## Modules

1. *Standards-Based Reform and Students with Disabilities*

2. *Developing Alternate Assessments for Students with Disabilities*

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# SECTION IV

# RESULTS

# *Standards-Based Reform and Students with Disabilities*[1,2]

PURPOSE: To describe the concept of standards-based reform and its implementation by States, with particular attention to inclusion of students with disabilities in assessments.

Standards-based reform has become the foundation for educational change in the 1990s. According to a report by the National Research Council:

> "Standards-based reform includes content standards that specify what students should know and do to demonstrate proficiency, and assessments that provide the accountability mechanism for monitoring whether these expectations have been met and by whom. In addition, standards-based reforms assume that schools should be held publicly accountable for student performance." (McDonnell & McLaughlin, 1997, p. 3)

It is recognized, however, that standards-based reform is being implemented in different ways by States and local educational agencies (LEAs).

Standards-based reform encompasses four concepts. First is a focus on establishing *high standards*, both in the rigor of content standards (what students know and are able to do) and the level of performance that must be demonstrated toward achieving the standards. The American Federation of Teachers (1996) reported that 48 States are now establishing common academic standards for their students. However, the development of standards is an ongoing process as States continue to revise and expand them.

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[1] For further discussion on these topics, see "Developing Alternate Assessments for Students with Disabilities" in the next section and "State Accountability and Students with Disabilities" in the Context/Environment section. For an in-depth discussion on how standards-based reforms have driven changes in curriculum and instruction at the school-level, the reader is encouraged to review the module titled "School Reform and Students with Disabilities: The Changing Context of Classrooms" in the *19th Report*.

[2] This module reports in work conducted by the National Center on Educational Outcomes, one of several research centers funded by OSEP.

A second concept embedded in standards-based reform is a belief in *accountability*. Accountability refers to "a systematic method to assure those inside and outside the educational system that schools and students are moving toward desired goals" (Brauen, O'Reilly, & Moore, 1994, p. 2). Accountability can be directed toward the individual (e.g., students must meet certain requirements to earn a diploma) or toward the system (e.g., schools must reach a certain level of performance to receive accreditation). Related to the belief in accountability is the third concept associated with standards-based reform--the implementation of *consequences* as part of the accountability system. Such consequences may include sanctions such as probational status and rewards such as teacher incentives at the school and district levels. Accountability systems have consequences, even if only in terms of public reporting of the results. Increasing the consequences in the accountability system is a particular focus of recent educational reform. In the most recent studies of educational accountability systems (Bond, Braskamp, & Roeber, 1996; National Education Goals Panel, 1996), 27 States tied consequences for student performance to schools (e.g., loss of funding, awards to staff, etc.), and 30 States tied consequences to students (e.g., student promotion, awards or recognition, graduation).

Finally, as a part of standards-based reform, there is renewed reliance on the use of *assessments* to measure the performance of students and their progress toward meeting standards. Bond and colleagues (1996) reported that during the 1995-96 school year, 46 States administered statewide student assessments. This number has increased over time, along with the attention given to the assessments.

Although the language and intent of standards-based reform have emphasized its importance for all students, the extent to which students with disabilities actually have been included in the various aspects of reform is still a question. Four avenues for examining the inclusion of students with disabilities in standards-based reform are: (1) involvement of special education in State-based reform activities, (2) current practices and policies in statewide

assessments, (3) reporting of the performance of students with disabilities, and (4) research findings relevant to standards-based reform. Each is discussed below.

## Involvement of Special Education in State-Based Reform Activities

In 1997, State directors of special education responded to questions about the involvement of their offices in State Department of Education activities related to reform (Erickson & Thurlow, 1997). These directors also indicated the emphasis placed on reform in their States. In general, the more emphasis placed on a reform activity, the greater the involvement of special education in that activity. However, there is room for greater involvement. For example, 35 State directors of special education indicated that efforts at establishing or revising educational results, standards, or curricular frameworks were highly emphasized in their States (see table IV-1), yet the number of directors who indicated that their offices were highly involved in these efforts was small. Only 12 directors indicated that their offices were closely involved in establishing standards. Similar results were found for other reform areas as well.

A three-part analysis of State standards documents was conducted to determine the extent to which students with disabilities were considered in the development of the standards (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Gutman, & Geenan, 1997). First, States' standards documents were examined for evidence of involvement in the development process of individuals with disabilities or individuals knowledgeable about disabilities (e.g., special education teacher or administrator, parent of student with disability, advocate). This analysis revealed that few States have involved these individuals as they developed their standards--only 17 percent of States included special educators in the standards development process. Thus, existing standards documents were developed, for the most part, without the involvement of people familiar with disabilities.

**Table IV-1**
**State Level Emphasis and Special Education Involvement in Establishing Educational Results, Standards, or Curricular Frameworks**

| Level of Involvement by Your Special Education Division or Unit | Emphasis Placed on This Activity by State Educational Agency This Year | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1: No Emphasis | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5: High Emphasis | Total Number of States |
| 1: Not involved | 2 States | | | | 2 States | 4 States |
| 2 | | | | 2 States | 3 States | 5 States |
| 3 | | | 3 States | 5 States | 11 States | 19 States |
| 4 | | | 1 State | 4 States | 8 States | 13 States |
| 5: Closely involved | | | 1 State | | 11 States | 12 States |
| Total Number of States | 2 States | | 5 States | 11 States | 35 States | 53 States* |

* Total includes both regular States and unique U.S. territories. Not all States or territories responded.

Source: Erickson & Thurlow (1997).

The second part of the analysis of State standards (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Gutman, et al., 1997) focused on how States specified whether students with disabilities would be held to State standards. Most States (77 percent) refer to "all" students in their standards. However, 49 percent mention "all" students without stating whether this includes students with disabilities; 8 percent specifically mention students with disabilities, and 20 percent give information on accommodations that might be needed to provide these students the opportunity to reach these standards. Only 23 percent of the States made no mention of "all" students or students with disabilities.

The third analysis of standards documents focused on the extent to which nonacademic standards were addressed in the States' documents (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Gutman, et al., 1997). These areas, such as social or emotional development, citizenship, and physical health, are frequently of importance to students with disabilities. This analysis revealed that States do indeed identify standards in a variety of areas other than academics. The extent to which information is available in nonacademic areas is not known. State assessment and accountability systems typically focus only on academics. And, State directors indicated that their own offices do not routinely collect or publish data reflecting nonacademic domains (Erickson & Thurlow, 1997).

## Current Practices and Policies in Statewide Assessments

The use of statewide assessments as part of educational accountability systems is widespread, but the specifics of the assessments vary greatly from one State to the next. Most assessments are administered in grades 4, 8, and 11, but at least two States administer assessments in every grade from kindergarten through grade 12. The subjects most frequently covered in statewide assessments are mathematics, language arts, and writing, with science and social studies close behind. Writing assessments and criterion-referenced tests are used most often, followed closely by norm-referenced tests. Slightly fewer States administer performance assessments, and only four States currently use portfolios as part of their statewide assessments. Currently, there is a tremendous amount of State activity related to assessments, which means that the characteristics of State assessment systems change frequently. A significant amount of the activity surrounding State assessments involves including students with disabilities.

In a 1997 survey, approximately 60 percent of States placed high emphasis on developing or revising the participation and exemption policies for students with disabilities in assessments (Erickson & Thurlow, 1997). At the same

time, about 40 percent placed high emphasis on their accommodations policies. This is just one indication of the tremendous amount of activity that has surrounded these policies in the past 5 years. Since 1995 when the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) published States' participation (Thurlow, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1995b) and accommodations policies (Thurlow, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1995a), 34 States have updated their policies on participation, and 32 have updated their policies on accommodations (Thurlow, Seyfarth, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1997).

**Participation in State assessments.** Although the participation of students with disabilities in assessments emerged as an issue in the early 1990s, its importance grew with the IDEA Amendments of 1997, which require States to report on the participation of students with disabilities in assessments (see Elliott, Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Erickson, 1997; Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Erickson, & Elliott, 1997). In 1997, there continued to be a lack of good data on the participation of students with disabilities in assessments, despite the high emphasis placed on this issue. Twenty-four of fifty-three State directors reported that their offices do not currently collect or receive information on the rate at which students with disabilities participate in any of their statewide assessments. State special education directors report that a leading inhibiting factor for increased participation of students with disabilities in assessment is the "high stakes" attached to school or district performance. This is followed by the tendencies of some teachers and parents who wish to protect students from stressful testing situations, the variation in implementation of participation guidelines, and inadequate monitoring of implementation. Of the 27 States indicating that their offices collect or receive information on the number of students with disabilities tested in statewide assessments, only 9 actually provided numbers when asked to do so.

**Individualized education program (IEP) documentation.** The IDEA Amendments of 1997 call for increased access for students with disabilities to the general education curriculum; the amendments also included several requirements for documentation on the IEP. For example, there

must be documentation of whether students will participate in the regular State assessment or in an alternate assessment that is to be developed and conducted by no later than July 1, 2000. Furthermore, IEPs must document both instructional and assessment accommodations that a student requires.

In 1997, however, only six State directors of special education indicated that their States had a requirement for IEP documentation related to State content or curriculum standards (Erickson & Thurlow, 1997). In addition, 75 percent of State directors indicated that documentation of instructional accommodations is a current IEP requirement; approximately 55 percent indicated that their States require documentation of which assessment a student will take and which accommodations are provided during the assessment.

**Alternate assessments.** Alternate assessments are designed for those students with disabilities who are unable to participate in general large-scale assessments used for accountability purposes by districts or States (Thurlow, Olsen, Elliott, Ysseldyke, Erickson, & Ahearn, 1996). The IDEA Amendments of 1997 require that such assessments be developed and conducted no later than July 1, 2000, and the performance of students reported. In 1997, the development of alternate assessments was still in conceptual form in many States. Only Kentucky had a fully implemented alternate assessment for those students unable to participate in the regular assessment. Maryland was field-testing its alternate assessment (see next module). Numerous other States indicate that they are "planning" or "considering" development of alternate assessments.

## Reporting the Performance of Students with Disabilities

Even when students with disabilities are included in State assessments, their scores may not be reported (Erickson, Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Elliott, 1997). In an earlier analysis, it was discovered that 14 of 24 States with written policies

specifically excluded the scores of students with disabilities when assessment results were reported (Thurlow, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1995b). In 1997, State directors of special education in 31 States reported that the performance scores of students with disabilities were disaggregated for one or more of their State assessments (Erickson & Thurlow, 1997).

In States where scores of students with disabilities were not disaggregated, State directors indicated that the primary reasons included (1) lack of time, (2) lack of resources, and (3) inability to identify students with disabilities in the databases. Few States indicated that the reason was a concern about possible misinterpretation or that there was no need for the information.

In those States that did disaggregate data on students with disabilities, the scores were primarily reported in internal review documents for both State and local education administrators (Erickson & Thurlow, 1997). States that report assessment results for students with disabilities are shown in table IV-2. Only 10 States include the disaggregated performance of students in their regularly released reports on educational results (Thurlow, Langenfeld, Nelson, Shin, & Coleman, 1997).

Analysis of State accountability reports from 47 States and Washington, D.C. (Thurlow, Langenfeld, et al., 1997) revealed a number of other findings. The analysis looked at 113 accountability reports that were given to NCEO between 1995 and 1997. The reports covered data from the 1993-94 school year through 1995-96 depending on the time the report was received from the State and the most recent reports the States had available. The analysis looked at the types of inputs, processes, and results that States use as educational indicators for students with and without disabilities. Existing reports that include data on students with disabilities are extremely variable in the types of information presented. Most report on enrollment, and few report on performance. When performance data are presented, they may be provided for only a subset of the data available for general education students. Often, it is unclear when students are included or excluded from

**Table IV-2**
**States That Report Assessment Results for Students with Disabilities[a]**

| | |
|---|---|
| Separate results for students with disabilities not included in reports | AK, AL, AR, AZ, CO, DC, DE, FL, HI, IA, ID, IN, KY, MA, MD, ME, MI, MO, MS, MT, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, OH, OK, OR, PA, SD,TN, UT,VT,WA, WV |
| Separate results for students with disabilities included in general education reports | GA, KS, NC, RI, SC, TX, VA |
| Results for students with disabilities included in separate report | CT, LA |
| Separate results for students with disabilities included in both general education and separate reports | NY |
| No accountability report[b] | CA, MN, WY |

a/ Data current for June 1997.

b/ California's testing system is currently under revision; Minnesota is currently developing an accountability system; an assessment system is under consideration in Wyoming.

Source: Data taken from Erickson, Ysseldyke, et al., 1997.

specific pieces of information presented in State accountability reports.

## Research Findings Related to Standards-Based Reform

Considerable energy is now being invested in research to address several of the critical issues that face States and LEAs as they move toward the participation of students with disabilities in their reforms and accountability

systems. In December 1997, the U.S. Department of Education funded 19 assessment-related projects. Three of the national projects are discussed below.

