting the SPP target. This facilitates a more thorough examination of trend data and enhances the effectiveness of planning and monitoring activity.

**Activity C** – Build systems and infrastructures of technical assistance and support – develop Statewide or regional infrastructures to maximize resources.

**Illinois**: Develop an infrastructure that allows for the scaling up of evidence-based programs. Outcome: Illinois began actively scaling up evidence-based programs with the national SISEP center in 2008

**New Hampshire:** The Bureau of Special Education, which provides technical assistance to schools through trainings and professional development, revised the technical assistance program in FFY 2006 to enhance support to districts and to ensure that special education administration, faculty and staff were provided with the necessary tools and techniques to support the success of their students. An RFP for Technical Assistance Consultants (TA Consultants) went out in spring 2007 and five TA Consultants were hired in the summer of 2007. The new process for technical assistance allows for schools or districts to request technical assistance around a specific area of need, weakness or noncompliance. The Bureau then assigns a TA consultant to provide the desired assistance. Schools/districts in turn provide feedback to the Bureau through an initial evaluation and a six-month follow-up evaluation around the success or failure of the assistance. This enables the Bureau to

continue improvement in their technical assistance regarding the education of students with disabilities, in turn, supporting their successful completion to high school graduation.

**Activity D** – Provide technical assistance/training/professional development – provide technical assistance and/or training/professional development to State, LEAs and/or service agencies, families and/or other stakeholders on effective practices and model programs, etc.

**Georgia:** Middle and High School Graduation Coaches - Funding for graduation coaches was made available to all high and middle schools. For the 2007-2008 school year, 398 graduation coaches served Georgia high schools, 424 graduation coaches served Georgia middle schools, four graduation coaches served both Georgia middle and high schools, and two graduation coaches served Georgia schools with K-12 configurations. All graduation coaches hired during the 2007-2008 school year were required to meet minimum state employment qualifications, including possession of a Professional Standards Commission (PSC) issued credential, a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited four-year institution, and at least three years of successful experience working with students. The purpose of this coach is to work with at-risk students and remove possible barriers to earning a diploma. The graduation coach utilizes the components of a profile of characteristics of potential dropouts developed by the National Dropout Prevention Network (NDPN) to identify middle and high school students who are at risk of dropping out of high school.

For the 2007-2008 school year, 78.26% (13,156) of seniors served by graduation coaches completed high school. Since 2003-2004, Georgia's graduation rate has shown steady growth. From 2006-2007 to 2007-2008, a 3.1% increase in graduation rate was accomplished. As a result of this increase, 8,277 additional Georgia students graduated from high school.

In 2007-2008, graduation coaches delivered more than 282,400 interventions on behalf of at-risk students. General academic tutoring and mentoring represent the most common types of interventions utilized. Graduation coaches reported 194,464 individual student service sessions, 55,087 small-group student service sessions, 20,813 large-group student service sessions, and 4,765 whole-group student service sessions. Almost 75% of the service sessions were delivered to individual at-risk students including SWD. The State was unable to disaggregate the data to determine interventions/outcomes solely for SWD, but the graduation coaches appear to have a positive impact on SWD.

New Hampshire: NH Bureau of Special Education funds the New Hampshire Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Supports (NH CEBIS) which is an organization devoted to implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) statewide. A multi-year process, the PBIS project works with different cohorts of schools as they move through the PBIS program. In FFY 2007 NH CEBIS continued working with their active sites, which is now numbered at one hundred and thirty-nine schools, spread out across five different cohorts. Cohort 5, which was created during FFY 2007, will be the last cohort of schools to receive training and supports from NH CEBIS under the PBIS project. For FFY 2008 NH CEBIS intends to focus PBIS efforts district-wide, with the goal of having all schools in one district implementing PBIS. Under past PBIS practices with individual schools scattered throughout the state and throughout the districts, it was possible for an individual PBIS school to send their students or receive students from non-PBIS schools. NH CEBIS believes the new focus will be more successful and sustainable in schools that have implemented PBIS district-wide.

**Activity E** – Clarify /examine/develop policies and procedures – clarify, examine, and or develop policies or procedures related to the indicator.

