What ever happened to those Paperwork Reduction Pilots?
By Christina Samuels – January 15, 2009

Remember them? They were created in the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The department was to give 15 states the opportunity to develop ways to cut down on individualized education program paperwork for teachers and districts. I last wrote about this in 2006, and never heard about the pilots again. Will they be revived under a new secretary of education?

I was thinking about paperwork reduction as I was reading the policy prescriptions included in the last chapter of Thomas Hehir's 2005 book, *New Directions in Special Education*. Hehir, now a professor at Harvard University, is a former head of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. He suggests that paperwork reduction isn't the really the point--making the IEPs more meaningful is.

Hehir gives an example of a student with dyslexia: such a student should have goals and benchmarks that relate directly to that area of disability. But in other subjects, like science or math, the student should be given accommodations that help the student access grade-level material, not some kind of modified curriculum. For every other subject except language arts, the goals should be the same as for any other student. That would cut down on paperwork, Hehir says, because there'd be no need to include those goals in an IEP. Only the relatively small number of children with significant cognitive delays should have IEPs that are lengthy, because of the need to modify the curriculum more extensively.

Hehir writes:

We should be seeking more powerful IEPs that are tightly focused on gaining access to the curriculum and meeting the unique needs that arise out of each child's disability. IEPs that go on for pages, listing goals and objectives that are disconnected from the curriculum, do not meet this standard.

How many readers feel that their school district's IEPs meet the standard Hehir describes?

*Find this blog post at:*