In the first project, the Department of Education is looking at efforts that will increase the number of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency who participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). In another, the National Center for Educational Statistics has established a line of research that addresses both students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency (Olson & Goldstein, 1997). In the third project, the NCEO focuses on educational outcomes for all students. Among some of the initial findings of all of these efforts are:

- More students can be included in large-scale assessments than have typically been included.
- Specific guidelines for IEP members and other decision makers can increase the reliability of decisions that are made about participation in assessments and about the types of accommodations that are needed.
- Some accommodations[3] that may have been controversial in the past (e.g., marking on the test booklet rather than on an answer sheet, reading a math test to the student) do not seem to alter the validity of the test.
- Alternate means of assessment for students with disabilities are being discussed and developed, allowing increased participation in assessment and accountability systems.
- Parents and teachers overwhelmingly view the current emphasis on higher standards and participation in aligned assessment programs as positive and beneficial

[3] The most frequently used accommodations can be classified into one of four areas: (a) setting (taking the test in a separate room, a carrel, or a small group), (b) scheduling (extended time, breaks during testing, or testing on certain days), (c) presentation (using braille or large print, sign language presentation of directions, recording directions), and (d) response (computer-generated and scribe-recorded answers, point to answers, mark in booklet).

to helping students with disabilities achieve better educational results.

- Current performance reporting practices for students with disabilities need to be dramatically improved to better inform public and policy-making audiences.

Eight additional projects were funded through OSEP, and another eight were funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). Findings from these projects are not yet available.

## Summary

Standards-based reform is being implemented within the educational system, and special education is beginning to play an increased role in reform efforts. States are placing high priority on the issue of inclusion of students with disabilities in State assessments and accommodations for these students. However, the data on student participation in statewide assessments continue to be inconsistent. The increased emphasis on reporting in the IDEA Amendments of 1997 is designed to improve participation and accommodation data. States are also addressing alternate assessments for students with disabilities. Reporting of performance assessments for students with disabilities varies widely across States, from reporting of disaggregated data in regular State accountability reports to separate reporting to no reporting.

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# *Developing Alternate Assessments for Students with Disabilities*

PURPOSE: To provide an understanding of alternate assessments and critical issues in developing assessments that are part of accountability systems, and to highlight the efforts of two States to include all students in their accountability system.

Standards-based reform is gaining momentum across the United States as virtually every State implements an accountability system. Although standards and assessments may vary from State to State, at least two components are similar: (1) public reporting of results and (2) the use of rewards (e.g., teacher incentives) for schools and districts that make satisfactory progress toward identified standards or sanctions (e.g., probational status) for schools and districts that do not make such progress.

Although most States encourage the use of testing accommodations to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities, there is great variation in the numbers of students who actually participate. In fact, participation rates range from 0 percent to 100 percent, depending on the State (Erickson, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1996). However, when students with disabilities are exempted from the testing process, they typically are not included in the accountability system, which means that school and district staff are not held accountable for the progress of these particular students (Thurlow, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 1995).

State reports suggest that large numbers of students with disabilities, and most with significant disabilities (approximately 1 to 2 percent of the total student population), are exempted from participation in large-scale assessments that form the basis of accountability systems. The reasons for their exclusion include the following:

- Current general assessments are not relevant to their needs.
- They are typically participating in an alternate curriculum.

- An IEP team reviews their progress annually and determines that participation in large-scale assessments are not appropriate for a particular child.

- Student progress on IEPs has served as the accountability measure for special education.

- Developing new assessments for this group of students is resource intensive (e.g., fiscal and manpower) and technically difficult.

- Test administration rules and guidelines have traditionally required students to be tested at their age-appropriate test level instead of their actual instructional level. (For example, a 10-year-old child working on the first grade level would be tested at the fourth or fifth grade level.) This may lead to diagnostic information that is not very helpful.

- School administrators may not want to include some students with disabilities because administrators believe these students' test scores may negatively affect the overall school score.

- Some school administrators and teachers do not want specific students included because they believe that it would subject these students to high stress.

The current special education evaluation process (i.e., IEP development and review) focuses on individual students. Although evaluating individual progress is important, it is also necessary to evaluate the school's effectiveness in preparing students with disabilities for life as adults in communities and holding school personnel accountable for the progress of these students (Brauen, O'Reilly, & Moore, 1994).

To address these issues, the IDEA Amendments of 1997 require all States to:

1. Report to the public on the performance of students with disabilities participating in regular assessments (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(17(B)(iii));

2. Conduct alternate assessments for students who cannot participate in State and district-wide assessment programs (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(17)(A)(iii)); and

3. Report to the public on the performance of students with disabilities participating in alternate assessments (with the same frequency and in the same detail as they report on the assessment of nondisabled children) if doing so would be statistically sound and would not result in the disclosure of performance results identifiable to individual children (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(17)(B)(iii)).

## What Are Alternate Assessments?

There are three predominant types of large-scale assessments for students with disabilities: general assessments, general assessments with accommodations, and alternate assessments. The majority of students take the general, large-scale assessments without any accommodations; others may benefit from the use of changes in setting, presentation style, response style, extended time, or alternative supplies or equipment (accommodations); and a small percentage need to participate in alternate assessments.

As explained by Ysseldyke and colleagues (1997) "alternate assessments are used when students do not 'fit' within the regular assessment program, or when the tests typically used do not 'fit' a segment of the school population (p. 2)." These alternative methods of gathering information on student achievement may look similar to the general assessments (i.e., similar performance measures) but will probably differ in format or content.

## Putting Alternate Assessments in Practice

With the passage of the IDEA Amendments of 1997, all States are in the process of developing strategies for including students with significant disabilities in their

accountability systems. Some States are already implementing this process.

Two examples, Kentucky's Alternate Portfolio system and Maryland's Independent Mastery Assessment Program, are described below.

## Kentucky's Alternate Portfolio

Assessment and accountability form just one part of the educational reform in Kentucky known as the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). With the advent of KERA, most curricular and instructional decisions were to be made at the school building level. With this new autonomy, however, schools became accountable for student learning through the performance-based assessment system. In Kentucky, schools receive cash rewards or sanctions based on their assessment scores. Baseline scores for 2 years are calculated to reflect a threshold score. Schools must exceed their threshold score to be eligible for cash rewards. Schools that fail to reach their threshold score or fall significantly below their threshold may receive technical assistance from the State Department of Education and are subject to extreme sanctions such as removal of staff.

The assessment system uses performance assessment methodologies that are based on a common curricular framework of 57 Academic Expectations. These expectations are determined for all students, who produce writing and mathematics portfolios that represent a collection of best work, on-demand performance events, and standardized assessment scores (i.e., California Test of Basic Skills). The standardized assessment is not used in the accountability index, an aggregation of student assessment data that results in school classification for rewards or sanctions (Petrosko, 1998). Students with disabilities are fully included in the assessment system. Students with disabilities can participate in the general assessment system with or without specifically determined accommodations. Students for whom writing and mathematics portfolios would be inappropriate participate in the assessment

system through an Alternate Portfolio. An Alternate Portfolio score weighs equally with the combination of assessments in the general system. The scores are reported through the accountability index. In addition, scores for students in the Alternate Portfolio are tracked to the child's neighborhood school, so that schools are encouraged to have ownership of the results of all students who reside within the school's attendance area. The Alternate Portfolio does not relieve the school of its responsibility for the education of that student.

Less than 1 percent of Kentucky's students, or approximately 850 per year, develop Alternate Portfolios. The severity of disability category alone is not a basis for exemption from the assessment process. In fact, only one student has been exempted in the past 6 years. All other students have participated in one of the assessment formats. Specific eligibility requirements for the Alternate Portfolio limit participation to those students with significant cognitive disabilities that are not the result of specific learning disabilities; hearing, vision, physical, or emotional/behavioral impairments; and who, even with appropriate modifications and support, are unable to complete the regular program of studies (Kentucky Systems Change Project, 1997). Following State guidelines, each student's IEP team determines which assessment the student will participate in and identifies accommodations as needed.

The Alternate Portfolio is based on a unified set of six learning goals and 28 of the 57 Academic Expectations identified for all students. An example of an Academic Expectation is: "Students use research tools to locate sources of information and ideas relevant to a specific need or problem" (Kentucky Department of Education, 1993). For one student, a critical function of "using research tools" may be to use an augmentative communication system to ask a question or request assistance. Another student may conduct a survey of employers about appropriate dress for work.

An Alternate Portfolio contains several types of information, including a letter to the reviewer written or dictated by the

student or interpretations of the student's communication by peers; examples of a student's mode of communication; and an individualized daily schedule with examples of how the student is learning to use the schedule. Eighth and 12th grade students must include a resume and/or evidence of vocational skills. A letter of validation from the parent must also be included. Finally, the portfolio must include 8 to 10 entries that show student performance in multiple settings with appropriate supports and peer interactions. Evidence of student performance can be instructional program data, photographs or videotape, and permanent products. A single entry may incorporate any or all of these approaches.

Portfolios are scored by teachers using a holistic scoring approach. This approach incorporates key standards in six scoring dimensions that must be shown within and across entries in order to score at high levels. The holistic scoring guide shows performance indicators at four levels: novice, apprentice, proficient, and distinguished. These indicators reflect those used in the general writing and mathematics portfolio. The scoring dimensions for the Alternate Portfolio are grounded in best programming practices for educating students with moderate and severe disabilities.

A recent survey of teachers involved in the alternate assessment suggested that teachers saw benefits of including these students in school accountability indices (Kleinert, Kearns, & Kennedy, 1997). Some of the benefits reported by teachers included instructional programming related to students following their own schedules, students evaluating their own performance, and an increase in the number of students using augmentative communication systems (Wheatley, 1993). Teachers also expressed frustration with the amount of time required to develop an Alternate Portfolio and scoring reliability, and some teachers perceived that the process is an assessment of teachers or programs rather than student progress.

## Maryland's Independent Mastery Assessment Program

In 1989, the Maryland Board of Education adopted the report of the *Sondheim Commission on School Performance*, which called for educational reform through rigorous standards and a new assessment. The Commission stipulated that "all children can learn equally rigorous content." Therefore, all children should be included in the accountability process (Haigh, 1996). Currently, two assessments form the "student performance" component of the Maryland School Performance Program; Maryland Functional Tests (MFTs), which consist of four minimum competency tests in reading, writing, math, and citizenship which must be passed for graduation, and the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). The MSPAP is a collection of performance assessments administered to a matrix sampling of students in grades 3, 5, and 8. The tasks are designed to measure what students have learned based on identified State outcomes. The assessments are integrated across subject matter content and emphasize the application of knowledge and skills in content areas. Each assessment requires multiple student responses that can include open-ended responses, writing mathematical findings, and group activities. Results are not reported for individual students. Rather, they are used to provide descriptive data about a school's performance at targeted assessed areas. Additional plans to take effect with the 2004 graduating class include requiring passing of all four of the MFTs to exit eighth grade and the implementation of a high school assessment that will be similar to the MSPAP, with passing required for graduation.

In an effort to include students with diverse learning styles, a wide array of accommodations were identified for students with disabilities, those eligible for Section 504 support, and those identified with limited English proficiency. All students with disabilities take the MFTs and MSPAP unless their IEP committee determines that the student is receiving a functional life skills curriculum rather than the curriculum based on the Maryland learning outcomes of reading, writing, language usage, math, science, and social studies. The Independence Mastery

Assessment Program (IMAP) was developed for those students with significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in the MFTs and MSPAP.

IMAP development was guided by a Stakeholder Advisory Committee composed of parents, special educators and administrators, principals, local district accountability coordinators, assessment and measurement specialists, employers, and representatives of advocacy and adult service organizations. Exit standards (age 21 years) were identified in the personal management, community, career/vocational, and recreation/leisure content areas with enabling standards in the learner areas of communication, decision making, behavior, and functional academics. A back-mapping process was used to identify outcomes and indicators for benchmark ages of 5, 8, 10, 13, and 17.

A series of chronologically age-appropriate performance tasks has been developed for each content area. Opportunities to engage in activities leading to the learner areas are embedded in each task. For example, a vocational task for a student age 17-21 could focus on preparing to engage in a community-based job and obtaining the necessary clothing, supplies, and equipment. The student's performance is scored on actual work preparation skills as well as on communication with nondisabled co-workers, problem solving, appropriate behaviors, and use of functional academic skills. After task completion, each student participates in a discussion that analyzes his/her performance.

Six scoring rubrics are used for each task. They are student performance, program supports, communication, decision making, behavior, and functional academics. The student performance rubric is a 4-point scale, with the highest score awarded to those students who complete the task with minimal assistance from peers and co-workers. A lower score is assigned for completing the task with support from teachers or other special education personnel. The program support rubric assesses chronological age-appropriate supports that are provided only as needed to promote maximum independence.

The IMAP product for each student is a portfolio consisting of at least two videotaped on-demand performance tasks, descriptions/examples of program supports (e.g., communication systems, behavior management plans), descriptions of previous experiences (e.g., vocational, community participation), and an optional parent survey that addresses student skills outside of school. Portfolios, including the videotapes, are evaluated during the summer by a group of three special educators (who do not know the student). This summer session is a professional development opportunity for the teachers as well as a formal scoring session. Scoring results are reported at the school level for the school that the student attended at the time of the assessment.

Currently, 12 of the State's 24 districts participate in IMAP. Because it has not yet been formally adopted as part of the State's accountability system, IMAP focuses on program improvement. With the implementation of the IDEA Amendments of 1997, the current IMAP framework is being expanded to include all school districts in Maryland.