**Georgia:** New Graduation Rule - There has been an emphasis on secondary programs as noted above. In addition, the State Board of Education has adopted a new graduation rule, effective with the incoming freshman in the fall of 2008, with anticipated graduation in 2012. The Graduation Rule Committee incorporated GaDOE staff (e.g., special education staff) and other individuals from agencies such as the Department of Labor, colleges and universities, and employers. This rule includes a provision for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, who access the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) at an entry or prerequisite level, to have a path to a general education diploma. In order to meet this mandate, the GaDOE has identified access courses that align with the GPS and meet requirements for high school diploma. As a result of this new rule, it is anticipated that the number of SWD graduating with a general education diploma will increase. This increase should become evident in 2012 when the first students impacted by this new rule should graduate.

**lowa:** Review of current practices for students to receive a regular high school diploma was completed. Review indicated seven methods available to obtain a regular high school diploma in lowa. Results: Multiple barriers (and related solutions) to obtaining a regular high school diploma were identified. Results were used to develop specific actions/activities for FFY 2008; four identified barriers served as critical pieces across graduation, dropout and suspension/expulsion: Alignment between identified need and policies/practices, Grade-level promotion and credit attainment policies/practices, Discipline policies/practices, and Attendance (truancy) policies/practices.

**Activity F** – Program development – develop/fund new regional/statewide initiatives.

**Alabama:** New statewide initiative: First Choice Initiative for all entering freshmen. Provides access to curriculum and credit recovery, credit advancement (in- & out of school alternatives to earn credit), graduation coaches, credit-based diploma endorsement (passed 3 of 5 grad tests)

**Arizona:** Implementation of an Assistive Technology initiative. The ADE/ESS AT Team offers statewide trainings and technical assistance on a regular basis.

**Georgia:** Georgia's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) – Georgia received additional funding from the Office for Special Education Programs (OSEP) for a SPDG effective September 1, 2007 for a five-year cycle. A major focus of the SPDG is to improve graduation rates. GaDOE worked directly with the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD), to provide districts with in-depth training in proven research based strategies to decrease dropout rates and increase graduation rates. GaDOE selected 34 schools from 15 school districts across the state. Of these schools, 18 were middle schools, and 15 were high schools. Eleven of the high schools and 9 of the middle schools were in "Needs Improvement" status. At the time of their selection, data indicated that the percentage of SWD graduating with a general education diploma in these schools ranged from 5.0% to 42.4%, and the dropout rate for SWD in these schools ranged from 5.1% to 16.34%.

The participating schools received training focused on the following areas: (a) use of a data probe for data analysis; (b) academic performance; (c) behavior and social skills; and (d) transition planning, vocational assessment and family engagement for SWD. Each school was required to send a leadership team to include a school administrator, general education teacher, special education teacher, Career Technical and Agricultural Education teacher, special education director, parent of a

SWD, and Graduation Coach to the trainings. There were four trainings at various sites around the state with 270 persons participating in each training.

In addition to the SPDG trainings, districts received funding for half-time SPDG Collaboration Coaches; 15 out of the 17 Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) regions secured coaches. The coaches were trained by the NDPC-SD to provide support for the leadership team in effective implementation of selected strategies in each school allowing for on-going capacity building. Each coach participated in an additional 10 days of required training, as well as, webinars on varied topics (i.e., Dropout Prevention from the NDPC-SD, Content Enhancement, Positive Behavior Supports, Teachers' as Advisors, Student Engagement and data probe analysis).

Based upon a comprehensive data analysis, each school submitted an action plan in June 2008 for FFY 2008. The State will determine appropriate training topics as determined by needs analysis conducted at the schools and submitted in the action plans. Coaches will follow up with on-site school visits to coach fidelity of implementation. Year 2 data will be reported based on the 2008-2009 school year.

**Kansas:** Provide professional development and on-going technical assistance to districts to support coordination of improvement planning across Cluster 1 Indicators and Indicator 4a.

