STATE PERFORMANCE PLAN PROCESS AND INDICATORS

Policy Forum

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A policy forum held May 11-13, 2011 to provide input from stakeholders to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) focused on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) accountability reporting system known as the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) process. Participants discussed their assessment of the benefits and challenges posed by the SPP/APR requirements and made recommendations for revisions to improve the process and content of the system. No attempt was made to develop consensus recommendations and all input was accepted and documented. This executive summary provides a synopsis of the participants’ input on the positive and negative aspects of the SPP/APR system and their suggestions for changes.

From a positive perspective, the SPP/APR:

- Ensures that specific IDEA program data are collected and provides the opportunity to track progress over time.
- Increases the focus on outcomes and encourages long-term planning.
- Makes educational and child development progress information available to parents and the public.
- Requires necessary correction to take place in a specified time period.
- Supports communication among all who work with children with disabilities and their families.

Despite the benefits, the SPP/APR:

- Contains too many indicators.
- Overemphasizes compliance at the expense of outcomes.
- Does not yield data that can drive policy change.
- Is focused on data collection leaving little opportunity to use the data for improvement.
- Lacks clear and consistent definitions for terms such as ‘rigorous and measurable’ and ‘disproportionality.’
- Has had frequent revisions that complicate state processes, increase costs and cause the loss of ability to track progress over time.
- Duplicates other federal-level requests for data from states.
- Serves to further the separation between general and special education.

In response to a request to identify the indicators that measure the most important outcomes for students with disabilities, forum participants gave priority to the indicators that address individual student, child and family results:
• Graduation rates;
• Academic assessment results; and
• Successful transition from early intervention programs to a preschool program as well as from secondary school to employment and/or enrollment in a postsecondary program.

The following recommendations were suggested to improve the process and content of the SPP/APR system and are further specified in the remainder of the report that records input by groups:

• Reduce the number of indicators, especially by eliminating duplication and streamlining to ensure meaningful data.
• Align the SPP/APR with the ESEA reporting requirements.
• Remove the requirement to report on any indicator for which the state has met criteria or allow simplified reporting to make time available for a stronger focus on areas that need improvement.
• Revise and rewrite indicators addressing disproportionality.
• Eliminate duplication, such as the reporting of Section 618 data in the APR.
• Convert to web-based reporting.
• Adopt an alternate schedule for reporting, such as one year on compliance indicators and the next year on performance.
• Revisit the guidance memo on correction of noncompliance and consider 95% as an acceptable criterion for compliance.
• Merge the APR and SPP into one coordinated document.
• Announce revisions a few years in advance and allow stakeholder input prior to finalizing the change.

The remaining sections of this document contain the process notes from all discussions held at the forum.