IMAP was designed to change instruction. Regardless of the special education placement, all students should have ongoing, regular opportunities to engage in community-based vocational experiences that facilitate effective transition to employment opportunities following school. Likewise, it is expected that students will begin to regularly engage in self-evaluation of their individual performance. Experiences in the first 2 years of the IMAP process revealed that minimal instructional time was devoted to the critical thinking skills of decision making/self-evaluation by students with significant disabilities. However, employers on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee felt strongly that these skills needed to be addressed early in school to allow sufficient time for skill development.

## Issues To Consider in Developing Alternate Assessments

Including students with significant disabilities in accountability systems and developing the alternate assessments

that will serve as the assessment mechanism are complicated tasks.

One goal of IDEA is to foster increased and expanded ownership for the education and services provided to students with disabilities. To accomplish this goal, a number of issues need to be considered within the context of each State's accountability system. Most of these can be addressed in two ways: within a unified system (e.g., Kentucky) or an alternative system (e.g., Maryland). Both approaches have merit; however, each time a decision is made to adopt an alternative component (i.e., standards, assessment framework, scoring rubric, reporting framework), an additional barrier is drawn that separates students with significant disabilities from the larger student population (McLaughlin & Warren, 1994).

## Eligible Population

Perhaps the most significant and controversial issue to be addressed is the identification of the population of students eligible to participate in alternate assessments. Currently in many States, large numbers of students with disabilities are exempted from general assessments because they read below grade level, lack sufficient comprehensive skills, disrupt the testing environment, or become frustrated during testing. Others are exempted because they have significant cognitive disabilities that prevent them from participating in most large-scale assessments, particularly those based on academic content versus those addressing vocational or personal management. The intent of IDEA is for a small number of students to participate in alternate assessments with the large majority of the remaining, currently exempted students being included in the general assessments. Therefore, as State departments of education develop eligibility policies, care should be taken to avoid identification of eligible or noneligible groups of students. The ultimate decision should be made by the IEP team on an individual basis within the framework of IEP development and review.

## Identification of Standards

Standards for students with disabilities need to be challenging, comprehensive, and realistic. Most States have already identified the standards that serve as the foundation for the general assessments. Depending on the nature of the standards, additional standards may need to be developed. Standards that focus on academic areas may not be broad enough to be relevant to the needs of students with significant disabilities and will need to be expanded or replaced by alternate standards that address relevant areas. However, many States have developed broad standards that can facilitate a system wherein all students work toward similar standards while exhibiting their progress in different ways.

The process of identifying alternative or additional standards should include geographic and cultural diversity, educators from the continuum of educational settings, parents, students or former students receiving special education services, employers, and adult service agency representatives.

## Purpose of the Assessments

It is essential that the purpose of the alternate assessment be clear to everyone. If a State requires that a student pass a particular assessment to advance to a higher grade or to graduate, then the schools must ensure that parents are fully informed of their options regarding an alternate assessment and that students with disabilities have access to instruction that will prepare them also to advance or graduate. Furthermore, students with disabilities should not be recommended for alternate assessments if their exemption from the general assessments is viewed as a way of increasing the school's score.

## Assessment Format

Assessments should reflect the broadest possible range of knowledge and skills needed for a positive quality of life.

For students with significant disabilities, this range should encompass vocational, personal management, leisure, and community orientation skills. However, it is impractical to propose developing a series of assessments that would cover all the necessary areas and that would be taken by every student.

There are options that enable assessors to evaluate the progress of groups of students toward meeting standards. Kentucky's portfolio approach presents a common framework for all portfolios while allowing for individual flexibility (e.g., focus areas) in selecting actual entries. Maryland has adopted two approaches. For the MSPAP, each student is randomly assigned to one of three groups. Each group takes a different assortment of performance assessments. Individually, the assortments do not provide a complete picture of individual student progress toward meeting State standards; but, analyzing performance across the three assessment groups offers a "bird's eye" picture of overall progress of the group. IMAP offers an alternative approach, with local school district accountability staff randomly assigning each student to a task while allowing school-based staff to select a second task for each student. An additional consideration is whether the alternate assessment will be an on-demand task (i.e., IMAP) or an ongoing process (i.e., Kentucky's portfolios). On-demand tasks allow a snapshot of performances by a large group at one particular time. A portfolio process can offer the opportunity to see change over time.

## Scoring Rubrics

Traditionally, the goal of assessments has been to determine whether the student knows subject matter content. More recently, the focus has changed to whether a student can apply knowledge. When evaluating students with significant disabilities, additional issues need to be considered. Given the nature of the disability, a student may require support to complete certain tasks. This support has typically been provided by paid staff (e.g., special educators, job coaches, counselors). The advent of natural supports has resulted in a new focus on roles that others

can play. Both Kentucky and Maryland have chosen to award higher performance points to those students receiving natural supports than to those receiving supports from staff.

This results in multi-point scoring rubrics. Both Kentucky and Maryland use 4-point scales. Kentucky uses descriptive terms, and Maryland uses numeric terms. In an effort to create a unified accountability system, consideration should be given to the adoption of comparable scoring rubrics for both general assessments and alternate assessments.

## Administration of Alternate Assessments

Resources required for administration of alternate assessments vary according to the nature of the specific assessment. Developing alternate portfolios may require no more resources or logistical support than are required to develop the general portfolios. Likewise, when performance assessments are aligned with performance-based instruction, administration will not require significantly more resources. Difficulties in resource allocation (e.g., manpower, equipment) tend to arise when the assessment looks very different from day-to-day practices. If students are engaged in community-based instruction and self-evaluation activities occur regularly, the actual assessment session should not pose dramatic logistical problems.

## Scoring of Alternate Assessments

The viability of the alternate assessment system may rest with the reliability of the scoring process. Lessons learned from Kentucky and Maryland point to the impact training has in achieving reliability.

These States have adopted different scoring approaches. Each Kentucky Alternate Portfolio is scored at least twice. The first scoring is conducted by the student's own teacher with (ideally) the input of another trained scorer. The second scoring is done at a regional level by scorers blind

to the initial score as well as to the district submitting the portfolio. Alternate portfolios that lack consensus between the two scores are evaluated a third time by a State employee.

Maryland IMAP portfolios are scored simultaneously by three trained scorers who represent districts other than the district submitting the portfolio. Their scores are averaged to obtain a final score.

## Reporting of Scores

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 require that the public in each State receive a report on the performance of students with disabilities with the same frequency and in the same detail as reported for nondisabled students. However, the reporting must be statistically sound and cannot violate the confidentiality of individual students.

Several benefits can accrue when scores are reported in the disaggregate (McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison, 1997). Validity can be strengthened when the scores of a particular group that have "uncertain meaning" are separated, thus increasing the validity of the larger group. Second, disaggregation removes the "unfair burden" placed on schools with larger numbers of students with significant disabilities. Finally, disaggregating scores of a particular group may focus additional attention to that group, thus focusing more public interest on the educational services provided the target group of students. Care must be taken in describing the disaggregated group to ensure confidentiality of individual students.

However, disaggregation of scores, particularly for very small groups as would be found in the alternate assessment population, raises serious threats to reliability. In addition, unless the disaggregated group was described (which would threaten individual confidentiality), there would be little benefit in separately identifying the group.

## Summary

Including *all* students in systems of public accountability is critical to expanding the concept that principals and, when appropriate, general educators, also assume responsibility for students with disabilities. Traditionally, responsibility for these students' progress and the services they receive has rested solely with special educators. In the future, this locus of responsibility should shift to the whole school.

Although many students with disabilities currently participate in large-scale assessments, the challenge is to develop rigorous, alternate assessments for students with significant disabilities that are based on standards relevant to their postschool needs. However, participation in alternate assessments needs to be used cautiously because the majority of students with disabilities can participate in the large-scale assessments.

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# *Secondary School Completion for Students with Disabilities*[1]

In recent years, as high paying manufacturing jobs have dwindled and the service and technology industries have expanded, the labor market has demanded higher levels of education and skills. This makes secondary school completion more critical. Students with disabilities who complete high school are more likely to be employed, earn higher wages, and enroll in postsecondary education and training (Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, & Newman, 1993).

PURPOSE: To present data on completion rates for students with disabilities.

The national education goals state that by the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent. The high school completion rate for all students in the United States rose considerably in the early 1980s but has been relatively stable since then. In 1992, the rate was 87 percent for youth ages 19 and 20. Notable are increases in high school completion among African Americans; their graduation rates are now equal to those of Whites. However, much lower graduation rates are reported for Hispanic students and students with disabilities (National Education Goals Panel, 1994).

Although much national attention is devoted to measuring and reporting the high school graduation rate, less attention is given to what it means to earn a high school diploma, how graduation requirements vary across States and school districts, and how rates differ for students with and without disabilities. Most States (44) have specific Carnegie-unit requirements for earning a diploma, but these requirements vary considerably from State to State (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Anderson, 1995). Seventeen States use a high school exit examination or minimum competency test as a requirement for graduation Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 1996). Local educational agencies in several States have the option of establishing

[1] States report completion data for students ages 14-21. However, the 17-21 age range is used as the basis of analysis for this module because most students complete high school after age 16.

more stringent standards than those set by the State, either in the form of academic credits or high school exit examinations (Thurlow et al., 1995).

Many States require that students with disabilities meet the same requirements as other students to receive a standard diploma. However, nine States award a standard diploma to students with disabilities who complete their individualized education program (IEP). Others award modified diplomas or certificates of completion to students who complete their IEP but who do not meet the requirements for a standard diploma. In many States, the IEP team may waive some academic credits and/or sections of the exit exam. In five States, graduation requirements for students with disabilities are set at the local level (Thurlow et al., 1995).

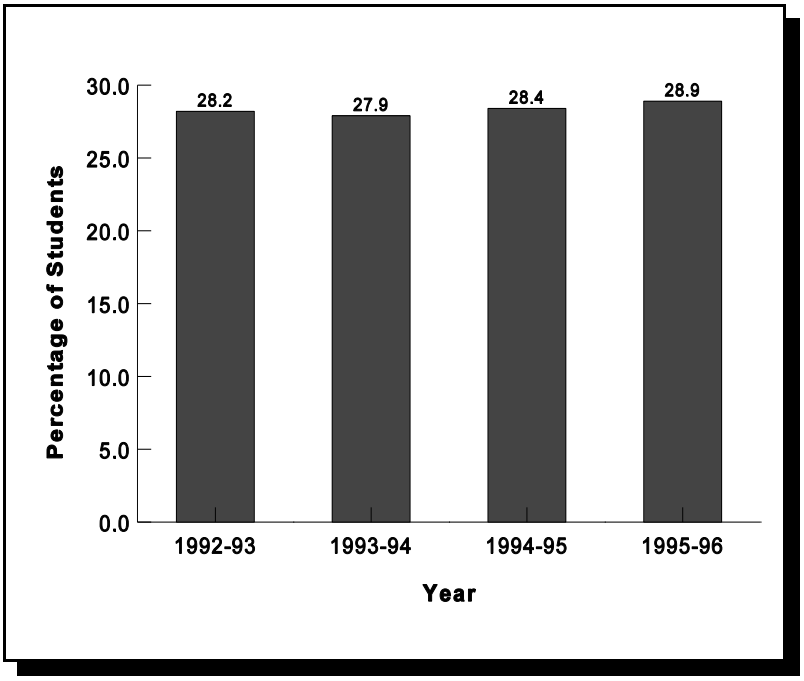
Overall, credits required for graduation have risen in the past 10 years. Nineteen States now award only one exit document for students meeting standard or alternative requirements, an increase from 14 States in 1987. All 31 States that have differentiated diplomas for students with disabilities also allow students with disabilities to earn a standard diploma (Bodner, Clark, & Mellard, 1987; Thurlow et al., 1995).

## Trends in High School Completion for Students with Disabilities

In 1995-96, 151,224 students ages 17 to 21 with disabilities graduated with a diploma or certificate of completion. This figure represented 29 percent of all students ages 17-21 with disabilities and 74 percent of those exiting the educational system. The percentage of students with disabilities graduating with a diploma or certificate of completion remained steady from the past year (see figure IV-1 and table AD2).

Graduation rates varied by disability. Students with speech and language impairments, specific learning disabilities, hearing impairments, and visual impairments were most likely to graduate with a diploma or certificate,

**Figure IV-1**
**Percentage of Students with Disabilities Graduating with a Diploma or Certificate of Completion**




Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).

while those with multiple disabilities, autism, and deaf-blindness were less likely to do so (see table IV-3).

The percentage of students with disabilities who completed high school with a diploma or certificate also varied considerably by State. The States with the largest percentage of 17- through 21-year-olds graduating with a diploma or certificate include Hawaii, New Jersey, West Virginia, Nevada, and Minnesota.