PROGRESS OF ACTIVITY: KSDE expanded Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) efforts to improve outcomes in high school graduation rates by supporting schools with academic and behavioral success for students. Statewide collaborative training on MTSS was provided to school teams. At the end of FFY 2007, twelve pilot secondary schools had received training from Project SPOT on implementing MTSS for Academics. Over 700 elementary schools were implementing MTSS for Academics. Twenty-six pilot schools were provided training and support in MTSS for Behavior. Another 111 schools were implementing MTSS for Behavior. Kansas implemented the Transition Outcomes Project (TOPs) Model beginning in FFY 2007 resulting in sixteen transition mentors trained who are implementing district level transition technical assistance. To increase student involvement in IEP meetings, self-advocacy training courses were made available to educational professionals. Community resource manuals identifying community agencies, services and supports have been developed and disseminated. Training and monitoring for effective transition plans and progress reporting has occurred.

IMPACT STATEMENT: The collaborative MTSS training conducted with a secondary education emphasis has resulted in a set of activities that a) raised awareness of MTSS; b) supported districts and schools to put MTSS into practice and c) connected MTSS implementation with other KSDE initiatives to improve student outcomes, including graduation rate. The TOPS training has resulted in increased local capacity to improve graduation rates and to support implementation of self-advocacy efforts.

**Activity G** – Collaboration / coordination – Collaborate/coordinate with families / agencies / initiative.

**Arkansas:** P.O.I.S.E. convened a stakeholders forum that addressed the needs of youth involved in Alternative Education, Juvenile Justice, and Foster Care. The forum's goal was to convey the benefits of a technical assistance direct service model. The forum was held in partnership with The Clinton Library and the Hamilton Learning Academy.

**Arizona:** Initiation of support for high schools with low graduation rates to offer expanded work study programs and community placements. Collaboration has occurred between ESS and the Dropout

Prevention Unit, Career and Technical Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation for PEAs who have expressed a need for expanded work study programs and community placements.

**Kansas:** Within the SPP/APR documents, indicators 1, 2, 4a, 13 and 14 have been clustered to focus on common improvement activities. More importantly, implementation of improvement activities has occurred in a collaborative and coherent manner. General educators and special educators in pilot and model schools are working collaboratively to address the behavioral and academic needs of all students in a tiered system of support. Continued emphasis will be given to addressing graduation rates, drop out rates, suspension/expulsion rates and transition services in a seamless manner during trainings and the provision of technical assistance.

IMPACT STATEMENT: Trainings and discussions on the interconnectedness of Indicators 1, 2, 4a, 13 and 14 have helped lead the SEA and LEAs to an understanding that systems improvement is necessary to impact positive results for students with disabilities. As a result, hundreds of schools are implementing MTSS and reducing parallel systems, eliminating duplicative efforts, while improving delivery of instruction.

**Maryland:** Ongoing (This activity is applicable to Indicators 1, 2, 13, & 14). Maryland continues the Maryland School Completion Project (MSCP) in conjunction with the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD). Two local school systems are participating in this demonstration project. One local school system has been involved in the project for two years and there is evidence of improvement. Professional development activities began in a second local school system in January 2009.

In the local school system that was the first demonstration site for MSCP, completion/dropout prevention interventions took place in two high schools beginning in FFY 2006 and resulted in an increase of 11.04% in the graduation rate of youth with IEPs in FFY 2007. The project has grown to include the establishment of a subcommittee concentrating on increasing the completion rate of youth with IEPs in Career and Technology Education programs. This subcommittee is represented on the State DSE/EIS – DCTAL workgroup and will be providing best practices outcomes to be used by other local school systems.

**Activity H** – Evaluation – conduct internal/external evaluation of improvement processes and outcomes.

**lowa:** Graduation data were analyzed with the following key stakeholders: Special Education Advisory Panel, SEA Staff, AEA High School Reform Consultants, and the Learning Supports Advisory Team. Progress monitoring and outcome data from the Iowa High School Project were analyzed with AEA High School Reform Consultants and SEA staff. Outcomes: Stakeholders determined that the Iowa High School Project should be restructured to (a) integrate Learning Supports, and (b) explicitly embed Iowa Core Curriculum. It was also determined the project should obtain feedback directly from AEA consultants to inform restructuring efforts in 2008-2009.

**Utah:** Monitor school completion rates to evaluate success of school completion initiatives. Completed and being revised. Exit data submitted by LEAs were evaluated and compared with participation in professional development activities provided by USOE. Results of this activity include improved school completion rates in some LEAs that received individualized professional development in the area of transition planning. This activity is being revised to include local initiatives that have positively impacted school completion rates.