A multivariate analysis of factors affecting State graduation rates showed that statewide reading and math achievement and per pupil expenditures in education accounted for almost 60 percent of the variance in State graduation rates

**Table IV-3**
**Number and Percentage of Students Ages 17 and Older Graduating with a Diploma or Certificate of Completion: 1995-96**

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Specific learning disabilities | 97,139 | 32.9 |
| Speech or language impairments | 4,043 | 38.5 |
| Mental retardation | 23,728 | 22.6 |
| Emotional disturbance | 13,753 | 24.0 |
| Multiple disabilities | 2,378 | 13.5 |
| Hearing impairments | 2,816 | 31.7 |
| Orthopedic impairments | 1,994 | 27.4 |
| Other health impairments | 3,275 | 28.2 |
| Visual impairments | 1,136 | 32.1 |
| Autism | 397 | 10.4 |
| Deaf-blindness | 51 | 16.5 |
| Traumatic brain injury | 514 | 27.8 |
| All disabilities | 151,224 | 28.9 |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).

(Oswald & Coutinho, 1996).[2] Variables such as median household income, percent White, percent of households below the poverty level, percent of education revenues from State sources, average teacher salary, and population density were significant in predicting graduation for

[2] Graduation rates for this analysis were calculated by dividing the number of diploma recipients with disabilities by the resident population of children and youth.

**Table IV-4**
**Factors Predicting State Graduation Rates for Students with Disabilities in 1992-93: Standard Diploma**

| Disability Condition | Predictors Entering Stepwise Model | Bivariate Correlation[a] | Model $R^{2}$[b] |
|---|---|---|---|
| All Disabilities | 4th grade reading proficiency | .63 | .59 |
| | 8th grade math proficiency | .46 | |
| | Current expenditure per pupil | .25 | |
| Specific Learning Disabilities | 4th grade reading proficiency | .54 | .54 |
| | 8th grade math proficiency | .36 | |
| | Current expenditure per pupil | .27 | |
| Emotional Disturbance | Per pupil revenue | .47 | .62 |
| | 4th grade reading proficiency | .58 | |
| | Median household income (1990) | .49 | |
| Mental Retardation | Percent White | .52 | .70 |
| | All education expenditures per capita | -.22 | |
| | Percent of households below poverty level (1992) | .03 | |
| | Percent revenue from State sources | .05 | |
| | Population density | -.14 | |
| | 8th grade math proficiency | .28 | |

a/ The correlation coefficient is a numeric description of the extent and direction of the relatedness between two variables. Values range from -1.00 to +1.00.

b/ $R^2$ indicates the percentage of the variance in receipt of standard diplomas accounted for by the independent variables in the model.

Source: Oswald & Coutinho, 1996.

students with various disabilities and for predicting graduation with a certificate of completion rather than a standard diploma (see tables IV-4 and IV-5). The analyses suggest that State economic, demographic, and educational variables may affect graduation rates but in highly complex and inconsistent ways (Oswald & Coutinho, 1996).

**Table IV-5**
**Factors Predicting State Graduation Rates for Students with Disabilities in 1992-93: Certificate of Completion**

| Disability Condition | Predictors Entering Stepwise Model | Bivariate Correlation[a] | Model $R^{2b}$ |
|---|---|---|---|
| All Disabilities | Community adult dropout rate | .50 | .59 |
| | Percent White | -.38 | |
| | Population density | -.04 | |
| | Percent revenue from State sources | .00 | |
| | Average teacher salary | -.26 | |
| | Gross State product per capita | -.07 | |
| Specific Learning Disabilities | Percent of households below poverty level (1992) | .39 | .15 |
| Emotional Disturbance | Percent revenue from local sources | .25 | .29 |
| | Population density | -.11 | |
| | Percent White | -.09 | |
| Mental Retardation | Community adult dropout rate | .59 | .29 |

a/ The correlation coefficient is a numeric description of the extent and direction of the relatedness between two variables. Values range from -1.00 to +1.00.

b/ $R^2$ indicates the percentage of the variance in receipt of standard diplomas accounted for by the independent variables in the model.

Source: Oswald & Coutinho, 1996.

## Summary

In the recent amendments to IDEA, Congress placed additional emphasis on high school completion as an indicator of individual and programmatic success. Each State is required to establish goals for the performance of children with disabilities in the State, including dropout rates and graduation rates. States must also report to Congress every 2 years on their progress, and of children with disabilities in the State, toward meeting State performance goals.

The percentage of all students and the percentage of students with disabilities completing high school has remained steady in the past few years. State economic, demographic, and educational variables apparently affect graduation rates, but in complex and inconsistent ways.

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# State Improvement and Monitoring

PURPOSE: To describe OSEP's monitoring program and technical assistance to States.

IDEA directs the Department of Education to assess the impact and effectiveness of State and local efforts to provide a free appropriate public education to children and youth with disabilities. Primarily through OSEP, the Department assists State educational agencies (SEAs) and local school districts in implementing Federal special education mandates by making grants pursuant to congressional appropriations and providing technical assistance, policy support, and monitoring.

OSEP works in partnership with States, school districts, school administrators and teachers, institutions of higher education, students with disabilities and their families, and advocacy groups to ensure positive educational results for students with disabilities. OSEP uses research, dissemination, demonstration, systems change, and other technical assistance strategies to provide State and local educational agencies with tools to assist them in improving teaching and learning.

OSEP also recognizes, however, the critical importance of its compliance monitoring responsibility and activities to ensure compliance with Congress' mandates. OSEP places the highest priority on compliance with those IDEA requirements that have the strongest relationship with improved services and results for students with disabilities and their families. The Office tailors its monitoring and technical assistance activities in each State to maximize positive impact on educational services and results for students in that State.

Based in large part on Congress' findings, as set forth in the IDEA Amendments of 1997, and the results of the National Longitudinal Transition Study[1], OSEP has found

[1] The National Longitudinal Transition Study identified several factors as strong predictors of postschool success in living independently, obtaining employment, and earning higher wages for youth with disabilities. These factors included high school completion, participation in regular education with appropriate supplementary aids and services, and access to secondary vocational education, including work experience.

that the requirements with the strongest links to improved educational results for students with disabilities include those addressing:

- Involvement and progress of students with disabilities in the full range of curricula and programs available to nondisabled children (and the supports, services, and modifications that they need to learn effectively in those curricula and programs, as determined through the development of an individualized education program (IEP)), including general curricula and vocational education and work-experience programs;

- Participation of children with disabilities in statewide and districtwide assessments of student achievement;

- Provision of transition services to enable students with disabilities to move effectively from school to postschool independence and achievement;

- Educating children with disabilities with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate; and

- Participation of parents, students, and regular education personnel in the development and implementation of educational programs for children with disabilities.

Drawing on more than 20 years of research and experience since the 1975 enactment of P.L. 94-142 (IDEA's predecessor), Congress, in the IDEA Amendments of 1997, greatly strengthened IDEA's emphasis on all of these critical components of effective education for students with disabilities. In its monitoring of States under IDEA, OSEP will emphasize all of these requirements in light of the recent IDEA amendments and continuing research findings that support the linkage between these requirements and improved educational results.

Because each State has general supervision responsibility for all educational programs for its children with disabilities, OSEP focuses its monitoring activities on each State's systems for ensuring that all public agencies comply with the requirements of Part B, including those noted above, in

providing services to students with disabilities. These systems include the State's procedures for monitoring public agencies to determine compliance with Part B requirements as they apply to students with disabilities--including students placed by public agencies in private schools or facilities--and ensuring that public agencies correct any deficiencies; the State's complaint management and due process hearing systems; and its procedures for ensuring that special education programs administered by State agencies other than the SEA meet State standards and Part B requirements.

In working with States to ensure compliance and improved results for students with disabilities, OSEP emphasizes partnerships and technical assistance, together with a strong accountability system. OSEP works with States, Regional Resource Centers, and others to identify systemic strengths and weaknesses and to develop strategies for systemic reform and improvement. OSEP also provides and brokers technical assistance to States on an ongoing basis regarding legal requirements and best practice strategies for ensuring compliance in a manner that ensures continuous progress in educational results for students with disabilities. OSEP uses these strategies for State improvement in conjunction with a multifaceted compliance review process that includes review and approval of State plans, on-site compliance reviews, procedures to ensure the effective and timely implementation of corrective action plans, and discretionary review of final State decisions on Part B complaints.

Over the past 4 years, OSEP has worked intensively to reorient and strengthen its monitoring system so that it will--in conjunction with research, innovation, and technical assistance efforts--support systemic reform that produces better results for students with disabilities *and* ensures compliance. To ensure a strong accountability

system, OSEP has emphasized strong and diverse customer input in the monitoring process[2]; effective methods for ensuring compliance with Part B, with strongest emphasis on requirements that relate most directly to continuous improvement in learner results; prompt identification and correction of deficiencies; and corrective action requirements and strategies that yield improved access and results for students.

OSEP tailors its monitoring and technical assistance activities to the needs in specific States. Thus, some States (e.g., States with relatively few findings in their last review or with findings of a technical nature and with demonstrable success in completing corrective actions) may require only a more narrow, focused review, while others will continue to require frequent OSEP comprehensive and follow-up monitoring visits.

During the 1996-97 school year, OSEP conducted comprehensive monitoring reviews of 13 SEAs and follow-up monitoring visits to six States. (See table IV-6 for a list of the SEAs that OSEP monitored during the 1996-97 school year.) Table IV-7 shows the monitoring reports that OSEP issued during fiscal year 1997. As shown in table IV-8, which summarizes the findings in the 11 final monitoring reports that OSEP issued during fiscal year 1997, those findings concentrated in areas directly related to:

- student access to instruction and vocational preparation (e.g., placement in the least restrictive environment, and the provision of a free appropriate public education[3]);

[2] OSEP uses a variety of methods to involve the families of students with disabilities in the monitoring process, including public meetings and smaller "outreach" meetings with members of groups representing students with disabilities and their families, as part of the pre-site visit to each State; one or more parent "focus group" meetings in at least one of the public agencies that OSEP visits in each State; and inviting a representative of each State's special education advisory panel to participate in meetings held to develop a corrective action plan.

[3] OSEP also made findings regarding requirements related to evaluation of students with disabilities and the development of IEPs. Both sets of requirements and OSEP's findings relate directly to the provision of a free appropriate public education. Evaluations serve as a critical source of information for making individualized determinations regarding the program and placement that each student needs, and Congress has mandated the development of an IEP as the mechanism for making such determinations.

**Table IV-6**
**Schedule of On-Site Monitoring Reviews, 1996-97**

| 1996-97 Cyclical Reviews | 1996-97 Follow-Up Reviews |
|---|---|
| Texas (9/96) | Michigan (11/96) |
| Alaska (9/96) | Connecticut (2/97) |
| Maine (9/96) | Massachusetts (3/97) |
| West Virginia (12/96) | New York (3/97) |
| Florida (1/97) | New Jersey (5/97) |
| Guam (3/97) | Pennsylvania (5/97) |
| American Samoa (3/97) | |
| Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (3/97) | |
| District of Columbia (3/97) | |
| Mississippi (4/97) | |
| Oregon (4/97) | |
| Missouri (4/97) | |
| Virgin Islands (5/97) | |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Division of Monitoring and State Improvement Planning.

**Table IV-7**
**Monitoring Reports Issued During Fiscal Year 1997**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Colorado (10/96) | Oklahoma (6/97) | Guam (9/97) |
| West Virginia (4/97) | Maine (7/97) | Texas (9/97) |
| Alaska (5/97) | American Samoa (7/97) | Florida (9/97) |
| Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (5/97) | Mississippi (8/97) | |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Division of Monitoring and State Improvement Planning.

**Table IV-8**
**Summary of Findings in Fiscal Year 1997 Monitoring Reports**

| Requirements on Which Findings Based/Number of Reports with Findings | | |
|---|---|---|
| TRANSITION | 6 | Agency invites student to meeting |
| | 2 | Agency invites representatives of other agencies likely to be responsible for transition to IEP meeting |
| | 7 | Content of meeting notice |
| | 7 | Statement of needed transition services |
| LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT | 5 | Removed from regular education only if education cannot be achieved satisfactorily in regular class with supplementary aids and services |
| | 2 | Placement decision based on IEP |
| | 2 | Continuum of alternative placements |
| | 3 | Student participates with nondisabled students in extracurricular/ nonacademic activities |
| FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION | 4 | Extended school year services |
| | 8 | Services provided as determined by the IEP team |
| | 3 | Length of school day consistent with State standard |
| | 5 | Timely completion of initial evaluation (consistent with State standards) |
| PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS | 5 | Prior notice or proposed/refused actions provided to parents |
| | 6 | Prior notice includes other required content |
| | 2 | Hearing and review timelines |
| MONITORING | 7 | Procedures to identify deficiencies |
| | 7 | Procedures to correct deficiencies |
| COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT | 5 | SEA resolves all Part B complaints within 60 days |
| GENERAL SUPERVISION | 2 | Programs administered by State agency other than SEA meet SEA standards & Part B requirements |
| IEP | 5 | IEPs include required content |
| EVALUATION | 3 | Students reevaluated at least once every 3 years |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Division of Monitoring and State Improvement Planning.

- transition from school to employment and other postschool activities;
- procedural safeguards for children with disabilities and their parents; and
- the SEA's exercise of its general supervision responsibility (e.g., monitoring, complaint management, and responsibility for special education programs administered by other State agencies).

In the past, OSEP reports consisted largely of detailed and technical findings regarding the content of local educational agency (LEA) applications, local educational policies and procedures, and explanations of procedural safeguards. OSEP now collects data and writes reports to stress findings and corrective actions that more strongly affect student results. For example, data collection and reports include a strong focus on State and local policies, procedures, and practices relating to transition and placement in the least restrictive environment.

Prior to the 1994-95 school year, each OSEP monitoring report included a corrective action plan developed by OSEP with limited dialogue with the State. Often States implemented the required procedures with little verifiable impact on services and results for students with disabilities. OSEP found that, to better ensure that corrective actions positively affect student results in a State, it is important to work with the State to develop and define corrective action requirements and to integrate technical assistance with the development, implementation, and evaluation of the corrective actions. While some States completed all required corrective actions, OSEP noted continuing deficiencies when it next monitored those States. Accordingly, OSEP has revised its corrective action procedures to emphasize joint development of corrective action plans and to provide for technical assistance to support implementation of corrective action and follow-up visits to assess the effectiveness of correction and identify needs for further technical assistance.

With the majority of the requirements of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 becoming effective with the President's signature on June 4, 1997, OSEP focused its monitoring efforts during the first half of the 1997-98 school year on working with a broad spectrum of stakeholders to ensure timely implementation of the new requirements in a manner which would support improved results for students and educational reform. From August 1997 through January 1998, OSEP staff participated in implementation planning meetings in 49 States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These meetings included a broad array of stakeholders, including parents and representatives of advocacy groups, special and general education teachers and administrators, personnel from institutions of higher education, representatives of the SEA and other State agencies, etc. (See table IV-9 for the schedule of these implementation visits.) OSEP staff also met in Hawaii with representatives from Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, who returned to their respective entities and in turn conducted implementation meetings with a broad spectrum of stakeholders to develop an implementation plan.

**Table IV-9**
**Schedule of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 Implementation Planning Visits**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Montana (8/97) | Minnesota (10/97) | California (12/97) |
| Kansas (9/97) | Pennsylvania (10/97) | Louisiana (12/97) |
| Kentucky (9/97) | Maine (10/97) | Massachusetts (12/97) |
| Michigan (9/97) | New Hampshire (10/97) | Missouri (12/97) |
| North Dakota (9/97) | Alabama (11/97) | Maryland (12/97) |
| Oregon (9/97) | New Mexico (11/97) | New York (12/97) |
| Wisconsin (9/97) | Ohio (11/97) | New Jersey (12/97) |
| Hawaii (9/97) | Colorado (11/97) | Oklahoma (12/97) |
| West Virginia (10/97) | North Carolina (11/97) | Virginia (1/98) |
| Illinois (10/97) | Delaware (11/97) | Mississippi (1/98) |
| Indiana (10/97) | Wyoming (11/97) | Connecticut (1/98) |
| Alaska (10/97) | Washington (11/97) | Puerto Rico (1/98) |
| Vermont (10/97) | Tennessee (11/97) | Rhode Island (1/98) |
| Arkansas (10/97) | Nevada (11/97) | Georgia (1/98) |
| Iowa (10/97) | Virgin Islands (12/97) | Arizona (1/98) |
| South Carolina (10/97) | South Dakota (12/97) | Florida (1/98) |
| Nebraska (10/97) | Idaho (12/97) | Bureau of Indian Affairs (1/98) |
| Utah (10/97) | | |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Division of Monitoring and State Improvement Planning.

## Summary

OSEP recognizes that it is important to focus on both student results and compliance and uses a broad range of technical assistance, partnership, and accountability strategies to ensure compliance, especially with those requirements that relate most strongly to learning opportu-

nities and results for students with disabilities. OSEP tailors its technical assistance and monitoring activities in each State to the needs and strengths of that State, and OSEP's revised monitoring procedures have resulted in monitoring reports and corrective actions that ensure compliance while supporting State reform efforts and improved teaching and learning.

# *Performance Indicators for Parts B, C, and D*

In response to increasing concerns about governmental accountability, Congress passed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993. This law is the mechanism by which Congress intends to ensure the accountability of Federal programs; it will also influence future appropriations for those programs. GPRA requires most Federal programs[1] to "improve Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction." (31 U.S.C. §1101(2)(b)(3))

PURPOSE: To summarize GPRA's goals and requirements, the Department of Education's response to the act, and OSEP's plans to fulfill those requirements for Parts B, C, and D of IDEA.

To meet this mandate, OSEP developed a strategic plan based on the IDEA Amendments of 1997, OSEP's primary vehicle for improving results for children and youth with disabilities. The plan contains a mission statement, goals, objectives, and performance indicators. Part B and Part C of IDEA are designed to improve results for children and youth, and infants and toddlers, respectively; Part D's discretionary programs provide tools to assess and further improve results.

This module will first address the goals established by GPRA, and then discuss the Department of Education's and OSEP's response to GPRA. Subsequent sections of the module will present models and performance indicators for Parts B, C, and D of IDEA.

## The Purposes of GPRA

GPRA was enacted to bolster eroding public confidence and to provide a mechanism for Federal managers to improve their programs. The act has six purposes. They are to:

[1] The Central Intelligence Agency, Government Accounting Office, Panama Canal Commission, U.S. Postal Service, and the Postal Rate Commission are excluded from GPRA.

- improve the confidence of the American people in the capability of the Federal Government, by systematically holding Federal agencies accountable for achieving program results;

- initiate program performance reform with a series of pilot projects in setting program goals, measuring program performance against those goals, and reporting publicly on their progress;

- improve Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction;

- help Federal managers improve service delivery, by requiring that they plan for meeting program objectives and by providing them with information about program results and service quality;

- improve congressional decision making by providing more objective information on achieving statutory objectives, and on the relative effectiveness and efficiency of Federal programs and spending; and

- improve internal management of the Federal Government. (31 U.S.C. §1101(2)(a))

This module will focus on the first four of these purposes. GPRA requires three major actions from all Federal agencies. The first is to prepare a 5-year strategic plan, including agency mission statements, goals, and performance targets. The second is to submit an annual performance plan that states tasks to be undertaken to achieve goals, and the third is to submit an annual performance report that delineates how well the previous year's performance plan goals have been met.

Each agency's initial strategic plan was to be submitted to Congress and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) by September 30, 1997. In addition to a mission statement and goals and objectives, plans were required to include performance evaluation criteria and possible external barriers to plan implementation. The first performance

plan, for FY 1999, included each program activity listed in the agency's budget, listed performance indicators to be used to assess outcomes, and discussed how program results will be compared with the agency's goals. The performance indicators were to focus on the results achieved by each department rather than on the number of initiatives undertaken.

The first performance report is due March 31, 2000. Performance reports must show, in measurable ways, how well the preceding year's performance plan has been implemented.

## The Department of Education's Response to GPRA

The Department submitted its *Strategic Plan, 1998-2002* to Congress in September 1997. The plan draws from a number of sources: The Department of Education's 1994 Strategic Plan, the National Education Goals of 1990, President Clinton's Call to Action for American Education, Secretary Riley's Seven Priorities, and individual program indicator plans. The strategic plan outlined four broad goals:

- help all students reach challenging academic standards so that they are prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment;
- build a solid foundation for learning;
- ensure access to postsecondary education and lifelong learning; and
- make the Department of Education a high-performance organization by focusing on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction (Department of Education, 1998).

## OSEP's Response to GPRA

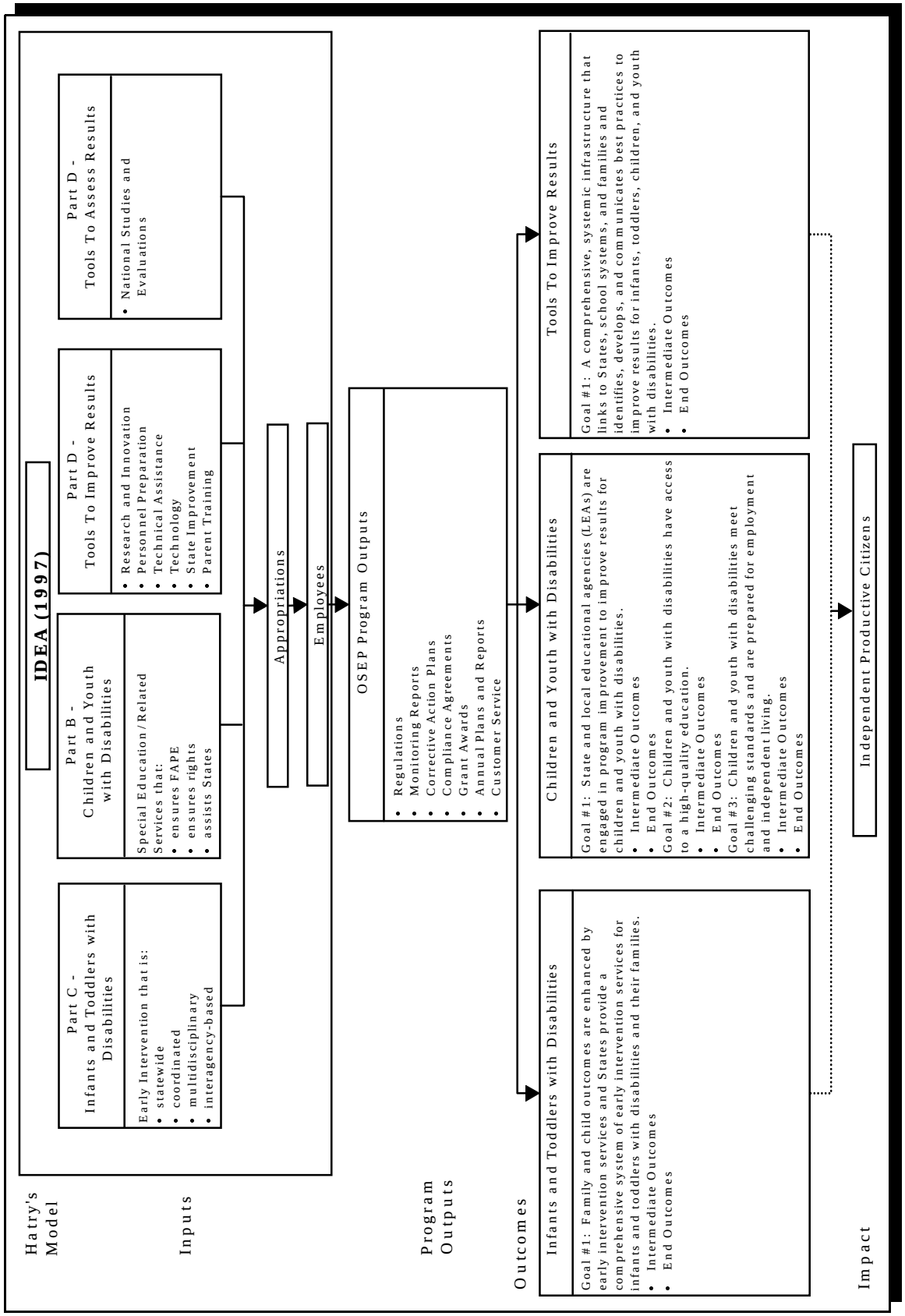
Within the framework of the broader goals of the Department of Education, OSEP decided to use the IDEA Amendments of 1997 to structure its response to GPRA. OSEP developed a series of program logic models with goals, objectives, and performance indicators for the Act as a whole, as well as for Parts B, C, and D independently. The goals, objectives, and performance indicators presented here will be subject to further development. This section discusses the goals, objectives, and performance indicators as they are outlined in the models as they were submitted to Congress.

The goals set forth in the models were presaged by OSEP's proposal for the reauthorization of the Act, which emphasized the alignment of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 with State and local education improvement efforts to improve results for students with disabilities. The proposal also emphasized the importance of placing students in the least restrictive environment possible, with access to the general curriculum; it noted the relationship between high expectations and high performance; and it highlighted the importance of early intervention efforts to ensure that children enter school equipped to learn (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). The goals outlined in the IDEA program logic models reflect these priorities.

### IDEA Program Logic Model

The first model, the IDEA Program Logic Model (see figure IV-2), provides an overview of how OSEP plans to use program inputs and outputs to improve results for young people with disabilities. This conceptual framework illustrates how each part of IDEA works, both independently and in conjunction with the other parts, to affect results for children and youth with disabilities. There are three inputs: legislation, appropriations, and employees. IDEA is the structural foundation for providing services and assessing and improving results. Congress appropriates monies for the program and OSEP staff implement the Act. The result is the second model component, OSEP

**Figure IV-2**
**IDEA Program Logic Model**




Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 1997.

program outputs. These include developing regulations, monitoring, suggesting corrective actions, making grant awards, developing annual plans and reports, and providing customer service. The program outputs have a number of outcomes, which are OSEP's GPRA goals. By achieving these goals, OSEP will advance the desired community outcome of helping young people with disabilities become independent and productive citizens.