**Activity I** – Increase/Adjust FTE – Add or re-assign FTE at State level. Assist with the recruitment and retention of LEA and service agency staff.

**Alabama:** 2005 – ongoing. Continue support of dropout prevention programs through Prevention and Support Services Section of the DOE. Currently, graduation coaches have been hired in twenty-five LEAs. Since the implementation of this program in 2007, an average decrease of 2.5% in the number of students dropping out was noted in the LEAs participating

**Palau:** Hire one additional special education teacher in the high school to work with IEP students in the general classes.

**Activity J** – Other - Any additional types of improvement activities specific to their topic/area.

**Connecticut:** Department will establish an intra-agency and interagency taskforce to address graduation, dropout and suspension and expulsion of students with and without disabilities.

**Georgia:** The Credit Recovery Program is operated by Georgia Virtual School and offers public school students the opportunity to retake a course they were previously not successful in. These online courses are fully aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards and are self paced. There is no cost for the courses which are available on a 24-hour basis. Credit recovery courses are particularly appealing to SWD because the students can move at their own pace.

**Louisiana:** Develop an Early Warning Data and Reporting System that signals 7th-9th grade teachers, counselors, parents and administrators when students need extra support

Develop a set of statewide "Catch-up Course" curricula and teacher training which double the amount of math/reading instruction, incorporate systematic and highly structured curricula and teaching strategies, and make use of diagnostic assessments.

# APPENDIX B – NEW YORK: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RECEIVED AND ACTIONS TAKEN TO CORRECT ISSUES

As a result of New York's status as Needs Improvement in Indicators 1 and 2 for the second consecutive year (NA2), the state was required to report the technical assistance it received and the steps it took to address the needs that resulted in its NA2 status. This appendix contains that information, taken directly from the New York APR.

# Improvement Activities Completed during 2007-081

The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) accessed technical assistance to further inform their activities to improve the graduation rates of students with disabilities. This included a review of Information and resources, including but not limited to information available through the Federal Resource Center for Special Education (FRC), Academy for Educational Development, Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC), Learning Innovations at WestEd, National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt), and the Access Center: Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8. In addition, VESID staff participated in various State and national meetings, conferences and webinars.

The State Education Department (SED) worked with the New York Comprehensive Center, funded by the United States Education Department (USED), to develop the capacity of SED and its networks and agencies to assist districts and schools in improving achievement outcomes for all students - see http://nycomprehensive center.org/events/.

# **Activities Completed:**

- 1. NYS' criteria for identifying school districts as needing assistance or intervention under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) includes a measure of graduation rates for students with disabilities in relation to the State's graduation target for that school year.
  - Through a regional planning process, resources were directed to these identified school
    districts including focused monitoring reviews by the Special Education Quality Assurance
    (SEQA) Regional Office and/or quality improvement technical assistance provided by Special
    Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) professional development specialists or
    other technical assistance networks funded with IDEA discretionary funds.
  - In September 2006, based on 2004-05 data, 58 school districts were identified as needing
    assistance and 17 districts were identified as needing intervention. VESID continued to
    provide technical assistance to these identified school districts throughout the 2007-08 school
    year.
  - In June 2007, based on 2005-06 data, 69 school districts were identified as needing
    assistance and 31 districts were identified as needing intervention. As a result, 45 school
    districts that received VESID monitoring and/or technical assistance services in the 2006-07
    school year improved their graduation rates of students with disabilities, dropout rates of

<sup>1</sup> See http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/spp/2007plan/graduation.htm for SPP improvement activities targeted for Indicator 1.

students with disabilities and/or performance of students with disabilities on State assessments. Thirty-six of the 45 school districts that received such assistance were no longer identified in the 2007-08 school year as at risk of identification or as needing assistance or intervention.