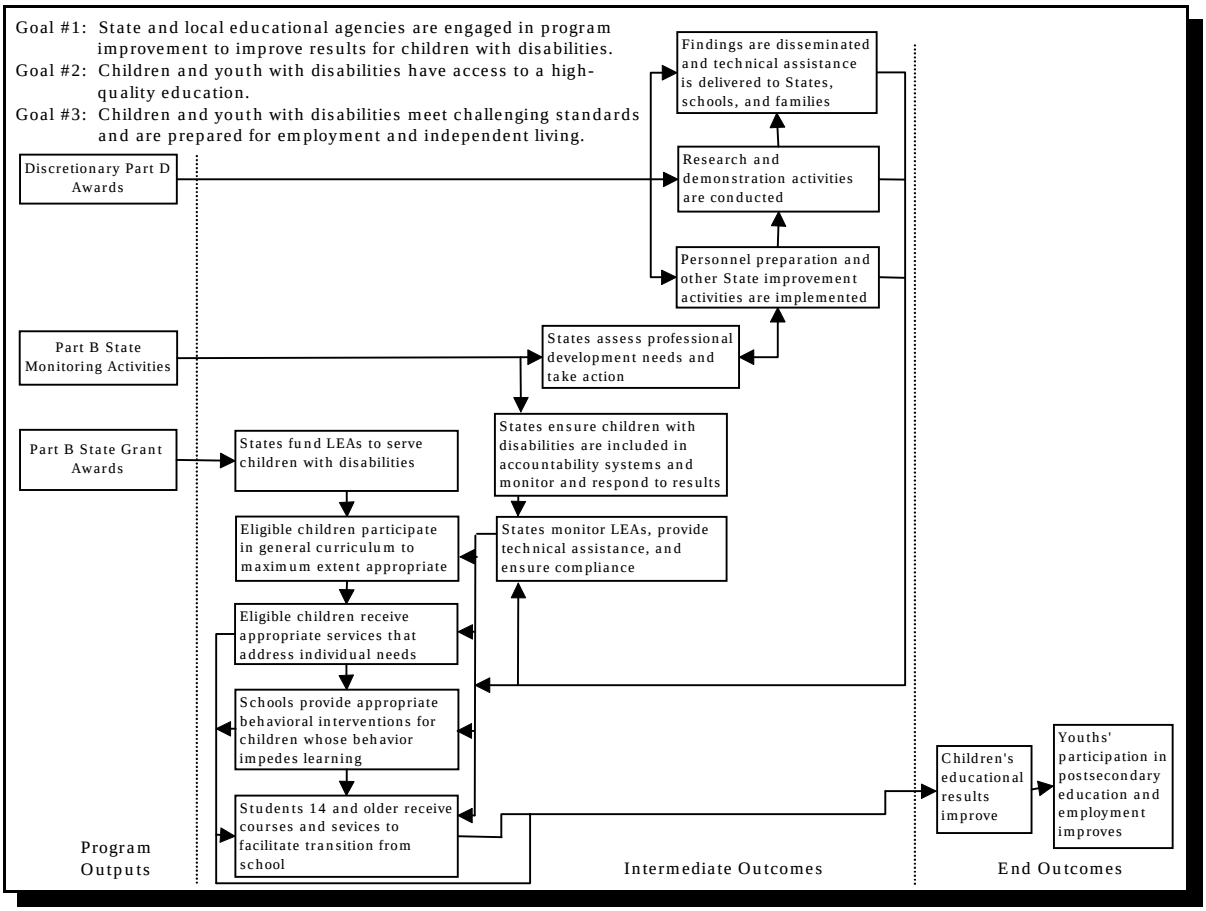
## Part B

The Part B logic model illustrates how State monitoring activities and State grant awards under Part B of IDEA are combined with discretionary Part D activities to improve results for children and youth with disabilities (see figure IV-3). OSEP developed the Part B model to meet three goals: (1) To engage State educational agencies and LEAs in program improvements; (2) to provide students with disabilities with access to a high-quality education; and (3) to ensure that students with disabilities meet challenging standards that help prepare them for employment and independent living.

In this model, OSEP awards grants to the States, which in turn fund LEAs to serve children with disabilities. These efforts result in two quantifiable end outcomes: Improvement of educational results for children with disabilities and greater participation in postsecondary education and employment for youth with disabilities.

GPRA required Federal agencies to develop quantifiable performance indicators to measure their progress. Accordingly, OSEP established a number of indicators to determine its progress in implementing the IDEA Amendments of 1997. For example, one objective of Part B is to improve educational results for children and youth with disabilities. An indicator of progress in this area is to increase the percentage of children with disabilities who are proficient in reading, math, and other academic subjects, based on measures such as State assessments and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). OSEP has developed strategies to help reach this objective. One such strategy is to provide technical assistance and disseminate

**Figure IV-3**
**IDEA Program for Children and Youth with Disabilities**




Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 1997.

information on model practices for instructing children with disabilities, including practices in the areas of reading and math. Another strategy is to ensure that students with disabilities are oversampled and appropriately included in NAEP. This is one example of the objectives and performance indicators for Part B of IDEA; a complete listing of the Part B performance indicators is shown in table IV-10.

**Table IV-10**
**Part B Performance Indicators**

**Special Education Grants to States and Preschool Grants - $4,184,685,000 (FY 99)**

**Goal: To improve results for children with disabilities by assisting State and local education agencies provide children with disabilities access to high-quality education that will help them meet challenging standards and prepare them for employment and independent living.**

| Objectives | Indicators |
|---|---|
| **Program Improvement** | |
| **1. States ensure children with disabilities are a part of all accountability systems and actively work to monitor and improve their performance.** | 1.1 **Performance goals and strategies.** By 1998 all States will have established performance goals and strategies for children with disabilities aged 3-21 and will report progress in meeting those goals.<br><br>1.2 **Participation in assessments.** Children with disabilities, as appropriate, will be included in regular State assessment and results reported starting July 1998.<br><br>1.3 **Participation in alternate assessments.** Children with disabilities in regular assessments will participate in alternate assessments and results reported starting July 2000. |
| **2. States are assessing their needs for professional development and taking appropriate action.** | 2.1 **Emergency/temporary certifications.** The percentage of teachers who have emergency or temporary certification will be reduced.<br><br>2.2 **Appropriately trained teachers.** The percentage of regular and special education teachers with the skills and knowledge to appropriately serve children with disabilities will increase.<br><br>2.3 **Reciprocity.** The number of States with reciprocity agreements regarding certification will increase. |
| **3. States effectively monitor local school districts and provide technical assistance and take other actions as appropriate to ensure compliance with the Act.** | 3.1 **State monitoring.** The percentage of States deemed to effectively monitor local educational agencies on implementing the requirements of IDEA will increase.<br><br>3.2 **State technical assistance.** The percentage of States deemed to provide effective technical assistance to poorly performing local educational agencies on implementing the requirements of IDEA will increase. |

**Table IV-10** (cont'd)

| **Special Education Grants to States and Preschool Grants - $4,184,685,000 (FY 99)** | |
|---|---|
| **Goal: To improve results for children with disabilities by assisting State and local education agencies provide children with disabilities access to high-quality education that will help them meet challenging standards and prepare them for employment and independent living.** | |
| **Objectives** | **Indicators** |
| **Access to high-quality education** | |
| **4. All children with disabilities will participate in the general curriculum to the maximum extent appropriate.** | 4.1 **Participation in the regular classroom.** The percentage of children with disabilities who participate in the general curriculum most of their day in the regular classroom, with appropriate supports and accommodations such as behavioral interventions and adaptive instructional materials, will increase. Preschool children with disabilities will receive services in settings with typically developing peers. *45% of children with disabilities ages 3 through 21 and 51% of children ages 3 through 5 were reported by States as being served in regular education classrooms for the 1994-95 school year.* |
| **5. Students 14 and older will take courses and receive services that will facilitate the transition from school to work or postsecondary education.** | 5.1 **Participation in appropriate secondary education.** The access of children with disabilities to appropriate quality academic, vocational education, or other programs that address their needs will increase. *The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) reported that 65% of students with disabilities took one or more vocational education courses during their most recent year in secondary school.*<br><br>5.2 **Transition services.** All children with disabilities ages 14 and older will have individualized education programs (IEPs) that include a statement of transition service needs that will help focus on the child's courses of study in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program. *The High School Transcript Study found that students with disabilities earned more credits in vocational courses in high school than other students did (5 credits vs. 4 credits).* |

**Table IV-10** (cont'd)

| **Special Education Grants to States and Preschool Grants - $4,184,685,000 (FY 99)** | |
|---|---|
| **Goal: To improve results for children with disabilities by assisting State and local education agencies provide children with disabilities access to high-quality education that will help them meet challenging standards and prepare them for employment and independent living.** | |
| **Objectives** | **Indicators** |
| **6. All children with disabilities will receive appropriate services that address their individual needs, including related services such as assistive technology.** | 6.1 **Parent satisfaction.** The percentage of parents who are satisfied with their child's education will increase over time.<br><br>6.2 **Teachers' view.** The percentage of teachers reporting that children receive the services they need will increase over time. |
| **7. Schools will provide appropriate behavioral interventions for children with disabilities whose behavior impedes the learning of themselves or others.** | 7.1 **Disciplinary actions.** The percentage of children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled will decrease.<br><br>7.2 **Identification of children with emotional disturbance.** Children with emotional disturbance will be identified earlier. |
| **Challenging standards and preparation for employment and independent living** | |
| **8. Improve the educational results of children with disabilities.** | 8.1 **Performance on assessments.** The percentage of children with disabilities who are proficient in reading, math, and other academic areas, based on NAEP and State assessments will increase.<br><br>8.2 **School completion.** The percentage of children with disabilities exiting school who graduate with a diplom or a certificate will increase; and the percentage of children with disabilities leaving school who drop out will decrease. *Of students with disabilities ages 14 through 21 who are known to have left school, 52% graduated with a regular diploma in the 1994-95 school year, 63% graduated with a regular diploma or certificate of completion, and 34% dropped out.* |

**Table IV-10** (cont'd)

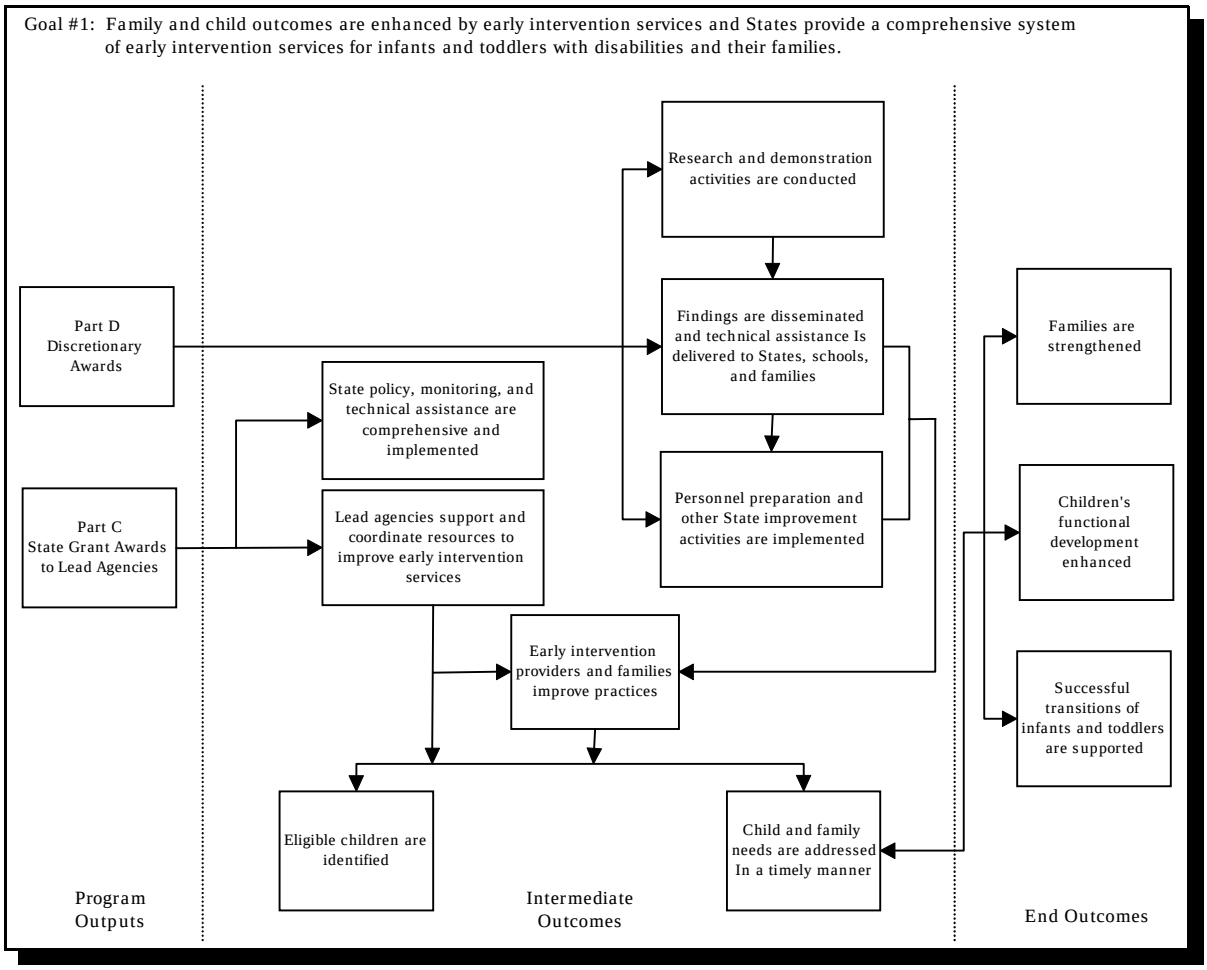
| **Special Education Grants to States and Preschool Grants - $4,184,685,000 (FY 99)** | |
|---|---|
| **Goal: To improve results for children with disabilities by assisting State and local education agencies provide children with disabilities access to high-quality education that will help them meet challenging standards and prepare them for employment and independent living.** | |
| **Objectives** | **Indicators** |
| **9. Improve participation in postsecondary education and employment.** | 9.1 **Postsecondary education.** The percentage of students with disabilities going on to 4-year colleges and 2-year community colleges and technical schools will increase. *The NLTS reported that 13.9% of youth with disabilities who left high school in the 1985-86 or 1986-87 school years had enrolled in some type of postsecondary school in the year before they were interviewed for the study (summer and fall of 1987), and that 27.7% of youth with disabilities who had been out of school for 3 to 5 years had ever attended postsecondary school.*<br><br>9.2 **Employment.** The percentage of students with disabilities who are employed within 2 years of leaving school will increase. *The NLTS reported that 45.9% of youth with disabilities who left high school in the 1985-86 or 1986-87 school years were employed at the time of the follow-up survey in the summer and fall of 1987.* |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, FY 1999 annual plan, 1998.