- In September 2008, based on 2006-07 data, 57 school districts were identified as needing
  assistance and 26 districts were identified as needing intervention. Of the 83 school districts
  identified as needing assistance or intervention based on 2006-07 data, 56 were identified as a
  direct result of their graduation rates for students with disabilities (38 as needing assistance
  and 18 as needing intervention). Directed work with these school districts was initiated in the
  fall of 2008.
- 2. VESID substantially increased the amount of its IDEA discretionary funds available for Quality Improvement Implementation grant awards to school districts identified as needing assistance or intervention. In January 2009, VESID provided approximately 65 school districts with grant awards to implement activities focused on improvement in instruction for students with disabilities and to address compliance issues identified through the focused review monitoring process. Many of the activities were directed to improve graduation rates of students with disabilities.
- 3. VESID's *Quality Indicator Review and Resource Guides*<sup>2</sup> were further developed to guide the work of SETRC in school districts identified as needing assistance or intervention to improve the district's instructional programs in the areas of literacy instruction, behavioral supports and interventions and/or special education instructional practices.
- 4. Professional development to enhance the expertise of SETRC to inform their school improvement work was provided to the SETRC network during the VESID statewide meetings with a focus on:
  - small group and intensive behavioral interventions for students with serious socialemotional/behavioral difficulties;
  - explicit strategy instruction research based strategies in special education;
  - formative assessment, including data and progress monitoring; and
  - school quality improvement strategies.
- 5. The focused monitoring review process was further refined to specifically focus on compliance issues most directly relating to graduation rates for students with disabilities.
  - In addition to focused reviews in school districts identified as needing assistance or intervention, slightly more than 10 percent of Boards of Cooperative Educational Services' (BOCES) special education programs were reviewed in 2008.
  - IEP educational benefit reviews were added to the monitoring review process.
  - In 2007-08, New York City (NYC) SEQA conducted 63 High School Graduation Rate Focused Reviews, which were designed to evaluate the interventions implemented in low performing secondary-level schools and their impact on the rate that students with disabilities earn Regents or local diplomas. This newly developed focused review was also used in other regions of the State with eight focused reviews regarding graduation rates initiated, completed or planned during the year with school districts whose student graduations were farthest from performance targets.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/techassist/Qlcover.htm

- 6. Seven new regional positions were created through VESID's federally funded State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) to identify a cadre of "Effective Practices Schools" throughout NYS. These regional staff will document the practices in successful schools to promote the sharing of identified practices with low performing school districts.
- 7. The Board of Regents approved new regulations on integrated co-teaching (a special education teacher and general education teacher providing instruction together) to promote greater access and participation in regular classes for students with disabilities.
- 8. NYS regulations were amended, effective July 2008, to provide autism specific requirements for special education teacher preparation programs; to establish standards under which SED will approve providers of this training; and to require that all teachers applying for certification in special education titles on or after September 2, 2009, complete course work or training in the needs of children with autism. NYS Education Law also requires that school administrators and supervisors assigned on or after September 2, 2009 to serve as special education administrators must complete training in the needs of children with autism as soon as practicable after their assignment, and certified school administrators/supervisors assigned to serve as special education administrators prior to September 2, 2009 are required to have enhanced training in the needs of children with autism by such date.
- 9. Representatives from 72 NYS institutions of higher education (IHEs) met on a statewide and regional basis to discuss personnel preparation issues and research-based instructional practices to improve results for students with disabilities. Seven summer symposia were sponsored by VESID funded Higher Education Support Center (HESC) on literacy instruction, behavioral supports and/or special education instructional practices. With HESC funds supporting their work, IHEs worked directly with school districts to address low performance issues through improved instructional practices. In addition, HESC formed three study groups with IHE representatives from across the State to align personnel preparation programs for special education teachers with the research-based instructional practices identified in VESID's Quality Indicator Review and Resource Guides.

# **Examples of Effect of VESID interventions:**

- In 2008 as a result of SEQA reviews, Oswego County has taken on several initiatives to increase
  graduation rates for student with disabilities including: destination diplomas to help all students
  achieve a Regents or Local Diploma; staff training for teachers in conjunction with State
  University of New York (SUNY) Oswego; writing prioritized curriculum; and establishing creditbearing special classes in districts as well as in the BOCES.
- As a result of participation in the High School Graduation Rate Focused Reviews, in 2007-08 the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) received IDEA discretionary funds to assist in implementation of activities to improve instructional practices in the targeted high schools. Schools were required to use existing data systems to track student attendance and academic achievement. In addition, NYCDOE implemented a Special Education Lead Teacher Program in low performing high schools to foster mentoring relationships within a school and draw upon the skill and competence of experienced special education teachers to help improve instruction.