## Part C

The Part C logic model depicts OSEP's use of Part D discretionary awards and Part C State grant awards to lead agencies to improve results for infants and toddlers with disabilities (figure IV-4). OSEP's goals in designing this model were to enhance family and child results through early intervention and to ensure that States provide a comprehensive system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Desired outcomes include identifying all infants and toddlers who are eligible for services, enhancing these children's functional development, helping them make successful transitions, and strengthening their families.

**Figure IV-4**
**IDEA Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities**




Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 1997.

There are a number of performance indicators for Part C. For example, the indicators for the objective of identifying all eligible children include counts of the number of children served, the number of children referred to the State Child Find System by pediatricians, hospitals, and public health agencies, and the number of States serving children at risk for developing disabilities. One of OSEP's strategies for reaching this objective is to work with the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council to develop ways to coordinate Child Find efforts for Federal programs

serving similar populations. Another strategy is to reach out to professional associations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Nurses Association to emphasize the importance of early identification, referral, and intervention for infants and toddlers with or at risk of developing disabilities. A complete list of the performance indicators for Part C is provided in table IV-11.

## Part D

Figure IV-5 illustrates how discretionary awards made under IDEA, Part D result in program outputs including research and innovation, personnel preparation, technical assistance, technology, State improvement, and parent training. The primary goal of the discretionary programs is to build a comprehensive and systematic infrastructure that is linked to States, school systems, and families and that identifies, develops, and communicates best practices to improve results for children with disabilities. This infrastructure will improve the learning of children with disabilities and advance the desired outcomes included in the other logic models.

Performance indicators for Part D include an increase in the number of States meeting their needs for qualified personnel, and an increase in the number of special education teachers and related services personnel who have appropriate certification. These measures will indicate how well OSEP is meeting the objective of ensuring an adequate supply of highly qualified personnel. One of OSEP's strategies to help meet this objective is the development of a computer system to track personnel and personnel demand. This system will be made available to all the States. Another strategy is to require State Improvement Grant applications to include current data on regular and special education personnel, including their certification status and the training they have received. The National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey for FY 2000 will be an important source of data in this area. Part D performance indicators are shown in table IV-12 on pages IV-67 to IV-69.

**Table IV-11**
**Part C Performance Indicators**

**Special Education - Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities - $370,000,000 (FY 99)**

**Goal: Family and child outcomes are enhanced by early intervention services, and States provide a comprehensive system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.**

| Objectives | Indicators |
|---|---|
| **1. All eligible children are identified.** | 1.1 **Total number of children served.** The number of eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities being served will increase. *Baseline in 1995 was 174,288.*<br><br>1.2 **Birth to 1-year-olds served.** The percentage of infants served under 1-year-old will increase as a proportion of infants and toddlers served. *Baseline in 1994 was 0.8%.*<br><br>1.3 **States serving at-risk children.** The number of States serving infants and toddlers at risk of developing disabilities will increase. *Baseline was 9 States and 1 territory in FY 1996.* |
| **2. Needs of the child and family are addressed in a timely, comprehensive manner** | 2.1 **Receipt of all services indicated.** The percentage of families receiving all the services identified on the individualized family service plan and the percent of families reporting that their services were coordinated will increase. *Baseline to be determined through new research.*<br><br>2.2 **Natural settings.** The percentage of children primarily receiving services in natural settings appropriate for the age of the child will increase. *Baseline was 53% in 1994.*<br><br>2.3 **Family capacity.** The percentage of families reporting that early intervention has increased the family's capacity to enhance their child's development will increase. *Baseline to be determined through new research.*<br><br>2.4 **Transition experiences.** The percentage of families reporting a successful transition (e.g., a transition meeting was held in a timely manner and a plan developed and followed) will increase. *Baseline to be determined through new research.*<br><br>2.5 **Setting of subsequent services.** The number of children transitioning to inclusive settings will increase. *Timing of new data collection to be determined.* |

**Table IV-11** (cont'd)

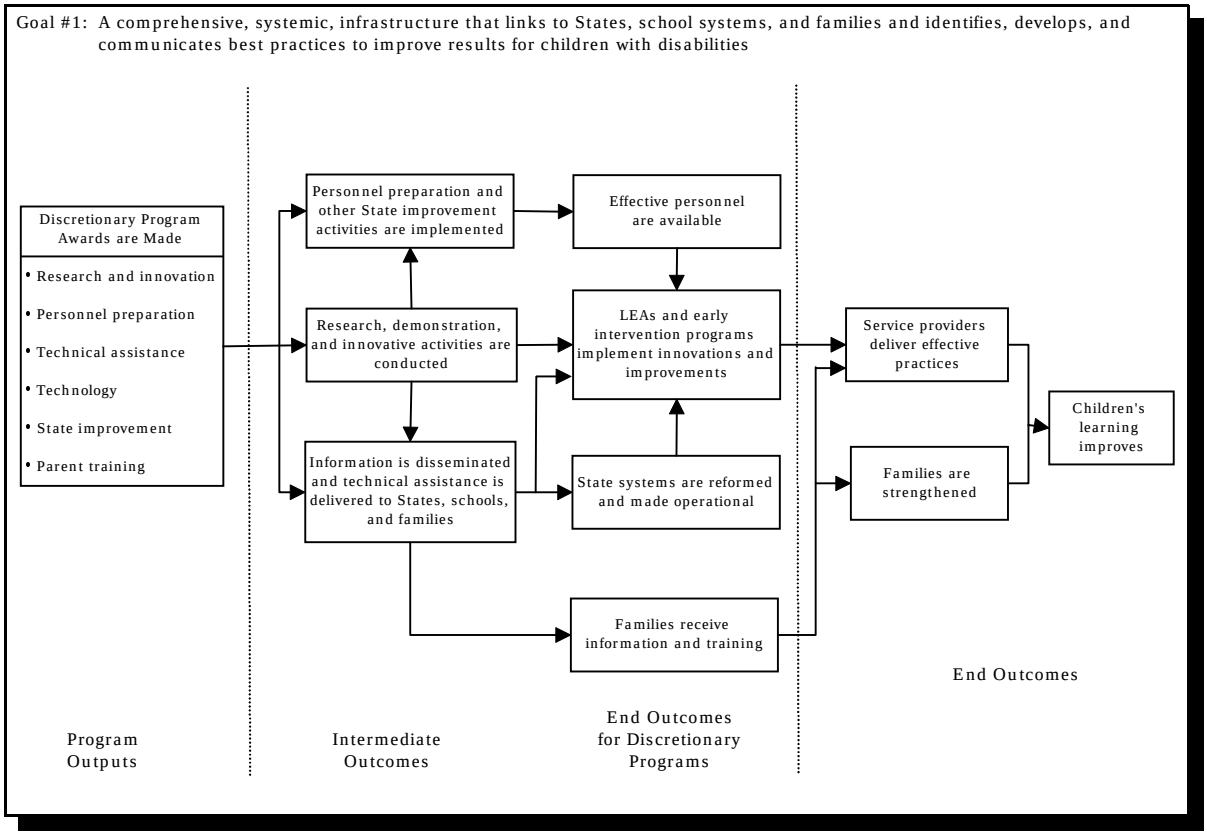
**Special Education - Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities - $370,000,000 (FY 99)**

**Goal: Family and child outcomes are enhanced by early intervention services, and States provide a comprehensive system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.**

| Objectives | Indicators |
|---|---|
| **3. Child's functional development is enhanced by early intervention services.** | 3.1 **Functional abilities.** Child's functional abilities are increased and sustained. *Baseline to be determined through new research.* |
| **4. State policy, monitoring and technical assistance promote comprehensive, effective family focused early intervention services.** | 4.1 **Funding sources.** The number of States accessing all appropriate sources of funding (Medicaid, Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, State general revenues) will increase (from the number reported in FY 1997).<br><br>4.2 **State monitoring activities.** The number of States that rigorously monitor local implementation of Early Intervention and provide effective technical assistance to service providers on implementation of the requirements of Part C of IDEA will increase. *Baseline data available in FY 1998.* |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, FY 1999 annual plan, 1998.

**Figure IV-5**
**IDEA Discretionary Programs**




Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 1997.

**Table IV-12**
**Part D Performance Indicators**

**Special Education Discretionary Program - $290,961,000 (FY 99)**

**Goal: To link best practices to States, school systems, and families to improve results for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities.**

| Objectives | Indicators |
|---|---|
| **1. Ensure an adequate supply of highly qualified personnel.** | 1.1 **Supply of qualified personnel.** An increasing number of States will meet their identified needs for qualified personnel.<br><br>1.2 **Research-validated effective practices.** An increasing percentage of training programs will incorporate research-validated practices in program curricula.<br><br>1.3 **Personnel employed with certification.** An increasing percentage of special education teachers and related services personnel will be certified appropriately.<br><br>1.4 **Special education training for regular education teachers.** An increasing percentage of regular education teachers and community service providers will receive pre-service and inservice training in special education and developmentally appropriate practices.<br><br>1.5 **Effective personnel.** An increasing percentage of special and regular education teachers and early intervention personnel will have the knowledge and skills to improve educational results for children with disabilities. |
| **2. Rigorous research, development, demonstration, and innovation responds to critical needs and advances knowledge to improve results for children with disabilities.** | 2.1 **Respond to knowledge gaps.** An increasing percentage of IDEA-supported research and demonstration products, including technology products, will respond directly to identified needs of State educational agencies, LEAs, and direct service providers.<br><br>2.2 **Ensure quality.** An increasing percentage of projects, including technology projects, use rigorous research and evaluation methods.<br><br>2.3 **Advance knowledge use.** An increasing percentage of final research reports documenting activities to advance the use of the knowledge produced are reported. (OSERS) |

**Table IV-12** (cont'd)

| **Special Education Discretionary Program - $290,961,000 (FY 99)** | |
|---|---|
| **Goal: To link best practices to States, school systems, and families to improve results for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities.** | |
| **Objectives** | **Indicators** |
| | 2.4 **Research impact.** An increasing percentage of consumers of IDEA-supported research regard the research as useful because it advances knowledge and contributes to improving educational policies and practices in special education. |
| **3. Technical assistance (TA) and information will be coordinated and accessible to parents, teachers, administrators, early intervention personnel, related personnel, and transition personnel and will result in improved practices.** | 3.1 **Customer satisfaction.** An increasing percentage of customers will receive TA and information and will report satisfaction with the services received.<br><br>3.2 **Improving practices.** An increasing percentage of customers will use TA and information to improve practices.<br><br>3.3 **Respond to information needs.** An increasing number of TA and information materials will respond to critical needs.<br><br>3.4 **Use effective practices.** An increasing number of TA and information products and events will promote effective practices in curricula, policies, and services and are based on validated research. |
| **4. LEAs and early intervention programs implement program innovations and improvements.** | 4.1 **LEAs and community-based programs implement innovation and improvement efforts**. An increasing percentage of LEAs and community-based programs will indicate that they have implemented innovations, validated practices, and improved their programs in order to improve the results of children with disabilities. |
| **5. State systems of education and early intervention for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities are reformed and improved.** | 5.1 **Development of accountability systems.** The number of States with accountability systems in place to track the progress of infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities will increase.<br><br>5.2 **Inclusion in statewide assessments.** All students with disabilities will be included in statewide assessment systems. |

**Table IV-12** (cont'd)

| **Special Education Discretionary Program - $290,961,000 (FY 99)** | |
|---|---|
| **Goal: To link best practices to States, school systems, and families to improve results for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities.** | |
| **Objectives** | **Indicators** |
| | 5.3 **State Improvement Grants.** By 1999, all States will have submitted a competitive application for the State Improvement Grant program. |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, FY 1999 annual plan, 1998.

## Summary

Congress enacted the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 in response to public demands for accountability in government. Under GPRA, most Federal agencies, including the Department of Education, are now required to measure program results and to report these results to Congress and OMB annually. OSEP's mission is to improve results for children and youth with disabilities to help them develop into independent, productive citizens. In keeping with this mission, OSEP responded to GPRA by developing goals, objectives, and performance indicators based on the IDEA Amendments of 1997. OSEP continues to refine its performance indicators and strategies for gathering quantifiable data to improve results for children and youth with disabilities.