# Actions taken to correct noncompliance:

- 1. Upon submission of results of the self-review monitoring protocol where noncompliance was indicated, each school district received a written notification that it:
  - must correct the noncompliance as soon as possible, but not later than 12 months of notification:
  - review a sample of student IEPs to verify correction of noncompliance;
  - report its correction of noncompliance to the State and that the State would publicly report on the school district's correction of noncompliance in the Special Education School District Data Profiles (see http://eservices.nysed.gov/ sepubrep/); and
  - would be required to conduct another review of the district's IEPs the following year in order to verify continuing correction of noncompliance (see the schedule of the school years in which school districts must re-submit data on this indicator, posted at http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/sedcar/resubschedule.html).
- 2. The State directed its TCS to provide technical assistance to the school districts with noncompliance. 86 of the districts listed in the table above as improving their compliance did so with the provision of TCS technical assistance.
- 3. The New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) corrective actions included a requirement for a written improvement plan to include professional development and development of additional transition services. VESID provided direct technical assistance to NYCDOE to improve NYC's transition planning results. In May 2008, the State Education Department (SED) and Cornell University presented the use of TransQUAL to NYC IEP specialists, and TCS initiated the TransQUAL workgroup in NYC.

# Improvement Activities Completed in 2007-08

VESID accessed federal technical assistance to further inform its activities to improve transition planning for students with disabilities. This included a review of information and resources, including but not limited to information available through the following Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) technical assistance centers: National Post-School Outcome Center (NPSO), National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD), and National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). Also see resources accessed as identified for indicator 1.

#### Activities Completed:

- VESID convened three meetings with its funded TCS during 2007-08 to foster communication and
  collaboration among these regional technical assistance providers on effective practices to
  improve transition planning outcomes. Data regarding regional performance was shared and
  strategies discussed to further inform the State's transition improvement activities. Professional
  development was provided to clarify questions raised by schools regarding acceptability of IEP
  content.
- In collaboration with VESID, NYCDOE implemented three new vocational training programs sponsored by Educational Training Institute for overage and under credited students, and began development of additional programs for 2008-09.

- In 2007-08, as part of ongoing efforts to facilitate the transition of students into appropriate postsecondary options, NYCDOE worked collaboratively with VESID and the NYS Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities on making procedural changes to overcome barriers to services eligibility.
- The NYC Special Education Quality Assurance (SEQA) office monitoring activities focused on both intermediate and secondary-level schools, including some that were identified as having a graduation rate less than 55 percent for students with disabilities. The Academic Achievement Focused Review examined the schools' transition activities and services.
- Statewide, TCSs provided targeted technical assistance to school districts on effective transition
  practices, particularly related to student-focused transition planning in the IEPs. In 2007-08, the
  TCSs actively engaged with school districts in their regions during the self-review process and
  correction of noncompliance issues. This was done by providing individual technical assistance
  and through regional professional development sessions. 86 of the districts listed in the table
  above as improving their compliance did so with the provision of TCS technical assistance.
- To assist school districts to prepare for reviews during 2008-09, VESID notified school districts scheduled to report on this indicator in the 2008-09 school year of resources for technical assistance, and the State Performance Plan (SPP) web page for the Indicator 13 Self-Review Protocol was updated during 2007-08, including links to technical assistance resources (http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/spp/indicators/13.htm).
- 121 school district teams created work plans to improve transition planning and services using TransQUAL Online. TransQUAL Online, funded by VESID, assists school districts to develop strategic work plans to improve development and implementation of transition IEPs (http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/transqual/open-portal.cfm). It also assists a school district to conduct a self-review of its transition IEPs. Since its inception, approximately 51 percent of NYS school districts have TransQUAL work plans.
- VESID provided direct technical assistance to NYCDOE to improve their transition planning results. In May 2008, SED and Cornell University presented the use of TransQUAL to NYC IEP specialists, and TCS initiated the TransQUAL workgroup in NYC. The workgroup's goal is to gain individual high school participation with TransQUAL within the boroughs of NYC in order to facilitate the positive growth of transition policies, procedures, and practices at the individual school level. The workgroup meets almost monthly, shares ideas and problem solves, and prepares for TransQUAL trainings within the boroughs.
- Throughout 2007-08, work groups of TCSs used the resources of several national technical
  assistance centers to assist in development of their technical assistance and resource packets,
  shared with school districts, students and families. This includes NDPC-SD, NPSO, NSTTAC and
  the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Partnership Communities of Practice.