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# *Results From RRC Technical Assistance to States*

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 represent a significant shift in the special education model, from "improved access" to special education and related services to "improved results" for children and youth with disabilities. Evidence of this change pervades the new law, in such areas as:

- congressional findings for the Act (§601(c));
- links between child assessment and instructional guidance in the individualized education program (IEP);
- systematic review of progress in the general curriculum; and
- new data requirements for measuring graduation and dropout rates for children with disabilities.

PURPOSE: To describe the RRFC Network and its services to States.

## Purpose of the RRFC Network

The Regional Resource and Federal Center (RRFC) Network, one of OSEP's technical assistance efforts, is assisting with these changes. The Network comprises six Regional Resource Centers (RRCs) and the Federal Resource Center (FRC). RRCs help State educational agencies (SEAs) improve their systems of early intervention, special education, and transition services through the development and implementation of policies, programs, and practices to enhance educational results for children and youth with disabilities. The FRC supports RRC work in States by coordinating information and activities across regions. In anticipation of the changes to IDEA, RRC activities with SEAs have expanded over the past 5 years to:

- increase interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, planning, and service delivery for children ages birth through 21;

- raise expectations for students with disabilities through high standards;
- promote greater participation of children with disabilities in general education curriculum and assessment systems;
- heighten parent education and involvement;
- improve professional development by addressing specific personnel deficit areas and by helping general educators make needed accommodations and modifications; and
- focus attention on students with limited English proficiency or who are from minority groups.

RRC technical assistance in these areas also reflects IDEA's emphasis on incorporating proven research to improve education practices for children with disabilities. (For a more detailed description of national technical assistance, support, and dissemination activities, see Appendix B. This appendix also contains contact information for the Federal and Regional Resource Centers.)

## Structure of the RRFC Network

Although each RRC focuses primarily on the needs within its region, the capacity of each RRC is strengthened by the entire RRFC Network structure. With coordination and support from the FRC, the six regional Centers have developed effective ways to make connections with other research, technical assistance, and dissemination projects; exchange information and otherwise benefit from each other's experience in States; share staff expertise across regional boundaries; develop collaborative responses to common needs; and in many other ways become more than a collection of independent projects. A strength of the Network is the breadth of its technical assistance services, which combine content and process expertise, thereby facilitating the transfer of research into practice and positive changes for children.

These features make the RRFC Network a unique program which, from its clients' perspective, "has been instrumental in helping States meet their responsibilities under IDEA" (letter from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) to Tom Hehir, OSEP, 10/14/97). The existence of this network means that SEAs have rapid and timely access to validated research, to other technical assistance programs, and to other States' special education programs. This network approach reduces duplicative efforts in times of declining State resources. In addition to state-of-the-art information and services, the RRFC system provides critical connections to the U.S. Department of Education and its Federal priorities. The interactive function of the Network means that States benefit from each other, from their own RRC, from other RRCs, and from the FRC. The structure of the Network enables each RRC to develop the requisite knowledge and relationships to appropriately meet each State's particular needs, while maintaining a larger perspective in which common issues may be identified and addressed in an efficient and coordinated manner. RRFC work in the past 5 years highlights its collaborative nature and benefits to SEAs; this module illustrates three such benefits in the areas of SEA general supervision, standards and assessments, and managing behavior in schools.

## SEA Responsibility for General Supervision

Section 612(a)(11) of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 requires that each SEA be responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the law are met and that all educational programs for children with disabilities in the State are under the general supervision of the State officials who are responsible for education programs for children with disabilities and meet the SEA's educational standards. Beyond working with OSEP staff, SEAs view the RRCs as a primary source of assistance as they address this requirement. States use complaint management systems, interagency agreements, compliance monitoring and reviews, technical assistance policy guidelines, and approval of local applications as methods to exercise their supervisory responsibilities. However, information on quality practices in these areas is limited, so States use the

Network to provide them with the best available information and technical assistance in these areas, which is often based on other States' practices.

To coordinate their efforts, the RRCs have established a Monitoring Work Group of representatives from each of the RRCs, the FRC, NASDSE, and OSEP. The purpose of this work group is to collaborate on "critical issues in monitoring trends . . . in order to build capacity across the regions in serving SEAs" (RRFC Directors' Handbook). As issues arise in one region, the RRC brings the issues to the work group to gather ideas and information on strategies that may have been tried by other States and in other regions. RRCs keep each other informed of activities in their regions that might be useful to States outside of the region. In addition, the work group provides a timely vehicle whereby OSEP and NASDSE representatives can alert RRCs and, through them, their States to national activities and emerging issues.

In many cases, work group discussions and exchanges lead to collaborative activity. For example, a description of training initiated within one RRC region led to follow-up training sessions attended by representatives of States in other RRC regions. The RRCs collaborate to document State monitoring practices and have developed a national profile that helps them respond to State questions (e.g., about techniques for using technology during the monitoring process, alternatives to fiscal sanctions, and involving parents and other stakeholders in monitoring activities). When a State needs timely and relevant information on how to handle a particular monitoring problem, the Network responds by placing the question on its listserve, conducting searches region-by-region, and returning consolidated information to the requesting Center.

To meet the need for direct exchange of information across States, the RRCs conduct regional and national monitoring conferences every 2 years. In addition to SEA monitors' showcasing effective practices (such as local educational agencies' self-evaluation, development of corrective action plans, monitoring for results), OSEP staff capitalized on the latest conference by presenting initial information regarding the amendments to IDEA and OSEP's plans for moni-

toring in 1997-98. As a result of the ongoing work group, information exchanges, and the conferences, States are better able to implement systems for ensuring compliance that have a direct effect on the services available to children with disabilities and the results they achieve.

As States began to address the changes to IDEA, it became clear that optimal technical assistance would combine policy information from OSEP with direct assistance from the RRCs. OSEP determined that an appropriate strategy to ensure effective implementation of the requirements of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 would be to collaborate with States in developing implementation agreements to ensure compliance with the provisions of the new law. OSEP requested that States involve a variety of stakeholders in this effort. The RRCs served as a resource to States in facilitating the stakeholder meetings and for providing technical assistance after the agreements were developed. To enhance the potential of these implementation agreements, the Network collaborated to ensure that each RRC benefited from the experience of other States and regions. An initial conference call among OSEP and the RRCs clarified the Federal expectations for the implementation agreement process and established RRCs' roles. RRCs helped States conduct self-analyses regarding the new requirements of the law. Training materials on the IDEA Amendments of 1997 developed by OSEP and the FRC were disseminated by the FRC for use by SEAs, RRCs, parent organizations, and local school agencies. As implementation agreement meetings occurred, RRCs discussed their experience with each other, making recommendations about effective techniques to improve stakeholder involvement and meetings results. Monthly calls between RRC directors and staff highlighted additional experiences. The result has been a positive relationship among SEA staff, OSEP, RRCs, and the stakeholders in these implementation agreement activities. The plans that emerged are calculated to lead not only to compliance but, consistent with the intent of the law, improved results for children with disabilities.

## Assessment and Accountability

General education's systemic reform has claimed assessment and accountability as its foundation. Most States are developing new sets of curriculum standards and accompanying assessment systems to set goals, measure achievement, and report to their public. With IDEA's explicit attention to participation in assessments, there is a need for timely information and technical assistance as States further develop assessment systems to ensure that "Children with disabilities are included in general State and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, where necessary. . . ." (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(17)(A)) States also are required to develop alternate assessments and accompanying guidelines for those children with disabilities who cannot participate in state- or districtwide assessment programs. It is equally important that States deliver assessment "reports to the public with the same frequency and in the same detail as it reports on the assessment for nondisabled students . . . ."

The RRFC Network, its member Centers, and its major collaborator in this domain, the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO), have worked together to develop research, disseminate best practices, provide technical assistance, and facilitate collaborative efforts linking general and special education personnel, parents, and other stakeholders. Network personnel have worked with State personnel, research consultants, and parents to analyze assessment systems, design more inclusive approaches, train personnel, and develop reporting formats. Within the larger education arena, RRCs have been active partners in Improving America's Schools initiatives with the Comprehensive Centers, the Regional Labs, and CRESST (Center for Research on Evaluation, Student Standards and Testing).

Specifically, the Network developed a Standards and Assessment Work Group with membership from the RRCs, FRC, OSEP, and NCEO and invited participation by related agency representatives. RRFC personnel hold regular teleconferences about regionally focused issues, informing each other and, in turn, SEA staff about efforts in other regions. Network members participate across regions in

conferences, workshops, and training meetings as presenters, participants, and observers.

RRFC members serve as regional links to NCEO, brokering the latest research, providing implementation feedback to developing research, and connecting SEA personnel directly with researchers. The newly established Improving America's Schools Conferences present yet another arena for Network services in assessment and accountability. These conferences strengthen and promote systemic reform across all aspects of public education, and RRC participation in the design teams as well as the Assessment and Standards Institutes promotes the inclusion of students with disabilities and provides leadership in this regard.

A recent example of the RRFC's initiatives in standards, assessment, and accountability is the concept design of a World Wide Web site dedicated to alternate assessment issues. This design is emerging from the Standards and Assessment Work Group and will incorporate development and perspectives from throughout the Network, its consumers, and collaborators as States work toward the July 2000 statutory deadline for alternate assessment systems. NCEO took the lead on this project. The RRFC workgroup coordinated efforts with NCEO to implement the survey and helped design survey questions, formatted the database, tracked down State contracts, tested the system, and has made ongoing recommendations for improvements. This survey on alternate assessments can be accessed through www.coled.uwn.educ/NCEO.

Across these domains, the Network has been both leader and provider as the systemic reform of education demands more rigorous and sophisticated accountability, assessment, and reporting systems for all students. State curriculum standards, IEPs, and district- and statewide assessment systems must all be integrated for fundamental accountability. RRCs continue to play a vital role in promoting and assisting that integration in individual States. Network participation enhances both the collective and individual member capacities that support States advancing this essential reform.

## Behavioral Issues and Interventions

Addressing the behavioral needs of students with disabilities has been a focus of States and of the reauthorization of IDEA. RRCs pursued regionally based work in this area until 2 years ago, when those activities were joined in a Network-led national focus on effective interventions and the prevention of behavior problems. The Network effort was to help States and local school systems on both the legal issues and appropriate prevention and intervention approaches that can reduce the need to address these problems through discipline measures. Providing information, coordination, research, and awareness and training, the Network also engaged other federally funded projects with interest and expertise in this area: the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NEC*TAS), the National Center for Children in Poverty, Zero to Three, and mental health grantees and State representatives. This national collaborative activity has provided resources for all States, including work groups, topical conferences, peer resources networks, and extensive materials. The effort also involved many Department of Education, OSEP-funded research and development projects.

A specific focus has been the RRC-led information dissemination and networks for SEAs on effective educational programs for children incarcerated in juvenile or adult corrections facilities. Providing for this population adequately has been of concern for several years; States have continued to look to the RRFC for information and technical assistance in this area. Many of the materials developed have been made available on the World Wide Web.

The Network formed topical work groups on early prevention of violence and on mental health to exchange current State information, solicit recent research, and invite experts to support State agency staff efforts in policy development and implementation at the local level. RRCs have sponsored conferences and workshops on school discipline and violence prevention in conjunction with NEC*TAS.

In response to federally funded research that clearly demonstrated the need for early prevention efforts, the

Network created a national database that consolidates information on early prevention of violence for children ages birth through 6. This database highlights effective programs and strategies, organizations, and resources targeted to young populations at risk for developing behavior problems. RRFC Network members have published volumes (made available via the World Wide Web, individual centers, and clearinghouses) on early identification and prevention of violent behavior in children, model programs, and services for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities and their families; effective classroom and school interventions for students with challenging behaviors; and teacher stress and burnout. The larger regional perspective allows early identification of emerging issues in areas common to several States and a commensurate development of appropriately matched responses, combining the latest in research, effective field practices, and expertise.

## Summary

In its pivotal role as the primary technical assistance provider to SEAs and the link among OSEP, other Federal and regional projects, and the States, the RRFC Network represents a critical component in the congressional intent in reauthorizing IDEA--improving State education systems to benefit all children. With a regional configuration, individual RRCs are able to build the requisite knowledge and relationships with each State to enhance the introduction and application of research and improved practices, appropriately matching needs in a particular State with available resources and technical assistance. For the States in any given region, the RRC functions as the hub for and among States working to improve the benefits of their particular system. The Network optimizes these cumulative efforts and intelligence: hierarchically, from the individual States to the regional and then the Federal level, and laterally, across States, across regions, across projects.

Nationally, RRCs work with each other and with Federal agencies and have ongoing knowledge of and involvement in research developments that inform State efforts and are grounded in State systems approaches. RRCs have

immediate access to a vast array of information and resources beyond the capacity of any single entity. The RRFC Network's synergy and national perspective makes assessing needs and responding with quality assistance more collaborative, more efficient, and more targeted in the common endeavor to support States in meeting requirements of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 and ensuring better results for children with disabilities.