#### **Indicator 14 Activities**

Improvement Activities Completed in 2007-08

The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) accessed technical assistance to further inform its activities to improve transition planning for students with

disabilities. This included a review of information and resources, including but not limited to information available through the following OSEP technical assistance centers: NPSO, National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) and National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). Also see resources accessed as identified for indicator 1.

# **Activities Completed:**

- See Indicators 1, 2, 8 and 13.
- Workgroups of the Transition Coordination Sites (TCS) network developed reference and technical assistance materials (e.g., presentation packages, reading lists and articles that discuss dropout prevention strategies) that show how effective delivery of transition services contributes to increased graduations and reduced dropout rates. Resources accessed to compile these resources include NDPC-SD, NPSO, NSTTAC and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Partnership Communities of Practice.
- In April 2007, VESID issued revised policies regarding college and university training vocational rehabilitation services http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/current\_provider\_information/vocational\_rehabilitation/policies\_proced ures/0405\_college\_and\_university\_training/policy.htm.

In August 2008, VESID issued updated vocational rehabilitation policies regarding serving youth in school http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/current\_provider\_information/vocational\_rehabilitation/policies\_procedures/0421\_youth\_in\_school\_transition\_planning\_and\_services/policy.htm.

Taken together these policies are designed to enhance the availability of vocational rehabilitation counseling and career development services for students two years prior to school exit and increase access to post-secondary education services and supports. Beginning in fall 2008, all 15 vocational rehabilitation District Offices began professional development on the new policies. TCS and Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) Technical Assistance Center (TAC) representatives supported the training by presenting information on school policies and procedures to increase vocational rehabilitation counselors' awareness of effective ways to communicate with school districts. Through questions and answers discussions, the networks advised on strategies to work collaboratively in the secondary transition process.

• Eleven Independent Living Center (ILC) transition projects worked with students in transition, their families and school district personnel to improve student access to community based work experiences, student and parent participation in IEP meetings to discuss transition planning and identified student needs for and facilitated access to community services (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, housing, social security income (SSI) and social security disability income (SSDI) benefits, Medicaid, driver licensing). ILCs worked with TCSs on transition implementation support teams, planning informational conferences for students with disabilities transitioning to college or work settings, providing information on benefits and advocacy training, helping to prepare job coaches, and participating in career and technical education fairs. The 11 projects provided 285 training programs to 2,583 students with disabilities, 1,471 parents, 1,016 school personnel and 783 community service agency personnel.

- VESID's Model Transition Program (MTP) funded 60 collaborative projects involving more than 180 private and public high schools to develop school-wide plans, activities and programs that facilitate the transition of students with disabilities to post-secondary placements. These placements include college, vocational training programs and competitive employment with and without supports. At the end of this project, successful transition strategies will be identified and shared with high schools throughout the State. As of June 2008, a total of 9,454 students received transition services; over half of those were expected to achieve a Regents Diploma. Highlights include:
  - Sixty-five percent (6.104) of MTP students had measurable post-secondary goals in their IEPs.
  - Sixty-one percent (5,769) of students participated in career development activities.
  - Nineteen percent (1,782) of MTP students participated in paid/unpaid work experiences, most of this being part-time work.
  - Eighteen percent (1,664) of MTP students participated in activities aimed to facilitate transition to post-secondary education. Most of these were college information nights and assistance with college applications.
  - More than 3,000 referrals to vocational rehabilitation were made.
- Technical assistance resources for Indicator 14 were provided in the annual determination letters sent to school districts scheduled to report on this indicator in the 2008-09 school year. The State Performance Plan (SPP) web page for Indicator 14 was updated during 2007-08 http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/spp/
  - 14postschool0809.htm. Links for national technical assistance resources for improving post-school outcomes in the protocol on the web included NPSO (http://psocenter.org/index.html).

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